

THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

*Twenty-first Annual*

# Commonwealth Heroines of Massachusetts Celebration

*June 14, 2024*



*Celebrating the Class of 2024 Commonwealth Heroines of Massachusetts*

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The MCSW is an independent state agency that was legislatively created in 1998 to advance women of the Commonwealth to full equality in all areas of life and to promote their rights and opportunities. The Commission provides a voice for Massachusetts women and is comprised of 19 members who are appointed by the Governor, Senate President, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Caucus of Women Legislators.

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- Mary-dith Tuitt**, Boston – *MCSW Vice-Chairwoman, Legislative and Public Policy Committee Chair*
- Tanisha Arena**, Springfield – *MCSW Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair*
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## *“They don’t always make the news, but they truly make the difference.”*

Greetings!

On behalf of all of us here at the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW), we thank you for your extraordinary work on behalf of the Commonwealth. It is an honor for us to celebrate women of all communities that perform unheralded acts on a daily basis that make our homes, neighborhoods, cities, and towns better places to live.

The Commonwealth Heroines Class of 2024 are truly the ones who have kept the community together when we needed it the most. They may not always make the news, but they most assuredly make a difference. You have been selected because you use your time, talent, spirit, and enthusiasm to enrich the lives of others. These acts of public leadership and volunteerism help advance the status of women and girls in Massachusetts in ways big and small. Your collective effort is meaningful and has a lasting impact. Commonwealth Heroines use their time, talent, spirit, and enthusiasm to enrich the lives of others in their community. They are mentors, volunteers, and innovators – you are the glue that keeps a community together.

We collectively extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of our legislative partners who continue to recommend, recognize, and advance women within their districts. Each year the MCSW partners with state legislators to identify women who make outstanding contributions to their organizations and in their communities. Elected officials are encouraged to submit one woman from their constituency as a means of recognizing their invaluable efforts and extraordinary acts of service. It is a true honor when those that represent us not only see us, but actively put women forward to be honored.

This year is a unique year of firsts! The Class of 2024 Commonwealth Heroines comprises more than 125 women from across the state, leaders in industry, business, nonprofit, advocacy, and more. We have our first-ever nomination from a federal candidate, U.S. Congresswoman Elizabeth Warren. The Class of 2024 also represents a diverse range of demographics, hailing from all across the state and ranging in age – our youngest awardee this year is 18 and our wisest elder is 90.

Founded in 1998, MCSW also recently celebrated our 25th anniversary, and launched a scholarship program to mark the occasion by giving back. Designed to support woman-identifying students already enrolled in a Massachusetts Public Higher Education Institution, scholarships were awarded to help an individual complete their degree. With more than 275 applications from all across the Commonwealth for our Scholarship application, this was incredibly competitive. Congratulations to the five women being honored today to advance their education tomorrow.

As you read through stories celebrating your fellow community members, we know that their passion and dedication to making our Commonwealth a better place will move you. We’re grateful to be able to celebrate with you here in-person today and encourage you to use the hashtag #CH24 to congratulate one another and foster that same community that is cultivated every year at the Commonwealth Heroines celebration.

Again, congratulations and thank you for all your special efforts to make the Commonwealth a better place to live and work. We couldn’t do this work without each and every one of you.

**The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women**

## Commonwealth Heroines — Class of 2024

### BARNSTABLE COUNTY

**Kerin Delaney**, Falmouth  
**Kathy DeMeyer**, South Dennis  
**Melissa Ferretti**, Buzzards Bay  
**Katarina Kumbatiadis**, Sandwich  
**Molly Sproul**, Centerville  
**Antonia Stephens**, Hyannis

### BERKSHIRE COUNTY

**Darlene Rodowicz**, Pittsfield  
**Christine Ward**, Great Barrington

### BRISTOL COUNTY

**Rebecca Collins**, Fall River  
**Angela Dolan**, Swansea  
**Ethel Garvin**, Attleboro  
**Kathryn Nemkovich**, Fall River  
**Michelle Rapoza**, Westport  
**Cathy Rutkowski**, Dartmouth

### ESSEX COUNTY

**Edye Baker**, Swampscott  
**Deborah Bowker**, Revere  
**Yamily Byas**, Salem  
**Terri Farrell**, Lynnfield  
**Karen Ferullo**, Methuen  
**Cheryl Foster-Cahill**, Rowley  
**Teasie Riley Goggin**, Salem  
**Ann Haaser**, Newburyport  
**Martha Holden**, Peabody  
**Brenda Matos**, Beverly  
**Iaritz Menjivar**, Saugus  
**Elizabeth Murphy**, Boxford  
**Doreen Murray**, Lynn  
**Linette Perez**, Lawrence  
**Elsa Sánchez**, Lawrence  
**Christi Staples**, Marblehead  
**Karen Tibbetts**, Gloucester  
**Christine Tron**, Peabody  
**Nerissa Wallen**, Rowley  
**Kaitlin Wright**, Haverhill

### FRANKLIN COUNTY

**Pamela Adams**, Greenfield

### HAMPDEN COUNTY

**Jessica Avery**, Chicopee  
**Amy Baxter**, Longmeadow  
**Roseanne Caracciolo**, Feeding Hills  
**Christine Goonan**, Wilbraham

**Emurriel Holloway**, Springfield  
**Mildred Lefebvre**, Holyoke  
**Dr. Judith Matt**, Springfield  
**Laura Rooney**, Ludlow  
**Pat Voisine**, Indian Orchard  
**Rose Webster-Smith**, Springfield

### HAMPSHIRE COUNTY

**Alisa Klein**, Leeds  
**Henia Lewin**, Amherst  
**Amanda Milazzo**, Easthampton

### MIDDLESEX COUNTY

**Debra Caplan**, Framingham  
**Jill Caporiccio**, Watertown  
**Sonia Conde**, Somerville  
**Kelley Cronin**, Sudbury  
**Ellen Duggan**, Maynard  
**Deborah Fountain**, Pepperell  
**Carol Gloff**, Natick  
**Ellie Goldberg**, Newton  
**Anna Jabar-Omoyeni**, Lowell  
**LouAnn Jendro**, Dracut  
**Kate LeBlanc**, Malden  
**Julie Lewis**, Burlington  
**Karen Lynch**, Malden  
**Demi Marsh**, Chelmsford  
**Beth Marshdoyle**, Weston  
**Bonnie Mitchell**, Ashland  
**Justine Neely**, Lexington  
**Donna Newcomb**, Chelmsford  
**Marie O'Rourke**, Billerica  
**Rebecca Parkhill**, Weston  
**Ellin Reisner**, Somerville  
**Marta Fuertes Rodriguez**, Somerville  
**Rachel Sagan**, Sudbury  
**Kate Sanetra-Butler**, Hopkinton  
**Beatriz Sierra**, Lowell  
**Gabriella Snyder Stelmack**, Malden  
**Beverly Woods**, Westford  
**Julie Wu**, Belmont  
**Erica Young**, Waltham

### NORFOLK COUNTY

**Kerri Anne Berry**, Randolph  
**Dr. Daurice Cox**, Weymouth  
**Anna David**, Franklin  
**Kerry Farrell**, Bellingham  
**Lovern Gordon**, Avon

**Janice Kahn**, Chestnut Hill  
**Amy LaBrache**, Foxborough  
**Louise Marcoux**, Sharon  
**Rinaz Mala**, Needham  
**Maureen Mazrimas**, Quincy  
**Sue McQuaid**, Norwood  
**Marilyn Ray Smith**, Brookline  
**Roberta Trahan**, Franklin

### PLYMOUTH COUNTY

**Jacqui Berardi**, Rockland  
**Kenzie Blackwell**, Hingham  
**Sharon Crowley**, Pembroke  
**Tiffany Gambill**, Bridgewater  
**Kim Greaves**, Hull  
**Patricia Haigh**, Plymouth  
**Gail Kubek**, Brockton  
**Mary Price**, Marshfield  
**Maria Tavares**, Brockton

### SUFFOLK COUNTY

**Helen Antenucci**, East Boston  
**Joyce Ferriabough-Bolling**, Boston  
**Marilyn Forman**, Dorchester  
**Crystal Galvin**, Charlestown  
**Ruth Georges**, Boston  
**Jane McHale**, Brighton  
**Melsada Valarie Molyneaux**, Hyde Park  
**Margaret Riley**, Winthrop  
**Mercy Robinson**, South Boston  
**Gretchen Van Ness\***, Hyde Park  
**Gladys Vega**, Chelsea  
**Sally Vranos**, Revere

### WORCESTER COUNTY

**Ellen Agro**, Mendon  
**Dr. Beatrice Cayo DD PhD**, Leominster  
**Amy Cowen**, Northbridge  
**Rebecca Czernicki**, Webster  
**Barbara Jandrue**, Southborough  
**Miranda Jennings**, Winchendon  
**Racquel Knight**, Worcester  
**Cynthia Laine**, Fitchburg  
**Malory O'Brien**, Auburn  
**Melanie Petrucci**, Shrewsbury  
**Carmen Rosado**, Worcester  
**Wendy Wiiks**, Leominster  
**Laura Wilson**, Oxford  
**Ayn Yeagle**, Princeton

\* First ever federal nominee, from U.S. Congresswoman Elizabeth Warren

# THE HEROINES

2024

## Commonwealth Heroine Awardees

Barnstable County .....	5
Berkshire County .....	7
Bristol County .....	7
Essex County .....	9
Franklin County .....	14
Hampden County .....	14
Hampshire County .....	17
Middlesex County .....	18
Norfolk County .....	25
Plymouth County .....	29
Suffolk County .....	31
Worcester County .....	35



## Barnstable County



### **Kerin Delaney, Falmouth**

*Nominated by State Representative Dylan Fernandes*

For fifteen years, Kerin Delaney, Executive Director of the Falmouth Service Center, has embodied compassion and dedication in her advocacy for vulnerable populations. Under her leadership, the center has expanded its reach, providing essential resources like groceries, fuel assistance, and school supplies to families in need. During the pandemic, Kerin's leadership was instrumental in expanding the center's food distribution for the Falmouth community. Before her work at the Falmouth Service Center, Delaney worked to support battered women and homeless families at various nonprofits across the country. Kerin is also an active member of the community. She helped to initiate a grab-and-go breakfast program at a local Falmouth school to combat food insecurity, collaborated with the Senior Center to aid seniors facing financial challenges, and serves as an active member of her church. Her work has left an indelible mark on the Falmouth community.



### **Kathy DeMeyer, South Dennis**

*Nominated by State Representative Christopher Flanagan*

Since 2003, Kathy has provided exemplary service to Encore customers in her business dealings, while earning her company the distinction of Builder of the Year in 2019 by the Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Cape Cod. Her dedication to local chambers of commerce began in Brewster where she served as President and later at the Dennis Chamber where she served in key officer roles – from treasurer to president, guiding the chamber during the challenging COVID pandemic. She has represented our local businesses as chair of the chamber's Government Affairs Committee. During and following the pandemic, she worked with the town to ensure outdoor seating protocol remained in place to enhance the customer experience. Our community has benefitted from her leadership co-chairing the chamber's annual Road Race and Festival Week and through her sponsorships which generate goodwill and tourism. A role model for women in business, Kathy is a Community Building Partner for We Can where she is a mentor for women. She stands out as the first woman president of the Eastern Massachusetts National Association of Remodelers. She is a current member of the board of directors for the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Cape Cod as well as the Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Massachusetts. The Town of Dennis views Kathy as a strong and capable leader in local zoning, where she sits on the Zoning By-Law Study Committee looking at accessory dwelling units and other issues impacting the future of our town. She is past chair of another key committee – our Tourism Committee – which attracts visitors and residents to Dennis and drives our local economy. In all of the above instances, Kathy can always be counted on to show up, lend her expertise and perform her duties with the utmost professionalism, honesty and civility. For all of these reasons, it is truly a pleasure and honor to nominate Kathy for this prestigious award.



### **Melissa Ferretti, Buzzards Bay**

*Nominated by State Representative David Viera*

Melissa "Golden Dragonfly" Ferretti was born in Wareham and raised in Cedarville/South Plymouth by Verna May Harding a Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribal Elder. She attended Plymouth Carver School system through the 11th grade but graduated from Pembroke Academy, NH. She returned to her Tribal homelands in less than a year and enrolled at Cape Cod Community College. Melissa's achievements and passionate dedication show as she serves her fourth, two-year term as the elected Chairwoman of the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe. She has worked nonstop with many initiatives and challenges that indigenous communities face on a daily base including protection of sacred sites and ancestral burial grounds, tribal archival research, documentation and digitization, advocacy for tribal rights and self-determination, mental health, substance use, addiction, and prevention. Melissa has also been active with the Wopanaak Language Reclamation Project in Mashpee and recently served on the Special Commission on the Official Seal and Motto of the Commonwealth. Melissa currently serves as the Vice Chair of the Bourne Select Board. She is also active with the Community Action Committee of Cape Cod and Islands, Local Emergency Planning Committee, Bourne Sewer Commissioners, and the Barnstable County Human Rights Advisory Commission. She is a happily married mother of two wonderful sons and a proud grandmother of four.



### **Katarina Kumbatiadis, Sandwich**

*Nominated by State Representative Steven G. Xiarhos*

I am immensely pleased and honored to nominate Katarina Kumbatiadis for the prestigious Massachusetts Heroine of the Year award. As the State Representative of the Fightin 5th Barnstable District, I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the extraordinary impact that Katarina has had on our community. Katarina is a distinguished figure in our district, widely recognized for her entrepreneurial spirit, dedication to community service, and significant contributions as a small business owner. Her journey is one of remarkable perseverance and resilience, embodying the spirit of a true Commonwealth Heroine. As a small business owner, Katarina has not only spurred economic growth but has also been a beacon of innovation and excellence in our district. Her business acumen and ethical practices have set a benchmark for others to follow, contributing significantly to the local economy and providing employment opportunities. Beyond her business achievements, what truly sets Katarina apart is her unwavering commitment to our community. Her volunteerism is not a mere obligation but a heartfelt dedication to uplifting those around her. She has been involved in numerous local initiatives, from organizing community events to supporting local charities and advocating for issues that affect the residents of our district. Katarina's ability to inspire and engage others in community service has fostered a spirit of collaboration and unity, making her an invaluable asset to our district. Katarina's endeavors extend far beyond her immediate circle, touching the lives of countless individuals. She has consistently demonstrated that one person's dedication and hard work can indeed make a significant difference in the lives of many. Her story is one of inspiration, encouraging others, especially young women, to pursue their dreams and contribute positively to their communities. In conclusion, Katarina is an exemplary candidate for the Massachusetts Heroine of the Year award. Her achievements as a small business owner, entrepreneur, and community supporter are a testament to her exceptional character and dedication. It is with great pride and confidence that I submit this nomination, firmly believing that Katarina truly embodies the spirit of a Commonwealth Heroine.



### **Molly Sproul, Centerville**

*Nominated by State Senator Julian Cyr*

Molly Sproul is a woman who helps women. She has supported countless community members as a volunteer and a leader without ever expecting a reward for herself. Molly spent many years teaching kindergarten and first grade in Hyannis and is still in touch with several girls she mentored, helped get into college, and supported as they grew into fulfilling lives. Molly is a Steering Committee member and volunteer with the YMCA Achievers program, helping lead teens to college and career programs. She also serves as a board member at Champ House where she partners with a local JJill store to provide a clothing closet for women. Molly spent a year helping a young woman with intellectual disabilities find housing and a new life after her mother's sudden passing. She has also worked with women as a volunteer at the House of Correction, is active in the Centerville Civic Association, and volunteers for Cape Kids Meals.



### **Antonia Stephens, Hyannis**

*Nominated by State Representative Kip Diggs*

Antonia Stephens is a dynamic leader in the library community, meriting recognition for her impact on the local Cape Cod library system. As the executive director of the Hyannis Public Library, she was the unanimous choice of the Board of Trustees, recognized for her ability to foster collaboration, passion for community engagement, and talent for nurturing donor relationships. Her strategic initiatives have revitalized the library's role as a cultural hub, integrating arts and education, and her efforts in securing vital funding have ensured the library's growth and sustainability. Her career in library services began in 2001, and she has since held key positions across various libraries in Barnstable. With a rich academic background and active involvement in the arts, Antonia's multifaceted expertise has been instrumental in bridging diverse community groups. Her dedication to the enrichment of community life through education and culture truly makes her deserving of recognition.

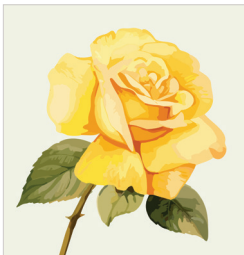
## Berkshire County



### **Darlene Rodowicz, Pittsfield**

*Nominated by State Representative John Barrett III*

Darlene Rodowicz has been the President and CEO of Berkshire Health Systems (BHS) since January 2022 after previously holding the position of Executive Vice President since 2020. She joined BHS in 1984 and has worked her way up the ranks over her 40-year career. Since becoming President and CEO, Darlene has proven to be a dynamic leader. Working with federal, state, and local officials, one of her first commitments was to reopen the former North Adams Regional Hospital as a critical access hospital after it closed unexpectedly in 2014. Darlene was instrumental in bringing this to fruition, driven by her tenacious advocacy for health equity and access in Northern Berkshire County. Community members feel a renewed sense of joy, hope, and safety due to her persistent efforts to achieve something many thought was impossible.



### **Christine Ward, Great Barrington**

*Nominated by State Representative Smitty Pignatelli*

I have known Christine Ward my entire life having grown up in the same neighborhood in Lenox, MA. She has been an amazing “unsung hero” for land conservancy in the Town of Great Barrington for decades now and the steward for the protection of Lake Mansfield for future generations. She also played a pivotal role in honoring and establishing the WEB DuBois walking trail along the Housatonic River. She has long been a visionary leader for environmental protection and preparing us all for climate change. ALL as a volunteer. I can’t think of a more deserving person of this honor.

## Bristol County



### **Rebecca Collins, Fall River**

*Nominated by State Representative Carole Fiola*

Rebecca Collins is fourth generation commercial general contractor serving the South Coast of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Becca has been using the 4 tenants of Conscious Capitalism (Purpose, Leadership, Culture & Stakeholder Equity) to transform her family business into a place where all stakeholders feel heard, valued, and trusted. Becca serves on multiple professional and non-profit boards in the area including United Way of Greater Fall River, Fall River Boys and Girls Club, Southeastern Economic Development Corp., Roger Williams University Board of Advisors, Bank Five Corporators Board and Conscious Capitalism of Boston. When Becca isn’t working or volunteering you can usually find her chasing sunsets, women’s sports, a good band, a craft beer or a quality bourbon. Becca resides in Fall River with her partner, three of her five children and the best dog a mama could ask for.



### **Angela Dolan, Swansea**

*Co-nominated by State Representative Steven Howitt, State Representative Pat Haddad, and State Senator Michael Rodrigues*

Angela Dolan is a dedicated and pivotal member of the Swansea Community and has demonstrated her commitment to making the town a better place. Angela is a veteran of the United States Navy, and currently serves as the Chair of the Swansea Free Public Library Board of Trustees. She volunteers her time for the libraries across the Swansea Public Schools district and works on various projects in the town of Swansea, such as running games for children at the town’s annual Trunk-or-Treat event. Recently, Angela assisted in making t-shirts for the Orange Out Campaign to support Brayden Cabral, a resident of Swansea who is battling Leukemia. Outside of Swansea, Angela works with the Veterans Association of Bristol County and assists with collecting donations of nonperishable food items, which are distributed to veterans across the area. Through these various roles, Angela has demonstrated an exuberant amount of passion for her community and is always the first to help. Angela is a wonderful wife and devoted homemaker for her two children.





### **Ethel Garvin, Attleboro**

*Nominated by State Senator Paul Feeney*

Ethel Garvin is an Attleboro resident and local activist for racial equity and justice in the community. Through her work as the Chairwoman of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Memorial Committee of Greater Attleboro, Ethel supports the African American community in the city as well as leads an annual observance of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, which showcases the message and legacy of Dr. King. Each year, Ethel and the Committee join with the citizens of Attleboro to remember Dr. King's message of "equality, justice, and peace." The committee also provides scholarships and other academic programs and contests for the youth in the community as well as provides donations to local charities. Ethel has enriched the City of Attleboro by serving the community through her dedication to education, activism, and the legacy of Dr. King.



### **Kathryn Nemkovich, Fall River**

*Nominated by State Representative Alan Silvia*

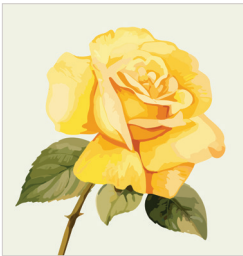
Kathryn's work in online education allows her to successfully prepare adult learners for new careers. The passion for helping others goes beyond her professional work. Her true purpose in life is about making a difference, helping those in need, and simply caring for others. The outreach she does to help those less fortunate and the homeless, providing prayer blankets, meals, and basic supplies, is what she lives to do and never considered work. The needs are great and events such as the Thanksgiving Community Dinner, Christmas Toy Drive, and Youth Day of Caring are important to me because of their impact on the Fall River Community and because they allow her to work alongside her husband to serve others. She serves as President of the Father Kelly Neighborhood Association and as a member of the Special Charter Review Committee. Kathryn is also an advocate for Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention, and strongly supports our Veterans and First Responders.



### **Michelle Rapoza, Westport**

*Nominated by State Representative Paul Schmid III*

Michelle Rapoza is the School Business Administrator of the Westport Community Schools. A true daughter of Westport, she grew up in a dairy farming family. As Food Service Director for the Westport schools, she has been a statewide leader in sourcing from local farms. She is all about getting local, healthy food served to students and prioritizes spending the food budget locally. A true win/win!



### **Cathy Rutkowski, Dartmouth**

*Nominated by State Senator Michael Rodrigues*

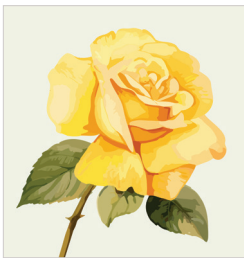
Cathy Rutkowski is currently the Co-Executive Director at the Children's Advocacy Center of Bristol County. Together, with Lara Stone, a former recipient of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Heroine Award, they lead the Center. Cathy brings over 25 years of experience in the mental health and child advocacy field. She joined Justice Resource Institute, twenty years ago, and during that time has served in a variety of positions throughout Southeastern MA, working closely with children, families, and community partners. While managing the Southern New England Behavioral Health & Trauma Center, Cathy developed and expanded the community-based services program, overseeing In Home Therapy and Therapeutic Mentoring services. Prior to that, she assisted in the startup of an In-Home Behavioral Services program on Cape Cod and in the Southeast region. For several years, Cathy worked closely with the Department of Children and Families in Taunton/Attleboro, in her role as Family Networks Program Director, where she and her team oversaw placement services for youth and the delivery of services to families. As the Co-Executive Director of the CAC of Bristol County, Cathy helped to establish our in-house mental health response for children impacted by trauma. Through her leadership, the Healing and Resiliency Program was founded in 2018 and has grown to be a program with a Clinical Services Director and six clinicians supporting over one hundred children annually. The CAC provides an investigative response to children impacted by child sexual abuse, physical abuse or witness to violence. Receiving between 600-800 referrals for forensic interviews annually, Cathy supervises the multi-disciplinary response to cases of abuse with our community partners such as the District Attorney's office, 20 law enforcement jurisdictions and the Department of Children and Families. Through the CAC's Education and Outreach Program, we educate approximately 12,000 youth, adults, officers, educators and human service workers annually. Cathy's biggest joys in life are her two daughters. She is a Bristol County resident and makes her home in Dartmouth, MA.



### **Edye Baker, Swampscott**

*Co-nominated by State Representative Jennifer Armini and State Senator Brendan Crighton*

Edye Baker's decades of service to her community and to the Commonwealth are impossible to neatly characterize – other than to say it was all done with great love and great style. Devotees of Boston public television are indebted to her for tirelessly advocating on the station's behalf. Some may recall WGBH's wildly successful TV auctions – each one was 100 hours of live TV stage managed by Edye with finesse, fun, and most importantly, funds for vital educational programming. Edye raised a whopping \$16 million during her two decades of involvement. In Swampscott, Edye sought to create an inclusive, welcoming community, chairing the Swampscott Democratic Town Committee for nearly 20 years. She educated and registered voters and made the rights of women a top priority. Perhaps it is Swampscott's children who hold Edye closest in their hearts: For 45 Halloweens, she and her family opened their home, photographing each trick or treat year after year. The photos were displayed on their walls, a generational progression of growth and memories for an entire community. Adults photographed decades ago delighted in bringing their own children around to add to this treasured time capsule. Edye Baker understood the power of images in creating social connection long before Facebook and Instagram. Edye Baker has always been ahead of her time, and we are all better for it.



### **Deborah Bowker, Revere**

*Co-nominated by State Representative Donald Wong and State Representative Jessica Giannino*

Major (Ret.) Bowker is the definition of an unsung heroine. Through her twenty years of service, she held various positions, including Executive Officer, Company Commander, Training and Operations Officer. In 2007, she was deployed to Iraq as part of the Military Transition Team. It was during my deployment that she met Army JROTC Instructor, CSM (R) James Kelly from Community Academy Science and Health High School. After she accumulated twenty years of service, she submitted her packet for retirement. Since then, she has been with the City of Revere supporting the JROTC. During school year, 2012-2013, the Revere High School Army JROTC Program started as a National Defense Cadet Corps (NDCC) program, with eighty-two cadets enrolled. The program was a fully funded JROTC Program in June 2013. The US Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) is one of the largest character development and citizenship programs for youth in the world. JROTC's mission, To Motivate Young People to Better Citizens, is the guidepost for the program's success. Bowker is an example of this mission and shows it every day. The Revere High School Army JROTC program is the best program within the Second Brigade (2BDE), evidenced by our Honor Unit with Distinction designation for achieving a perfect score on our JROTC Program of Accreditation (JPA) for twelve consecutive years. Through twelve years, 1,955 cadets have participated in the Revere High School Army JROTC program, and 258 seniors have graduated. The RHS JROTC co-curricular teams compete in competitions in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Army League (COMAL) Drill League. The RHS JROTC Drill team is six-time state champions. It because of the compassion, dedication, and commitment of Major (Ret.) Bowker that our program is so successful, and students thrive.



### **Yamily Byas, Salem**

*Nominated by State Representative Manny Cruz*

Yamily Byas is the founder of Mamás Unidas, a support group for Latina mothers in Salem and other North Shore cities. She is also a mother raising a handsome five-year-old boy named Jayden. The mission of Mamás Unidas is to bring Latina mothers together to encourage and empower them to be the best mom they can be for their children. Mamás Unidas has many resources and contacts to guide mothers in any direction. Yamily started Mamás Unidas in November 2019 when she realized she was the only Spanish-speaking mom at mother support groups. She quickly grasped that Latina mothers needed a safe space to freely talk about their issues and concerns. Her goal was to create a loving, nonjudgmental culture in that space. Besides organizing diaper distribution drives at St. Peter's-San Pedro Episcopal Church in Salem, Yamily also serves as a Student Support Specialist for the Salem Public Schools.



### **Terri Farrell, Lynnfield**

*Nominated by State Representative Bradley H. Jones, Jr.*

As a Lynnfield resident and mother of a child with autism, Terri Farrell has been an outspoken advocate for the needs of autistic individuals and their families. She currently serves as the Senior Project Director of the Insurance Resource Center for Autism and Behavioral Health at UMass Chan Medical School's Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center, which assists families, providers and agencies with information related to both private and public insurance, including MassHealth. In 2013, Terri was appointed as the chair of the Government Affairs Committee for the Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts (AFAM), the Commonwealth's leading autism advocacy non-profit. As the event chair for AFAM's annual Autism Awareness and Acceptance Day at the State House, Terri has worked to educate legislators about AFAM's budgetary and legislative initiatives and has presented at local conferences focused on autism insurance, transition and issues affecting homeless youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). I am proud to nominate Terri as a 2024 Commonwealth Heroine.



### **Karen Ferullo, Methuen**

*Nominated by State Representative Ryan Hamilton*

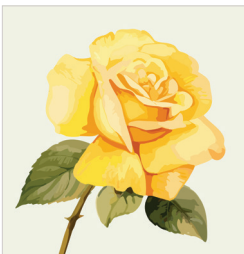
Serving as the Public Health Nurse for the City of Methuen, Karen states, "I am humbled and honored to be recognized for the Commonwealth Heroine award. To be recognized by the Commonwealth and Representative Ryan Hamilton for actually doing a job that I love makes each day worthwhile. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."



### **Cheryl Foster-Cahill, Rowley**

*Nominated by State Senator Bruce Tarr*

Cheryl is a long-time resident of Rowley who organizes and manages the non-profit Ipswich Caring for about 14 years now as a volunteer. Cheryl was asked to champion this effort, assisting in the needs of about 200 children and families in the Ipswich community throughout the year, preparing children for school with clothes, sneakers and backpacks filled with supplies. In the winter, coats, boots, hats, and mittens with gift cards are handed out. Ipswich Caring visits and brings a holiday cake to every senior citizen over 80 yrs, about 450 total to support loneliness. Also, under the leadership of Cheryl, the Empowerment branch of Ipswich Caring assists single Moms to enroll in courses for certifications or licenses to better provide for their family. Cheryl has volunteered her time with several other organizations within the community. Cheryl is a caring, kind, and compassionate person who is well-deserving of this award.



### **Teasie Riley Goggin, Salem**

*Nominated by State Senator Joan B. Lovely*

Teasie Riley Goggin, 90 years young, has contributed her lifetime to public service. As a community leader, she has volunteered at Food Pantry's, Parks, Salvation Army, Red Cross, Veterans, Special Olympics, NS Cancer Center & Hospice of the North Shore. In her hometown of Salem, she has served at the Senior Center, TRIAD, Landlords Association & Neighborhood Associations. As a 40-year educator, Teasie was a K-8 Certified Teacher, Guidance Counselor & Principal. As an athlete, Teasie was a YMCA Instructor, State & World Tournament Softball Player, Basketball Referee, Girls Coach & Recreational Leader. She serves on Retired Teachers Associations & held positions on the PTO, MTA, NEA, & BPWA. She also has had several successful businesses. Teasie's greatest accomplishments include wife of the late Ret. Deputy Fire Chief David J. Goggin, Mother & Grandmother. Teasie has contributed immeasurably to the benefit of all who have had the honor to know her. Thank you Teasie, and Congratulations on being nominated as a Commonwealth Heroine!



**Ann Haaser, Newburyport**

*Nominated by State Representative Dawne Shand*

For the last 12 years, Ann Haaser has been a tireless advocate for gun safety and reform in both Massachusetts and New Hampshire. A founding member of Grassroots4GVP, she was present at all of the gun legislation hearing sessions throughout the Commonwealth, which eventually led to the crafting of the landmark firearm safety bill passed by the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Ann is a steadfast presence in the community, and our Commonwealth is a safer place because of her dedication and hard work. The First Essex is grateful for Ann’s continued advocacy for a safer Massachusetts.



**Martha Holden, Peabody**

*Nominated by State Representative Thomas Walsh*

Martha Holden served as Director of the Peabody Institute Library for more than 17 years. In that time, Martha worked tirelessly to expand the offerings the library provided in Peabody and develop the library into a community staple. Martha embraced new and creative ideas, leading the \$10 million dollar restoration project, launching the Creativity Lab, and welcoming in the Banned Book Club, Open Mic Night program, and countless other programs that opened the doors for a new generation of Peabody residents. Martha has been a leader with our non-profit organizations in Peabody. Serving on several boards, Martha is always one of the first to volunteer and fundraise for The Black Box Theater, Peabody Children’s Museum, Peabody Rotary Club, Citizen’s Inn, along with countless other worth while causes. Martha Holden has been a champion on behalf of the Peabody community throughout her professional career, philanthropic endeavors, and volunteerism for over 20 years. I am proud to nominate her for the 2024 Commonwealth Heroine Award.



**Brenda Matos, Beverly**

*Nominated by State Representative Jerald Parisella*

Brenda is the founder and organizer of Ellis Square Friends, an organization that since 2016 has provided free meals to the homeless population of Beverly. She began this work after observing online judgment by community members against those experiencing homelessness around the Ellis Square area of downtown Beverly. She started by handing out water and sandwiches from the back of her car, to now serving a weekly dinner to 100 people, offering 200 weekly lunches, and providing toiletries and other necessities, all with the assistance and charity of dozens of volunteers, donors, and delivery drivers. She worked without pause during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. She has all of this work in collaboration with a number of other women-led local organizations, including Beverly Bootstraps and Beverly’s First Baptist Church.



**Iaritz Menjivar, Saugus**

*Co-Nominated by State Representative Christine Barber & State Senator Patricia D. Jehlen*

Iaritz is a first-generation Latina artist, and graduate of Somerville High and Lesley University. She was one of two photographers who produced the widely praised "Museo Inmigrante" exhibit at the Somerville Museum, which broke attendance records at the museum. The exhibit was organized by Padres Latinos, a mutual aid group of over 230 Spanish and Portuguese-speaking parents with children in the Somerville Public Schools. It explores stories from members about immigration, home, family, memory, community, and finding purpose. The daughter of Guatemalan and Salvadoran parents, Iaritz uses her work to empower and represent her family and community. She has received recognition from WBUR as one of "15 Artists of Color Leaving an Imprint on Massachusetts," and her photos have been featured in the Washington Post, the New York Times, and several national exhibits. She is also a staff member at the Somerville Arts Council.



### **Elizabeth Murphy, Boxford**

*Nominated by State Representative Tram Nguyen*

Elizabeth Ann Murphy has been an active and forward-thinking member of the Boxford community for many years. She has been serving on the Board of the Boxford Council on Aging (COA) since 2011 and is committed to making life better for seniors. As Chair of the COA, Elizabeth helped spearhead the design and construction of the new ADA-compliant Center at 10 Elm, which opened in March 2023. She also successfully lobbied the town to hire a social worker to assist seniors. Moreover, Elizabeth bravely and selflessly joined a group of volunteers that helped their neighbors during the COVID pandemic, by taking grocery orders, shopping, sorting, disinfecting, repacking, and delivering food to 89 households and 141 individuals quarantined at home for three months. Elizabeth continues to be a powerful force for good in the 18th Essex District.



### **Doreen Murray, Lynn**

*Nominated by State Representative Peter Capano*

Doreen Murray is best known for her work as Co-Founder and Executive Programs Director of Building Bridges Through Music, a nonprofit, multicultural, educational, integrative arts organization that has been serving Lynn and surrounding North Shore Communities since 2000. Their program, known as “Groove School” A-Sharp, was created to address academic, literacy, and social skills difficulties facing students considered to be “at risk”. Their innovative music performance program integrated music instruction with all aspects of STEM and STEAM. Thus, STREAM2, (science, technology, reading, engineering, arts, MATH/MUSIC) was introduced and has helped students excel to their highest potential. Doreen’s dedication to social justice and to her community make her an extraordinary female leader who is truly deserving of recognition for her outstanding work.



### **Linette Perez, Lawrence**

*Nominated by State Representative Estela Reyes*

Linette Perez has been an outstanding citizen and community leader. She has been working with families in the Lawrence community for more than 20 years. She has held various roles on boards and organizations. She makes a difference in the lives of many. She saves lives. She works with victims of domestic violence and advocates for women’s rights. She also advocates for the families of victims of violent crimes and helps them in the most vulnerable times of their lives, the loss of a loved one. For all her years of service, I nominate her.



### **Elsa Sánchez, Lawrence**

*Nominated by Second Assistant Majority Leader Frank Moran*

Elsa is the president of the Tower Hill Neighborhood Association and has worked for years to help the residents of Lawrence have the resources to become civically engaged, through advocacy work and voicing their priorities to their elected officials at the local, state, and federal level.



### **Christi Staples, Marblehead**

*Co-nominated by State Senator Brendan Crighton and State Representative Jennifer Armini*

Christi Holmes Staples, Vice President of Policy and Government Relations at the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, is a dedicated leader with over two decades of transformative work in policy, government relations, and community engagement. Her unwavering commitment to fostering positive change is evident in roles at the Corporation for Supportive Housing, Partnership for Strong Communities, and The Connecticut Multicultural Partnership. Christi advocates for equity, collaboration, and community well-being, leaving an indelible mark on countless initiatives. With a Master of Social Work in Policy Practice, she graduated from the University of Connecticut, complementing her Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Studies from Wheelock College. Christi exemplifies tireless advocacy, embodying the spirit of a Commonwealth Heroine. Her passion, expertise, and dedication make her a deserving nominee, symbolizing the heroes shaping the fabric of our communities.



### **Karen Tibbetts, Gloucester**

*Nominated by State Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante*

Karen is a tireless advocate for Cape Ann's historic waterfront and culture. As a dockmaster for 17 years, Karen brought dozens of boats into Gloucester every weekend with great local economic benefit. Before Wicked Tuna, she founded the North Shore Community Tuna Association and lobbied Congress on the economic impact of the tuna fishery. As an advocate for arts, Karen helped secure a home for the Rocky Neck Art Colony and curated a showing of Cape Ann artists at the State House. Karen organized the Gruppe Family Legacy Art Exhibition, Gloucester Fisheries Heritage Festival, restoration of historic cannons at Stage Fort Park, and placement of a cannon from the USS Constitution in Gloucester. She has been a liaison between her community and the USS Constitution for 20 years, attending ceremonies, awarding the Gloucester 400+ medal to its first female commander, and bringing sailors to Gloucester Public Schools.



### **Christine Tron, Peabody**

*Nominated by State Representative Sally Kerans*

It's my honor to nominate Retired U.S. Army First Sergeant Christine Tron of West Peabody for a Commonwealth Heroine Award. Sgt. Tron served 32 years in the Military Intelligence Corps. Her Primary Military Occupational Specialty was Counterintelligence. Her Secondary MOS was as an interrogator. She speaks Polish and Czech and served from 1977-2008. She is devoted to her country and recognizes the importance of women standing together. With a personal motto of "Veterans helping Veterans," today Christine serves as the VFW State Judge Advocate and is past Chair of the V.F.W. Women's Veterans Committee. Christine continues to devote her time in retirement to improving the lives of all veterans.



### **Nerissa Wallen, Rowley**

*Nominated by State Representative Kristin Kassner*

Nerissa Wallen serves on the Triton School Committee, where she was a strong advocate for permanent universal school meals and regional transportation reimbursement. She volunteered at Pine Grove School, including PGS Science Enrichment Day, Book Fair, and Veterans Assembly, most recently spearheading a composting project at PGS. Nerissa volunteers weekly at New England Equine Rescue and Pettengill House. She collects food for the Rowley Food Pantry and participates in the Walk for HAWC, Rowley Green Up Day and Rowley COA's Valentine's Day cards for elders. Finally, Nerissa has dedicated significant effort to be a source of reliable information to encourage civil participation via social media, thus fostering a more engaged and informed community. Nerissa's dedication to education, environmental sustainability, animal welfare, food security, community beautification, and civil participation embodies the spirit of the Commonwealth Heroine Award. She is a true asset to our community and our Commonwealth.



### **Kaitlin Wright, Haverhill**

*Nominated by State Representative Andy Vargas*

Kaitlin M. Wright has a history of public service, and she’s worked hard to make sure people vote. She currently serves as Haverhill’s City Clerk. Before, she served as Assistant City Clerk and elections director where she worked on Haverhill’s annual city census and voter registration. She has been an advocate for early voting and has worked with me on multiple occasions to inform young people about the power of voting. Moreover, she has served as chief of staff for both state Rep. Steven Xiarhos and State Rep. William Crocker. As chief of staff she was always aiding constituents, helping them get connected to essential resources. She also interned for state Sen. Bruce E. Tarr and former Haverhill state Rep. Brian S. Dempsey. Kaitlin has shown a continuous commitment to public service, and I believe this makes her a great fit for the 2024 Class of Commonwealth Heroines.

## **Franklin County**



### **Pamela Adams, Greenfield**

*Co-Nominated by State Representative Natalie Blais & State Senator Jo Comerford*

Pamela Adams has crisscrossed the western hemisphere, but her roots are in Haiti, where she first fell in love with cooking and baking. Her journey has led her from creating masterpieces in her imaginary backyard kitchen to her current position as Director of Bakery Operations & Executive Pastry Chef for UMass Amherst Dining, where she oversees all aspects of the university’s bakery department for both residential and retail operations. Pamela is an alumna of the Connecticut Culinary Institute and a proud graduate of UMass Amherst. Being a part of the UMass Dining leadership team has allowed her to fulfill her other passion: helping immigrants of all nations find their footing and way forward supported by fulfilling employment and education. Thanks to Pamela’s efforts, UMass Amherst has hired more than 25 immigrants and refugees in the last months. As Pamela says, “I may have wandered far from Haiti, but my heart is never far from home and my people.”

## **Hampden County**



### **Jessica Avery, Chicopee**

*Nominated by State Representative Shirley Arriaga*

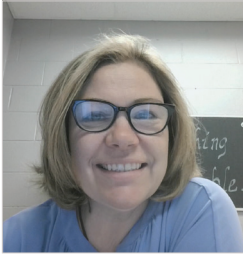
Jessica Avery became the Director of Advocacy at CCUA in January 2023. While at CCUA, Jessica has worked to incorporate data into communications and strategies to increase giving. As a Western Massachusetts local, she has also increased advocacy efforts and legislative engagement in the region. Before this role, she spent five years at the Massachusetts State House, focusing on climate, energy, education, and Veterans policy. Additionally, she worked as a research and evaluation specialist at the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, developing survey tools and producing data analytics presentation. Most recently, she served as the campaign manager for State Representative Shirley Arriaga’s primary and general campaign, in which Rep. Arriaga’s election brought the first woman to hold the seat. Jessica earned her Bachelors degree in Gender Studies from Mount Holyoke College, with a Nexus focus on Law, Public Policy, and Human Rights. She then pursued her graduate degree in Public Policy and Administration focusing on public and nonprofit management from UMass Amherst’s School of Public Policy. In her free time, Jessica volunteers with her Mount Holyoke alumnae class and serves as a scholarship reader with the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts. She is also on the Catholics for Choice board and volunteers with local reproductive rights organizations.



### **Amy Baxter, Longmeadow**

*Nominated by State Representative Brian Ashe*

I am honored to nominate Amy Baxter for the Commonwealth Heroine Award. Amy has turned her own personal tragedy of losing her pet, Ollie, into an opportunity to ensure the safety of pets at dog day care facilities while also improving the standards for the industry. She has spent countless hours lobbying for legislation and has been the lead contact person for pet owners across the Commonwealth who have experienced a similar tragedy. Amy is the founder of the Ollie's Law Coalition which is made up of animal welfare organizations and dog day care owners who continue to fight for the protection of pets and employees at dog day care facilities. Her passion and drive to make a positive change within a growing industry is just one of the reasons why I am proud to have her as my constituent.



### **Roseanne Caracciolo, Agawam**

*Nominated by State Senator John Velis*

Throughout the years Roseanne "Rosie" Caraciolo has had many roles with the Holyoke Public Schools but throughout it all she has focused on supporting her students and the needs they have, both in and out of the classroom. Rosie was raised in Holyoke and graduated from the Holyoke Public Schools where she now serves as an inspiration story to so many students. She recently was appointed the Principal of Dean Technical College where she has been passionately working to ensure her students not only receive the best education but also make incredible memories. COVID-19 had an undoubtable impact on so many students however, Ms. Caraciolo has worked to bring back many traditions and extracurricular activities for the students to build on their social skills and have safe positive outlet afterschool. Outside of her incredible work with the Holyoke Public Schools, Ms. Caraciolo lives in Agawam and has previous welcomed foster youth into her home as a foster parent. We are incredibly lucky to have her in our community!



### **Christine Goonan, Wilbraham**

*Nominated by State Representative Angelo Puppolo*

Christine has shared her passion for science with young people for more than 24 years, as a Science Teacher, and, for the past 18+ years, as an Elementary STEM Teacher in the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District. She has also shared this love of science outside of the classroom as a Facilitator for "Girls Who Code," an international, non-profit organization working to close the gender gap in technology, and Co-Director of the "Kids Who Code" Robotics Club at the Wilbraham Middle School. As a member of the Board of Trustees for the Wilbraham Public Library (WPL), Christine is not only an advocate of the library and booster for their programs, she facilitates WPL's "Teens Who Code" program. She is best described by many who know her as one who is passionate about all things science and continues to educate herself on science and technology and how to best teach it, especially to the young.



### **Emurriel Holloway, Springfield**

*Nominated by State Representative Bud Williams*

We are proud to nominate Emurriel Holloway, a longtime resident of Springfield who has dedicated over 40 years as an esteemed educator for Springfield public schools, having served the last 20 years of her career, as the Director of Guidance, Counseling and Psychological Services. Currently retired, Ms. Holloway is an active member of the Coalition of Experienced Black Educators focusing on improving the academic success of children of color who are often disenfranchised when it comes to resources, opportunities, and financial/personal growth. From her involvement in church where she mentors preschoolers, to supporting youth groups through mentoring programs, personal development, and social etiquette events, to her volunteer work with the senior groups empowering them to advocate for themselves, for benefits and for resources, Ms. Holloway has dedicated her life to being a champion in the community. She is also a staunch advocate for social justice, sitting on the board for Families Against Violence and H.M. Hutchings Family Center. She is a true Commonwealth Heroine lending her voice, her commitment, her dedication, and cherished time. We recognize her, we appreciate her, and we are truly grateful for the work that she has and continues to do to impact the lives of so many residents in the Springfield Community.





**Mildred Lefebvre, Holyoke**

*Nominated by State Representative Patricia Duffy*

I am so proud to nominate my friend Mildred Lefebvre. She has been a strong voice advocating for Holyoke schools and schoolchildren, and now she brings that voice statewide as President of the MA Association of School Committees.



**Dr. Judith Matt, Springfield**

*Nominated by State Representative Carlos Gonzalez*

Dr. Judith A. Matt is the President of the Spirit of Springfield, which has been celebrating Springfield’s biggest, best, and brightest since 1989. She is also the co-founder of Bright Nights at Forest Park, the Northeast’s premier holiday lighting experience. She brings the community together in celebration with large-scale quality events like the World’s Largest Pancake Breakfast, Star Spangled Springfield, Springfield’s September 11th Ceremony, the City of Bright Nights Ball, and Bright Nights at Forest Park, which has welcomed more than six million visitors since opening in 1995. Dr. Matt has raised millions in corporate contributions and donated products and services to fulfill the Spirit of Springfield’s mission to create and produce events that enhance the quality of life by providing people with a sense of community, civic pride, and opportunities for celebration. She prides herself on the relationships she has built and fostered. Her commitment to community building extends beyond the Spirit of Springfield. Dr. Matt has also shared her talents to assist others with events, including MGM Springfield’s opening procession and Red Sox Winter Weekend, Basketball Hall of Fame Enshrinement Ceremonies, the opening ceremony for the Dr. Seuss Museum, mayoral inaugurations, and other municipal events. One of her proudest moments was seeing the completion and dedication of Springfield’s September 11 Monument in Riverfront Park. It was 18 years in the making and includes an artifact from the World Trade Center and the names of the 498 first responders who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. Currently, she serves the Horace Smith Foundation as a Corporator, the Greater Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau as a member, and as a Director of the Mattoon Street Association.



**Laura Rooney, Ludlow**

*Nominated by State Senator Jacob Oliveria*

Laura Rooney is president of Ludlow CARES Coalition, Inc., a community-wide volunteer organization striving to promote the health and wellness of the Ludlow community, especially its youth. Since 2012, CARES has been a trusted partner with the schools, town departments and other local non-profits, providing speakers, forums, events, communication, and opportunities for citizens of all ages. Laura’s professional background includes 25 years of expertise in Business Management and Human Resources as a practitioner, consultant, and trainer. She holds a bachelor’s degree in engineering from Lehigh University and certifications from SHRM (SHRM-SCP) and HRCI (SPHR) and obtained EEO professional training from the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. Although semi-retired, Laura currently works as a substitute teacher for Ludlow Public Schools and provides HR, business and facilitation consulting services through her business LAR Consulting, LLC. On a personal level, Laura has been married for over 30 years to her husband William Rooney. Their three children Allie Deaton (Kyle), Casey Rooney and Kate Rooney are the light of their lives. In her spare time Laura enjoys golfing, travelling, and spending time with family and friends.



**Pat Voisine, Indian Orchard**

*Nominated by State Representative Orlando Ramos*

Born in Ludlow and brought up Indian orchard was very active in the IOCC in the 1980's. She volunteered at the survival center and was the creator of the purple can award that honors residents in Indian Orchard that are the oldest resident of our community. She is active in her church and organized the Christmas bazaars and tags. She also volunteers at her local church, the annual Polish Festival and was a volunteer on her local police commission. She was awarded an honoree from the American Red Cross and certificate of appreciation from Operation Deserts Storm. She was honored by IOCC in 1998 for her lifelong commitment to public service.



### **Rose Webster-Smith, Springfield**

*Nominated by State Senator Adam Gomez*

Rose started with Springfield No One Leaves (SNOL) as a member in 2011 when Freddie Mac foreclosed on her home. Fired up by her own experience of eviction, Rose began training and practicing civil disobedience to keep Big Banks from actively evicting families from their homes after foreclosure. She's sat-in and peacefully blocked two evictions, has helped to organize national mobilizations against mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and the Federal Housing Finance Agency, is spearheading a statewide campaign to pass critical legislation to protect families and regulate banks, and supports other families in using civil disobedience. In 2015, she was hired as the junior organizer and in 2016 the members took over the organization. After fighting an eviction for 6 years, she won her home back in 2017. She is now the Executive Director overseeing all the work of SNOL.

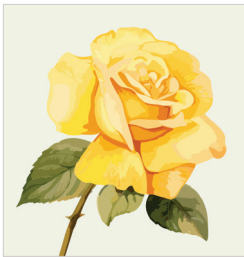
## **Hampshire County**



### **Alisa Klein, Leeds**

*Nominated by State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa*

Alisa Klein (she/her) serves as Executive Director of Grow Food Northampton, the largest community farm in Massachusetts. Last July, when historic flooding threatened local farmers' livelihoods, Alisa rose to the occasion, working double-time to mobilize resources. She spearheaded the effort to set up a recovery relief fund to support food-insecure gardeners who lost all the plants they grew, help farmers rebuild and make future farms more climate resilient. Helming Grow Food Northampton allows Alisa to bring her extensive background in program management, policy analysis and advocacy, and fundraising to work that is near and dear to her heart – food justice and environmental sustainability. Prior to joining the organization, Alisa served as the Director of NEARI Press, a specialty publishing house and training center, and was the principal in her own consulting firm specializing in organizational development, public health prevention of interpersonal violence, international conflict resolution, and social justice advocacy. Her clients included the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the International Women's Peace Service, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, and several other local, national, and international organizations. Alisa also served as the Officer for Partnerships at Proteus Fund, as the Director of Public Policy for a national organization working to end child sexual abuse, as the Jerusalem-based editor of an online journal of alternative analysis of the Palestine-Israel conflict, and as the Director of Education and Prevention for an AIDS service organization. Alisa is a long-time activist and community organizer working on issues as diverse, yet interconnected, as the climate emergency, peace and justice in Palestine and Israel, and abolition of the carceral continuum. She has been deeply involved in bringing restorative and transformative justice models to address harm in communities. Between 2014 and 2020, Alisa served as a Northampton City Councilor where she established a Select Committee on Pesticide Reduction and wrote and sponsored legislation to prohibit the use of pesticides in municipal spaces. She has a bachelor's degree from Smith College and a Masters in International Policy from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.



### **Henia Lewin, Amherst**

*Nominated by State Representative Mindy Domb*

Henia "Henny" Lewin has dedicated much of her life to making herself available as a Holocaust educator, combatting antisemitism and responding to hate incidents. As a child survivor of the Holocaust, her presentations are powerful and have significant impact with audiences across the commonwealth. She has shared her personal experience with students in middle school and high school classrooms and auditoriums across the commonwealth, as part of their Holocaust education and in response to incidents of antisemitism and hate. As a 3-year old, she survived because her mother was determined to smuggle her out of the ghetto in a suitcase. From there, she went to live with a family in Lithuania for two years. Later, she and her parents, who miraculously survived, were reunited and, together, they made their way to a displaced persons camp, moving from Europe to Israel to Montreal to Vermont, and ultimately to Amherst. She's has also shared her personal story with civic organizations, college campus communities, and with state legislators when, in 2019, she came to the State House to testify in support of the Genocide Education Act, which has since been passed into law.



**Amanda Milazzo, Easthampton**

*Nominated by State Representative Daniel Carey*

Amanda Milazzo owns and operates Small Oven Bakery in Easthampton. During the pandemic, Amanda started the bakery's "Bread for Friends" program, which offers a free loaf of freshly baked bread to anyone who needs it. The program began as a way to fight food insecurity amidst the global pandemic but continues to this day as a benefit to our community. Through this program, Amanda has assisted countless individuals and families in need. Amanda and Small Oven regularly contribute to the betterment of the community, from working with the Easthampton Community Center to donating portions of her sales to worthy causes and so much more.

**Middlesex County**



**Debra Caplan, Framingham**

*Nominated by State Representative Priscila Sousa*

After working with Debra for the last couple of years, I can honestly say that I don't know many folks more dedicated to Framingham than she. Her passion for her community is incredible and she is so very deserving of this award. She is out fearless coordinator of Keep Framingham Beautiful cleanups, sustainability ambassador and an advocate for civic engagement around a more beautiful Framingham.



**Jill Caporiccio, Watertown**

*Nominated by State Representative Steve Owens*

Jill Caporiccio, BSN RN is a mother, community member, and an emergency room nurse at Massachusetts General Hospital. Jill has been a nurse for 19 years and has a strong commitment to social justice, equity in health, access to care globally, social determinants of health, and immigrant health. Jill has worked serving communities that have been traditionally excluded from healthcare access in the United States, as well as Ghana and Haiti. She was a founding member of EqualHealth and worked for many years in Haiti providing nursing education and support to Haitian nurses. Jill has been working with the Refugee Support Group since August 2023. Since then, she has provided accompaniment and support to the newly arrived families. This support has included helping families register kids for school and daycare, access benefits through DTA and MassHealth, sign students up for after-school activities, find doctors, get to medical appointments and hospital visits, and supporting pregnant women and families with new infants, assisting individuals in creating resumes and finding work and advocating/accompanying migrants as they adjust to life in a new country. Jill also volunteers as an English Teacher with the Immigrant Family Services Institute in Mattapan teaching English to newly arrived migrants.



**Sonia Conde, Somerville, Boston**

*Co-Nominated by State Representative Christine Barber & State Senator Patricia D. Jehlen*

Sonia Conde is originally from Lima, Peru and now lives in Somerville. She was Project Director for the widely praised "Museo Inmigrante" exhibit at the Somerville Museum, which broke attendance records at the museum. Sonia holds a bachelor's degree in medicine and certificate in clinical research, and one of her passions is to educate new mothers about the importance of early intervention in children's developing brains. As a founding member of Padres Latinos, Sonia volunteers to assist local immigrant families, mobilizing resources to help them access food, clothing, stable housing, and educational resources for their children. She is an incredible leader in our community.



### **Kelley Cronin, Sudbury**

*Nominated by State Senator James Eldridge*

Kelley has served as the Executive Director of the Acton Housing Authority for over 15 years. During that time, she has led the effort to build dozens of units of new affordable housing, renovated currently existing public housing unit and secured tens of millions of dollars in federal and state grants to build a new public housing project serving seniors and people with disabilities in Acton. Kelley has also served as a Board member of the Massachusetts chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (MassNAHRO), which has successfully secured over \$200 million in pandemic funding to renovate currently-existing public housing units, increased funding for the operating budgets of public housing authorities, and gathered support for the largest Housing Bond bill in Massachusetts history, which for the first time dedicates over \$1 billion to public housing authorities.



### **Ellen Duggan, Maynard**

*Nominated by Speaker Pro Tempore Kate Hogan*

Ellen's passion for her hometown means she spends an extraordinary amount of time and effort working to make Maynard a better place, including protecting its heritage and making it more responsive to the needs of all age groups. It's her way of giving back to the town that has been a nurturing place for her immigrant Irish ancestors, who arrived in Maynard four generations ago. Since retiring Ellen has been fortunate to have many opportunities to volunteer in town including the Community Preservation Committee, Maynard Historic Commission, several search committees for town administrator and school superintendent, school councils at both the Fowler and High school, Meals on Wheels delivery, the Sesquicentennial Committee and the 61-63 Summer St Reuse committee. Most recently she has been active in a newly formed study group to advocate for a Senior Center for the growing population of seniors in town. In an essay published by Maynard Advantage, Ellen opined about the town's special qualities and her family's long history as residents and wrote that the town of Maynard gives her "a sense of self." We are honored that she has given herself to Maynard.



### **Deborah Fountain, Pepperell**

*Nominated by State Representative Margaret Scarsdale*

Deb embodies community-building and community service. After three decades working for the federal government, Deb "retired" and set to work in Pepperell. She played pivotal roles in laying the groundwork for our vibrant, resilient future, including on our Master Plan Committee and a feasibility committee to determine the future of a former school in Town center. Just as importantly, Deb leaves beauty and kindness everywhere, whether it's organizing a community Garlic-Mustard Pull challenge; beautifying our schools, library, and public places with rain gardens and trail systems that include invitations to build fairy houses, or working with young people to understand the importance of native plantings vs. invasive species. Deb founded and runs the energetic Native and Invasive Plant Advisory Committee, which thanks to her leadership, sows native plants everywhere, and also collaborates with other towns' NIPC. Deb leaves everything — and everyone — better than how she found it/them.



### **Carol Gloff, Natick**

*Nominated by State Representative David Linsky*

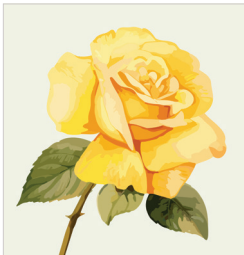
Carol Gloff has dedicated much of her life to the Town of Natick. During her career, Carol was elected the President of the Natick Service Council, has chaired the Natick Select Board, has been a Trustee of the Morse Institute Library and the MetroWest Health Foundation, a Natick Finance Committee Member, member of Friends of the Morse Institute Library Steering Committee and the Natick Visiting Nurse Association Board of Directors, and a volunteer for the town clerk's office. The Natick community has truly benefited from Carol's years of service and it is my honor to nominate her to the Commonwealth Heroine class of 2024.



### **Ellie Goldberg, Newton**

*Nominated by State Representative Kay Khan*

Ellie Goldberg (M.Ed) has dedicated her life to serving others as a high school teacher, educator, policy advocate, environmental champion, volunteer, mom, and a remarkable community member. After receiving her Bachelor of Arts in English and Psychology at the University of Michigan, she earned her Master of Education at the Institute of Open Education in Cambridge, MA. Ellie has been involved and active in numerous public health, environmental, educational, and public policy organizations working to increase citizen engagement, government accountability and corporate responsibility on behalf of children and their health-related needs. She is the founder and director of Healthy-Kids.Info, an advocacy and consulting group that helps others overcome barriers to health and provides educational resources to families of students with asthma and other chronic health conditions. Today, she continues to serve the community as an indefatigable advocate and member of organizations including Green Newton, Mothers Out Front, and as a board member of Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow.



### **Anna Jabar-Omoyeni, Lowell**

*Nominated by State Representative Vanna Howard*

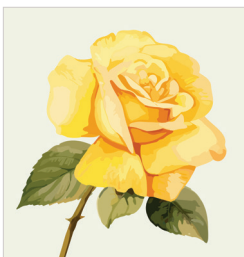
Anna has always had a dedication to helping the next generation. She left the catering business to become the founder and director of YouthBuild Culinary at Community Teamwork Lowell, a transformative job training program for young adults who may have dropped out of school and are looking for a second chance. Through this program, students not only acquire industry-recognized certifications such as ServSafe Manager Certification, Allergen Awareness Certification, OSHA10 for Culinary, and Restaurant Ready Certification but also gain hands-on experience by operating a full-service catering company. Anna's mission at YouthBuild Culinary is to empower and inspire confident hospitality professionals who share a passion for quality and service. YouthBuild Culinary, under the direction of Anna Jabar Omoyeni supports the community by providing weekly meals at St Paul's Soup Kitchen and hot meals at Lowell Youth Leadership Program's summer camp. Anna model's not only excellence in the kitchen but also the importance of giving back to the community.



### **LouAnn Jendro, Dracut**

*Nominated by State Representative Colleen Garry*

LouAnn Jendro has been an active member of the Dracut Community for Four Decades. She is a longtime member of the Dracut Rotary Club, former President of the Dracut Scholarship Foundation; she is a former school committee member and was the editor of the Merrimack Journal newspaper. LouAnn also served as a legislative aide to Representative Colleen Garry for a decade, serving the constituents of the district. In each of these roles LouAnn has held, community has been her priority. She is always welcoming and kind to people she encounters. She is respected by her peers and all who have had the opportunity to volunteer and work with her. Dracut is fortunate to have such a kind, hardworking and dedicated individual and is a better place because of the work she has done for the community.



### **Kate LeBlanc, Malden**

*Nominated by State Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian*

Kate Weldon LeBlanc is the Executive Director of Resolve New England (RNE), an independent non-profit organization dedicated to building a caring community in New England to support, inform, and advocate for all those struggling to grow their families. Having personally experienced infertility, pregnancy loss and postpartum anxiety, Kate is particularly passionate about the importance of mental health support before and during parenthood. Prior to her arrival at RNE, Kate worked for the Center for Early Relationship Support of Jewish Family & Children's Service, the Child Advocacy and Government Relations departments of Boston Children's Hospital, and the Massachusetts Legislature. She holds a Bachelor of Social Work from Skidmore College and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Massachusetts Boston. Kate and her husband Joe are the grateful parents of Sophie, who is a junior at Malden High School.



### **Julie Lewis, Burlington**

*Nominated by State Representative Kenneth Gordon*

Julie Lewis is the founder of the Burlington Community Collaborative, a forum for all social service entities in the Town of Burlington. Julie founded the forum last year, hoping to facilitate a supportive network in which social service agencies could share resources with, learn from, and grow alongside each other. Although only founded a short while ago, the forum has already become a tremendous asset to the community by creating a coordinated response to critical needs in the Town. In addition to this initiative, Julie works full-time as the pantry manager for People Helping People, is the coordinator for Burlington Ingathering, and a mother of three children. A hero to many, Julie spends her life being of service to others, believing that “a positive attitude is everything.” I am proud to nominate her for this award.



### **Karen Lynch, Malden**

*Nominated by State Representative Steven Ultrino*

Karen Lynch is a long-time activist, fighting for social, environmental, health, and housing justice and equity in Malden and across the state. Karen spent her career as an LPN and served as a foster parent for numerous children for over thirty years. Now retired, Karen advocates for economic and health security for seniors and their families. She is active with the Massachusetts Senior Action Council, serving as the First Vice President of the State Executive Committee, and was the Metro North Chapter President for seven years. Karen works hard to make a difference in the Malden community and volunteers for several local organizations, including Bread of Life, Urban Media Arts, Malden's Council on Aging, and Friends of the Malden River. Karen is also a proud mother of one daughter and grandmother of one grandson.



### **Demi Marsh, Chelmsford**

*Nominated by State Senator Barry Finegold*

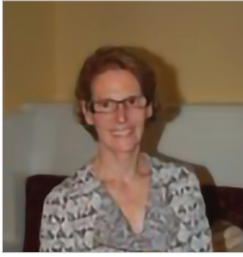
Demi Marsh is Assistant Director of North Andover Youth & Recreation Services, a position she has held for 13 years. In that role she manages the accounting and finances, communications including website, outreach, and registration — and training for youth workers. She herself started at the youth center when she was in high school, participating in various leadership programs. Since then her role has grown in terms of responsibility/management and the creativity and inclusivity she brings to the job. The mission of the youth center is to "empower and build self esteem". Demi's leadership style ensures that North Andover's youth are welcomed, encouraged and assured they are valued members of the community.



### **Beth Marshdoyle, Weston**

*Nominated by State Representative Alice Peisch*

27 years ago, Beth fell in love with the rural farming in Weston and put down roots, choosing to raise her three sons in the community. From her family's first visit to Land's Sake Farm to pick strawberries and sunflowers, she was hooked. Beth combines her M.S. in Natural Resources and B.S. in Environmental Science with her stewardship, sustainability, and a love of the outdoors to provide invaluable leadership in her role as the President of the Land's Sake Farm Board of Directors. Since 2017, Beth has used her experience in professional sales, marketing, and development to engage other families and businesses in the community to become involved with Land's Sake. With her leadership, Land's Sake Farm has advanced their future goals of sustainability, Hunger Relief, and Environmental Education for the Community and works to combat food insecurity by donating 1/3 of their harvest to local hunger relief organizations.



### **Bonnie Mitchell, Ashland**

*Nominated by State Representative Jack Lewis*

Bonnie Mitchell has lived in Ashland for over 45 years. She is serving in her 3rd term as a Trustee of the Ashland Public Library and is a former Chair. Bonnie served on the Ashland Cultural Council from 2009-2015, and in 2013 was a founding member of Arts! Ashland Alliance, Inc., sponsor of the annual Ashland Dragonfly Festival. Bonnie began her career at Framingham State University in 1982. She was appointed Library Director in 1998, and Dean of the Library in 2017. Always interested in promoting the arts and culture, Bonnie was a founding member of the Framingham State University Arts and Humanities Council and served as Committee Chair for over 20 years. She was a member of the FSU Committee for Diversity and Inclusion, and served for 3 years as a First-Year Foundation Program facilitator, teaching life-long learning skills to freshmen. She served as the Librarian on 4 NEASC accreditation review committees for University's in New Hampshire, Vermont and Rhode Island. Since retiring from her position as Dean in 2020, she has maintained her connection to the University as a Dean of the Library Emerita, and by working with the current Library Dean to support a Friends of the Library organization. Bonnie also serves on the Advisory Board of the FSU University Community Club, located at the Warren Conference Center in Ashland. In 2020, Bonnie trained to be a tutor for Literacy Unlimited in Framingham, and continues to provide individual tutor sessions, teaches a weekly conversation class. This summer, she will be teaching a 6-session course to train new tutors. Bonnie serves on the Literacy Unlimited Advisory Board and as Clerk of the Foundation Board. Bonnie is a member of the Remote Area Medical Framingham/Ashland Community Host Group, organizing a health clinic to provide free health services to underserved populations in the local Metrowest communities. In August, 2023, the Clinic was held at Keefe Tech, and will again be held in August, 2024. In January, Bonnie was hired as the Outreach, Archives and Collections Manager at the Framingham History Center. Bonnie is a 2009 graduate of the Metrowest Leadership Academy and in the 2010-2011 academic year participated in a year-long Massachusetts Public Higher Education Regional Collaborative Leadership Development Program. Bonnie is a graduate of Long Island University, C.W. Post campus and received a Master of Library and Information Science from Simmons College and a Master of Arts in Public Administration from Framingham State University.



### **Justine Neely, Lexington**

*Nominated by State Representative Michelle Ciccolo*

Beginning in October with the arrival of 30 families at a shelter in Lexington, Justine immediately stepped into action and helped to coordinate a town-wide effort to support recently arrived migrants whose needs were not being met by existing systems. In particular, Justine advocated and coordinated for many of the supports most needed for women and those with young children. Justine has gone above and beyond consistently: coordinating donations, liaising with town, regional, and state-wide government officials to better consider the needs of each family, recruiting and directing volunteers, organizing a volunteer-transportation system, sourcing critical supplies, and being an irreplaceable practical and emotional support for many of the sheltered families. These administrative tasks were in no way Justine's responsibility but she rose to the occasion admirably and we are all incredibly grateful to her. This monumental commitment to recent arrivals is only the tip of the iceberg on Justine's continued commitment and dedication to the Town of Lexington for many years and demonstrates why she is deserving of recognition.



### **Donna Newcomb, Chelmsford**

*Nominated by State Representative Simon Cataldo*

Donna is wrapping up a 7-year run on the Chelmsford School Committee where she was a passionate advocate for children and their families. She has spent her entire life serving the Chelmsford community with additional service on the Board of Library Trustees and as a Town Meeting representative and is a co-founder of the Initiative for Local Aid, a grassroots advocacy group that works to increase local aid. She has been involved with the South Row School Council, the parent-teacher organizations at South Row and Chelmsford High School, and the Chelmsford Council of Schools. She was also a longtime religious education teacher at St. Mary's Church, coached youth basketball and field hockey, served as a Girl Scout leader, was a member of the Chelmsford Garden Club and served as chair of the Junior Garden Club. A special-education teacher at Lowell High School since 2006, Newcomb also oversees the Compass Program, an after-school enrichment program for freshman, and volunteers with the Outdoor Adventure Club. She previously taught at Lighthouse School for 18 years. A Westfield State University alum, she also holds a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from Boston University.



### **Marie O'Rourke, Billerica**

*Nominated by State Representative Marc Lombardo*

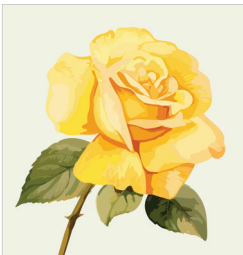
Marie O'Rourke has been a positive figure in Billerica for many years. Residing in Billerica since 1962, Marie with her husband Bill raised their 3 sons as Marie was becoming involved in the town. Marie began her career as the Head Clerk in the Billerica Veteran Services Office on August 24, 1981 where she was employed for 43 years. Marie has been instrumental in serving Billerica's Veteran's and their families needing information and services, as well as non-veterans; Marie retired this May 31, 2024. Marie established the Billerica Food Pantry in 1989 with her dear friend Ken Buffum, coming to the aid of 55 families; they managed the Food Pantry for 28 years. Marie began the Billerica Christmas Program, Claus for a Cause. Marie holds a seat on the Billerica Board of Health and on the Billerica Housing Authority. Marie O'Rourke has made Billerica a better place to live!



### **Rebecca Parkhill, Weston**

*Nominated by State Senator Michael Barrett*

Rebecca Parkhill is the Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Metrowest Women's Fund, a non-profit that invests in women and girls through education, community partnerships, and grant-making. In 2023 the fund awarded \$170,000 to 17 organizations serving the needs of women in Metrowest, focusing on impact areas like education and domestic violence. Rebecca is an ordained Unitarian Universalist community minister. She has worked in churches in the United States and England and alongside non-profits, schools, and social services. Rebecca holds a BA from Brown University and an MDiv from Yale University. Her exemplary track record is proof of her dedication to uplifting others. She deserves to be recognized as a Commonwealth Heroine.



### **Ellin Reisner, Somerville**

*Nominated by State Representative Michael Connolly*

Ellin Reisner is a sociologist who consults and conducts research on Human Resources, transportation, organizational, and work and family issues. She is also a committed community advocate working to end environmental health disparities through research and community action. She currently serves as President of the Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership (STEP), an organization working to improve transportation and air quality for residents and workers in Somerville. There she co-founded the Community Assessment of Freeway Exposure and Health study which is a National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences funded study examining the link between traffic pollution exposure and health. During her tenure as President, STEP has tirelessly and successfully advocated for regionally transformative projects such as the Green Line Extension, the Community Path Extension, and the grounding of McGrath Highway. Ellin received her Bachelor's from Boston University where she then went on to receive a Master's in Social Work and then later a Ph.D. in the Sociology of Organizations and Work. Ellin has worked at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority in a variety of training, workforce planning and community relations positions, at the Massachusetts Port Authority as a project manager, at the Brandeis University Center for Community, Families, and Work as its program director, and as a project management consultant at ERS Boston. Additional academic projects include a Housing and Urban Development funded study examining the cardio-vascular health benefits of in-home air filtration. In her spare time, you will find working in her garden, visiting the East Somerville branch library, and frequenting East Broadway restaurants.



### **Marta Fuertes Rodriguez, Somerville**

*Nominated by State Representative Erika Uytterhoeven*

Originally from Spain, Marta Fuertes has lived in Somerville for the last 15 years. In addition to teaching Spanish to highschoolers and dedicating time to her family, Marta volunteers with Padres Latinos of Somerville Public Schools. Padres Latinos is a mutual aid group of more than 230 Spanish and Portuguese-speaking parents with children in the Somerville Public Schools. The group formed during the COVID-19 pandemic to advocate for SPS Latino students and reduce or eliminate the achievement gap between Latino students and their peers. The group also strengthens its community by sharing information about food, education, cultural opportunities, and housing resources. Recently, Marta co-curated the Somerville Museum exhibition "Museo Inmigrante: Stories of Resilience from Somerville's Padres Latinos," which was featured in The Boston Globe, Telemundo, and on WCBV. This moving exhibition explored stories from Padres Latinos members about immigration, home, family, memory, community and finding purpose, and was supported by Mass Humanities, the American Rescue Plan Act, and The Phillip and Edith Leonian Foundation. It included events about mental health in the Latino community, a panel discussion of eight Somerville immigrant parents sharing their stories, and tours with many Somerville students and educators. Marta holds a bachelor's degree in History and Archaeology and master's degree in Conservation of Heritage and Education.





**Rachel Sagan, Sudbury**

*Nominated by State Representative Carmine L. Gentile*

Rachel Sagan is the Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Metrowest Women's Fund celebrating its fifth year. The Metrowest Women's Fund is in the business of changing lives. They invest in women and girls through community building, education, and grant-making. The Metrowest Women's Fund's mission is to identify the needs of women and girls in the Metrowest and raise resources to meet those needs. In 2023, The Metrowest Women's Fund awarded \$170,000 to 17 nonprofits serving the needs of women and girls in Metrowest in the areas of Educational Opportunity, Girls: The Next Generation, and Safety From Violence. see [www.metrowestwomensfund.com](http://www.metrowestwomensfund.com). Rachel is dedicated to public interest law and philanthropy. She is the recipient of the John R. Heerwagen Award for Nonprofit Leadership by the Middlesex Savings Charitable Foundation and the Outstanding Non-Profit Executive Director of the Year by the Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce. She holds degrees from Northeastern University School of Law and Harvard University.



**Kate Sanetra-Butler, Hopkinton**

*Nominated by Massachusetts Senate President Karen Spilka*

In 2016, a homeless woman in Copley Plaza asked Kate Sanetra-Butler for a spare tampon. This led Kate to research period poverty (lack of access to menstrual care) and learn it was an unaddressed problem in Massachusetts. She established a nonprofit, Dignity Matters, in her Hopkinton basement that has now grown to provide free menstrual care to 16,000 homeless and low-income women and girls in Massachusetts every month, most of whom also underwear. With three FTEs (and 100 volunteers) in her Framingham office, Kate meets the need, builds collaborations, and educates and advocates. She has tirelessly spread awareness of period poverty and the I AM Bill among elected officials, corporate partners, and the public. Dignity Matters' effectiveness stems from collaborations Kate built with women-serving organizations, including 175 nonprofits (shelters, food pantries, schools, domestic violence shelters). Through them, Dignity Matters supports women in trusted places where they receive other services year 'round. She has shown that addressing period poverty on a large scale is feasible.



**Beatriz Sierra, Lowell**

*Nominated by State Representative Rodney Elliot*

Beatriz Sierra was born in 1958 and raised in Medellin, Colombia. Beatriz has been a tireless community leader since she came here in 1979. Once established in Lowell, Beatriz became a strong advocate and activist for her community. She established a youth dance group called Raíces Colombians. Education is a priority for Beatriz, and she works her hardest to ensure that young students continue their education to enrich their lives and better their future. Beatriz raises funding to help support 13 schools in the impoverished, rural region of Titiribi, Antioquia in Colombia. This project has been ongoing since 2009 and has helped over 400 students. Ms. Sierra has also helped many people in the city to find jobs through her role as counselor for the Lowell Career Center/ Greater Lowell Workforce Development. Every year, Beatriz also singlehandedly organizes the annual Colombian Independence Day celebration in Lowell, which brings hundreds of Columbian residents of Lowell together.



**Gabriella Snyder Stelmack, Malden**

*Nominated by State Senator Jason Lewis*

Gabriella Snyder Stelmack is the Executive Director of Bread of Life, a faith-based, nondenominational, nonprofit food security organization providing 1.5 million pounds of food annually for residents of Malden, Everett and eleven communities in metro north Boston. She started her work with Bread of Life as a homeless advocate in 1988, at a time when the need for affordable housing had surfaced as a national crisis. She went on to work as the Volunteer Coordinator, Special Projects Coordinator, grant writer and Deputy Director before assuming her current role. Under her leadership, the Bread of Life Under One Roof project to create a new central home for all Bread of Life programs, as well as 14 units of affordable housing operated by Metro North Housing Corp, has been realized. The grand opening is planned for later this year. "I'm glad I began this journey working with people who were homeless, with the poorest and most overlooked members of our community. My goal is for us never to forget that we exist to serve, to listen to, to walk with those who are most marginalized and excluded, and to work with them so that they are heard, included and empowered to make changes that improve their lives, the lives of their families, and the common life of our communities."



### **Beverly Woods, Westford**

*Nominated by State Representative James Arciero*

Beverly has been an outstanding leader in our community and always goes the extra mile to see results. For 14 years, she was the leader and driving force behind the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) and the success work this organization does for our region. This critically important group provides professional technical assistance on a host of issues ranging from housing, economic development, transportation, public safety, land use, permitting, open space and conservation, energy/climate change and environmental protection. Ms. Woods has been a valuable resource in all these areas for the 9 member communities of NMCOG. I believe that Beverly Woods is the king of person who exemplifies a Commonwealth Heroine and proudly nominate her for this prestigious award.



### **Julie Wu, Belmont**

*Nominated by State Representative David Rogers*

Julie Wu endeavors to make Belmont more accepting, vibrant, and sustainable. On Belmont Town Meeting since 2019, Julie co-chairs the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Implementation Committee, and serves on both the MBTA Communities Advisory Committee and the Solid Waste & Recycling Committee. Julie is founding President of the Belmont Pan-Asian Coalition, which unites and amplifies the voices of Belmont’s many Asian groups. She also founded Belmont Composts!, leading to over 1200 residential curbside compost subscriptions and facilitating school compost programs. A writer, Julie promotes diverse coverage as part of the Editorial Advisory Group of the Belmont Voice, a nonprofit newspaper. Her novel, *The Third Son*, was one of the first American novels to describe the events of the February 28th massacre in Taiwan. Her current novel-in-progress examines the leadup to Taiwan's democratization. In each role, Julie uses her education and empathy to enhance the lives of her community.



### **Erica Young, Waltham**

*Nominated by State Representative Thomas Stanley*

Erica Young has over 20 years of youth development experience, including over a decade serving as Executive Director of the Waltham Boys & Girls Club. She has led initiatives to increase access to out-of-school-time opportunities, build awareness for issues affecting youth and families, and social justice. She was also instrumental in addressing food insecurity in Waltham, setting up a summer meals site during the pandemic where children and their parents could pick up meals to take home.

## **Norfolk County**



### **Kerry Anne Berry, Randolph**

*Nominated by State Representative William “Bill” Driscoll Jr.*

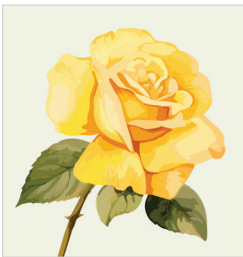
Kerriane Berry has made a significant impact on the Randolph community through her kindness and commitment to helping others. Kerri annually works behind the scenes to bolster events like toy drives, food drives, clothing drives, and many other initiatives. Kerri works closely with the Randolph Police Department, where she recently established a scholarship fund in honor of Officer Mike Beal, who was killed in a rollover crash; she also organized a fundraiser for a sick child whose father is a Randolph Police officer. She also collects donations of prom dresses to donate them to girls in need so they can look and feel their best on prom night. Aside from all of this, Kerri also conducts regular clothing and coat drives for Randolph Public Schools, she organizes weekly food delivery for families in need, and she ensures that local children have presents and warm meals during the holidays. Everything she does is in the spirit of helping others, and she always does it with little to no attention on herself whatsoever. Because of her relentless commitment to Randolph families and children, and to the betterment of the entire community, we are proud to nominate her as our 2024 Commonwealth Heroine.



### **Dr. Daurice Cox, Weymouth**

*Nominated by State Senator John Keenan*

Dr. Daurice Cox has been working in non-profit services and clinics since 1986 and has been with Bay State Community Services since 1995. She began as the Director of Clinical Services overseeing the agency's five outpatient mental health and substance abuse clinics and four residential programs. Since December of 2014, Dr. Cox has served as the agency's President and Chief Executive Officer. Over the course of her career Dr. Cox has provided essential and life changing services to people struggling with addiction, incarcerated people, vulnerable children, and countless others. More recently she played a crucial role in establishing a migrant welcome center in Quincy that has become a model for shelters statewide. Dr. Cox has also been an adjunct professor for almost 20 years teaching psychology to undergraduate students at Boston University.



### **Anna David, Franklin**

*Nominated by State Senator Becca Rausch*

Anna David is a student-leader with a passion for robotics and a recent graduate of Franklin High School ('24). This passion led Anna to found the Science Fair club at FHS in the Fall of 2023, where she set up a school-wide competition & mentored other students on their projects. Also a successful competitor, Anna is a coach & leader for the Sense & Sound Robotics team; the team was recently awarded the Control Award at the F.I.R.S.T. World Championship and came in at 5th place, making them a top 1% robotics team in the world. Additionally, Anna is a member of the National Honor Society and a group leader in the Science National Honor Society. She will be attending Carnegie Mellon University in the Fall.



### **Kerry Farrell, Bellingham**

*Nominated by State Representative Michael Soter*

Kerry Farrell deserves to be recognized because she has single handedly changed the face of Bellingham youth sports. Kerry started and is the President of the Challengers program within Bellingham Youth Sports and brought the Special Olympics Unified Sports program to Bellingham High school. The Challengers program, started in 2015, provides kids with developmental issues the opportunity to play organized sports. This program works closely with coaches, parents and volunteers to coach, practice and play with students with special needs. Many people come out every weekend to watch their friends and children have fun and play sports. She has truly brought the community together in a way that we have never seen before. A big focus is on the sports, particularly baseball; but really, it's the social aspect that makes the biggest difference because the Challengers Program allows all students and friends to communicate and work together despite social and developmental boundaries. The Challengers program, as well as the Special Olympics sanctioned Unified Sports reaches those with and without disabilities. Because of Kerry's hard work and leadership, she has seen firsthand disabled students make lasting friendships that they would have never been able to in a traditional school environment. She has also seen many volunteers go on to study the field of developmental disabilities and go on to work in that field. Kerry epitomizes the essence of community inclusion and empowerment, particularly for individuals with disabilities, while also providing avenues for women's involvement and support. Without Kerry, Bellingham would never have had these great programs and the lives of so many kids would have never been touched.



### **Lovern Gordon, Avon**

*Nominated by State Senator Michael Brady*

Over the last 12 years, Lovern has poured herself into the Love Life Now Foundation (LLN) as its Founder and President, whose mission in part, is to raise year-round awareness around the issue of domestic violence (DV). She is a 2-time survivor herself as a child witness for 15 years, in the Caribbean to her mother's abuse and a young adult survivor of a 2-year relationship in the States. Based on her experiences, she endeavors to educate the community and provide resources to victims and survivors of DV nationwide and internationally via in-person, annual DV awareness initiatives that get various communities involved in the issue such as the White Ribbon Night Gala (that asks more men to get involved around awareness), the Heel-A-Thon Awareness Walk (in heels), the Bedding Drive (for various DV shelters), a quarterly Homeless Brown Bag & Care (meet survivors where they are at with DV resources, lunch, and toiletries), and more. These DV awareness initiatives continue to raise thousands of dollars in goods and funding for numerous DV agencies, as well as people affected by abuse. Lovern created and manages LLN's Get Safe Fund, which gives victims who are fleeing abuse, a leg up financially, with DV-related expenses. Her award-winning, DV memoir book, *The Legacy He Left Me*, published in 2021, reached people nationwide, as well as internationally, as part of an ongoing DV awareness book tour. She also conducts nationwide and international DV awareness shelter visits, which are highlighted on social media and in turn, raises awareness that the issue is everywhere, but there is help everywhere.



### **Janice Kahn, Chestnut Hill**

*Nominated by State Representative Ruth B. Balseer*

Janice Kahn cares deeply about neighborhood. A longtime Brookline resident, she built an alliance between adjacent Newton and Brookline neighborhoods to improve traffic safety and address local environmental concerns, including protecting an endangered pond. She brought together concerned neighbors when an addiction treatment center opened in the neighborhood to make sure that neighborhood concerns were addressed while at the same time protecting access to needed services. She has launched efforts to protect a local park. She has chaired the Brookline Commission for Women, was a president of the League of Women Voters Brookline, served on the town's Advisory Committee, and has been a town meeting member for more than 2 decades. Janice is a neighborhood activist par excellence!



### **Amy LaBrache, Foxborough**

*Nominated by State Representative F. Jay Barrows*

I would like to nominate Amy LaBrache, a Foxborough resident and mother of three children, one of which is serving in the military. Amy has been involved in the community and dedicated her time to assist those in need; Amy has volunteered with the Friends of Foxboro Veterans for over five years, the Foxboro Jaycees for over 20 years, Foxborough High School, Foxborough Youth Basketball, and the Clean Up Foxborough Day. Amy has shown continued dedication to our community and those in need. I nominate Amy LaBrache for the 2024 Commonwealth Heroine Award for her exemplary commitment to bettering the lives of residents in the Town of Foxborough and the surrounding communities.



### **Rinaz Mala, Needham**

*Nominated by State Representative Denise Garlick*

Rinaz Mala Mohammed, a Needham resident, works hard to reflect the many kindnesses she has experienced by advocating for and promoting cultural understanding. A former member of Needham's Human Rights Committee and the Needham Diversity Initiative, she spearheaded the Needham Multicultural Festival. A first of its kind, it was an overwhelming success with over 20 countries represented, each with a Needham family displaying items and information about their countries of origin. Rinaz is also a member of Needham's Working Group which will create an Arts & Culture Action Plan that will support a thriving arts and cultural community within Needham that is accessible to all. In Rinaz' own words: "We all want to be appreciated and respected for our differences." Rinaz' actions and words have helped Needham immensely, by fostering an environment where all people are valued members of our community.



**Louise Marcoux, Sharon**

*Nominated by State Representative Ted Phillips*

Since new residents first arrived in Sharon hotels as part of the Commonwealth's emergency shelter program, Louise has been incredible in her efforts to make their transition go as smoothly as possible. Whether it be organizing trips to laundromats or for shopping, helping coordinate birthday celebrations that provide families a semblance of normalcy, or advocating for their needs at the local and state levels, Louise has been a calming, steady presence for people who have faced so much upheaval in their lives. Her quiet diligence is an inspiration to her fellow members of Sharon's New Resident Task Force, where she truly embodies the ethos of a Commonwealth Heroine who leads by example.



**Maureen Mazrimas, Quincy**

*Nominated by State Representative Bruce Ayers*

Maureen Mazrimas has made significant contributions to the city of Quincy through her selfless activism and advocacy. As a longtime volunteer and President of Friends of Wollaston Beach, she has planned community events, cleanups, and awareness campaigns to provide for the preservation of our natural resources and our beautiful coastline. Her involvement in FWB has resulted in increased membership and attendance at events, and she has made a strong impact on the beautification of Wollaston Beach. Maureen is also active with the Wollaston Yacht Club and was a member of Quincy's Zoning Board, among her many other activities. Through everything she does, Maureen works hard for the betterment of her community and for the preservation of natural resources for her neighbors to enjoy; just as importantly, she does it without fanfare nor want of recognition. I'm proud to nominate Maureen Mazrimas as a 2024 Commonwealth Heroine.



**Sue McQuaid, Norwood**

*Nominated by State Representative John Rogers*

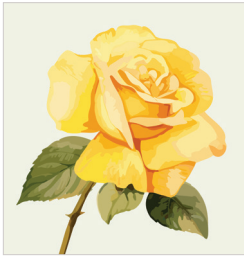
Ms. McQuaid began her career of public service as a teacher and campus minister. From there she spent decades as a community liaison, first for Caritas Christi Healthcare and later for the Shriners Hospital for Children and the League School of Greater Boston. Later Sue's talents led her to become The Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce's first Female President and CEO. Ms. McQuaid served four years on the Norwood School Committee and six years on Norwood's Board of Selectmen. She is the second woman ever elected to the Board of Selectmen; first ever re-elected, and first female Chairman of that Board. Ms. McQuaid's lifetime serving communities in Southeastern Massachusetts has been spent advocating for the healthcare and educational wellbeing of children, especially those with special needs as well as building a thriving business climate in the I-95 corridor strengthening communities.



**Marilyn Ray Smith, Brookline**

*Nominated by Senate Majority Leader Cindy Creem*

Following decades of service to the Commonwealth as an active member of the Massachusetts Bar Association, a former trial attorney, and a chief legal counsel and deputy commissioner within the Department of Revenue, Marilyn has volunteered her time and talents to the cause of addressing climate change. As a member of the Gas Transition Allies and Mothers Out Front and as a board member of HEET, she has been instrumental in crafting and advocating bills that aim to expand tree urban canopy and facilitate the transition from gas to clean forms of heat. Marilyn is a keen legislative drafter and strategist. Just as importantly, she is an expert at building community, frequently opening her home to climate organizers and advocates so that they can develop closer connections. When Massachusetts achieves its obligation of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, Marilyn will be one of the climate champions we have to thank for making the accomplishment possible.



### **Roberta Trahan, Franklin**

*Nominated by State Representative Jeffrey Roy*

Roberta DeBaggis Trahan is a lifelong member of the Franklin community. She is a retired Critical Care Registered Nurse having worked in Adult ICU for 44 years, is a graduate of FHS, Saint Vincent Hospital School of Nursing and Worcester State University. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Franklin Food Pantry and is actively involved with many community organizations: (Vice President of Franklin Downtown Partnership; FPAC/TBB member; Vice President of The Franklin Education Foundation; Chair of Saint Mary Parish Council, FPS Student Wellness Advisory Council member and The Franklin Cultural District Committee. She is a past member of the Franklin School Committee having served for 10 years and has served on various other community organizations in the past). She resides in Franklin with her husband Roger, has four grown children and 6 grandchildren.

## **Plymouth County**



### **Jacqui Berardi, Rockland**

*Nominated by State Representative David DeCoste*

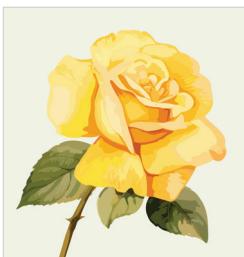
Jacqui Berardi is a well-known local Rockland business woman. While working in the restaurant industry she earned a Bachelor's degree in Hospitality Management from Newbury College with subsequent diet and nutrition studies in Florence and Barcelona. She took ownership of Player's Restaurant in Rockland in 2012. Over the past 12 years she has become the locus of charitable fundraising in Rockland. Groups including Rockland Cares, scouting, support and recovery groups, local sports and youth groups along with a myriad of other civic causes & organizations have had the support of Players as a venue, helping thousands of our citizens. Jacqui is the epitome of local civic involvement.



### **Kenzie Blackwell, Hingham**

*Nominated by State Senator Patrick O'Connor*

Kenzie Blackwell is the founder of Free. (Free Period) a Hingham based organization that provides free feminine hygiene products to those in need with a goal of ending period poverty. Started in 2021, and through a partnership with St. John the Evangelist in Hingham, Free. has gone on to supply nearly 1 million free feminine hygiene products to schools across the Commonwealth. Kenzie has been a steadfast advocate for the "I AM" bill which ensures access to free menstrual products in schools, shelters and incarceration facilities. Kenzie's work with Free. has opened conversations surrounding periods and menstrual products in our community and has been instrumental in creating awareness about this issue. She has created a movement that has inspired communities across the Commonwealth to improve access to menstruation supplies. Kenzie is helping people throughout Massachusetts and hopes to achieve 1 million products distributed in 2024, which she calls "moments of dignity."



### **Sharon Crowley, Pembroke**

*Nominated by State Representative Kathleen LaNatra*

Over twenty years ago, Sharon Crowley of Pembroke founded the nonprofit MoonShadow Jewelry, with the mission of honoring the memory of her daughter Rachel. Sharon and her family established the Rachel Crowley Memorial Scholarship benefiting students at Pembroke and Silver Lake Regional High Schools. Proceeds from MoonShadow Jewelry support annual scholarships. The nonprofit has grown to also support in Rachel's memory the Beth Israel Deaconess-Plymouth Cancer Center and Dana Farber with the addition of a "Survivor" necklace. Other local organizations also benefit from MoonShadow Jewelry in honor of Rachel Crowley. Mrs. Crowley is a retired English Teacher from Silver Lake Regional High School. In her retirement she continues as a substitute teacher at Silver Lake. Mrs. Crowley dedicates her time designing and creating the jewelry and household items sold through MoonShadow. MoonShadow products can be found at local craft fairs, gift shops, and online.



### **Tiffany Gambill, Bridgewater**

*Nominated by State Senator Walter Timilty*

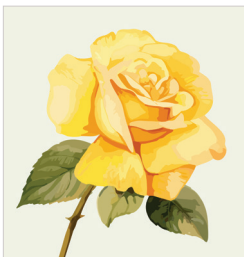
Tiffany Gambill is a 34-year-old resident of Bridgewater, Massachusetts. She was diagnosed with a muscle condition called Friedreich's Ataxia (FA) when she was just fifteen years old. FA is slowly and systematically shutting down all of her muscles except for her brain. By nineteen she had a walker and by twenty her first wheelchair. FA has affected her eyesight, hearing and speech as well as her mobility. Tiffany had always loved traveling and in 2018, she decided to go after her dream of seeing the world and launched off on her first European vacation. She realized quickly how little was out there regarding accessibility for those in wheelchairs while traveling. Tiffany and her mother Joan spent many hours trying to research entrances, doorway sizes and stairs to enter buildings in places they were traveling to. This inspired her to create a blog and a website ([www.tiffschariot.com](http://www.tiffschariot.com)) to show people both that her disability doesn't stop her and to educate and inform the public regarding accessibility and inclusivity. Tiffany's blog shows the barriers she encounters in her travels to educate us all but she also writes to encourage and help ease the anxiety some wheelchair users feel about traveling outside of their comfort zones. Tiffany has been to 23 states, 9 countries, 3 continents and 1 territory. She wants to show people, disabled or not, that traveling the world can be done; and to inspire others and show them that life is worth living in. Throughout her blog she speaks of FA, "the good, the bad, and the ugly" as she says. And she reminds us all to enjoy this wonderful planet and all it has to offer. Beyond her blog, Tiffany has spent years spreading awareness about her disease by participating in fundraising with FARA ([www.curefa.org](http://www.curefa.org)), as FARA Ambassador for a time, as well as engaging in larger known charities such as Muscular Dystrophy. The progression of her disease has limited her focus in recent years to her blog where she continues to inspire everyone who reads it. Tiffany belongs to a women's travel blogging group called Wits and continues to travel to conferences. She is one of their first members in a wheelchair and has worked with them around how to accommodate those in wheelchairs. Tiffany is a testament to the strength of a woman on a mission. She highlights issues pertaining to women with differing abilities both here at home and as they explore this planet. I am proud to her for the Massachusetts Commonwealth Heroine Award 2024.



### **Kim Greaves, Hull**

*Nominated by State Representative Joan Meschino*

Kim Greaves is a multifaceted artist and dedicated community leader with a heart for service. Her commitment to service extends beyond the art world, as she is actively involved in leading numerous veteran events in Hull, volunteering to honor our servicemembers and their families. Additionally, Kim has made significant contributions to various causes such as the American Red Cross and our local food pantries while simultaneously volunteering her expertise in curating Native American artifacts for the Smithsonian Institution. Despite her numerous accomplishments and contributions, Kim leads with humility, preferring to let her actions speak louder than words. Her leadership by example inspires those around her to strive for excellence and give back to their communities. Through her unwavering dedication and service-oriented mindset, Kim Greaves continues to make a profound impact on the lives of others, leaving a lasting legacy of kindness and compassion in Hull.



### **Patricia Haigh, Plymouth**

*Nominated by State Representative Matthew Muratore*

From an early age, Patricia Haigh was aware of inequalities in her community and was determined to evoke positive change. She knew education would help her best serve her community and earned a degree in Sociology. She was a social worker for the Department of Children and Families and supervisor in a Guardian Ad Litem office working with abused, neglected, and abandoned children. She also worked for a consumer advocacy law firm. Additionally, Patty devotes much of her free time and resources supporting non-profit organizations. She is an active member of Plymouth's Sunrise Rotary Club, participating in numerous charitable projects such as, helping build homes at Habitat for Humanity, and various toy, food, and clothing drives. Patty also serves as the Advisor for Plymouth North High School Interact Club, where she mentors future leaders on how service to their community fosters positive outcomes for all. Recently, Patty assisted them in organizing a Benefit Show to support several local veteran groups. Whether working or volunteering, Patty's devotion to helping others is inspiring.



**Gail Kubek, Brockton**

*Nominated by State Representative Michelle DuBois*

Gail Kubek has been Brockton VFW Post 1046's Auxiliary President since 2016. In this position Ms. Kubek has advocated to ensure Veterans in the greater Brockton region and across the State have access to supportive programs and services. Gail coordinates volunteers to: bring Veterans on community outings, provide free monthly community meals for Veterans at Post 1046 banquet hall, annually cleans the graves of Veterans and takes part in the decoration of graves with wreaths and flags. Through Gail's robust focus on fundraising, Gail and her team have provided free monthly meals for Veterans, donate clothing and toiletries for distribution at the Brockton VA hospital, makes donations to Veteran's causes, and won grant funds to update the Post's banquet hall, obtain new televisions, replace the 30 tables, 300 chairs, update the bocce courts, and is currently working on securing funding to upgrade the banquet hall bathrooms. One of Gail's most memorable moments of being President of the VFW Auxiliary was taking a WWII Veteran to the movie Midway and he was able to see his plane and share his memories of this decisive victory.



**Mary Price, Marshfield**

*Nominated by State Representative Patrick Kearney*

As a long-time director of Marshfield FACTS, Mary Price is a force of passion, empathy, clear thinking and collaboration among substance use survivors of all ages, family members, educators, elected officials, the Plymouth District Attorney's Office, small business owners, first-responders, and supportive members across our community. As a parent, her first-hand experience in loving and supporting a child who faced and entered into recovery from substance abuse, Mary took on a volunteer leadership role in Marshfield Facts and has initiated educational programs in the school districts, informational sessions for all ages around the community, as well as, trainings for family members, educators and small business owners to increase public awareness of opioid addiction and prevention. Through her attentiveness to policy and legislation focused on addressing the current traumas and impact of fentanyl on youth she has boosted parental and educators' knowledge about the public health issues youth are facing among peers. Her down to earth manner at meetings, her ability to spearhead grant projects such as recovery literacy kits, strategic planning, and creating arenas of love, knowledge and best practices to diminish stigma and support individuals and families in need.



**Maria Tavares, Brockton**

*Nominated by State Representative Rita Mendes*

Maria T. Tavares is an exceptional woman and leader in her community. A long-time resident of Brockton, Ms. Tavares has worked as a diplomat in international law in furthering support for international human rights. She was the first black female to work as a court enforcement officer for the Board of Health in Brockton when she was hired in 2019. Ms. Tavares was elected to the Brockton City Council in 2021 and has dutifully served her constituents in Ward 2 for over three years. Ms. Tavares is heavily involved in social work in Brockton by assisting those who are food insecure and without housing. Ms. Tavares also runs an organization that helps fellow women with business start-ups and empowers them to be financial independent. This is a very brief synopsis of the fantastic work Ms. Tavares does and it is our pleasure to nominate her for this award!

**Suffolk County**



**Helen Antenucci, East Boston**

*Nominated by State Representative Adrian Madaro*

Both visitors to the city and longtime Blue Line riders alike might be familiar with the cheerful voice of Helen Antenucci, one of the friendliest employees on the MBTA. Many weary-eyed travelers and groggy commuters have had their day brightened by her cheery "Good Morning!" over the train speakers. A resident of East Boston, Helen began working for the MBTA in 1995. Her upbeat announcements have made her an unofficial ambassador for the Blue Line, and especially the New England Aquarium, who Helen gives a special shout-out to as her favorite place every time the train pulls into their stop. In 2024, Helen was certified by the Guinness Book of World Records as the oldest female train operator. Helen is a living icon, whose commitment to bringing a positive attitude to public transportation has improved and enlivened many commutes and served as a role model for women in the field.





### Joyce Ferriabough-Bolling, Boston

*Nominated by State Senator Liz Miranda*

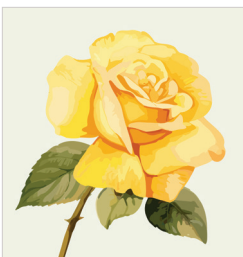
In 1992 *The Boston Globe* magazine described Joyce Ferriabough "as a spokeswoman, strategist, or adviser, who has played a role in almost every issue of import to the black community in the past decade". A Journalist, former television producer/writer for channel 5's *Chronicle* and *City Line*, Joyce holds a number of barrier breaking firsts. She has the distinction of being the "first" black woman political and campaign strategist in the state. Her work and volunteer activism has contributed to breaking barriers for the African American community and particularly women of color using an array of skillsets that include shaping and advancing messaging, media outreach, community education and organizing, crisis communications and fund raising. Campaign and Politics magazine named her among the state's top 100 influencers for her messaging and fundraising skills. She worked with Councilor Bruce Bolling, who later became her husband, promoting his linkage legislation that became law and continues to support affordable housing. As the first and only woman popularly elected President of the highly respected activist Black Political Task Force, she helped draw the redistricting lines that created the foundation for a district that would enable a person of color to one day win a seat in Congress. Today that seat is held by Ayanna Pressley who prior to being elected to congress, became the first woman of color elected to the Boston City council. Joyce was advisor and operative for both campaigns. An advocate, mentor and advisor she has actively engaged in supporting the campaigns of a number of black women "firsts" among them: Dianne Wilkerson, Marie St. Fleur, Charlotte Golar Ritchie, Kim Janey, and Ruthzee Louijeune to name a few. She added more "color" and inclusion to Boston's landscape as a result of her contributions to the city's celebration of African Americans in Boston more than 350 years, in particular the Women's Statue on Commonwealth Avenue, the installation of the bust of Frederick Douglass in Fanueil Hall, and contribution of a library book that catalogued important passages and notable contributors to Massachusetts black history. Recently she served as advisor for the Embrace memorial dedicated to Rev Dr Martin and Coretta King. The National Women's Political Caucus awarded her the woman of courage award for her work expanding diversity in the political arena.



### Marilyn Forman, Dorchester

*Nominated by State Representative Christopher Worrell*

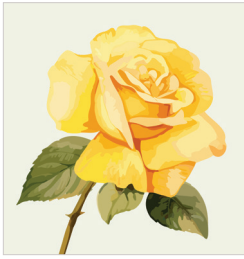
Marilyn Forman, esteemed Director of Community Organizing & Resident Engagement for Codman Square CDC and President of the Erie/Ellington Civic Association, has dedicated her career to the empowerment and upliftment of her community in Boston. Renowned for her unwavering commitment to the community's well-being, Marilyn first made headlines in the '80s for her vigorous campaign to save a local basketball court—a battle she not only won but also reimagined decades later by collaborating with NBA star Jaylen Brown for its redesign. This initiative is just a glimpse into Marilyn's forward-thinking approach to community development, illustrating her ability to blend tradition with innovation for communal enrichment. Beyond her notable achievements in recreational spaces, Marilyn has been a pivotal figure in creating affordable housing solutions across Boston. Her efforts ensure that the community is not just a place where people live but a space where they thrive. Her leadership extends to keeping the neighborhood informed and engaged, making her an indispensable asset to the community. Marilyn Forman's legacy is defined by her relentless pursuit of progress, equity, and unity, marking her as a visionary leader in community organizing.



### Crystal Galvin, Charlestown

*Nominated by State Senator Sal DiDomenico*

Charlestown native Crystal Galvin is the current Director of Community Services at the John F. Kennedy Family Service Center in Charlestown and has worked tirelessly in this role since 2014. As the Charlestown representative for the Boston Family Engagement Network, Crystal has developed a tremendous team of parent partners who offer toddler skill-building playgroups, "Raising a Reader" workshops, and a New Mom support group. Crystal oversees a range of programs to promote social connections and physical/mental health among older adults. Throughout her work, Crystal has kept food at the heart of community programs led by the Kennedy Center whether that means grocery delivery to seniors, bringing fresh produce to the Farmers' Market and the food pantry, or stocking bags of kid-friendly food to send home with children for school vacation weeks. Through early education, eldercare, and community services, Crystal helps uplift and support women across the Commonwealth.



### **Ruth Georges, Boston**

*Nominated by State Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley*

Ruth Georges-Innis is a trailblazer, advocate, leader, and scholar. She is the co-founder of Fanm Kreyol Inc., which is a non-profit service-oriented sisterhood organization that strives to promote more Haitian women as leaders and role models. Ruth has proven to be an integral part of her community as the founder of the Cummins Highway Neighborhood Association and through her past work as the Mattapan & North Dorchester Liaison and Haitian Liaison under Mayor Marty Walsh. She also served as the Manager of Engagement and Employment for youth in the City. Prior to her current role as the Senior Supply Chain Deployment Manager at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), she worked at Eversource. Ruth is truly deserving of the title of Commonwealth Heroine because she goes above and beyond to empower the women around her and pave the way for generations of women to come.



### **Jane McHale, Brighton**

*Nominated by State Senator William Brownsberger*

I am pleased to nominate Jane McHale of Brighton for a Commonwealth Heroine 2024 Award. Jane exemplifies the qualities of a Commonwealth Heroine – someone who has made her community a better place to live and has offered enormous amounts of time, talent, caring, spirit and enthusiasm to get things done that benefit the entire community. Jane, along with her husband Tim, co-founded Music with Heart, a volunteer organization providing interactive music at shelters, prisons, and elder facilities. Jane works tirelessly and passionately, somehow finding time to volunteer (most notably working to help victims of human trafficking), serve on many community boards, attend countless local meetings, and advocate for whatever it takes to make a better neighborhood for all.



### **Melsada Valarie Molyneaux, Hyde Park**

*Nominated by State Representative Rob Consalvo*

Valarie Molyneaux is a wife and mother, and an author, poet, advocate, activist, entrepreneur, educator, notary public, and philanthropist. Val started VITFriends Vitiligo Support Group, Inc (501c3) in 2009, and it expanded to a total of 15 groups across the US. They started a Vitiligo Conference in Boston and it has since been held once a year all over the country. VITFriends has a podcast with a global reach, and Val has just been featured in a documentary called "More than our Skin" about her experience with Vitiligo. Val has been a leading advocate for supporting people with Vitiligo, working with Rep. Consalvo when he was formerly a Boston City Councilor, as well as former Representative Gloria Fox and her aide Mary-dith Tuitt to spread awareness for this disease. Rep. Consalvo worked with Val to file H.976 this legislative session, which would require insurance coverage for people with Vitiligo.



### **Margaret Riley, Winthrop**

*Nominated by State Representative Jeffrey Rosario Turco*

Recognizing a lifetime of service as a sister, mother, wife and community leader. Margaret "Peggy" Riley is one of six siblings. Born in Winthrop and a proud graduate of the Winthrop High School class of 1964. She married the love of her life, Lenny Riley and they had five children. She demonstrated her lifetime role as a caregiver by taking care of her elderly parents and ill brother while raising her children. Peggy's love of her hometown of Winthrop led her to become a community leader as an advocate for Winthrop on all issues related to Massport and the Airport. Her advocacy led to her being the first "citizen" member of the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority Board of Directors from 1985-1989. In the decades that followed, Peggy took a lead role in negotiating a mitigation agreement worth 10s of millions of dollars to the Town of Winthrop. In her "spare time" she was a fiercely and passionately dedicated teacher's aide in special needs. Subsequently becoming a home health aid in caring for the elderly. A proud grandmother of 15 grandchildren, her heart and soul and continues to be the best caregiver to her beloved husband. Her lifetime of service makes Peggy Riley a true example for all.



### **Mercy Robinson, South Boston**

*Nominated by State Representative David Biele*

Mercy Robinson is dedicated to the betterment of low-income households across her community and to bringing about generational change. After honing her skills at ABCD as an infant/toddler teacher and family advocate, Mercy is currently serving and advocating for families throughout the Mary Ellen McCormack and West Broadway Housing Developments as the Executive Director of South Boston En Accion. Through her work, Mercy has improved the quality of life of countless families in a variety of different ways: addressing food access and insecurity throughout the neighborhood; coordinating free, family-friendly events to build community; organizing holiday helper programs; and helping a family recover after being displaced by and losing their necessities to a fire in their home. She also empowers individuals by sponsoring financial workshops, advancing youth leadership opportunities, registering individuals to vote, and helping individuals sign up for health insurance coverage. Mercy recognizes the dignity in every person, invests in her neighbors, and, in doing so, has uplifted her community for the better.



### **Gretchen Van Ness\*, Hyde Park**

*Nominated by U.S. State Senator Elizabeth Warren*

Gretchen Van Ness is a civil rights attorney and past president of the Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts and Hyde Jackson Square Main Street. Honored as a Best of Boston lawyer and one of Boston's top LGBT leaders by Boston Magazine, Gretchen has decades of ground-breaking achievements in community activism and representation for women and the LGBTQ community. Today, she serves as the first executive director of LGBTQ Senior Housing, Inc. – a Hyde Park-based nonprofit organization dedicated to creating LGBTQ+ welcoming, safe, and affordable housing for seniors. Senator Warren is proud to have fought with Gretchen to secure \$850,000 in federal funding for The Pryde in Hyde Park, the organization's newly constructed housing complex and community center.



### **Gladys Vega, Chelsea**

*Nominated by State Representative Judith Garcia*

At nine years old, Gladys Vega relocated from Puerto Rico to Chelsea, Massachusetts, witnessing firsthand the adversities confronting Latino residents in the United States. Gentrification displaced families, economic opportunities eluded neighbors, and deportations tore families apart. Armed with democracy and human rights tools like voter registration, economic development, legislative reform, and educational access, she dedicated herself to securing justice, equality, and opportunities for her community. Joining the Chelsea Collaborative in 1990, later renamed La Colaborativa, Vega juggled various roles as Office Manager, including receptionist, tenant organizer, and immigrant rights advocate. Her dedication and professional demeanor helped La Colaborativa achieve significant victories, earning her respect from colleagues. In 2006, she became the executive director. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified difficulties for Chelsea's undocumented immigrant community. Vega swiftly rallied resources, transforming her office into a vital pantry serving residents in distress. Undeterred by challenges, she continues to uplift her city, now providing food to over 10,000 individuals weekly. Additionally, she recently established a new Survival Center spanning 30,000 square feet, devoted to fostering economic sustainability and mobility for Chelsea's inhabitants and beyond. Emphasizing the significance of collective action in surmounting obstacles, Vega's steadfast leadership serves as a beacon, motivating others to fortify Chelsea's resilient community in the face of adversity.

\* First ever federal nominee



### **Sally Vranos, Revere**

*Nominated by State Representative Jessica Giannino*

Miss. Sally is a true unsung heroine whose remarkable contributions to our community often go unnoticed but deserve the utmost recognition. For 17 years, she has been the heartbeat of the Revere Recreation Department, tirelessly dedicating herself to enhancing the lives of children and families in ways that transcend the ordinary. Through her unwavering commitment and tireless efforts, she orchestrates a myriad of programs and events that serve as pillars of support and enrichment for our community. From crafting and facilitating six weekly programs for children, including the beloved Monday and Friday play groups and engaging story time art sessions, to spearheading life skills programs and monthly gatherings like Kids Night Out and Senior Center crafts, Miss. Sally's contributions are as diverse as they are invaluable. Her dedication extends to organizing Art Camps during school breaks and meticulously planning community events like Touch -a- Truck and Trunk or Treat, where every detail is meticulously crafted under her guidance. Beyond her official duties, Miss. Sally's selflessness knows no bounds. She willingly steps in to clean classrooms and bathrooms, ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all. Her involvement in holiday events, Sunday night concerts, and community center activities further demonstrates her unwavering commitment to serving others. Despite her immense workload, Miss. Sally remains a beacon of positivity and compassion, always ready to lend a helping hand and brainstorm innovative ways to improve the experiences of those she serves. Her dedication, creativity, and selflessness make her a true unsung heroine whose impact resonates far beyond the walls of our Rec Center.

## **Worcester County**



### **Ellen Agro, Mendon**

*Nominated by State Representative Brian Murray*

Compassionate, intelligent and motivated, Ellen Agro is a pillar of the Mendon community. An advocate for public libraries, she served on the Friends of the Taft Public Library, as well as the Board of Trustees, including Chair, while playing a pivotal role in crafting the library's first strategic plan. Ellen has actively participated in multiple boards and committees, including the recent Master Plan Committee. Her involvement extends to community support initiatives like Mendon's Neighbor Brigade. Currently Town Clerk, her efforts contributed to Mendon being recognized as the 2022 Best Voting Community in the district. She performs her duties with grace and good humor, making her a popular officiant for wedding ceremonies. Ellen has also given countless hours as a volunteer to multiple groups supporting education, music, theater and sports. Ellen pursues her passions for curling and disc golf and is leading an effort to introduce disc golf to the town. Her commitment to enhancing community engagement and enjoyment of outdoor spaces reflects her deep care for Mendon and its residents.



### **Dr. Beatrice Cayo DD PhD, Leominster**

*Nominated by State Representative Natalie Higgins*

Rev. Dr. Beatrice Cayo founded the Leominster Haitian American Community Center to unite and support the Haitian Community in Leominster and across Central Massachusetts. In 2019, they hosted the first Leominster Haitian Community Cultural Expo to lift up Haitian American entrepreneurship, food, culture and music. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Rev. Dr. Beatrice Cayo fostered a network of community supports, and that ensured our community could better welcome Haitian families and individuals adopting Leominster as their new home. This network of supports isn't always visible to the larger community, but we know firsthand how the Leominster Haitian American Community Center and Rev. Dr. Beatrice Cayo work to stabilize and support our neighbors. We are grateful for all of the ways this Commonwealth Heroine gives back to Leominster.



### **Amy Cowen, Northbridge**

*Nominated by State Representative David Muradian*

Amy Cowen is a tremendous asset to the Town of Northbridge as the Program and Volunteer Coordinator of the Northbridge Senior Center. This is quite apparent by her daily work with elders. She is compassionate, caring, kind and patient all while being a consummate professional. Amy puts on beautiful and meaningful events for the seniors that are almost always sold out. Each guest can be found with a smile on their face as they dine on a delicious meal and enjoy one another's company. Over the years, she has worked tirelessly with limited resources to ensure the older adult population in Northbridge has a friendly, warm, and open-hearted place to call home. Amy is truly a Commonwealth Heroine to all the citizens of Northbridge.



### **Rebecca Czernicki, Webster**

*Nominated by State Senator Ryan Fattman*

Principal Czernicki is a lifelong educator previously serving as an English teacher, and then Assistant Principal and now Principal of Oxford High School for her second year. She always prioritizes the concerns of her students and is a great advocate for students in need of mental health or social emotional assistances. She is also a very visible leader who is always there to assist, support and cheer on colleagues and students alike. She leads with collaboration in mind and with compassion and conviction. She has gone above and beyond to welcome and support the Fattman Senate Youth Council's (SYC) utilization of her campus as they participate in student leadership opportunities representing the Hampden and Worcester District.



### **Barbara Jandrue, Southborough**

*Nominated by State Representative Kate Donaghue*

Barbara Jandrue is a committed member of the Southborough community. She has dedicated her life to the town, leading the Southborough Food Pantry for a quarter-century. Mrs. Jandrue continues to volunteer for the food pantry with some members of her supportive extended family, which included her husband of 57 years, her five children, six grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. In the past, she has served as a Scout leader and worked with the girl's basketball league. She now volunteers her time with the Southborough Senior Center. Mrs. Jandrue embodies the spirit of public service. Her work has served the community in general, and specifically women and girls through her works with scouts, basketball and the food pantry. She has undertaken the critical work of supporting others in the community through her leadership and example.



### **Miranda Jennings, Winchendon**

*Nominated by State Representative Jonathan Zlotnik*

Miranda has gone above and beyond in her time with the Winchendon CAC and the HEAL Winchendon Initiative. Miranda was an instrumental part of establishing the HEAL (Hope, Empower, Access, Live) initiative in the Town of Winchendon, which supports improving the health and quality of life for residents. Miranda is also the Executive Director of the Winchendon Community Action Committee, a position she has held since 2022. Her personal goal in this position is to ensure that every person that visits the CAC feels welcomed, dignified, and inspired to be the change they want to see in their lives. Through her roles in both organizations, she has brought support and positive changes to the residents of the Town of Winchendon, truly making an impactful difference in her community.



### **Racquel Knight, Worcester**

*Nominated by State Senator Robyn Kennedy*

Racquel is dynamic leader who is passionate about fostering entrepreneurial success and community enrichment with a focus on women entrepreneurs. As Director for CWE in Central MA, she is driven by impactful programs, focusing on empowering underrepresented entrepreneurs, especially women of color. She leverages strategic partnerships by amplifying resources for business growth and innovation. Beyond professional pursuits, her commitment to global citizenship and educational equity shines through her philanthropic work with the For One Child Foundation.



### **Cynthia Laine, Fitchburg**

*Nominated by State Representative Michael Kushmerek*

Cynthia Laine is a mom of 4 brilliant boys, two of whom are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Cynthia and her husband did not receive an instruction manual on how to care and advocate for their boys. The many challenging moments of isolation and confusion is what has brought her to this work of advocacy and support through the Black Autism Coalition. She currently works as a financial coach educating families on how to build their legacy. Cynthia is also an Haitian Creole interpreter and translator for IEP meetings in many cities of the Massachusetts' school system. Cynthia is a council member of the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council, Charting Life Course Ambassador, a member of the Inaugural Advisory Board for the Massachusetts Association of Haitian Parents, a Lend fellow, Families Leadership Series alumnus and a Crocker fellow.



### **Malory O'Brien, Auburn**

*Nominated by State Senator Michael Moore*

It is my honor to nominate Malory O'Brien as a 2024 Commonwealth Heroine. Malory's love for her community is clear from her commitment to share her time, talent, spirit and enthusiasm toward enriching the lives of others. Malory volunteers at Auburn Youth and Family Services, providing countless hours of support to the town's most vulnerable residents. Most recently, she assisted with the collection of food and clothing for the new arrival families living in hotels in Auburn. Malory has instilled the importance of giving back to others in her two young children, who cook and volunteer at local food pantries serving the homeless population. Malory also volunteers with Auburn Youth Sports, the Auburn Public Schools, the Auburn Police Association and serves as a parent representative on Pakachoag Acres Day Care Inc. Board of Directors. For her selflessness commitment to bettering her community, it is my pleasure to nominate Malory as a Commonwealth Heroine.



### **Melanie Petrucci, Shrewsbury**

*Nominated by State Representative Hannah Kane*

Melanie Petrucci is ubiquitous in Shrewsbury. I cannot think of an organization or effort that she has not been an impactful volunteer for to help our community and residents. I first got to know Melanie when we volunteered together on the Celebration in the Garden Party to raise funds for the Shrewsbury Public Schools. Melanie has been a board member of Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services and Shrewsbury Education Foundation and supported the Shrewsbury High School Robotics program. She serves on the Shrewsbury Town Center Association, the Friends of the Shrewsbury Public Library, and has been a member of our Rotary Club. Additionally, Melanie has invested her time and talent serving in various capacities in local town government. She is a long-time Town Meeting Member, and an appointed member of the Historic District Commission. Melanie is always willing to help in any way she can and has made our community stronger!



### **Carmen Rosado, Worcester**

*Nominated by State Representative David LeBoeuf*

Carmen Rosado is currently serving as a Family and Community Engagement Liaison at the Latino Education Institute. Before taking on this role, she dedicated 30 years to the Worcester Public School, where she served as a School Adjustment Counselor. Carmen holds a Master's Degree in Social and Rehabilitation Counseling from Assumption College (1998) and a second Master's Degree in School Leadership and Administration from Worcester State University (2009). Her commitment to the community dates back to 1982, when she first moved here. Carmen has actively participated in various Latino Coalitions, volunteered, and engaged in other community movements. In addition to her impactful work in education and community service, Carmen has taken on leadership roles, mentoring others within her field. Carmen has not only been an advocate for social justice but has also been instrumental in organizing and conducting community workshops and presentations. She created the School Navigation Program, where she assisted many families at the LEI with strategies to navigate the school system, have a better understanding of school requirements, and be more supportive of their children's academic achievement.



### **Wendy Wiiks, Leominster**

*Nominated by State Senator John Cronin*

Wendy Wiiks, Grants Administrator for the City of Leominster, does remarkable work whenever called upon, whether the problem is large or small. September 11, 2023 was a rainy day across Massachusetts, but in Leominster, the rain was catastrophic: nearly 10 inches fell in several hours, stranding evening commuters on flooded-out roads, forcing residents to evacuate from homes, and destroying roads and critical infrastructure. In response to the flash flooding, Wendy worked tirelessly to field residents' damage claims and navigate a complex FEMA submittal process. Her quiet and confident approach with residents, community partners, and elected officials and her unwavering persistence is a demonstration of her character. Wendy displays the qualities of a true *Unsung Heroine* through her unselfish giving and caring for others. I am proud to call her a constituent.



### **Laura Wilson, Oxford**

*Nominated by State Representative Joseph McKenna*

Laura's dedication to the Senior population of Oxford and surrounding areas is outstanding. Laura's warmth, positive energy, and her commitment to providing the best possible experience at the Senior Center to any and all visitors. Laura ensures the center is involved in town events and is usually the first to volunteer her time and services. She coordinates events and services with the local police and fire departments to make sure her seniors are safe. Laura is an asset to the town of Oxford and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



### **Ayn Yeagle, Princeton**

*Nominated by State Representative Kimberly Ferguson*

Ayn's professional goal is to support an equitable and healthy food system in the most underserved communities in North Central MA. She served as the Assistant Director of the Nutrition and Wellness Division at the Montachusett Opportunity Council, Inc. (MOC) for 10 years. At MOC, she immersed herself in the community and gained more knowledge, skills, and awareness about the root causes of food insecurity in North Central MA, and the importance of advocacy, policy/system change, and social justice to positively impact nutrition and health, than she could ever learn in a classroom. Ayn joined Growing Places as the Executive Director in February 2018. The mission at Growing Places is to inspire and connect the North Central MA community to create equitable access to healthy food and environmental sustainability through education, collaboration, and advocacy. She considers this position to be her dream job, and even more so as it landed her back at her roots in North Central MA.

# SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

2024

In honor of our 25th Anniversary the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women proudly launched the MCSW scholarship program, funded by the MCSW Trust Fund. This program aims to support emerging leaders of the Commonwealth in continuing their education journey to leadership and economic empowerment. Designed to support woman-identifying students already enrolled in a Massachusetts Public Higher Education Institution, scholarships were awarded to help women of the Commonwealth complete their degree and advance their economic and educational futures. Join us in congratulating these five exceptional women!



## **Liza Bullock, Bristol County**

*Bridgewater State University | Expected Date of Graduation: December 2025*

As a lifelong resident of Brockton, I've been deeply rooted in my community, witnessing its evolution firsthand. Growing up as the youngest in a large family, I've learned the value of education from my mom, a steadfast advocate for learning. As a single mom, I've devoted myself to raising my son, guiding him to become a proud Marine, embodying the dedication and resilience instilled in our family. Over nearly two decades, I've contributed to the Brockton public school system, initially as a paraprofessional and now striving to transition into a teaching position to impact students' lives further. Despite my dedication, securing the necessary credentials for my teaching aspirations has posed challenges. This scholarship offers a transformative opportunity, bridging the gap between my current role and my professional goals. With the financial support provided, I can pursue the credentials needed to solidify my role as an educator, enhancing my impact on the community. This scholarship holds immense significance for me, fulfilling a lifelong dream as the first in my family to graduate with a bachelor's degree. It honors my mom's legacy and the values she instilled in me. By investing in my education, this scholarship benefits not only me but also future generations. Achieving my goal of securing credentials will enable me to make a meaningful difference in students' lives, ensuring they receive the education they deserve. I am grateful for this opportunity and committed to maximizing its impact professionally and in serving my community.



## **Chisom Ifejiolor, Suffolk County**

*Roxbury Community College | Expected Date of Graduation: May 2025*

My name is Chisom Ifejiolor, I'm a nursing student at Roxbury Community College, where I have been learning how to apply critical thinking skills and empathetic nursing techniques and care for patients, I have worked so hard on this passion, and I have been able to achieve a 3.7 credit unit in school. I grew up in a third world country where the low socioeconomic status doesn't have much access or finances for medical services. My lifelong desire is to give back to my community especially women and children, I have a goal to open a free maternity clinic for women in my community. I want to inspire the next generation to have confidence in every challenging step of life and prioritize their health over anything.





### **Veronica Nault, Berkshire County**

*Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) | Expected Date of Graduation: May 2025*

My name is Veronica Nault, and I am an Environmental Studies student at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, focusing on Environmental Science. At MCLA, I am currently the Vice-President of the Outdoors Club, President of Gardening Club, and am a research technician for the Environmental Studies department. Outside of school, I have done conservation and trail work in Holyoke and Berkshire County as a youth trail-crew leader. This summer, I will be working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in North Dakota at Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge. For the past few months, I have been learning how to safely work with and band birds, completing a bird banding internship. Through this I have had the privilege to intern at a banding station in Berkshire County. Overall, I am passionate about conservation work and wildlife protection, which I plan on pursuing throughout my last year of undergraduate education and into the future.



### **Alyda Yim, Essex County**

*Salem State University | Expected Date of Graduation: May 2025*

As an occupational therapy student, I am passionate and driven about providing assistance to others to achieve independence and improve their quality of life. Being a first-generation college student, I draw strength from my mother, who immigrated from Cambodia seeking a better future for our family. Her resilient qualities related to her courage and determination has always inspired me to work hard no matter how difficult life gets. While balancing the demands of occupational therapy school and the responsibilities from my three part-time jobs, I am able to manage my time efficiently while remaining focused on my goals. My family is a core of who I am, as I am fortunate enough to share my journey with my two sisters, two fur babies, and my father who all motivate me each day to keep going. Once finished with occupational therapy school, I aspire to specialize in women's pelvic health in hopes of empowering and advocating for women across Massachusetts to advance their life within the healthcare system.



### **Emanuelle Zeni, Worcester County**

*Worcester State University | Expected Date of Graduation: April 2025*

My name is Emanuelle Zeni, a college student pursuing a degree in Political Science studies at Worcester State University. I have a profound passion for understanding the intricate mechanisms that shape societies and governments and hope to attain a career in policy development. My keen interest in societal structures has led me to pursue a career in politics, and I am particularly interested in advocating for the rights of women, racial minorities and the disability community. The necessity of legal framework engagement resides in the hands of the people, and only the people can make a difference. Attaining a degree seemed out of my league as a first-generation Latina student, yet all is possible through resilience and hard work. I am honored to be considered a receiver for the MCSW Scholarship Award. This award will help me with the financial hardships that come along with pursuing higher education, thus I am tremendously grateful for this opportunity.





## *The Meaning of the Yellow Rose*

The yellow rose is a symbol of the women who struggled for 72 years to be included in the United States Constitution. They achieved their goal through a peaceful revolution without firing a single shot.

Courageous suffragists faced jail, hunger strikes, years of organizing, ridicule, and great disappointment before achieving full suffrage when the 19th Amendment was finally adopted in 1920.

They came from rural and urban backgrounds, different economic classes, different races and generations. They worked together. Diversity became their strength as they united under a symbol: the yellow rose. The yellow rose stood for unity, friendship, and determination.

Today, the yellow rose reminds us that our own work to improve the status of women in the Commonwealth continues... requiring diversity, unity, and determination. We must strive for victory in our own peaceful revolutions.



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