



THE NORTH CAROLINA CHAMBER
PROUDLY PRESENTS ITS
**AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED
CITIZENSHIP TO**

**SUSAN M.
CAMERON**

PRESIDENT AND CEO OF
REYNOLDS AMERICAN INC.

For Reynolds American CEO Susan Cameron, her job is all about investing in two things — brands and people.

“I fundamentally believe that in a business like ours, we have only two assets — brands and people. You need to invest in the brands to build the business and in the people so they build the business.”

Cameron, who has spent a total of nine years at the helm of Reynolds, started out in the industry fresh out of college in 1981 with an undergraduate degree in business from the University of Florida. Although her interest was in marketing, she got her start in sales with Brown and Williamson Tobacco in Louisville, Ky.

“I was quite taken with consumer marketing, but I took a sales job because it was very hard to get into consumer marketing without a master’s degree. So I worked in sales, and the company paid for me to go back to graduate school at night and on weekends.”

With her MBA in hand from Bellarmine University, Cameron moved into the consumer marketing area that had first sparked her interest, spending a total of nine years overseas — seven years

in London and two years in Hong Kong — working in brand marketing and global brand management.

After her return to the U.S., she continued in marketing and brand management for B&W until 2001 when she was asked to take the CEO role with the company, becoming the first woman to lead a major cigarette business. A short three years later, B&W and R.J. Reynolds combined their U.S. businesses, and Cameron continued as CEO of the new parent company, Reynolds American.

Cameron continued as CEO until 2011 when she decided to retire — for three years, at least. Just as she got the hang of retirement, a situation she loved, she was asked to return to Reynolds as CEO to help with the enormously complicated purchase of Lorillard Tobacco.

“The company wanted to do this big transaction, a \$28 billion deal, and they wanted somebody with experience to do the deal,” said Cameron. “So I came back to finalize the deal, integrate the companies and work on succession. So all good fun.”

Cameron is frequently highlighted as one of the most powerful women in business by a number of publications, including *Forbes* magazine, *FORTUNE* magazine and the *Financial Times* and in local business media publications. But her list of accomplishments and contributions stretches far beyond the boardroom.

“I believe that as a leader in a community you have a responsibility to give back, and you have a responsibility to each of the communities in which your employees work and live and play,” she said. “So that is fundamental to me, both as a business and as an individual.”

The United Way, both at the national and the local levels, has been one key recipient of Cameron’s time and philanthropy.

She has chaired community United Way campaigns not once, but twice, in Louisville, Ky., and in Forsyth County.

In Forsyth County in 2007, she created the first-ever Women’s Leadership Council at the United Way, which had more than 1,000 members and had contributed \$4.8 million in new giving to the United Way by the end of 2014.

In addition to her work with the United Way, Cameron has volunteered in local leadership roles on the boards of the Experiment in Self Reliance, the YWCA, Wake Forest University, Salem College, Senior Services Inc., the Winston-Salem Alliance and Old Salem.

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Beyond her contributions as an individual, Cameron has guided Reynolds American as it plays an integral and involved role in the community.

“As a business, we have been a long-serving company in this community,” she said. “In the last decade, we have given away millions of dollars’ worth of property which has renovated Winston-Salem. So our business has been transformed and our community has been transformed, and we like that symmetry.”

Looking ahead to the future of North Carolina as a whole, Cameron parallels her business philosophy of investing in people and brands, recognizing the importance of focusing on education and attracting new business to the state.

“We need to ensure that we invest enough in education — from pre-K through higher education,” she said. “Investing in education will attract businesses, so these things can work very well together. And in that context, we also need to take care of our infrastructure. These things all cost money, but balancing those priorities will allow North Carolina to continue to grow.”