

**April 5, 2009-- Michelle Tjelmeland – Recipient of 2009 Woman of Influence Award**

The Women of Influence program, sponsored by Springfield Business Journal and Security Bank, honors local women for their contributions to the Springfield area community. Selected by their peers through submitted nominations, all have made important contributions to the community at large.

Nominations were not limited to the business community for this program. The area's reputation as an exemplary place to live, work and raise a family is dependent upon the day-to-day hard work and long-range foresight of each and every one of us. These women are significant for their valuable contributions in making Springfield the outstanding community that it is.

**Name:** Michelle Tjelmeland

**Age:** 35

**Role:** Web site designer; owner of [e-websmart.com](http://e-websmart.com), [alertsmadeeasy.com](http://alertsmadeeasy.com); founder of [ciafonline.org](http://ciafonline.org)

**Family:** Married, two children

**Motto:** "Live life outloud!"

**Interesting tid-bit:** "I was on the varsity bowling team at Taylorville High School for 4 years. And, yes, I still have my bowling ball with my name engraved on it and I polish it regularly!"

**Notable Nomination:**

"Michelle embodies the spirit of entrepreneurship. Her business ventures are dynamic forces that mirror Michelle's energy, creativity, and zest for living."

**About Michelle:**

Resilience defines Michelle Tjelmeland. Refusing to back down to obstacles standing in her way has defined her path to success.

Tjelmeland's energy, determination and passion are reflected in her accomplishments, but she has achieved none of them without hard work.

One of Tjelmeland's proudest accomplishments is building her business, E-websmart, from scratch. The company, founded in 1999, helps businesses develop targeted marketing messages to reach consumers through web and print. Although Tjelmeland thoroughly enjoys her work, her family and friends are equally as important. "Personally, I'm most proud of my marriage and my children," she said. Tjelmeland is devoted to her husband, Joel, Jr., and two daughters, Ellie and Lucy.

Tjelmeland had not always dreamt of owning her own business. When she became deaf, her career as a language arts teacher came to a halt and she had to "reinvent" herself. "It was what life dealt me and I chose to embrace it," she said. "It's okay to grieve and to cry, but I knew that I if I did not overcome my disability it was going to overcome me. My parents instilled in me that I could do anything I set my mind to," she said. Since the days of starting her own company, Tjelmeland has received cochlear implants, permitting her to hear again. Her daughter Ellie, who was born deaf, received implants when she was about 1



½. In 2006, mother and daughter received their second implants together. "Twenty-five years ago this would not have been possible; I am so thankful to be living with such incredible technology," Tjelmeland said.

Throughout it all, Tjelmeland says she has believed strongly in "paying it forward." In 2005, she founded Cochlear Implant Awareness Foundation, a non-profit organization developed to provide an information outlet to families struggling with hearing loss and considering cochlear implant technology. Giving back to the community is also an important part of Tjelmeland's life. She is a member of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce and is the Vice President of Rochester Education Foundation.

Tjelmeland considers her father, Max Klemm, one of her greatest mentors but she is also thankful for her "ultra-supportive" husband. "He always greets me with open arms, embraces my ideas and provides me with never-ending support," she said.

While obstacles have challenged her, Tjelmeland continues to pursue her career without reservation. She earned her master's degree in Education and Computer Technology from the University of Illinois in 2000 and is currently working on a social networking degree. In addition, she co-invented Alerts Made Easy™, a 4-in-1 web, email, text and phone messaging service in 2008.

"I've always faced my obstacles head on – maybe because I am deaf and can't hear the naysayers in the background," she said, with a laugh.

**--Betsy Fullerton, Springfield Business Journal**

