



# NEWS RELEASE

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## MASSACHUSETTS DISTRICT

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### **Suzanne Merritt Named Woman Small Business Owner of the Year Lenox-based company used 504 financing for renovations and buildout**

**BOSTON** – The Small Business Administration (SBA) has named Lenox Fit Inc. the 2019 Woman Small Business Owner of the Year for Massachusetts.

Lenox Fit earned the recognition for increasing economic development and job creation in the Berkshires region. Lenox Fit, Inc. is a multi-dimensional fitness and wellness facility that serves Berkshire County region. The customers range from rehab/post rehab from physical therapy, to advanced athletes and fitness enthusiasts of every level.

*“It is an honor to recognize Suzanne Merritt for being an amazing entrepreneur and overcoming adversity both personally and in business along her path to the success.”* **said SBA Massachusetts District Director Robert Nelson.** *“We are delighted to recognize her accomplishments as an entrepreneur and as an inspiration to her community.”*

In 2012, Merritt was diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer, receiving treatment at Dana Farber Cancer Institute for over a year while maintaining her job at the fitness center as a trainer. During the recovery process, she reached out to the owners and offered to buy Lenox Fitness Center.

In 2016, Merritt finalized the closing process for the new Lenox Fit facility with SBA 504 financing; supported by Carol Brennan of BDC Capital and March McKenna of Lee Bank. Proceeds were used for new equipment, renovations and improvements to the fitness center. In four years as the new owner, Merritt has increased sales by 28% and today employs 22 staff members.

*“As my business has grown, I have learned how important it is to hire the right people to support my mission in the fitness and wellness industry. There are so many facets involved in running a successful small business, but the most important is the people who work together as a team to accomplish all that we do each day,”* **said President, Suzanne Merritt.** *“I am proud of my team and all that they individually and collectively do each day to make Lenox Fit the place where our members and guests feel welcomed, valued and listened to. Our attention to detail and our willingness to go the extra mile, truly makes all the difference.”*

Merritt gives back to a number of charities supporting cancer research and support groups. Each year, she participates in the annual Pan Mass Challenge – raising nearly \$100,000 in the last seven years. Merritt is also involved with the local Relay for Life campaign, mentoring other cancer patients and offering guidance from her personal experience with cancer.

The company was nominated by Nancy Shulman, Senior Business advisor at the Berkshire Regional MSBDC office, a staff member of UMass Amherst Isenberg School of Management.

Suzanne Merritt will be honored at the annual SCORE Boston / SBA awards luncheon along with other 2019 Massachusetts Small Business Week winners at Assumption College on Wednesday, May 8th, 2019.

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**About the U.S. Small Business Administration**

The U.S. Small Business Administration makes the American dream of business ownership a reality. As the only go-to resource and voice for small businesses backed by the strength of the federal government, the SBA empowers entrepreneurs and small business owners with the resources and support they need to start and grow their businesses. It delivers services to people through an extensive network of SBA field offices and partnerships with public and private organizations. To learn more, visit [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).