

Metro Savannah Rotary would like to nominate Metrorotarian, Julie Wade, for the 2024 Horatio “Cabby” Cabasares Vocational Excellence Award. Julie has not only excelled in her vocation, but also, has used her profession to encourage and promote the ideals of Rotary that Cabby Cabasares exemplified. She has leveraged her formal education, professional background, and personal connections to advance a better community and world.

1. Rotarian’s achievements in their vocation:

Julie is a lawyer by training and practiced in a variety of fields, most recently criminal defense work, before moving to non-profit in 2017. Her criminal defense work demonstrated first hand the systemic challenges people in the criminal justice system experience, most often starting at adolescence. Dissatisfied with clients going to a broken incarceration system, in 2017, Julie moved to the non-profit sector as Executive Director of Park Place Outreach, a teen homeless shelter, where she added new programs, doubled the budget, and provided enhanced service and support to teens experiencing homelessness.

In January 2022, Julie left Park Place to start Tharros Place, a 12-bed residential facility for survivors of human trafficking, girls ages 12-17. Tharros Place was necessary to fill a recognized gap in services in our community for minor victims of human sex trafficking. Chatham County ranks 4th in the state for reported cases of minor sex trafficking, yet the nearest facility was 90 minutes away. In less than two years, Tharros grew from an idea to a vibrant residential facility that welcomed its first residents in December 2023, in a modern and renovated multi-million dollar facility. Julie leveraged community partners and volunteers, including her very supportive fellow Rotarians, to develop over 500 donors in two years. Tharros means courage in Greek, and Tharros Place cultivates a culture of courage in all the girls it serves.

Julie also operates Wade Law and Consulting, providing legal services and consultations for other non-profits in the Savannah area.

2. Rotarian’s achievements in the community:

Current:

Savannah Downtown Business Association, President Elect
BankSouth, Advisory Board of Directors
United Way of the Coastal Empire, Women United Council
Metropolitan Savannah Rotary, member (President in 2013-14 and other various roles)

Prior Service:

Savannah Chatham County Board of Education, represented District 1, 2011-2020
Board of Directors, Planned Parenthood Southeast
Board of Directors, UGA Alumni Association
Georgia WIN List Leadership Academy
Board of Directors, Girls on the Run, President

Board of Directors, America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia
Board of Directors, Historic Savannah Foundation, Chair of Development Committee

Recognition:

UGA Alumni 40 Under 40

UGA Bulldog 100 Business (three times)

Leadership Georgia

Leadership Southeast Georgia

Leadership Savannah

Vicki Loughrey Volunteer Advocacy Award from Coastal Center for Developmental Services
(now EmployAbility)

John B. Miller Service Award from the Savannah Bar Association

Savannah Magazine Next Generation Rising Star Recipient

Outstanding Woman Award (legal) for A Working Woman in Need

Other:

TEDx

Georgia Association for Women Lawyers Leadership Academy

Executive Leadership Program for Nonprofit Organizations Graduate, University of Georgia J.W.

Fanning Institute for Leadership Development

Breast Cancer survivor

Boston Marathon Qualifier

3. Rotarian's use of their vocation to promote the ideals of Rotary:

Service is the guiding light of Rotary, and for at least half of her career, Julie has fought for the rights of underserved and disadvantaged individuals, particularly adolescents, through her work as a criminal defense attorney, member of the Board of Education, and in the non-profit sector. She has brought that work and passion to Rotary by supporting Rotary's service areas as well as educating and engaging Rotarians about her own work and experiences.

Julie's constant theme of service above self extends beyond her professional career. She also seeks to use her influence for the greater good. Julie was operating her law practice in downtown Savannah and serving on the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System Board during her time as Metropolitan Savannah Rotary's President-Elect and President. As a successful professional, she could have put her kids through private school like many families in Savannah. Instead, Julie joined the school board to advocate for change and improvement, so more students in our community have access to quality education. She regularly posted the hashtag #wechoosepublicschool.

A few months into her presidency, Julie was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer and started treatments. She shared her story on social media and with local reporters as a proponent for how important health screenings are, specifically annual mammograms. (You can read her article in the *Savannah Morning News* here:

[https://www.savannahnow.com/story/lifestyle/columns/2014/04/11/julie-wade-breast-cancer-can-take-my-boobs-it-cannot-take-my-life/13550829007/.](https://www.savannahnow.com/story/lifestyle/columns/2014/04/11/julie-wade-breast-cancer-can-take-my-boobs-it-cannot-take-my-life/13550829007/)) Julie gave the diagnosis and fight a place in day-to-day conversation. Julie, unknowingly, is a leader with great influence who demonstrated how cancer does not discriminate and health must remain a focus, no matter how many other priorities you have in life.

Julie also implemented Metro's first [Annual Service Partner Program](#) (Greenbriar Children's Home under Julie's tenure), which became a Club model for sustained community service and financial commitment.