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Guidewell Financial Solutions President & CEO Helene Raynaud Receives Baltimore SmartCEO Brava Award

Nonprofit Guidewell Financial Solutions (also known as Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Maryland and Delaware, Inc.) is proud to announce its President and CEO Helene Raynaud has been named a 2016 Baltimore SmartCEO Brava Award recipient.

(BALTIMORE, MD) – Nonprofit Guidewell Financial Solutions (aka Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Maryland and Delaware, Inc.) is pleased to announce that *Baltimore SmartCEO* has chosen its President and CEO Helene Raynaud as a 2016 Brava Award recipient.

The Brava Awards program celebrates high-impact female business leaders. Brava winners combine their entrepreneurial spirit with a passion for giving back to the community and are exemplary leaders of both their companies and their communities. They encourage local philanthropy, mentor up-and-coming leaders, and set their companies on the path to tremendous growth.

Award winners are selected by an independent panel of local business leaders based on award candidates' company growth, community impact, and mentoring.

Raynaud says, "I am thrilled to be honored alongside these women, who are some of the best and most innovative leaders and small entrepreneurs in the Baltimore area. This award will hopefully help us develop new partnerships and reach even more local residents than we currently do."

▪ **An Agency on the Rise**

When Guidewell Financial first opened its doors as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 1966, it provided financial counseling and education as well as debt management to consumers with money management problems. It still offers these services, but has expanded its range of programs to include HUD-approved homeownership, foreclosure prevention, reverse mortgage counseling and education, student loan counseling, and financial coaching. All employees are certified professionals and the agency is fully accredited.

In the past 10 years Guidewell Financial has completed more than 180,000 individually-tailored financial counseling sessions and facilitated nearly 2,500 workshops that reached over 350,000 consumers.

Studies confirm the positive, long-term effect Guidewell Financial's services have on consumers, their families, the workplace, and the community as a whole. A recent independent evaluation of the services conducted by The Ohio State University found that clients who take part in rigorous and comprehensive financial counseling show noticeable improvements in their credits scores along with average decreases in total debt of \$17,000 and revolving debt of \$8,000 within 12 to 18 months of receiving the services. An NFMU Urban Institute evaluation likewise revealed that homeowners who receive housing counseling are 67% more likely to remain current on their mortgages and recognize an annual savings of \$2,100.

▪ **New Directions**

Since joining Guidewell Financial this past January, Raynaud has brought a new vitality and direction to the agency. She works tirelessly with her staff to create new community alliances. The organization has just entered into a partnership with University of Maryland, Baltimore to help campus members and local residents in West Baltimore become more financially aware and secure.

"She is such a great motivator," says Director of Public Affairs Director Nancy Stark. "She closely collaborates with each of us and has such a passion for what we do. She is a strong mentor and good listener who is always open to new ideas."

The *Baltimore SmartCEO* Brava Awards will culminate with a Gala Award Event on July 14. The publication also plans to feature articles about award recipients in its July 2016 issue.

Stark says, "We want to thank *Baltimore SmartCEO* for recognizing and honoring Helene and our organization with this award. We appreciate this public acknowledgement of her leadership and of our growing role within the community!"

For more information about Guidewell Financial Solutions' programs and services, please visit the agency website at guidewellfs.org.

About Guidewell Financial Solutions

Guidewell Financial Solutions (also known as Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Maryland and Delaware, Inc.) is an accredited 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency that helps stabilize communities by creating hope and promoting economic self-sufficiency to individuals and families through financial education and counseling. Maryland License #14-01 / Delaware License #07-01