

AWARD

Leading by example

by **ROBIN MARSHALL**

Now into its second year, the annual AmCham Women of Excellence award took the theme of leadership for 2011.

A former head of Hungarian state postal service Magyar Posta, now in charge of communications at OTP Bank, Ildikó Szűts was named the winner of the Excellence in Leadership award at the chamber's annual diversity conference on November 8.

Szűts was picked in what AmCham CEO (and jury member) Péter Dávid called a "decisive vote" for the qualities she has displayed throughout her career, including her tolerance, patience and tact in union negotiations, and for bringing modern HR practices to Magyar Posta. "At OTP she is an example for young women leaders," Dávid said.

In what was a strong field, drawn from more than 50 candidates, the runners up were: Júlia Király, of the Hungarian National Bank; Réka Matheidesz, founder and managing director of WAMP, the Sunday arts market which promotes Hungarian design and designers; Éva Patzauer, founder and CEO of the Csodalámpa Wish Fulfilling Foundation, which aims to grant the dreams of seriously ill children; and Dr. Éva Kriszt Sándorné, head of the Budapest Business School, and the country's only female university dean.

Returning jury chair Dr. Andrea Jádi Németh said the task had been no easier this year, although the panel had been looking for one major trait, leadership, whereas 2010 had involved finding a balance between private and business lives, usually with charity also thrown in to the mix. "This time we sought excellent women leaders who convey a strong sense of mission, demonstrate commitment to passing along leadership skills and involving peers with the next generation of leaders and display consistence, fairness, trust and truthfulness in interpersonal relationships," she said.



EXCELLENT LEADERS

From left, Éva Patzauer, Csodalámpa Foundation; Réka Matheidesz, WAMP founder; winner Ildikó Szűts, OTP Bank; and Dr. Éva Kriszt Sándorné, Dean of the Budapest Business School. The fourth runner up, Júlia Király, of the Hungarian National Bank, was unable to attend the ceremony.

"Generally speaking, candidates built their careers with stamina, diligence, hard work and professional calling, but we had to choose real leaders, charismatic, inspiring personalities, and that was much harder than we thought at first." More than 50 candidates were whittled down to 11, each of whom was given a personal interview, said Jádi Németh.

That is a very important part of the process, she said, and helped narrow the field down to five finalists, from which the eventual choice was made. "This award finally is not a 'career award' but a recognition and complex appreciation of the inspirational human – female values, attitude, lifestyle and life management."

In a sense, AmCham member companies are not the real audience for the award; rather, the message should spread to wider society. Jádi Németh is clearly passionate about the idea of putting up role models for Hungarian women of all ages. "It is very important to show to the largest possible audience, both women and young girls, that we have some

fascinating Hungarian ladies out there who are not just good examples, they are idols. They demonstrate that it is possible to be a strong, respectable self-fulfiller in working life while remaining a real woman at the same time."

This year's winner will benefit from a FranklinCovey leadership training course. This year's theme was built around the number of shoes a successful woman must own to help her step into the many roles she must play. Fittingly, then, the 2011 trophy featured a pair of golden shoes by internationally acclaimed designer Réka Vágó. She also designed handbags for the runners up, and will craft some made-to-measure shoes for Szűts.

"I was very glad to be asked, because my professional motto is basically the same as the theme for the award," explains Vágó, who has been in business since she graduated in 2003, founding her own brand in 2005. "I believe every woman needs at least two pairs of shoes; one with low heels to get on time to a meeting, and one with high heels for being late for a rendezvous."