THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Eighteenth Annual **Commonwealth Heroines** of Massachusetts

JUNE 23, 2021

Please join us in celebrating the 2021 Commonwealth Heroines of Massachusetts!

@MassCSW

#CHeroines2021

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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Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women
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www.mass.gov/women

Greetings!

It is an honor for us to identify extraordinary women from across the Commonwealth.

We would like to thank our many legislative partners who have recommended and recognized women within their district who perform unheralded acts daily that make our homes, neighborhoods, cities and towns better places to live. These acts of public leadership and volunteerism help advance the status of women and girls in Massachusetts in ways big and small, and the collective effort is meaningful.

The Commonwealth Heroines of 2021 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. Again, congratulations and thank you for all your special efforts to make the Commonwealth a better place to live and work.

As you read through stories celebrating your fellow community members, we know that all that is happening in our Commonwealth every day will move you. While we understand that many of you may have wanted to celebrate in person, we encourage you to connect with each other online with the hashtag #CHeroines2021 to congratulate one another and foster that same community that is cultivated every year at the Commonwealth Heroines celebration.

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

"They don't always make the news,

but they truly make the difference."

Olivia Adams • Cathy Long Anderson • Rhonda Anderson • Julia Armstrong • Doreen Arnfield • Carmen E. Bermudez • Jodi Breidel • Alejna Brugos • Sharon Cameron • Marie Caradonna • Beth Casavant • Heather Cheetham • Mary Ciummo • Mary Connolly • Patricia Contente • Marta Corvelo • Macayla Cote • Darlene Coyle • Shelley Crohn • Kristi Cullinane • Kathleen Cunningham • Sandra Cuny • Rosamaria Daniele • Dr. Jennifer E. DeBarros • Michele Desmarais • Nicole Doak • Heather Doss Prince • Emma Dragon • Mai Du • Dr. Neenah Estrella-Luna Deborah Fallon • Juliette Fay • Kamie Fessenden • Lisa Field • Carmen Ines Figueroa • Sabrina Firicano • Heather Fleming • Christina Florence • Laura Flávio • Connie Forbes • Nancy Frates • Kelly Frazier • Carol Freitas • Carmen Frias-Interrante • Dottie Fulginiti • Sheilah Gauch • Taryn Gillis • Ellie Gilmore • Keeta S. Gilmore • Katey Goehringer • Maria Gomes • Jeny Gonzalez • Joan Goodwin • Kathleen Graham • Barbara Hamilton • Susan Hanly • Vaira Harik • Tina Hein • Laurie Higgins • Beth Hogan • Evelyn Humphries • Meredith Hurley • Lossa Janvier Julie • Kathleen Jespersen • Phyllis Jones • Lori Joubert • Patricia Daniel Keenan • Barbara Kelly Caputo • Caroline Kinsella • Amy Kirsch • Catherine Kope • Barbara LaGrenade • Eliza Lake • MaryEllen Lannon • Lisa Lopez • Leah Lovasco • Wendy Luzon • Emily MacRae • Kelly Marion • Jynai McDonald • Connie McGilvray • Ashley Melnik • Meredith Mendelson • Myriam Michel • Carol Miranda • Patricia Monteith • Christianne Mylott • Patricia Nadle • Dawn Naylor • Ndoumbe Ndoyelaye • Hang Ngo • Kelly O'Connor • Merridith O'Leary • Deborah Olander • Shavel'le Olivier • Lucy Pacheco • Donna Palmer • Allison Park • Barbara Parmenter • Pamela Peirce • Lucy Pineda • Angela Pitter • Gina Plata-Nino • Deepika Prakash • Cheryl Rawinski • Carol Read • Carolyn Roberson • Dawn Roche • Nayroby Rosa-Soriano • Gwendolyn Rosemond • Laura Rosi • Maria Sagarino • Megan Savage • Christina Shafer • Sandra Sheehan • Cynthia Sierra • Laina Simone • Kathleen Swallow • Heather Sylvia • Usha Thakrar • Mary Verry Beth •

Jennifer Vitelli McCormack • Shana Wang • Corinn Williams • Lindsay Wright •

Theresa Young • Lisa Zarcone

THE HEROINES

2021

Inspired by her mother-in-law's struggle booking a vaccination appointment, Olivia Adams dedicated her maternity leave to creating a website to help not only her mother-in-law, but all Massachusetts residents, schedule vaccine appointments. The website, dubbed macovidvaccines.com, centralized thousands of websites that were scheduling appointments from both the state and private businesses. The website proved successful in the early days of the vaccine distribution, and she was even in touch with the Governor's office on ways to work collaboratively on vaccine scheduling. Olivia's work is truly inspirational during these unprecedented times.

Olivia Adams, Arlington
Recommended by
Rep. Sean Garballey

Cathy Long Anderson has a heart of gold and is affectionately known as the Mayor of Sagamore. Everyone knows Cathy, and Cathy knows everyone. Always there with a smile and a warm hug, Cathy is a stoic and selfless leader who works hard every day to live a life of service before self. Despite the pandemic this past year, Cathy continues to push forward and contribute hundreds of hours of her time providing fresh food and clean clothes for Veterans and Military Families. She is a lead volunteer of the highly successful Food4Vets and Coats4Vets programs on Cape Cod and across the Commonwealth. Cathy is one in a million, and I am proud to recommend her for this prestigious and well-deserved award. She is truly the glue that helps keep our community together.

Cathy Long Anderson, Sagamore
Recommended by
Rep. Steven Xiarhos

Rhonda Anderson, Colrain
Recommended by
Sen. Jo Comerford

Rhonda Anderson is Iñupiaq-Athabascan from Alaska. Her Native enrollment village is Kaktovik. Her life works, most importantly, is as a Mother, as well as a classically trained Herbalist, Silversmith, and activist. Rhonda is an educator within area schools and the five colleges near her home. Vital, Vibrant, Visible: Indigenous Identity Through Portraiture was developed and curated by Anderson to highlight our local and diverse population of Native Americans. Rhonda has sat on several Indigenous panels and roundtables to discuss how to implement the Hyde Amendment within all Indian Health Service institutions across the United States, how to educate Native students in Massachusetts better, issues regarding Native teen drug and alcohol use, Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, and reproductive rights. Her activism includes work to remove Native American mascots, Water Protector, Indigenous identity, and protecting her traditional homelands in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from extractive industry. Rhonda is the Western Massachusetts Commissioner to Indian Affairs, a founding member, and Co-Director of the Ohketeau Cultural Center and the Native Youth Empowerment Foundation.

Julia Armstrong, Leominster
Recommended by
Rep. Natalie Higgins

Julia Armstrong co-founded the Restoration Recovery Center with her husband Mark in 2018, hoping to create a peer support recovery center respond with a person-centered approach, promoting long-term recovery by providing holistic and faith-based recovery alternatives. Julia works as an RN at a Behavioral Health Hospital, with nearly 20 years of experience in Emergency Nursing, Community Nursing, and Addictions/Recovery Nursing. She is also a graduate of the CCAR Recovery Coach Academy. In 2019, the Restoration Recovery Center committed to reopening a neighborhood center in Fitchburg. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, Julia and the RRC have worked tirelessly in 2020/2021 to open a Warming Center to meet the needs of our most vulnerable community members, providing breakfast and lunch six days per week.

Over the past decade, Doreen Arnfield has been an extraordinary public servant in her role as director for the Amesbury Council on Aging. A licensed social worker and certified personal trainer, she has assisted countless seniors and adults with disabilities in accessing critical resources such as fuel assistance, housing and transportation. Doreen's tireless advocacy has especially been on display over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, as she has connected members of the community with the resources they need to get by during this challenging time. She is richly deserving of this recognition!

Doreen Arnfield, Amesbury
Recommended by
Sen. Diana DiZoglio

It is with immense pleasure that I recommend Carmen E. Bermudez, founder of Hope Dove Inc, a local non-profit organization dedicated to making a difference in the lives of those less fortunate. Carmen grew up in Puerto Rico, has four children, and moved with her family to the United States mainland. Having faced many challenges seeking resources and aid for her children, three of which are epileptic, Carmen made it her mission to assist others facing similar challenges. In 2004, after many years of helping others without a formal organization, Hope Dove Inc. was founded. Through Carmen's passion and commitment, along with many devoted volunteers, Hope Dove Inc. continues to be a helping hand for so many in need. Outside of her work with the community, Carmen enjoys time with her family and friends. I believe that Carmen E. Bermudez has all the characteristics and qualities that represent and embody a Commonwealth Heroine.

Carmen E. Bermudez, Lowell
Recommended by
Rep. Thomas A. Golden

Jodi Breidel exemplifies what it means to be a Commonwealth Heroine. Jodi is the North County Regional Director of WHEAT in Clinton. For years Jodi has fed those in hunger in and around Clinton. When the pandemic was taking away people's jobs, careers, friends, and families, Jodi kept the food pantry stocked. In the most uncertain times of the pandemic, Jodi was able to keep people fed. After the COVID State of Emergency was declared in March 2020, WHEAT distributed over 20,000 meals—double the meals distributed in 2019. In addition to the 6 towns surrounding Clinton that WHEAT provides service to, Jodi helped expand WHEAT access to 15 additional towns during the first surge of the pandemic. Jodi has always been a pillar of the community and her unwavering commitment to helping those around her continues to be a source of hope as we continue on a path towards recovery. I am honored to recommend Jodi Breidel as a Commonwealth Heroine.

Jodi Breidel, Clinton
Recommended by
Rep. Meghan Kilcoyne

Alejna Brugos has been an active member of the community for several years. She is chair of the Mendon Taxation Aid Committee, which provides financial assistance to homeowners age 60 and over or disabled, who are income eligible and require help to pay their real estate taxes to remain in their homes. She also serves as vice-chair of the Mendon Democratic Town Committee and affirmative outreach coordinator. Alejna is a founding member of Mendon-Upton Citizens for Social Justice, which was created to increase awareness of social justice issues at the local, state, and national level. She has helped coordinate demonstrations, weekly anti-racism seminars, and fundraising for school social justice resources and a speaker series for the community. During this past election, Alejna coordinated a local GOTV effort which resulted in contact with over 4,000 voters in the swing states of Michigan, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Georgia.

Alejna Brugos, Mendon
Recommended by
Rep. Brian Murray

During the Coronavirus pandemic this past year, public health official Sharon Cameron has been at the forefront of Peabody's response, testing, and vaccination programs. Sharon has served as the City of Peabody's Director of Health and Human Services for over 15 years. She studied at Harvard University, earning her Bachelor's Degree in Biology and her Master's of Public Administration from Harvard Kennedy School. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Sharon has coordinated and been involved in every aspect of Peabody's pandemic response. From overseeing public health staff, to assisting the school system with reopening and contact tracing procedures, to helping seniors and residents of all ages receive their vaccines, Sharon has been an instrumental part of Peabody's health and safety. Sharon has been a leader in Peabody, and is the definition of a Commonwealth Heroine.

Sharon Cameron, Peabody
Recommended by
Rep. Thomas Walsh

Marie Caradonna was moved to activism in the wake of the many social movements of the 1960s. As a teacher and union representative, Marie worked with her school's Title IX committee to ensure equitable opportunities for girls and boys in athletics, enhance educational opportunities for all genders, and implement sexual harassment policies to protect students and staff. She has worked with both the METCO & COPAY programs in her school, and advocated successfully to change the school's offensive Native American mascot. To support her school's LGBTQ+ students, she implemented and co-advised one of the first Gay-Straight Alliances in Commonwealth. Wanting to continue working after 36 years as a teacher, Marie helped Rep. Jack Patrick Lewis launch OUT MetroWest, a group which meets the social needs of area LGBTQ+ teens. She continues to work with OUT MetroWest and DESE to develop LGBTQ+ curriculum units. "Christa McAuliffe said teachers touch the future. I am fortunate to continue touching the future." - Marie Caradonna

Marie Caradonna, Ashland
Recommended by
Rep. Jack Patrick Lewis

Beth Casavant, Shrewsbury
Recommended by
Rep. Hannah Kane

Beth Casavant moved to Shrewsbury in 2008 and has worked tirelessly ever since to make our community stronger. A truly selfless and humble volunteer, Beth has successfully led large community-wide efforts to pass our first operational override and build new schools and a police station. She is the director of an annual charity golf tournament that raises funds for local human service organizations. Beth is also the first to volunteer for the non-glamourous, unheralded jobs of cleaning bathroom facilities after a late-night fundraiser for Shrewsbury Public Schools, staffing a multi-day PTO magazine fundraiser, or going door-to-door to help a candidate running for office. Beth has undertaken all of these efforts and many more, all while raising two daughters. She illustrates the life lesson she learned from her parents: joyfully giving one's time and talent pays dividends to the communities you call home.

Heather Cheetham, Somerset

Recommended by

Sen. Michael Rodrigues

Heather Cheetham has served as the Town of Somerset's Veteran's Service Officer since June 9, 2011. She is the first female Veterans Service Officer for the town, and proudly holds that title today. Heather served actively for 4 years in the US Navy, with a rank of Damage Control Petty Officer 2nd Class. She currently serves on many boards across the state, including the Massachusetts Veterans Service Officer Association, Southcoast Massachusetts Veterans Service Officer Association, Bristol Community College Veterans Organization, a member of Wreaths Across America, and was a Selective Service Cadet interviewer for Congressman Joseph Kennedy III. Heather helps our local Veterans with their entitled benefits such as pensions, education, insurance, hospitalization, medical care, burial benefits, and many other services that our local Veterans need. She serves as the administrator for aiding low-income veterans, servicing veterans, widows, and their dependents. Her Veterans Department is responsible for planning the Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies and marking the Veterans Graves on Memorial Day. Serving as the Town of Somerset's Veteran's Service Officer she has coordinated new events for the town and surrounding communities "Somerset Veterans Appreciation Breakfast" and the "Remembering Veterans 5K."

Since moving to Bolton two decades ago, Mary Ciummo has not been shy about getting involved with the community. She gives her time to many local committees and groups. She is chair of Bolton's Public Ways Safety Committee and former chair of the town's Mobility Committee. She serves the Bolton Historical Society (director and secretary), Friends of the Bolton Seniors (president) and is co-coordinator of the Sawyer Scholastic Fair. She is also a former Cub Scout den leader. This year, we are especially grateful to Mary for the work she has done during the pandemic for Bolton's seniors. As Bolton's Council on Aging representatives say, she has gone "above and beyond." Mary has organized meals and drive-thrus, delivered 'boredom buster' kits to seniors' homes, and committed the Friends to supporting Bolton seniors in numerous creative and critical ways.

Mary Ciummo, Bolton

Recommended by

Rep. Kate Hogan

Mary Connolly, Haverhill

Recommended by

Rep. Andres Vargas

Mary Connolly serves as the Public Health Nurse for the city of Haverhill. Throughout this pandemic, she has taken on a tremendous load of service to the residents of Haverhill. Early on in the pandemic she managed calls to residents in quarantine, seniors in need of groceries, and families seeking support. Once the vaccine became available, Mary helped clinics to vaccinate all of Haverhill's public safety personnel. Now she's providing over a thousand first and second dose shots per week to Haverhill residents. Her commitment to equity was further exemplified when she opened a Saturday vaccine clinic in the heart of Haverhill's Mt. Washington neighborhood. Regardless of the task or time available, Mary Connolly finds a way to deliver vaccines to the most vulnerable residents. She is Haverhill's heroine.

Patricia Contente runs the Community Outreach Help and Recovery Department for the City of Somerville. Her work with people suffering from substance abuse and caught in the criminal justice system has saved hundreds of lives and put people that were considered lost causes on the path towards redemption. Patty leads outreach efforts with the homeless, assist people struggling with addiction to find gainful employment and remove them from the prison pipeline, and encourages harm reduction methods and treatment over incarceration.

Patricia Contente, Somerville

Recommended by

Sen. Patricia Jehlen

Over this past year, Marta Corvelo has gone above and beyond to serve the people of the Merrimack Valley. While she's usually working her magic behind the scenes in site operations, she entered the spotlight in the early days of the vaccine rollout to help our seniors access local vaccinations. She has continued working with 14th Essex communities to streamline an otherwise complicated process, ensuring our most vulnerable residents were not left behind. Marta's work is always focused through a lens of equity, and driven by a desire to further the GLFHC mission of whole community health and wellness. The Merrimack Valley is fortunate to have Marta on our team!

Marta Corvêlo, North Andover
Recommended by
Rep. Christina Minicucci

Macayla Cote has been volunteering and working with Mill City Grows since she was a high school student in Lowell. She is now a full-time staff member. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Macayla worked with the team to start a program where Lowell Public School garden produce was harvested, packed, and delivered for free every week to families in need through the LPS grab and go meals sites. The program was so successful that partners at Lowell Schools Food and Nutrition have been working with Macayla to grow the program for summer 2021. Macayla truly knows Lowell, and is a champion for food justice in our community!

Macayla Cote, Lowell
Recommended by
Rep. Vanna Howard

It is my privilege to recommend Darlene Coyle of Leicester for the Commonwealth Heroine Award. Darlene currently serves as Director of Public Health in the Town of Auburn. While we know that many municipal employees have played an important role during Covid 19, Ms. Coyle has gone above and beyond the duties expected of a municipal employee. Darlene embodies what a Public Health Director should be. Darlene is passionate about public health and her approach is that of aggressive education and outreach rather than of punishment. She is compassionate, energetic, empathetic and professional. Darlene worked after hours, nights and weekends ensuring safe delivery of vaccines. She purchased needed equipment on her own time to store the vaccines. Darlene sought to identify every eligible homebound resident to receive vaccines and services. Her personal outreach and follow up should be recognized. Darlene has demonstrated an immense amount of leadership, responsibility and selflessness in her work during these challenging times of a Global Pandemic and for these reasons Darlene Coyle is deserving of this honorable recognition.

Darlene Coyle, Leicester
Recommended by
Sen. Michael Moore

Shelley was born and raised in Springfield MA and attended Boston University. She and her family have lived in Brookline for 40 years. Shelley has worked her entire adult life to improve opportunities for the larger community, including co-managing and supervising several successful school and town override campaigns. She was PTO co-president at her children's elementary school, and a chief fundraiser for the High School PTO. Shelley has also volunteered as shift coordinator at the local Food Pantry. For over a decade she has focused on working weekly with clients at Dress for Success, an international non-profit assisting women looking to join the workforce. There she also served as Director of the Professional Women's Group, a support group for working women clients which met monthly for dinner and a speaker's series. When COVID closed the Dress location, she designed a program with several large retailers to provide shopping opportunities, and worked with clients online to obtain new suits and accessories for job interviews. This successful remote program is now being used worldwide.

Shelley Crohn, Brookline
Recommended by
Sen. Cynthia Stone Creem

Kristi Cullinane, Pembroke
Recommended by
Rep. Josh Cutler

Ever since moving to Pembroke, Kristi Cullinane has exemplified what it means to be a community leader. This past year, Kristi has been pushing for equity and inclusion within her community by co-founding "Pembroke For Racial Justice"(P4RJ). This grassroots movement organizes protests, educates the public on systemic racism, and advocates for changes to be made at the local level. In addition to her advocacy work, Kristi has taken leadership roles within her community serving on the Pembroke Advisory Committee, the executive board for the North Pembroke PTO, and the social justice committee for Pembroke public schools. Before working on the Advisory Committee, Kristi worked on the Recreation Commission in Pembroke with the same goal of inclusivity. Kristi continually demonstrates the value of inclusivity within our communities through her hard work within Pembroke's schools, athletics, and administrative services. Her work and accomplishments this past year can be summed up by her own words: "There's something to be said to having a voice in the whole community instead of just one part."

Kathy Cunningham became the coordinator for the Watertown Food Pantry in 2017. Over the past year, she led a team of a dozen Watertown Food Pantry volunteers, working heroically at great risk to their own health and well-being. During the pandemic, the Watertown Food Pantry quadrupled the number of families served. Kathy's team spent countless hours packing and distributing canned goods and fresh produce to local families in crisis. The volunteers also delivered boxes of food to Watertown housing units in order to keep senior citizens safely at home. Kathy's capacity to make local hometown connections and support her neighbors in need has been nothing short of extraordinary. Thanks to her efforts, donations to the food pantry from the community have been at an all-time high.

Kathleen Cunningham, Watertown
Recommended by
Rep. Steven Owens

Sandra Cuny, Falmouth
Recommended by
Rep. David Vieira
Sen. Susan Moran

A Falmouth native, Sandra lives in Falmouth with her husband Dennis. Sandra has been a Town Meeting Member since 1985 and a community volunteer for over forty years. She serves on several committees, including the Community Preservation Committee, the Recreation Committee, and the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Sandra volunteered with the Falmouth Public Schools for twenty-two years, and in 2000 she worked with the FHS Senior class to create the Falmouth Teen Center. Sandra's involvement with the recreational center extends well into many of their programs, including recreational sports coaching and the Celebrations After-Prom committee. She currently serves as the Treasurer for Together We Can, Inc., overseeing the finances of the nine community organizations under the Together We Can umbrella.

Rosemarie Daniele is a driven and inexorable woman. When she is confronted with an issue, she will go to depths to address and solve it. In 1976, Rosemarie started her business under the name Bob & Rico's Specialty Market, in the heart of the South End in Springfield. Bob & Rico's Specialty Market vends groceries, sandwiches, and subs. Rosemarie is heavily involved in the community and her business has sponsored touch football teams, provided scholarships, and sponsored stickball and bocce tournaments. Every year, Rosemarie's business honors law enforcement officers with a Police Day event in Springfield. Rosemarie herself enjoys traveling, decorating, and cooking. She has invented new recipes, some of which she serves at the buffet.

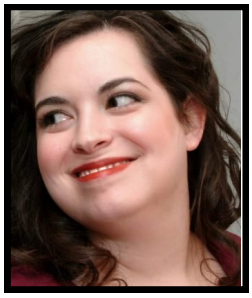
Rosamaria Daniele, Springfield
Recommended by
Rep. Carlos Gonzalez

Dr. Jennifer E. DeBarros is a New Bedford native committed to supporting youth and families from the ground level up. She has been an advocate, organizer, and community educator for twenty-five years. Her educational journey started with a GED and lead her to her PhD. She discovered her passion while interning at a local non-profit organization named Treatment on Demand, Inc. in 1996. This sparked her interest in social justice as she learned her own adversities were tied to a larger, historical, and collective movement through civil rights advocacy and activism. She has received awards from the Coalition for Social Justice, Suns of Panthers, Bristol Community College as their African American Alumnus, and the New Bedford NAACP. She currently leads the HEAL Center at NorthStar Learning Centers which received the Commissioner's 2020 Community Partner Award from the Department of Youth Services for its innovative and impactful approach in supporting young adults through healing-centered practices. New Bedford is very lucky to have her energy and commitment focused on our community.

Dr. Jennifer E. DeBarros, New Bedford
Recommended by
Rep. Antonio F.D. Cabral

Michele Desmarais has been instrumental in Lynn's fight against COVID-19 as the Public Health Director. During these challenging and unprecedented times, Michele has worked diligently through COVID-19's devastating and far-reaching impacts on Lynn and its people. Ms. Desmarais has risen to the challenge as Lynn's Public Health Director and has shown tremendous leadership, capability and compassion. Michele has coordinated multiple efforts in the fight against COVID-19, such as coordinating vaccine distribution and testing with the Lynn Community Health Center, implementing health guidelines for the city, and monitoring and protecting our seniors. Michele has also made tremendous strides in educating middle school students of the dangers of vaping and works tirelessly on substance use disorder initiatives. Lynn has truly benefited from Michelle's hard work and devotion to its residents and her ability to rise to the challenge of COVID-19.

Michele Desmarais, Lynn
Recommended by
Rep. Dan Cahill



When Framingham Public Schools closed for what people assumed would be "just a few days" in March 2020, Nicole Doak immediately thought of families who relied on the schools' free breakfasts and lunches. Poking around Facebook, she saw "an overwhelming amount of worry, and so many people wanting to help." She thought, "We need a system." So she built one: the Framingham Coronovirus Community Outreach group had a core team within weeks and more than 100 volunteers shopping, packing, and delivering food to Framingham families. For the next year, Nicole led this mutual-aid group providing information on a host of issues—domestic violence, Covid testing, vaccines, food security-- and connecting people to emotional support services including AA Zoom support and free clinicians. While the need and the 24/7 pace Nicole has kept up are not abating, she says her Community Outreach Group is a stopgap, changing and adapting but not intended for the long-term. That said, the group has built bridges that will have lasting impact. "These are neighbor issues, not political issues," she says, "and the people pitching in have learned that volunteering changes you as well as the people you're helping."

Nicole Doak, Framingham
Recommended by
Senate President Karen Spilka

Carmen Ines Figueroa, Brockton
Recommended by
Rep. Michelle DuBois

When Ines Figueroa retired from her 25-year career as a sexual assault and domestic violence counselor, she sought to help Brockton's growing Latinx community. Ines soon learned there were only a few local groups breaking through to the Spanish-speaking, Latinx community. So, in her 70s, Ines launched the Latin Women's Association of Brockton and became its first director. Each year this all-volunteer group helps hundreds of Latinx immigrant families. Ines leads efforts to create a beloved community here in Brockton for our Latinx families who struggle with poverty, racism, and now COVID. She surrounds immigrant families with a community that's centered in familiar Latinx culture: get-togethers, youth engagement activities, free translation services, weekly mental health support groups, assistance with accessing social safety net support, food distribution, and a special empathy that comes from understanding the struggle these immigrant families face.

Sabrina Firicano is the Director of Health and Human Services for the City of Everett, using her skills as a registered nurse to serve the city. She has been an incredible leader during the COVID-19 pandemic, setting up early guidelines to help Everett residents understand the virus and how to protect themselves. She has worked tirelessly to protect the City and educate its residents. Earlier this year, she helped organize a COVID-19 vaccine clinic, aimed to help those who could not make it to a mass vaccination site. Everett is proud to have a hometown heroine working on the front lines in this hectic time.

Sabrina Firicano,Everett
Recommended by
Rep. Joseph McGonagle

Heather Fleming, Boxborough
Recommended by
Rep. Danillo Sena

Heather Fleming has consistently gone above and beyond for the town of Boxborough. Heather started and presently runs Neighbors of Boxborough, one of the go-to social media presences in Boxborough. She has used this platform to support to families in need, increase involvement with the town and local organizations, and to promote local businesses (of which she is a consummate patron and champion). Furthermore, Boxborough recently experienced a fire that displaced families in 24 houses. Following the fire, Heather spearheaded an organization to provide support to the fire victims. This organization created a support network, facilitated support from local organizations, and raised awareness of the fire on social media. Boxborough would not be where it is today without Heather's tremendous contributions.

Christina spent four years advocating for families and children working with public and private organizations as well as school districts. Reflecting upon experiences observed working with family's' access to resources and housing, Christina expanded her service to include public health. Primarily performing permitting inspections until the Covid-19 pandemic; Christina quickly became the point person for organizing the community response. In April 2020, Christina was named the Health Supervisor. She redrafted the Town of Palmer's EDS plan (emergency dispensing site), coordinated reopening phases with the Town's businesses and the reopening of two school districts. In January 2021, Christina was additionally named the Operation Director for the regional vaccination site in Palmer at Converse School. The Palmer area was a vaccine desert before Christina sprang to action opening the site, amassing volunteers and assuring the most vulnerable would receive vaccines. Christina is the mother of two daughters and enjoys kick boxing.

Christina Florence, Palmer
Recommended by
Sen. Anne Gobi

Laura Flávio was born in Lima, Peru. Out of a desire to care for people in need, she pursued nursing at the Instituto Superior Daniel Alcides Carrión. She immigrated to the United States in 1999 and settled with her husband in Somerville where they currently live with their two children. While mastering English at the Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences, Laura worked at the Cambridge Hospital in patient food services. For the past six years, Laura has helped coordinate the efforts of the adult education English language program at the Somerville Family Learning Collaborative. Laura is also a founding member of the English Learner Advisory Council where she works with the Welcome Project and Somerville Public Schools to advise new immigrant families and students on how to navigate English learning resources, social services, and enrichment opportunities.

Laura Flávio, Somerville
Recommended by
Rep. Mike Connolly

Connie Forbes is devoted to giving back to her community and helping ensure that her neighborhood is inclusive, developing, and impacting the people of the community. Connie is a member of the Garrison Trotter Neighborhood Association, which is located in Roxbury. As a board member, she is engaged and on the frontlines, fighting for equity for the residents of Roxbury. Among all the amazing things Connie has contributed to the community, she also participates in monthly community meetings, where she educates the people of Roxbury on neighborhood issues, development projects, etc. Connie is concerned about the wellbeing of her neighborhood and community interaction and cohesion.

Connie Forbes, Roxbury
Recommended by
Rep. Chynah Tyler

Nancy is the proud mother of the late Pete Frates, ALS patient and advocate and inspiration for the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. Since Pete's diagnosis, Nancy has immersed herself in the ALS community as an advocate and thought leader. She has traveled and networked to the offices of CEO's, Senators, Congressmen, top doctors and governmental authorities. She has testified in Washington DC on Capitol Hill, at the White House and to an FDA panel regarding important issues affecting the ALS community. Since the start of the Ice Bucket Challenge in 2014, Nancy and Pete's friends and family, better known as Team Frate Train, have raised more than $220 million for ALS nonprofits around the world. Nancy and Pete's story have inspired countless others and brought immense awareness to ALS.

Nancy Frates, Beverly
Recommended by
Sen. Joan B. Lovely

Kelly Frazier, Lawrence
Recommended by
Rep. Frank Moran

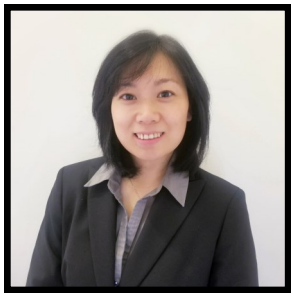
Kelly Frazier is an outstanding community member, who works tirelessly to ensure that our Veterans have a strong support system and resources available to them. She started the non-profit organization, International Veterans Care Services, in the City of Lawrence as an organization that provides our Veterans with support services, resources and a community. On a weekly basis Kelly delivers food from the International Veterans Care Services Food Pantry to Veterans in the City of Lawrence and across the Merrimack Valley. She makes sure that our veterans who pass away are given proper burials with respect and honor for the time they served our country. Most recently, Kelly has been giving our Veterans rides to get the COVID-19 Vaccine and has been instrumental in making sure that they have all the necessary information regarding the vaccines. Kelly has touched the lives of so many Veterans and their families, and continues to do amazing work through her organization daily.

Heather Prince Doss, Lowell
Recommended by
Sen. Ed Kennedy

Rev. Heather Prince Doss came to Lowell in 2015 as the new pastor at the Eliot Presbyterian Church and quickly became an important member of the community. Her church is located downtown and serves a multi-cultural population, which includes many immigrants and refugees. It is a place where people from all backgrounds can come together and have built community. During the pandemic, Heather led Eliot Church to start a daytime drop in program for the unhoused providing warmth, refreshments, clothing, toiletries and a place for people to charge their phones. The church also hosts St. Paul's Kitchen, an organization that provides dinner to local people who are unhoused or food insecure. In addition to the important work Rev. Prince Doss has done to care for those who need care the most, she is always fighting for social justice and is never afraid to use her voice to fight for those without a voice or those who need help to be lifted up.

Emma Dragon serves on the Hadley Board of Public Health, is a nurse, an EMT, has a graduate degree in Emergency Management, and has had a position on the Federal Disaster Health Management Team since 2009. They also serve on the Hadley COVID-19 Unified Command Team. In Emma's current position as Amherst Health Director, they have helped ensure the safety of in-person voting for the November election, as well as making sure the region's homeless shelter was open for the season. Emma set up a local vaccination program and has been enlisting, training, and scheduling medical volunteers. They launched one of the first mobile vaccination programs for homebound individuals and has been a strong advocate for additional COVID-19 related services to the community. Emma Dragon is a local public health champion.

Emma Dragon, Hadley
Recommended by
Rep. Daniel Carey
Rep. Mindy Domb



Mai Du, Malden
Recommended by
Rep. Steven Ultrino

Mai Du is a powerful voice for the needs of many throughout Greater Boston, particularly our Asian American community. As a co-founder and board member of the Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition (GMAACC), Mai has worked tirelessly to improve language access, drive civic engagement, and make local government more accessible to Malden's Asian American community for many years. Throughout the pandemic, she has worked with GMAACC and Malden Neighbors Helping Neighbors, a local mutual aid group, to deliver food and provide services to thousands of people in need. Mai has also been a leader in combatting anti-Asian prejudice stirred up by misleading rhetoric about the virus, bringing our community together and educating people against this hatred. In addition to this tremendous work, Mai serves on the Board of Directors for the Asian Community Development Corporation and runs the Wah Lum Kung Fu & Tai Chi Academies in Malden and Quincy.

Dr. Neenah Estrella-Luna is a professor and author who focuses on topics including environmental justice, racial equity, immigrant rights, and bias. Dr. Estrella-Luna has been extensively involved in grassroots activism, policy advocacy, and community-based organizing in her neighborhood of East Boston, as well as communities around the Commonwealth. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Estrella-Luna has worked with mutual aid groups throughout the neighborhood and has provided critical insights on the inequities that have led to communities with a disproportionate impact of infections. In the wake of last summer's Black Lives Matter protests, she led a community teach-in about conversations regarding racism. Dr. Estrella-Luna is currently a Social Equity and Anti-Racism Consultant.

Dr. Neenah Estrella-Luna, East Boston
Recommended by
Rep. Adrian Madaro

I would like to recommend Deborah Fallon as a Commonwealth Heroine. In 1996, Deborah founded Portal To Hope, a nonprofit organization that provides comprehensive services to people whose lives have been impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking crimes. She is a tireless advocate for both survivors and their families. Portal To Hope provides numerous direct care services, including crisis intervention, emergency shelter, legal aid, victim advocacy in the courts, and support groups. Deborah ensures that everyone seeking assistance at Portal To Hope receives these services; she spends many nights, weekends, and holidays to make sure they are protected. Thank you for considering my recommendation for Deborah Fallon as a Commonwealth Heroine.

Deborah Fallon, Malden
Recommended by
Rep. Paul J. Donato

Juliette Fay, Martha's Vineyard
Recommended by
Rep. Dylan Fernandes

Last year, Julie Fay retired from Martha's Vineyard Community Services (MVCS) after serving as its Executive Director for seven years. At MVCS, Julie expanded mental health and substance-use services, and her leadership broadened programming for domestic violence and sexual violence survivors. She advocated for state funding to help mitigate travel costs for island residents with off-island medical appointments. Julie helped lead the MVCS response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where island residents saw firsthand her leadership and the excellent response from MVCS on the forefront of maintaining the safety and security of the community's most vulnerable residents. In her retirement, Julie has continued to serve the community as a board member of the Martha's Vineyard Hospital and the Martha's Vineyard Community Foundation. She also sits on the steering committee of the Coalition to Create the Martha's Vineyard Housing Bank.

The Fessenden Family of Beverly comes readily to mind when one contemplates the values of perseverance and heroism. Following her daughter Riley's courageous battle with cancer, Kamie Fessenden came to learn the struggles facing parents with children with life-threatening diseases. Upon hearing that the son of a childhood friend was in need of a kidney transplant, Kamie selflessly volunteered as a donor and found her kidneys to be a match. Her steadfast courage has helped this young man regain the lost stamina incurred from his rare kidney disease and has helped him foster a more positive outlook and quality of life. Kamie Fessenden has become a heroine and role model, and we wholeheartedly believe that she is more than deserving of this honor.

Kamie Fessenden, Beverly
Recommended by
Rep. Jerald Parisella

Lisa Field, Taunton
Recommended by
Rep. Carol Doherty

Lisa Field is the Associate Director in the Division of Legislative and Governmental Affairs within the MNA. She is a tireless, fearless advocate for nurses and patients alike. Her work with the Massachusetts Nurses Association since 2016 has seen her on the frontlines, championing the interests of quality patient care, especially during this pandemic. At the same time she continues to fight for safe and appropriate working conditions for nurses. Lisa works to identify and promote areas in the nursing profession that must be addressed to ultimately reach the goal of quality patient care. She lends her voice to community initiatives that enhance the well-being of citizens, and loudly opposes those that do not. Above all, Lisa Field is a champion among women.

Carol grew up in New Bedford and enlisted in the Marine Corps in October 1986. Her journey brought her to Camp Lejeune, NC; Arlington, VA; Yuma, AZ; Tampa, FL; Okinawa; Iwakuni, Japan; London; and Germany. She was meritoriously promoted to the rank of Sergeant while on active duty and received two Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medals. After separating in 1992, she served in the Marine Corps Reserve for five years and was promoted to Staff Sergeant.

Carol Freitas, Westport
Recommended by
Rep. Paul Schmid

Throughout her life, Carmen has been devoted to giving back to her community, working with organizations like Proyecto Divinidad, Habitat for Humanity, and Children International. This past year, in the face of a pandemic, Carmen again answered the call and co-founded the Kindness Collaborative along with other local heroes. The goal of the Kindness Collaborative is to spread compassion and provide goods to those on the front lines combatting COVID-19. Carmen herself has served the community in Methuen by distributing homemade face masks from her front porch and delivering baked goods and baskets to firefighters, COVID testers, teachers, and more. Carmen's dedication to spreading positivity and serving her community, all while working her day job as an electrical engineer, makes her a true Commonwealth Heroine.

Carmen Frias-Interrante, Methuen
Recommended by
Rep. Linda Dean Campbell

Dottie Fulginiti was elected to the Easton Select Board in 2013 and has served as the Chair for the past three years. In addition to serving on the board, Dottie serves on the Easton Economic Development Council, Commission on Disabilities, and Shovel Town Cultural District Management Partners. As an active member of our community, Dottie is a member of the Easton Lions Club and a supporter of many town organizations, including the Food Pantry, Easton Wings of Hope substance use coalition, and Raising Multicultural Kids. She is an active member of the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) and also serves on the Women Elected Municipal Official (WEMO) Committee. Dottie is a hardworking member of our community and is always willing to help out wherever needed. She has worked tirelessly on behalf of the people of Easton and has been a true leader for our town.

Dottie Fulginiti, North Easton
Recommended by
Rep. Claire Cronin

Sheilah Gauch is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker. She has worked successfully for several years to build a coalition of advocates and legislators, resulting in enactment of the PANS/PANDAS insurance coverage law (SD.2984) and a PANDAS/PANS state advisory council. Along with that, she works as the Principal and Clinical Supervisor at a nonprofit therapeutic day school and is the Chair of the Melrose Special Education Parent Advisory Council. Sheilah has been working with children with significant mental health needs for over 20 years. She has two children of her own who have required special education services, further igniting her passion for fighting for the underrepresented

Sheilah Gauch, Melrose
Recommended by
Rep. Kate Lipper-Garabedian

Taryn Gillis is a committed member of the Billerica community. She has raised her 3 children in Billerica, gotten involved with Billerica Public Schools, and volunteered for a combined 20 years in parent organizations. Taryn was Director of the Billerica Partners for Education for 5 years, a member of Kids Respecting Kids for 5 years, where children learned core values of good citizenship, and she helped create a comprehensive anti-bullying plan. Taryn was involved for 20 years in the Lowell Wish Project, running their Thanksgiving program for 2 years. Now Taryn is the dedicated Co-Chair of the Operations at the Billerica Community Pantry. Representative Lombardo is happy to recognize Taryn Gillis as a 2021 Commonwealth Heroine for her strong morals and the positive imprint she leaves on all her commitments.

Taryn Gillis, Billerica
Recommended by
Rep. Marc Lombardo

Ellie Gilmore, Worcester
Recommended by
Rep. Mary Keefe

In 2013 Ellie Gilmore came to Worcester to attend Clark University, a school that encourages their students to explore, discover and participate in the life and culture of Worcester. That is just what Ellie did. She immersed herself in the community by joining the a local Community Development Corporation called Worcester Common Ground. She became the community organizer and started building relationships in the target area and learning about neighborhood issues. She made her commitment clear as she walked the walk and moved into the neighborhood. She works intentionally to grow strong relationships with families, business owners, youth groups, neighbors, police officers, code inspectors, elected officials, and housing advocates. Whether it's organizing a neighborhood basketball league, creating a park, cleaning up the neighborhood, or sitting on the city's planning board, Ellie's energy and positivity attract people. Her thoughtfulness and listening abilities build the trust that makes it possible for people to come together and make Worcester a great place to live.

Keeta Gilmore is a neighborhood leader and activist in Beacon Hill. She is a board member of the Beacon Hill Civic Association, where she previously served as chair, and Beacon Hill Village. She has served in leadership capacities for many neighborhood organizations, and has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life in Beacon Hill. Keeta Gilmore also manages a research laboratory at the Mass Eye and Ear Infirmary that's focused on developing new ways to prevent and treat antibiotic resistant infections.

Keeta S. Gilmore, Boston
Recommended by
Rep. Jay Livingstone

Katey Goehringer, Wellesley
Recommended by
Rep. Alice Peisch

As the impact of the pandemic on public education became clear, a group of parent-scientists in Wellesley developed a plan to address routine COVID-19 surveillance testing and ensure the safety of in-person learning. An unpaid volunteer, Katey Goehringer became the Program Manager of the Wellesley pilot program, spending thousands of hours mapping out an operational strategy. She was the point-person on complex negotiations and decision-making. She then took on the challenge of helping other school districts, leading the Safer Teachers, Safer Students K-12 COVID Testing Collaborative. This group is made up of 20 diverse districts across Massachusetts to advance COVID testing in those communities. By early 2021, the districts within the Collaborative had completed over 100,000 tests in public schools. Katey's group had demonstrated both the operational feasibility and socioemotional value of weekly surveillance testing. Finally, Katey's group demonstrated the strategic value of surveillance testing. They showed how a testing program and the actual collection of data could help productively resolve negotiations between districts and teachers' unions and enable a return to in-person learning. And, they demonstrated how targeted actions could be taken in a data-driven manner.

Maria Gomes has dedicated her life to bettering her community. Mrs. Gomes established her CPA firm in 1987 and has helped clients ranging from retail, construction, and manufacturing firms to professionals from medical, dental, and legal practices. Outside of her professional career, Mrs. Gomes has served as Chair of the Board of Directors of LUSO Federal Credit Union for over three decades. She has also served as Chair of the Joseph Dias Foundation, distributing hundreds of thousands of dollars to fund Ludlow Public Schools, Ludlow students, and Ludlow sports. Never one to take the spotlight, Mrs. Gomes has contributed immensely to the Ludlow community and is well deserving of this recognition.

Maria F. Gomes, Ludlow
Recommended by
Rep. Jacob Oliveira

Jeny Gonzalez has been an involved community member and leader in Fall River. She is a dedicated member of the Ecuadorian and Hispanic community in Fall River and has been instrumental in organizing groups of residents to participate in city clean-ups. Though a teacher by profession, Jeny has stepped up to assist the Fall River Health Department in vaccine education and outreach efforts to the Spanish-speaking community. She has gone above and beyond: reaching out to community leaders, visiting stores, and disseminating information about the safety and logistics of obtaining the COVID-19 vaccine. She has helped us improve our vaccine education program by keeping us up to date about how residents are feeling about the vaccine and she has already helped dozens of residents access the vaccine.

Jeny Gonzalez, Fall River
Recommended by
Rep. Carole Fiola

Joan Goodwin, Foxborough
Recommended by
Sen. Paul R. Feeney

Joan has lived in Foxborough, MA for over 60 years and has come to embody the spirit of the community. Affectionately known as, “Mrs. Foxborough,” Joan is known for her reputation as a supporter of so many community activities and organizations, and for her positivity and kindness toward others. The mother of 5 children, 12 grandchildren, and 10 great grandchildren, Joan was the Transportation Coordinator for the Public Schools systems and bus driver for the school system for over 30 years. She led the Foxborough Touchdown Club as President, a role she also held for over 30 years. She is a regular volunteer at Foxborough Clean Up Day, Serenading Seniors, Relay for Life, the Foxborough Discretionary Fund, and is part of the St. Mark’s Church as a Deacon and Altar Guild. Joan’s late husband passed away in 2006, but she can still be seen cheering in the stands at town football games, school concerts, and graduation ceremonies whether or not her own children or grandchildren are the ones participating. Joan is the ultimate embodiment of community and her spirit is a treasure to the Town of Foxborough.

Kathleen Graham is the Town Clerk in Dracut, Massachusetts and went above and beyond to rise to the challenge of operating an election during a pandemic while maintaining the integrity and security of our democratic processes. She led her department, and the town in executing a fair and accessible election. Kathleen's work helped maintain Dracut residents' right to vote. She provided residents the opportunity to ensure their voices and their votes were counted despite the additional challenges of the pandemic. Thanks to Kathleen's work, residents could vote without worrying about risking their health.

Kathleen M. Graham, Dracut
Recommended by
Sen. Barry Finegold

Barbara Hamilton is a long-time community leader in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Boston. She retired from the City of Boston in 2018 after 40 years of dedicated service. She currently serves as the head of the East River Street Neighborhood Association, a neighborhood community organization. She is a co-founder of Boston United, which introduces youth in the Boston area to track and field and cross country. She serves on the Board of Directors for VITFriends, a group supporting the vitiligo community. Currently, Barbara is advocating for several important issues, including championing renovations for Doyle Park, a long-neglected community resource. Barbara's love for her community is evident as she consistently fights for improving the quality of life for our neighborhood. Barbara is also the Trustee Chairperson of the Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, Boston. She has always been a strong voice for her community, and is truly a heroine!

Barbara J. Hamilton, Hyde Park
Recommended by
Rep. Rob Consalvo

Susan Hanly, Westford
Recommended by
Rep. James Arciero

Sue Hanly of Westford is a community leader. For over two decades, she has been a public school nurse at Blanchard and Stony Brook Middle Schools having received her Bachelor Nursing degree at Boston College and her Masters of Nursing at Sacred Heart University. A passionate volunteer, both during the pandemic and before, she has been an advocated for suicide and mental health awareness in Westford and beyond. An active marathoner who has participant in 16 races, she has coached young runners and basketball. Married to her husband Ken for 24 years, she is the mother of Steven, Caroline Ailish and Connor. From flu clinics to substance abuse awareness, contact tracing to fundraising, Sue exemplifies community service and commitment. It's been said that Sue has time for everyone and takes every person's challenges to heart. She treats every child like her own and fights fiercely for what she believes.

Vaira Harik is a Barnstable resident and Deputy Director of the Barnstable County Department of Human Services, where she has worked since 2013. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic Vaira has provided consistent and thorough epidemiological guidance and data tracking for all fifteen towns in Barnstable County. Further, Vaira has focused intently on stemming the opioid epidemic on Cape Cod and expanding coordination of human service providers over the last eight years. Vaira spent five years as the Public Health Director for Cochise County, Arizona. She is a dual citizen of the United States and of Lebanon. She grew up in Lebanon during its Civil War and volunteered as a first responder/civil defense worker as a teenager. She is an avid photographer and enjoys reading, all things historical, politics, Cape Cod vistas, ospreys, manual transmissions, and fastballs high and inside. Vaira holds a bachelor's Degree from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Master's Degree in Health Policy and Management from the Harvard School of Public Health.

Vaira Harik, Barnstable
Recommended by
Sen. Julian Cyr

Tina Hein, Holliston
Recommended by
Rep. Carolyn C. Dykema

Tina Hein is an outstanding public servant and is currently serving as Vice Chair of the Holliston Select Board. A committed community leader, Tina's passionate advocacy for increased pedestrian and roadway safety has been instrumental to advancing safety policies for children, families, and elders. She spearheaded the Walking School Bus project to allow groups of children to walk safely to school in coordination with the state Safe Routes to School Program. She also led the successful effort to reduce minimum traffic speeds community-wide and is currently an active voice for safe and appropriate routing of truck traffic. Prior to serving on the Select Board, Tina was a member of the Rail Trail Committee and has consistently dedicated her career in public service toward promoting walkability and enhancing community connectedness. Tina's thoughtful, informed leadership style and her commitment to open communication have made her a respected and effective advocate for the community.

Laurie Higgins, Plymouth
Recommended by
Rep. Matt Muratore

Laurie Higgins, a middle school teacher for 25 years, retired in 2020. During her teaching years, Laurie was instrumental in soliciting Red Sox players, students, and the community in fundraising efforts for the Jimmy Fund at Dana Farber and Boston Medical Center. They raised $150,000 for the Jimmy Fund and $50,000 for Boston Medical Center. Even more amazing, Laurie did all this while fighting a rare disease called Wegners. Despite her frequent trips to Boston University Medical Center and Mass General Hospital for chemotherapy and various treatments, Laurie raised money for Boston University Medical Center's research on Wegners disease through golf tournaments that she and her family and friends contributed to. Throughout her own health battle, Laurie Higgins, a true Commonwealth Heroine, went above and beyond to make a difference, spread awareness, and ignite a spirit of giving in the community.

Beth Hogan, Springfield
Recommended by
Rep. Angelo Puppolo Jr.

Beth Hogan always finds time for her community, despite working independently as a fulltime National Contract Recruiter. She is a neighborhood activist and a long-time resident of the East Forest Park neighborhood of the City of Springfield. She has served on the East Forest Park Civic Association Board of Directors as a member, Vice President and now President. As Founder/ Chairperson of East Forest Park's annual "National Night Out", she has strengthened police-community partnerships and neighborhood unity. Beth, a self-professed dog lover, is also the Founder/Chairperson of the neighborhood's Dog Walker Watch, an initiative which encourages dogwalkers to act as extra eyes and ears for local law enforcement. Beth is also the Founder/ Lead of East Forest Park's NextDoor Neighbor website, which has strengthened community connections. And, thanks to her work with the East Forest Park Capital Campaign Steering Committee, East Forest Park is now home to a new, state-of-the-art branch library with a community space. Beth's strong leadership skills and ability to motivate people has strengthened the bond between neighborhood residents and enhanced the quality of life for all who live there.

Evelyn Humphries, Longmeadow
Recommended by
Rep. Brian Ashe

Evelyn is a senior at Longmeadow High School who has been making a difference in people's lives through community service for many years. Most recently, she has worked with board members from Girls Inc. of the Valley to help create "Project Red," an initiative that provided a 4-month supply of menstrual products to approximately 500 people who were struggling during the pandemic. She also sits on the Teen Board for the Ronald McDonald House, where she plans COVID friendly activities and prepares the house for incoming families. And, as an officer on the Teen Board for Rachel's Table, she solicits donations for local food pantries and soup kitchens. Evelyn's enthusiasm, compassion, and dedication to helping others are to be commended.

Meredith Hurley, Winthrop
Recommended by
Sen. Joseph Boncore

Meredith Hurley is the Director of Public Health & Clinical Services in the town of Winthrop. As the Director of Public Health, Meredith has played an essential role managing the public health crisis in Winthrop during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meredith has collaborated with state and local leaders to ensure the safety of the community and has helped the town address the local spread of COVID-19. Additionally, Meredith is a member of the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC); through which she helps provide information on specific emergency preparedness topics. Meredith Hurley is leader dedicated to the health and well-being of the Winthrop community.

Lossa Julie Janvier, a resident of Medford, is a valued, dedicated, and active leader in the community. Lossa has served on the Medford Housing Authority Board for years, representing tenants as a resident of LaPrise Village. In 2017, Lossa volunteered to distribute food to her neighbors and at the newly-opened Mystic Community Market (food pantry), quickly becoming a core member of the market team. Now an employee at the Market, her work spans Malden, Medford, and Everett. In addition to the critical food distribution, she is a translator for families as well. Lossa worked every day during the pandemic, ensuring children received meals and families who could not travel to the market received fresh groceries. She goes above and beyond for her community. Her noble selflessness, determination, and commitment to helping others are invaluable. We are lucky and incredibly grateful to have her working with us in Medford. Thank you, Lossa!

Lossa Julie Janvier, Medford
Recommended by
Rep. Christine Barber

Kathleen Jespersen, N. Falmouth
Recommended by
Sen. Susan Moran
Rep. David Vieira

Kathleen is the mother of four daughters, a retired high school English teacher, and a community developer. Originally a high school shop teacher, she became a Regional Community Developer for Substance Abuse and Prevention in the 4 upper cape towns after the death of her 7yr. old daughter and after her husband's diagnosis of Muscular Dystrophy, she received a degree in English and taught for 17 years in the Falmouth Public Schools. Kathleen was a founder of Falmouth Together We Can, Inc. in 1993. Falmouth Together We Can, Inc. focuses on community-driven leaders, groups, and organizations eager to expand the communities outreach and inclusion. Falmouth Together We Can, Inc. sponsors and is instrumental in the creation and success of programs, organizations, and teams. Today, Falmouth Together We Can, Inc. serves as a repository/umbrella for many organizations including Celebrations After-Prom Event, Jack's PACT, FWTC Scholarship Fund, Falmouth Together Memory Café, Down To Earth (FHS Project), Joe Q. Veterans Coffee Break, Kids Grieve Too, Falmouth Litter Reduction Team, and the Falmouth Police Fund. Kathleen also chaired the After-Prom "Celebrations" for 17 years.

I would like to take this opportunity to recommend Attorney Phyllis A. Jones of North Andover for the 2021 Commonwealth Heroines Award. Phyllis's demonstrated desire to serve the community is most prominent in her numerous years of community service and volunteer work. As an experienced and well-respected attorney for the Special Needs Law Group Massachusetts, PC, Phyllis brings her strong advocacy skills to her work along with her representation on a number of Professional Organizations including the Women's Bar Foundation, Massachusetts Special Education Attorneys group and ProVisors' New England Chapter. I further note Phyllis' dedication to her community as she serves as the chair on the North Andover Commission on Ability Assistance, where she and other members work to identify the needs of the community under the ADA Civil Rights Law. Phyllis is a host on their community television show, Ability Assistance where they interview community members about strides being made to increase accessibility within the town for those with ability issues. In conclusion, Phyllis is an exemplary example of a Commonwealth Heroine. Despite her hectic and challenging schedule, she selflessly sacrifices her time and resources to give back to the community and help those in need.

Phyllis A. Jones, North Andover
Recommended by
Sen. Bruce Tarr

Lori Joubert, Webster
Recommended by
Rep. Joseph McKenna

Lori Joubert serves as Aide to Representative McKenna, a position she's held since 2015. At her job, she serves others behind the scenes, day-in and day-out. Over the past year especially, Lori has reached extraordinarily far beyond her job description to ensure that those affected by COVID-19 receive the support they need. She answers the call from those in need every day of the week and at all hours. Lori often takes a personal interest in the lives of these constituents, staying in touch and ensuring they are doing well long after any case-work has been resolved. For all that she does, the credit far too often goes to Rep. McKenna for Lori's work, and that is just the way Lori prefers it.

Patricia Daniel Keenan is vice president for advancement, community and equity for Ellis Early Learning, a socioeconomically diverse early childhood education center in Boston's South End. She has been a champion of the nonprofit sector and social justice organizations throughout her 35-year development career. Patti has held fundraising leadership positions with organizations including Facing History and Ourselves, YWCA Boston, the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, City Year and the WGBH Education Foundation. She has contributed to her community of Sharon, as well as in Boston, by serving on nonprofit boards; speaking on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, and serving as a mentor for others in the nonprofit sector, particularly young women of color. Patti is a graduate of Holy Cross College in Worcester. She and her husband, Matt, have three grown children, Alexandra, Walker and Xavier.

Patricia Daniel Keenan, Sharon
Recommended by
Rep. Edward Philips

Barbara Caputo Kelly has spent her life and career helping others in South Boston. Through her work with the Boston Centers for Youth and Families, Barbara has had a positive impact on generations of children and families by fostering a fun, safe, and supportive atmosphere for youth to be challenged, learn and grow during her time at the Curley Community Center and the Condon Community Center. During the pandemic, Barbara and her staff worked to deliver important resources and PPE items to seniors and families in need while also helping to coordinate the access and availability of breakfast and lunch on a daily basis to the community. In addition to these efforts, Barbara has been instrumental in organizing coat drives and toy drives, as well as the distribution of Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets, to support children and families across South Boston.

Barbara Caputo Kelly, South Boston
Recommended by
Rep. David Biele

Caroline Kinsella, RN is an accomplished, intelligent, and self-sacrificing woman. Through her tireless work as Milton's Health Director, Ms. Kinsella has been unfaltering in leading Milton through the COVID-19 pandemic. She's served the town admirably in this position since 2014. Ms. Kinsella is, also, a staunch advocate for helping those suffering from substance misuse, spearheading the Milton Substance Abuse Coalition for the past several years. She brings community residents and leaders together to collaboratively address concerns about substance misuse and mental illness. She and her team analyze local community problems, raise community awareness, and support efforts to tackle these critical issues. Ms. Kinsella's impact goes beyond the local level. As a past president of the Massachusetts Association of Public Health Nursing, Ms. Kinsella advocated for the growing need for Public Health Nursing throughout the Commonwealth.

Caroline Kinsella, Milton
Recommended by
Sen. Walter Timilty

Amy Kirsch and Shana Wang founded Belmont Helps as a community response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has grown to be a comprehensive mutual aid organization. Belmont Helps has collected donations, made and distributed masks, delivered meals, ordered groceries for home-bound older residents, helped teachers make vaccine appointments, provided snacks to employees at local hospitals and nursing homes, and organized campaigns to support Belmont restaurants, and other programs. They have also created initiatives to connect residents experiencing isolation during this time and crafts projects for kids to help them understand COVID and give back to their community. Amy's history of volunteer work includes: volunteers coordinator for the Joeys Park build, as PTA President for Winn Brook School, and as founder and moderator of the Belmont Massachusetts Parents group on Facebook. Amy has worked in marketing & outreach for the JCC of Greater Boston and teaches preschoolers at Beth El Temple Center. She is married and has two children in the Belmont School system.

Amy Kirsch, Belmont
Recommended by
Sen. William Brownsberger

Barbara LaGrenade, the Director of the Marlborough Community Cupboard, has truly stepped up to feed financially insecure Marlborough residents during the pandemic, including adding more volunteers, expanding food networks, and employing creative outreach to residents. In addition, Barbara successfully advocated for state funding to upgrade the facility, to better serve Marlborough families and individuals, and ran the successful annual Holiday Toy Drive.

Barbara LaGrenade, Marlborough
Recommended by
Sen. James Eldridge

Eliza Lake, Worthington
Recommended by
Rep. Natalie Blais

Since 2014, Eliza Lake has been the Chief Executive Officer of the Hilltown Community Health Center (HCHC) in Worthington. Her commitment to serving each member of our community began long before 2014 though, with her career in non-profit work and public service. In 2010, she first joined the HCHC as a board member, and then in 2012 as the Director of Community Services and Grants Writer. Founded over 70 years ago, the HCHC provides access to high-quality and critical healthcare services for some of the most rural areas of the Commonwealth. Eliza works collaboratively with community partners to create and expand programs that address community health needs and has worked tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 health crisis to continue this work. She is recognized statewide as a compassionate leader and advocate for health equity. Eliza Lake also serves on the Board of Trustees for Cooley Dickinson Healthcare.

Winchester Clerk MaryEllen Lannon and Stoneham Clerk Maria Sagarino have, for years, been the rocks of their respective town governments. Through their own unique set of skills and talents, Maria and MaryEllen have seamlessly handled everything from town meetings to anxious residents to national elections. Never did our residents need their steadying hands more than during the past year. Both Maria and MaryEllen have conducted the business of the clerk's office and held elections that brought out record numbers of voters in the face of an unprecedented pandemic and ever-changing laws. Their skillful and compassionate performances are a testament to both of their temperaments and professionalism.

MaryEllen Lannon, Winchester
Recommended by
Rep. Michael Day

Lisa Lopez, Canton
Recommended by
Rep. William C. Galvin

Lisa Lopez has been a Canton resident for nearly 40 years. During that time, Lisa advocated for Canton to approve the Community Preservation Act, which has lead to the development of key projects throughout Canton. She served on the Community Preservation Committee, worked to create the Paul Revere Heritage Site, and is currently a member of the Canton Selectboard. In addition to her work in Canton, she previously served on the board of the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, volunteered as an attorney for the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, and was a member and Chair of the New England Legal Foundation. Lisa also donates her time as a pro bono lawyer at Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) assisting undocumented, unaccompanied minors seeking the right to remain in the U.S. Lisa retired in 2011, after a legal career of more than thirty years. She is also a mother to three and a grandmother.

During the pandemic, Leah Lovasco has been an active and committed community volunteer through her work with We Are All In this Together Gloucester. Not only has she helped individuals and families with urgent needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, but she has also helped a variety of organizations, including The Open Door Food Pantry and the Grace Center of Gloucester. Leah has coordinated regular bi-weekly meals from local restaurants for Gloucester's homeless population and has worked with cultural organizations to ensure this support through 2021. In addition to her work during the pandemic, she has also served as past president of the Gloucester High School Docksiders stage band and was previously on the board of directors for Grateful Friends, a nonprofit that supports adults living with cancer. Leah continues to support their mission today.

Leah Lovasco, Gloucester
Recommended by
Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante

Wendy Luzon is a community and women's rights activist. For the past 20 years, Wendy has worked tirelessly toward eliminating cases of domestic violence and sexual assault. She began her work in 2001 at The Women's Resource Center, working with children and families who were victims of sexual assault. In 2004, she joined the YWCA of Haverhill, Women's Resource Center program as a Family Advocate for the Domestic Violence Program. Wendy has worked to ensure instances domestic and sexual violence against women of faith are included in activism. She was also co-founder of Delamano Inc, an organization focused on increasing awareness about domestic violence in Lawrence.

Wendy Luzon, Lawrence
Recommended by
Rep. Marcos Devers

Emily MacRae proudly serves her community of Fitchburg and the surrounding region as the originator and Executive Director of the North Central Massachusetts Faith Based Coalition. Emily and her team provide nutritious to-go meals three days per week at the Montachusett Community Branch YMCA in downtown Fitchburg. Emily's work provides nourishment to the elderly, poor, working poor, and individuals living in temporary housing. Prior to the pandemic, 200 meals were served per month. Now 2,000 meals go out each month. Emily's ability to meet the increased community need during the pandemic is truly a testament to her organizational skills and advocacy for area citizens. Emily displays unselfish caring for others and her ability to pull people together is unbounded. I am proud she is my constituent and to recommend her for this award.

Emily MacRae, Fitchburg
Recommended by
Sen. John Cronin

Kelly Marion is the CEO of The Gladys Allen Brigham Community Center, a multi-service organization empowering children (especially girls). The Center serves a diverse community with an equally diverse staff who receive support to grow personally and professionally. Outside her agency, Kelly is a strong community leader who knows the needs of youth and families. Throughout this past year, The Gladys Allen Brigham Community Center stood strong, first providing emergency childcare to essential workers, and then to their families. They have supported school-age children with technology and instructional assistance while the school district schedules continually changed. As we honor Kelly, we honor her whole team and all childcare providers. It is high-quality, affordable childcare that is the key to building a strong community.

Kelly Marion, Pittsfield
Recommended by
Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier

Jynai McDonald is the Family Child Care Coordinator for SEIU Local 509 where she leads the department in providing representation, training, and services for approximately 2,400 Family Child Care providers throughout Massachusetts. McDonald is a life-long resident of Springfield, mother of 3 children, and graduate of Bay Path University. Passionate about making change in her community, Jynai learned how to formally organize by joining the Western MA Chapter of Neighbor to Neighbor (an organization that mobilizes people in their community to confront local, state, and national crisis). She currently serves as Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees at Springfield Technical Community College, the Board of Directors for Pioneer Valley Project (a social justice organization), Community Calendar Editor for the African-American Point of View News Magazine, and is a Business West 40 Under 40 Honoree for Class of 2019. She has been a political activist for over 8 years and has over 12 years of experience working with at-risk populations.

Jynai McDonald, Springfield
Recommended by
Sen. Adam Gomez

Connie McGilvray, Woburn
Recommended by
Rep. Richard Haggerty

Connie has been an integral part of the Woburn community for decades. As a board member of the Woburn Friends of VNA Hospice & Palliative Care the past 24 years, she has helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to support terminally ill patients, train volunteers, and offer vital care to local residents. Connie's leadership and efforts on this local board exemplify a person who strives to protect and represent the interests of seniors, immigrants, and other vulnerable populations. Her impressive professional career prepared her well for her work not only on the Friends of VNA Board but also as an original Director on the Woburn Public Library Foundation. Her efforts to gather public support for the renovation of the historic Woburn Public Library played an important role in the completion of the $32-million-dollar public project. Connie is kind, inclusive, organized, smart, and the definition of a Commonwealth Heroine.

Ashley Melnik is a heroine who works tirelessly to make the City of Revere a better place for everyone to live in, work, and visit. As City Clerk, Ashley leads a City Hall team that works to accurately preserve public records and certify all vital statistics for the city. Ashley also provides administrative support to the City Council. Although this may sound clerical, Ashley's job goes far beyond just filling and maintaining records. She is a resource to anyone navigating city hall or municipal government who needs help. In addition to her job duties, Ashley gives herself to the community in many other ways. She is a member of the Rotary Club, donates to many nonprofits, and spends her free time volunteering in various local organizations, such as the food pantry. Often, she is behind the scenes happy to roll up her sleeves and help. Ashley takes difficult situations and upset residents and handles them with kindness, compassion, and grace.

Ashley E. Melnik, Revere
Recommended by
Rep. Jessica Giannino

Meredith Mendelson, Newton
Recommended by
Rep. Ruth B. Balser

An attorney, Meredith has focused her career on non-profit organizations in Boston: most notably, as the Executive Director of the Ellie Fund. Having stood alongside her mother as she lived with metastatic breast cancer for 8 years, she was drawn to the Ellie Fund and became its executive director in 2018. The Ellie Fund's mission is to provide women and men undergoing breast cancer treatment with essential services such as grocery assistance, nutritious prepared and delivered meals, transportation to medical appointments, childcare, and housekeeping. Meredith has expanded the outreach of the organization to make sure that people in underserved communities can gain access to these critical services. The Ellie fund now serves nearly 1,000 patients annually. With 7,000 new breast cancer diagnoses in Massachusetts each year, Meredith's goal is to expand the Ellie Fund's budget and patient reach in the decade ahead.

Myriam Michel, Waltham
Recommended by
Rep. Thomas Stanley

Myriam Michel is the Executive Director of Healthy Waltham, a community health organization that promotes healthy eating, active living opportunities, and mental wellness for the vulnerable of Waltham: families with young children, recent immigrants, and low-income senior citizens. While Healthy Waltham offers many critical services to the community, their efforts to address food insecurity over the past year have been truly admirable. Under Myriam's leadership, Healthy Waltham expanded its two food pantries' offerings for families and seniors to meet an increasing demand. These pantries provide families with essential groceries such as fresh fruit and vegetables, canned goods, dairy, frozen meats, and toiletries. Healthy Waltham also offers "Food Pantry Delivery for Seniors," a program providing door-to-door delivery service of groceries and essential toiletries to senior citizens.

Carol Miranda is the Director of the Jamaica Plain Community Connections Coalition/Tree of Life/Arbol de Vida and the Jamaica Plain Family Engagement Network, where she dedicates her time to anti-poverty initiatives. Carol Miranda is also a member of the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Trauma Team. Carol works with low income families from prenatal and up, including seniors in the community providing family support, community engagement and school readiness. Carol created the Family Exchange Boutique, a physical space located inside the Mildred C. Hailey Development, which offers free, gently used, household items and clothing exchange opportunities. Carol engages families and connects them with opportunities and resources in collaboration with other community partners. Carol Miranda graduated from Springfield College with a Bachelor's Degree in Human Services and is currently working in Jamaica Plain, MA.

Carol Miranda, Jamaica Plain
Recommended by
Rep. Nika Elugardo

Patricia Monteith, Brockton
Recommended by
Sen. Michael D. Brady

Patricia "Pat" Monteith is an unparalleled advocate for STEM education, diversity, and women's issues in the City of Brockton. Through her volunteerism she has built programs with the Brockton NAACP (for which she serves as Treasurer) and Public Library to engage students, often those from underprivileged backgrounds, in hands on science and engineering programs which might otherwise be unavailable to them. In 2012, she created a series of science fair workshops and a mentoring program through the non-profit organization which she founded with her son, Mister Science Fair. Pat has been appointed as a volunteer for NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory as a solar system ambassador, for which she conducts presentations about NASA and astronomy subjects for libraries and schools. Pat has conducted a yearlong Suffrage Centennial series in 2020 for the Brockton Library. Thank you Pat!

Christy Mylott has followed a path of community involvement and public service with her career. Christy is known in the healthcare and senior care industry for her dedication and advocacy for elders and the disabled. After 30 years in healthcare, she received the opportunity to use her knowledge of resources to work as a staff member in the MA Senate. Her career experience and vast knowledge allowed her to provide exceptional constituent services to the residents of North Central Mass. Since leaving the MA Senate, Christy has been an integral part of the Fitchburg Housing Authority where she continues to serve the City of Fitchburg as the COVID-19 Housing Coordinator. In this role, she has continued to work to protect resident safety and health throughout the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. It truly is my pleasure to recommend Christy Mylott for this distinct honor!

Christianne Mylott, Fitchburg
Recommended by
Rep. Michael Kushmerek

Patricia A. Nadle, B.S.N., M.Ed, is Chief Executive Officer of Outer Cape Health Services, a Federally Qualified Community Health Center with clinics in Provincetown, Wellfleet, and Harwich. She brings decades of experience to this role, having held various executive management positions in healthcare. Pat has effectively led Outer Cape Health Services during a time of crisis. She has kept the doors of OCHS open and offered free COVID-19 testing despite facing huge financial challenges. In leading the vaccination efforts on Cape Cod, she has reached the homebound, essential workers, and her clients on the outer and lower Cape. Under Pat's leadership, OCHS has kept Cape Codders well and healthy amidst a global pandemic.

Patricia Nadle, Harwich
Recommended by
Rep. Sarah Peake

Dawn Naylor, Kingston
Recommended by
Rep. Kathleen LaNatra

Dawn Naylor is the owner and medical director of Skin Esteem Med Spa in Kingston. She received her BS in physical therapy from Lasell College and went on to receive her RN, MSN, and Acute Care Nurse Practitioner licenses. Dawn's background in intensive care and cardiology has allowed her to deliver holistic services supporting heart, mind, and body. Prior to opening Skin Esteem, she donated her aesthetic services to cancer survivors. During this pandemic, she has worked tirelessly to secure and administer vaccines to residents of Kingston and the surrounding communities. She has donated her time on the weekends to running vaccination clinics for groups in need of vaccination. Thanks to her efforts, many residents now have the peace of mind the vaccine offers.

Ndoumbe, a recent graduate of Franklin High School, is a young leader dedicated to combatting social injustice within her community. Ndoumbe has served as president of the Diversity Awareness Club and as a local campaign organizer, is a mentor for children of color, and actively strives to create a better environment for marginalized groups in predominantly white spaces, including her hometown of Franklin. She is well known for her Kneel for Nine speech on the Franklin Town Common in June 2020 after the death of George Floyd, where she shared her personal experience with the town of Franklin. Ndoumbe plans to study political science and government on a pre-law track as she heads off to college this year.

Ndoumbe Ndoyelaye, Franklin
Recommended by
Sen. Becca Rausch

Hang Ngo, Somerville
Recommended by
Rep. Erika Uyterhoeven

Hang Ngo is a clinical psychologist, diversity and inclusion trainer, facilitator and community activist with a passion for racial and socioeconomic justice. She is actively working to dismantle racism in both her practice and our community in Somerville. Through her activism, she has organized for anti-racist causes and for policies focused on equity and justice for our city. She has also facilitated forums to discuss racial justice with community members of color. Hang is currently an organizer with Just Us Somerville, a community organization of residents of color, who help build communities among Somerville residents to color to ensure that our collective voices are heard are represented.

Kelly O'Connor, Lynn
Recommended by
Sen. Brendan Crighton

Kelly O'Connor has worked in numerous roles at the Gregg House in Lynn, Massachusetts for over two decades. As Director, Kelly oversees many services for Lynn's families including all-day childcare for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and after school and summer programming for older children. COVID-19 has put a significant strain on the Gregg House both financially and physically. Kelly has worked to adhere to state and federal guidelines including reduced classroom sizes. Lynn's diverse population includes many low-income employees deemed essential who rely on Gregg House's services. With Lynn's students learning completely remotely the demand for childcare is great. Kelly has worked hard to ensure the needs of Lynn's families are being met. Kelly has always been a champion for Lynn families. Kelly's leadership and compassion through COVID-19 has put her in her own category. Not one to seek recognition or praise for her selfless commitment to the Lynn community, she is truly a Commonwealth Heroine.

Merridith O'Leary epitomizes the values of a true public servant. She has guided the City of Northampton through the COVID-19 pandemic, helping to flatten the curve time and time again by setting up protective restrictions for residents as well as helping small businesses and regional vaccination sites to provide a local vaccination option for Hampshire County. Despite the complications caused by changing guidelines and vaccine scarcity, Merridith has been a calming, hard-working presence. Thousands of people in Western Massachusetts are safer and healthier because of her work and dedication. If we need an example of what a well-run public health department can do, despite a limited budget and resources, we need look no further.

Merridith O'Leary, Northampton
Recommended by
Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa

Deborah Olander, Andover
Recommended by
Rep. Tram Nguyen

Andover resident Deb Olander spends her days teaching math, statistics, and computer science to students at Phillips Andover Academy. Her focus is on developing problem-solving strategies, an important skill for people both young and old. In her spare time, Deb is a tireless community organizer, passionate about racial and immigrant justice. A longtime leader of Merrimack Valley Shows Up for Racial Justice, Deb has organized rallies to stop the separation of immigrant families and to support Black Lives Matter. And, most recently after the shootings of six Asian women in Atlanta, she arranged a well-attended rally to Stop Asian Hate in Andover. She works hard to bring awareness of racial injustice to her community, and to collaborate with other anti-racism groups to fight for positive change.

Shavel'le holds a master's degree in nonprofit management from Northeastern University, and is the first executive director of Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition (MFFC). She also serves as the Community Engagement Coordinator at LivableStreets, where she works on outreach strategies for the Blue Hill Ave, Warren Street, and Hyde Park Ave areas and supports the Street Ambassador program. She has been a Mattapan resident for 15 years and has long been active in the Mattapan community. Before serving as executive director of MFFC, she volunteered as the Youth Program Director, overseeing MFFC Vigorous Youth and the MFFC Youth Coordinator. Shavel'le has worked to bring biking to Mattapan, founding Mattapan on Wheels in 2011, a free youth-led biking event that advocates for youth of color, provides an opportunity for young people to exercise their leadership skills, and utilizes open spaces for biking.

Shavel'le Olivier, Mattapan
Recommended by
Rep. Brandy Fluker Oakley

Lucy Pacheco was born in Fall River to immigrant parents from St. Michael, Acores. She works at Crystal Springs, which provides individualized programs for children and adults with developmental disabilities. As Director of Administration, she is a compassionate professional. She works with staff to provide a highly individualized person-centered approach that fosters progress, growth, and success for children and adults living with severe-to-moderate physical, cognitive, and developmental disabilities. She has been employed for over 30 years serving the community, families, guardians, and staff. Lucy is a heroine who deserves recognition for her work.

Lucy Pacheco, Fall River
Recommended by
Rep. Alan Silvia

Donna Palmer, Norton
Recommended by
Rep. Fred Jay Barrows

It is with great pleasure and pride that I recommend Donna R. Palmer, R.N., B.S.N for the Commonwealth Heroines of Massachusetts Award. Donna has served as the Public Health Nurse in Norton since 2008 and during that time she has been a steadfast advocate for the health and safety of the people of Norton. Donna has served as an officer and tireless worker on the Bristol/Norfolk Medical Reserve Core. She is also an active member of the Bristol County Emergency Preparedness Coalition as well as the Norton Opioid Prevention Education program. Additionally, she volunteers her time as a member of the Board of Directors for the North Cottage Program, a residential facility for substance abuse. A cause that is near and dear to her heart is Gilly's House, Inc., an addiction treatment center in Wrentham, Ma. Her dedication to this cause is ongoing. Donna is also a regular volunteer for her church as well as several other community civic organizations. In this period of Covid-19, she has gone above and beyond her duties as a Public Health Nurse keeping residents, businesses and town employees informed and educated about COVID and how to stay safe and healthy during this pandemic. The town of Norton is lucky to have such a dedicated, caring, and hardworking Public Health Nurse serving their needs.

Allison Park is a vital member of BayPath Elder Services. As Nutrition Supervisor, Allison ensures that the seniors of MetroWest who are unable to leave their homes receive daily nutritious meals. These meals, delivered by a volunteer who provides a friendly visit and safety check, help keep seniors socially connected while maintaining their independence. Allison's work for Meals on Wheels is an invaluable service combatting senior hunger and isolation—critical issues that have worsened during the pandemic. We're fortunate in MetroWest to have such a dedicated and compassionate leader in our community.

Allison Park, Framingham
Recommended by
Rep. Maria Robinson

Barbara Parmenter, Brighton
Recommended by
Rep. Michael Moran

Barbara Parmenter has been at the forefront of advocating for the Allston-Brighton community as it undergoes a major transformation due to an unprecedented amount of development. Barbara serves on countless committees, including the Harvard Allston Task Force, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative Transportation Committee, 350 Mass Allston Brighton Working Group, and the Brighton Allston Community Coalition. In addition, she is spearheading a community-led initiative called the Western Ave Re-Zoning Community Engagement Group. This group recently sent out thousands of postcards to neighbors to inform them of rezoning, and drastically increased community participation in the last Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) meeting. Barbara's advocacy is thoughtful and will help Allston-Brighton stay a diverse, inclusive, and resilient neighborhood. Barbara is a Commonwealth Heroine and I am proud to recognize her for her tremendous efforts!

Pamela Peirce, Rehoboth
Recommended by
Rep. Steven S. Howitt

Pamela Peirce is a lifetime resident of Rehoboth. She is the caretaker of her daughter, Becky, who has a rare disability called Kleefstra Syndrome. Becky is one of a handful that live in the state of Massachusetts. For the past several years, Pam has become a beacon of hope to other families who have children diagnosed with the same disorder. She is part of many support groups and provides comfort and advice to parents of children with Kleefstra Syndrome. Whether patients are local or visiting from around the country, Pam always arranges to meet and surprise them with care packages. Pam continues to network and reach out to families across the globe. Pam continues to be Becky's full-time caretaker, all while holding down a full-time job as a preschool teacher for children enrolled in the Head Start program. The program, Citizens for Citizens, Inc. out of Fall River, operates for low-income families and strives to help families and children succeed. For Pam, spending the day with young children is the fuel for her soul and empowers her to help any and all that she can.

Lucy Pineda, Everett
Recommended by
Sen. Sal DiDomenico

Lucy Pineda, originally from El Salvador and mother of 4 children, immigrated to Boston in 1986, where she became a leading advocate for the rights and social justice of the immigrant community. In 1992, she began volunteering with pro-immigrant organizations and also played an important role in the Formation of C.O.S.M.A. Salvadoran Committee, where she worked to keep the cultural values of this country alive, 2014, founded COMAC BOSTON and CODIMAC Agua Caliente to work on different social development projects Such as safety plans, environment, programs for special families, the elderly, and construction of churches in her Beautiful Department of Chalatenango El Salvador. In 2002, Lucy founded Latinos Unidos in Massachusetts, LUMA an organization that focuses not only on the fight for the rights of immigrants, but also on the cultural, providing them with educational development programs. Lucy shares, "We have demonstrated our unity and equality, which is what, identifies us as a beautiful state where I have lived and given love and opened doors for me to help our community."

Angela Pitter, Newtonville
Recommended by
Rep. Kay Khan

I'm honored to recommend Angela Pitter as a Commonwealth Heroine. Angela has been a strong voice and a force for change in the city of Newton, where she has served on local committees, councils, and in several leadership and elected positions. She has gone far to support Black residents of the Commonwealth, working to advance policies that support the Black community in public schools systems, including higher educational opportunities. More broadly, she is the founder of LiveWire Collaborative, where she provides digital marketing services and training to people impacted by furloughs, layoffs, and general business decline across the globe. Angela's work uplifts those around her and has made an overwhelmingly positive impact on life for residents in the Commonwealth.

Gina Plata-Nino, Worcester
Recommended by
Sen. Harriette Chandler

Gina Plata-Nino is a staff attorney at the Central West Justice Center of Community Legal Aid. Gina is a graduate of Northeastern University School of Law. She did a clerkship with the Massachusetts Appeals Court and later worked as a legal consultant in Southeast Asia at a corporate firm before moving back to the U.S. Gina is a leader within the Worcester Together Coalition, a group of local leaders who works with the City of Worcester to support the community, their most recent focus has been the response to Covid-19 pandemic. Gina is a co-chair of two of the sub groups of this collation that focus on housing needs and food insecurity. Gina's is a wonderful advocate and works to ensure that no one organization is working in a silo, she believes that collaboration is key to make the most out of the limited resources. . She is currently working to advocate for legislation that would help elderly and homeless individuals or who have a disability to utilize their SNAP cards at participating restaurants to purchase hot meals. This is just one of the many pieces of legislation that Gina

Deepika Prakash is passionate about promoting equality and women's rights through her small business endeavors and volunteer work. While working full-time as an engineer, Deepika founded PatternReview.com, a virtual, inclusive, and unbiased platform to help people who sew connect beyond physical borders. PatternReview.com is the first, largest, and longest running online community of sewing enthusiasts, boasting 500,000 members from 37 different countries and supporting more than 50 small sewing businesses. In addition to single-handedly building PatternReview.com from the ground up and supporting 700 independent sewing pattern companies on the platform, Deepika has volunteered and coached the local Girls on the Run program, a national nonprofit aiming to strengthen third to eighth grade girls' social, emotional, physical, and behavioral skills. Deepika has donated time and money to support the Acton Food Pantry and serve as an active member of its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity committee. She has tirelessly petitioned and brought about the addition of Diwali and other religious holidays to the Acton and Boxborough communities, while also advocating for racial justice and promoting the Black Lives Matter movement.

Deepika Prakash, Acton
Recommended by
Rep. Tami Gouveia

Cheryl Rawinski, Sutton
Recommended by
Sen. Ryan Fattman

Cheryl Rawinski has been a valuable public servant for the Blackstone Valley area for many years. She serves as the public health official for several towns, ensuring that all their needs are met. This service to the communities that she represents was highlighted as the world began to face the challenges of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past year, Cheryl has dedicated countless hours of her time to ensure the good health and well-being of thousands of citizens in our area. She has been an outstanding public health resource, from diligent contact tracing throughout the pandemic, to supplying resources, to present day, as she works to ensure residents are receiving doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. Her diligence, tenacity, and commitment to our municipalities during the COVID-19 pandemic has made Cheryl a more than deserving woman to be named as a Commonwealth Heroine.

Carol Read has dedicated her life to the health and well-being of others. As Program Manager for the Town of Needham's Public Health Department, Carol manages the Substance Abuse Prevention Collaborative (SAPC) grant program, a regional prevention model created to prevent underage drinking and other substance use across Massachusetts. A former Vice President of the Massachusetts Prevention Alliance, Carol is a certified prevention specialist and regularly speaks to parents to provide guidance on educating their children about substance abuse. A resident of Medfield, Carol also serves on the Medfield Board of Health, a volunteer board that ensures that all public health state regulations are enforced. This year they have provided significant guidance to the town and schools on matters related to COVID-19. Carol Read brings her great intellect, her compassionate heart, and indomitable energy to every issue and concern.

Carol Read, Medfield
Recommended by
Rep. Denise Garlick

Carolyn Roberson, Springfield
Recommended by
Rep. Bud Williams

Carolyn A. Roberson is a beloved leader and staunch advocate for the community of Springfield, MA. An Executive staff member of the Greater Springfield Branch of the NAACP and retired 31-year employee of the Department of Transitional Assistance, she is a strong anti-gun and youth violence activist. During the Black Lives Matter movement in the summer of 2020, she coordinated a weekly prayer vigil from June to September and held 3 Gun Violence Standouts. Ms. Roberson is a woman of faith currently serving as a District Missionary/Assistant Supervisor for Fresh Anointing Ministries Church of God in Christ. She has also been instrumental in helping at-risk youth with summer activities, including vacation bible school, free meals, arts and crafts, sharping comprehension skills, and organizing various recreational activities. Concerned about families experiencing the impact of COVID-19 and job loss, she also coordinated with her church to fundraise for a holiday food and toy drive this past Christmas. Under her leadership, the church was able to feed and bless over 100 families. Ms. Roberson is a proud mother and grandmother who strives to make a tangible difference in her community.

Dawn Roche, South Yarmouth
Recommended by
Rep. Timothy Whelan

In 2018, Dawn Roche lost her beloved 26-year-old son Trevor to addiction. After suffering such a tragedy, Dawn has coped with her grief through selfless service and giving within her community. Her leadership within local support groups, such as Parents Supporting Parents and Learn to Cope, helps families of those who have lost a loved one and/or are still caught in the web of addiction. Dawn, affectionately known as Miss Dee, has reinforced her love of community even more by generously donating food to the needy through the Food4Vets and Farmers2Families programs, as well as distributing winter weather gear and supplies through the Coats4Vets and Cops and Communities programs. Her consistent volunteerism with these organizations mitigated thousands of Cape Cod families' pandemic-related food insecurity concerns and financial distress. Having survived some of the worst challenges every mother fears, Dawn Roche has survived, thrived, and continues to be a blessing in our community.

Nayroby Rosa-Soriano is the Director of Community Engagement and Resident Services for OneHolyoke CDC. Nayroby has served as a human service provider in Hampden County for over ten years. Graduate of both Holyoke Community College and UMASS, Nayroby has worked very closely with many community providers. As a Holyoke resident, Nayroby, has collaborated frequently with many local agencies to provide great services to the population she has served. From case management for teen parents, to domestic violence and sexual assault shelter director to resident services, Nayroby is always there uplifting others. Recently, as our communities have faced this unprecedented pandemic, Nayroby has been on the forefront of supporting the Holyoke community by creating learning pods for students, organizing countless food box handouts and a local vaccine clinic. Nayroby also worked diligently to help increase participation in the 2020 Census by reaching out and creating trust with hesitant residents.

Nayroby Rosa-Soriano, Holyoke
Recommended by
Sen. John Velis

Gwendolyn Rosemond graduated with Bachelor's and Masters degrees from Bowling Green State University and did doctoral studies at Vanderbilt and UMass Boston. She came to Salem State University in 1977 as the Assistant Director of the AID Program and Learning Center. In a career that spanning decades, she has held positions like Assistant Director of Minority Affairs and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Dean Rosemond, in addition to being a lifelong educator, is a writer, a storyteller, and has performed the lead roles in Tituba's Tale, a play commemorating the Salem Witchcraft Trials, and the inaugural production of Letters from War with the Salem Theatre Company. She is currently a member of Salem's Race and Equity Task Force and is a leader on civil rights and women's issues.

Gwendolyn Rosemond, Salem
Recommended by
Rep. Paul Tucker

Laura Rosi is the CEO of Housing Families, a Malden-based housing and homelessness prevention organization that also operates an academic and therapeutic program for children and young adults. Laura became CEO during a difficult financial time for Housing Families, but under her leadership the organization has stabilized and flourished. In fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Housing Families' Homelessness Prevention and Legal Services Program has helped over 600 families remain stably housed and has administered rental assistance to over 200 families. Laura's passion for working on housing and homelessness issues began when she worked as a Housing Advocate at Housing Families, helping the families in shelter obtain permanent housing. Working at this level enabled her to understand the families' needs at a deeper level and identify many systemic inefficiencies and inconsistencies tied to subsidized housing which prompted her to become active in advocacy and policy.

Laura Rosi, Malden
Recommended by
Sen. Jason Lewis

Stoneham Clerk Maria Sagarino and Winchester Clerk Mary Ellen Lannon have, for years, been the rocks of their respective town governments. Through their own unique set of skills and talents, Maria and Mary Ellen have seamlessly handled everything from town meetings to anxious residents to national elections. Never did our residents need their steadying hands more than during the past year. Both Maria and Mary Ellen have conducted the business of the clerk's office and held elections that brought out record numbers of voters in the face of an unprecedented pandemic and ever-changing laws. Their skillful and compassionate performances are a testament to both of their temperaments and professionalism.

Maria Sagarino, Stoneham
Recommended by
Rep. Michael Day

Megan Savage, Barnstable
Recommended by
Rep. Kip Diggs

Megan Savage is a highly trained public safety professional with an extensive background in marine, environmental and workplace safety. She received her Bachelor's degree in Marine Safety and Environmental Protection from the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, and is currently working towards a Master's degree in Public Administration through Suffolk University. As Barnstable's Town Safety Officer, she coordinates training and licensing requirements and conducts incident investigations, facility audits, safety programs, and a multitude of tasks for the town. Megan has gone beyond the call of duty this past year to facilitate Cape Cod's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Megan teaches courses in OSHA General Industry and Hazardous Material Management at Massachusetts Maritime Academy and Environmental Health and Safety at Massasoit Community College. "From a young age I have always been one to help others and try to protect the environment. I feel rewarded knowing my efforts impact others in a positive manner and have made a difference in their lives whether big or small," said Megan.

In August of 2001, Mrs. Christina Shafer was appointed to Millville Elementary School as a Grade 2 teacher. Mrs. Shafer served in the role of elementary classroom teacher for 17 years until she was appointed to the position of Principal of Millville Elementary in 2018. In her nearly two decades in the classroom, Mrs. Shafer worked hard to not only meet the needs of her students but also to be a leader in the Millville Elementary School community. This "presence" served her well as she moved into the "corner office", taking over the leadership of the school. Mrs. Shafer stepped into her current role as the district was working to develop a comprehensive strategy that fosters high levels of student engagement and learning, addresses the social-emotional and behavioral needs of our students, and brings the two communities of Blackstone and Millville together around its schools and students. Mrs. Shafer has been a very important part of launching this strategy and making its vision and goals come to life. Millville Elementary School is a warm and welcoming place for the students that walk through the doors of the building each day and Mrs. Shafer is a big part of that.

Christina Shafer, Millville
Recommended by
Rep. Michael Soter

Sandra E. Sheehan, Springfield
Recommended by
Sen. Eric Lesser

Sandra Sheehan is the Director of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) since June 1, 2017. Ms. Sheehan oversees the largest Regional Transit Authority in Massachusetts with 24 member communities. She manages a budget made up of federal, state, and local governments as well as farebox and advertising revenues. In the last year, PVTA has been awarded over $5M in grant funds to pilot new technologies and new service. During the pandemic, changes were implemented to work schedules and practices, to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID 19. The PVTA also implemented an information campaign to keep passengers informed of the various requirements and protocols. The PVTA is continuing to invest in permanent driver barriers, less driver contact, securement systems, plastic seats and in a mobile ticketing system. The PVTA serves critical populations that depend on service to get to essential work, food, and medical appointments. The PVTA was founded in 1974.

Cynthia Sierra, Abington
Recommended by
Rep. Bruce J. Ayers
Sen. John Keenan

As the CEO of Manet Community Health Center, Cynthia Sierra has made significant contributions to the city of Quincy and a valued member of the Abington community. She is a relentless advocate for local health organizations and under her leadership, Manet CHC has seen exponential growth in its programs and outreach, providing outstanding care to its patients. Cynthia's commitment towards public health reached a new level this past year, as Manet CHC partnered with the city of Quincy to run a COVID-19 vaccination site. With the help of Cynthia and her outstanding team, over 14,000 people have been vaccinated. In all that she does, Cynthia keeps her central mission as the focal point. She has done exceptional work and will continue to make a major impact on Quincy, its surrounding communities, and countless individuals who rely on Manet CHC. Cynthia has gone above and beyond, leading staff, and fostering a supportive environment for our community when leadership, care, and support was needed most. She has helped create stronger, healthier communities across Massachusetts, and for that, we are proud to recognize her as our 2021 nominee as a Commonwealth Heroine.

Laina Simone is active and involved in education in North Reading and across the Commonwealth. She has been a member of the Hood School Parents' Association for years and on the Parents' Association Board serving as Co-Enrichment Director. She also served on the Middle School Parents' Association for 3 years on the Enrichment team. She was the NRUE (North Reading United for Education) liaison for the Hood School, and helped organize an Opioid Abuse Forum in North Reading. Laina has also worked with local businesses, such as the food pantry and Senior Center, to organize numerous charitable occasions in town: donating Have a Heart Valentine's day gifts for North Reading seniors, collecting and donating birthday gifts for local foster children.

Laina Simone, North Reading
Recommended by
Rep. Bradley H. Jones

Kathleen Swallow, West Newbury
Recommended by
Rep. Leonard Mirra

Kathleen Swallow has been the Town Moderator for West Newbury for 34 years, making her one of the longest serving moderators in the Commonwealth. Kathleen also contributes to many town projects including the recent Bicentennial celebration in West Newbury. As the Co Chair of the planning committee along with her husband Stephen, Kathleen planned and executed many events from February to October 2019. Kathleen is also a member of the West Newbury Historical Society and the West Newbury Garden Club. Kathleen is a chemist who has taught Chemistry at Merrimack College for 25 years. Thank you for all your continued contributions in West Newbury, Kathleen!

Heather Sylvia, Acushnet's Council on Aging Director, has long been a community leader. But during this challenging year, Ms. Sylvia has been a bright star, bringing needed services to residents. Last summer, 637 families received meals through the USDA Farm to Families Program she spearheaded. She volunteered countless hours assisting the Fire/EMS and EMA departments with COVID-19 testing clinics, and has processed over 5,500 tests (and counting) throughout the pandemic. Currently, she is part of the team working to bring community vaccines directly to residents through the new Acushnet Mobile Unit. On top of this, Ms. Sylvia found safe ways for seniors to meet outside and through virtual gatherings. Her leadership has kept staff and residents safe and engaged. Some call her the "mother of Acushnet" for her dedicated and caring outreach. Without her commitment, many much-needed services would not be available in Acushnet. Heather Sylvia is the perfect person to be recognized by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women as a Commonwealth Heroine.

Heather Sylvia, New Bedford
Recommended by
Rep. Christopher Hendricks

Usha Thakrar has been a vital member of the Lexington community for over 22 years. For the last six years, she has been a volunteer at the Lexington Food Pantry, where she facilitated the swift change in operations necessary to provide continuous operations during the COVID-19 crisis. This quick action ensured that those who needed the Pantry's services most, an average of 250 people weekly, were still able to access nutrition during the uncertain early days of the pandemic. In addition to her work with the Lexington Food Pantry, Usha has spent almost two years as the Executive Director of Boston Area Gleaners, an on-farm food rescue and hunger relief non-profit that has distributed over seven million pounds of fresh food to families in the region since the onset of the pandemic. Prior to her current role at Boston Area Gleaners, Usha spent 14 years working in health care, most of that time managing the Jimmy Fund Clinic at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Usha continues to call Lexington her home and has one son who is in college.

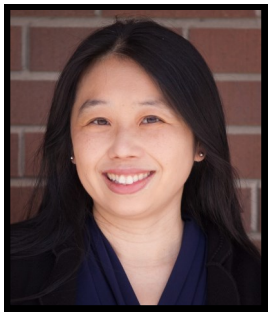
Usha Thakrar, Lexington
Recommended by
Rep. Michelle Ciccolo

Mary Beth Verry has strengthened Danvers and its schools through her many volunteer roles over the years: Riverside School PAC volunteer, Danvers Educational Enrichment Partnership President, fundraiser for teaching grants, Chair of the Danvers Cultural Council, Peabody Institute (Danvers) Library Trustee, and, for the past five years, a member of the Danvers School Committee. This already-demanding and thankless position became exponentially more difficult one year ago, as the Coronavirus changed the trajectory of our schools. Even while battling her own cancer, Mary Beth kept her focus on the best interests of children as the Committee sorted through a range of difficult choices. This award honors women who have worked tirelessly, without compensation or recognition, to make a difference in their community; women like Mary Beth Verry. She is the definition of a Commonwealth Heroine.

Mary Beth Verry, Danvers
Recommended by
Rep. Sally Kerans

Jennifer Vitelli is one of the founding members of the New England PANDAS/PANS Association. In this role she has supported countless families dealing with PANDAS. She was also a co-leader of the Massachusetts Coalition for PANDAS/PANS Legislation where she dedicated the past two years of her life to advocate and help pass the PANDAS/PANS insurance bill into law in 2020. Included in the bill, she also helped establish a DPH PANDAS/PANS Advisory Council to help families cope with and manage the effects of PANDAS/PANS. In addition to her advocacy work she served 28 years in the Town of Scituate as their Recreation Director. Here she helped grow the department from 30 to 300 programs, improved and helped rebuild athletic facilities, expanded lifeguard services, the sailing program, and established the CORSE foundation to provide integrative programming for children of all abilities. Jennifer has four sons (three of her four children live with PANDAS/PANS). She is a tireless advocate and always maintains a "never give up" attitude.

Jennifer McCormack Vitelli, Marshfield
Recommended by
Sen. Patrick O'Connor



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Shana Wang and Amy Kirsch founded Belmont Helps, which has now grown into a comprehensive mutual aid organization. Belmont Helps has collected donations, made and distributed masks, delivered meals, ordered groceries for homebound older residents, helped teachers make vaccine appointments, provided snacks to employees at local hospitals and nursing homes, organized campaigns to support Belmont restaurants, along with numerous other programs. They have also created initiatives to connect isolated residents, along with craft projects for kids. As a Taiwanese-American, Shana also co-founded the Belmont Pan-Asian Coalition to amplify Asian-American voices in Belmont, showcase diversity, and dispel harmful stereotypes against Asian-Americans. Shana was a long-time volunteer for the Winn Brook Elementary PTA and its PTA extracurricular program director for many years. She co-moderates the 4,000-member Belmont MA Parents Facebook group to connect families across town.

Shana Wang, Belmont
Recommended by
Rep. Dave Rogers

Corinn Williams, New Bedford
Recommended by
Sen. Mark Montigny

Corinn Williams is a co-founder in 1997 of the Community Economic Development Center of Southeastern Massachusetts (CEDC) located in New Bedford, Massachusetts. She has been Executive Director of the CEDC since 2002. She has been involved in creating economic opportunities in numerous community development programs and efforts. She has been an unbelievable asset to the immigrant and general community during the COVID-19 crisis. Under Corinn's leadership, the CECD has remained open to the public during the pandemic, with proper safety protocols, and provides numerous services from direct food support to advocacy for people experiencing unemployment and much more. Corinn has also been a leader in developing the neighborhood around the CEDC office by providing direct business support to immigrant businesses and leading public art initiatives. She continues to be an inspiration to all in the region and leads in creating a positive and supportive environment for people most in need.

Lindsay Wright is a married mother of two working as a part-time nurse for the Abington Health Department. This past year her part-time job quickly became round-the-clock, with a steady schedule of 12-15 hour days. She was charged with the responsibility of contact tracing COVID-19 cases amongst Abington residents, as well as Abington faculty and volunteers residing outside the town. She coordinated multiple departments and volunteers to oversee safe, efficient vaccine clinics for the elderly, first responders, and town educators. She developed a school contact tracing/quarantine system for the Abington school system, and helped start a vaccine program for at-risk homebound residents. When things are critical, special people step forward. Lindsay has been a hero throughout the entire COVID-19 pandemic these past 12 months, carrying the weight and wellbeing of a community on her shoulders. Her leadership and drive has been nothing short of heroic.

Lindsay Wright, Whitman
Recommended by
Rep. Alyson Sullivan

Theresa C. Young, Lynn
Recommended by
Rep. Peter Capano

Theresa C. Young is a lifelong Lynner with over four decades of governmental and constituents service experience. Theresa served for almost ten years as a Secretary for the Legislative Services Bureau at the State House where she served as a liaison between the general public and members of the Massachusetts Legislature. She later transitioned to the Department of Community Development where she worked tirelessly on improvements and upgrades to city's downtown area. For the past twenty-nine years, Theresa has worked for the Lynn City Council and is the Executive Assistant. She has served under six Lynn City Council Presidents and more than fifty-three Councilor-at Larges and Ward Councilors. Theresa is always available to answer constituent questions "off the top of her head" and always with a smile. Theresa also serves as the Clerk to the Lynn Human Rights Commission. Her dedication and hard work embodies the true meaning of the words "public servant." Theresa has been married to her husband Andrew for forty-three years. She and her husband have four children and nine grandchildren. She is a member of the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary.

Wife, Mother of three, grandmother of three, Lisa took all of her past experiences of her personal trauma and abuse and wrote a detailed memoir of her life. She shares her story through the eyes of a child "HERS". This is a special way that she can give back to others, and help to hopefully promote healing. Lisa gained her voice, and by validating her story she healed through the process. Lisa is the everyday woman with an extraordinary gift for giving and is full of compassion. She has worked with disabled children and adults teaching life skills and writing, and served as a mentor to young women in a locked-down facility. Take the journey today and see how her story unfolds. Her ability to survive, as well as thrive from her silent world of treachery truly is an incredible journey filled with such inspiration, and never-ending hope. Thank you Lisa for being a voice for so many people out there who have the same unspoken truth!

Lisa Zarcone, Springfield
Recommended by
Rep. Orlando Ramos

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.

THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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