



JUNE 24, 2020

Please join us in celebrating the 2020
Commonwealth Heroines of
Massachusetts!

@MassCSW
#CHeroines2020

THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Seventeenth Annual Commonwealth Heroines of Massachusetts

Thank You to Our Sponsors

This 2020 Commonwealth Heroines virtual celebration would not be possible without our wonderful sponsors. We thank these exceptional businesses and individuals for their generosity and kind contributions.



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
Charles F. Hurley Building, 19 Staniford Street, 6th Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02114
www.mass.gov/women

Greetings!

This year, MCSW will hold the Seventeenth Annual Commonwealth Heroines celebration virtually. It is an honor for us to identify extraordinary women from across the Commonwealth and we sought to find ways within our capacity that would still allow us to do so in these unprecedented times.

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 2020 are truly positive change makers. They may not always make the news, but they most assuredly make a difference.

As you read through stories celebrating your fellow constituents, we know that you will be moved by all that is happening in our Commonwealth every day. 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 #CHeroines2020 to congratulate one another and foster that same community that is cultivated every year at the Commonwealth Heroines celebration.

Sincerely,

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

***“They don’t always make the news,
but they truly make the difference.”***

Elizabeth Almeida • Anne Antonellis • Magdalena Ayed • Anne Bader-Martin • Marilou Barsam • Anne Beauregard • Cynthia Beckford Brewington • Florence Bergmann • Kathryn Bonfiglio • Gail Boutiette • Alyzandra Brioso Vizcaino • Barbara Buckley • Courtney Cahill • Peg Carbone • Amy Cardoso • Deb Cary • Tiffany Cesero • Christine Chamberland • Sophor Chhour • Nanina Gaeta Coletta • Rhonda Garvin Conaway • Mya Cook • Deanna Cook • Francine Coughlin • Tracey Crago • Jennifer Marini D'Antonio • Charan Devereaux • Liz DiCarlo • Lotte Diomede • Donna DiVirgilio • Paula Dubord • Michelle Dunn • Andrea Egmont • Marie Enochy • Marilyn Fitzgerald • Estelle Flett • Kathleen Flynn • Alexis Forgit • Kristen Forsberg • Julie Gage • Catherine Gaudet • Maureen Geary • Marge Ghilarducci • Jacqueline Gillis • Eileen Giordano • Laurie Godwin • Sara Hamerla • Kristin Harrison • Emily Hedspeth • Sue-Ellen Hershman-Tcherepnin • Michaela Gagne Hetzler • Joanne Hillman • Cheryl Holbert Millard • Deirdre Holt • Beth Huang • Sachiko Ishihara • Maureen Johnson • Cynthia A. Johnson • Alyssa Jones • Leah Caroline Jones • Aleks Kajstura • Meena Kaushik • Marie-Louise Kehoe • Marcia Kimm-Jackson • Cindy Kuenzler • Loretta LaCentra • Anne Larner • Marilyn Lee-Tom • Mimi Lemay • Nancy Stone Lennhoff • Virginia Locke • Kim Longey • Michele Marantz • Hadassah Margolis • Frances Martinez • Katherine Martinez • Mary Jane McGlennon • Siobhan McHugh • Isaura Mendes • Margaret Morrissey • MaryBeth Murphy • LaTonia Naylor • Gina Sabbs Nelson • Anne Nemetz-Carlson • Wendy Northcross • Helen "Taffy" Nothnagle • Joanna O'Connell • Laura Often • Marie Oliva • Flor Palacios • Lesa Patrock • Kim Pettingill-Long • Lynne Poyant • Sue Prindle • Sahana Purohit • Ellen Quackenbush • Patricia "Patti" Quigley • Kathy Reardon • Nicole Reilly • Yaritza Rizzo • Debra Roberts • Stella Rogers • Cheryl Rose • Jennifer Rose • Noreen Rosher • Patrice Rousseau • Jacqueline Royce • Laurel Ruma • Jeri Rumsis • Debra Mann Schmill • Linda Snow Dockser • Lynn Strider • Catherine Sugarman • Joanne Sullivan • J. Cherry Sullivan • Annette Szczygiel • Lucy Tabit • Teresa Tapper • Carlie Tartakov • Marie Thibault • Darlene Torre • Graciela Trilla, Ed.D. • Nicole Valentine • Angela Varney • Christina Varney • Martha Velez • Tracye Whitfield • Toni Wiley • Jane Winn • Donna Wresinski • Patricia Yebba • MagalieYolanda Torres-Rowe • Tena Zapantis •

THE HEROINES

2020



Elizabeth Almeida, Westford

Recommended by
Rep. James Arciero

Elizabeth Almeida has changed Westford's Select Board in significant ways. Now the Chair, she has transformed the culture to one of respectful discussion, thoughtful deliberation, and transparent and inclusive decision making. When contentious issues are before the Select Board, Elizabeth carefully listens to all sides and routinely encourages outside of the box solutions. As a business-owning farmer, Elizabeth was determined to resurrect the defunct Agricultural Commission. She thoughtfully led the Commission in redrafting their mission statement and in the creation of Westford's Community Gardens. Elizabeth has also recently started a "Women in Government" support and discussion group. Elizabeth was also the first local candidate to be endorsed by the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus (MWPC). Finally, Elizabeth was the initiator of the recently passed change in language to our Town Charter to be gender-inclusive. Elizabeth's passion for everyone to feel included in Town Government is what makes her a Commonwealth Heroine.

Anne Antonellis is a small-business owner, parent, wife, civic volunteer, and tireless advocate who has led the Duxbury Business Association for nearly two decades. In 2004, Anne founded "Holly Days" to showcase local businesses and inspire residents to shop local. The festive annual event has grown to become a favorite town tradition. Anne also played an important role in establishing the Alden House "Speak for Thyself Awards" honoring outspoken women on the South Shore. Anne volunteers to assist many community organizations and the Duxbury schools. For several years Anne volunteers her expertise in the real estate and mortgage field by participating in the Duxbury High School Credit for Life Fair. In this role she provides guidance to students as they determine the realistic costs it takes for students to live on their own. Anne is truly a heroine and outstanding volunteer who enrich the lives of many in her community.



Anne Antonellis, Duxbury

Recommended by
Rep. Josh Cutler



Magdalena Ayed, East Boston

Recommended by
Sen. Joseph Boncore

Magdalena Ayed is Founder and Executive Director of The Harborkeepers, an East Boston-based grassroots coastal resiliency organization. A multilingual native of Argentina who grew up in NY and NJ with a Bachelor's from Montclair University in International Relations, Magdalena came to Boston in 2003 to work and raise a family. She very quickly discovered that Boston, as a coastal city, experiences a dichotomy between socio-political economic progress and the challenge to building equitable resiliency, which she believes will require shifting the resiliency narrative and making systemic changes in climate resiliency-building, multi-sector collaboration and developing more innovative models of stakeholder engagement. She brings her extensive experience in community engagement, cross-sector partnership building skills and knowledge of multi-cultural sensitivity to find points of collaboration between diverse stakeholders in order to advance local, state and regional climate resiliency plans and as well as assure that environmental policies work for more impacted communities, like East Boston.

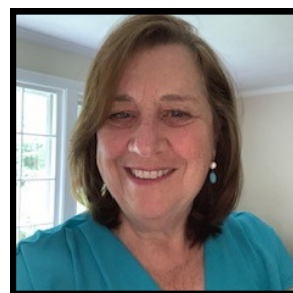


Anne Bader-Martin, Newton

Recommended by
Rep. Ruth Balser

Fifteen years ago, Anne Bader-Martin, a court appointed attorney in the juvenile system, sat in a Dunkin Donuts with a client, a 15 year old pregnant girl who was making a list of needs. She was focused on a stroller. A man who heard them handed Anne a check and said, "Buy her the stroller." Anne realized that if she could explain the needs, people would help. Shortly after, Anne gathered a group of court-appointed attorneys, social workers, and friends and founded the nonprofit One Can Help, where Anne now serves as Executive Director and Board President. One Can Help addresses the impact of poverty on children by providing resources that make a difference. Privately raised funds are used to pay for resources no one else provides. One Can Help has grown so it helps kids involved in juvenile courts all over Massachusetts.

Marilou Barsam works tirelessly to ensure that every adult and child feel safe and welcomed into the Bedford community. Marilou co-founded Bedford Embraces Diversity (BED) in March of 2014 in response to incidents of anti-Semitism in Bedford schools and has since served as the group's chair. BED's first project was to create a "Diversity Quilt," consisting of individual drawings expressing how each artist interpreted diversity and respecting differences. BED is now a non-profit organization and has organized three independent multicultural festivals, which have since become a permanent fixture of the town's Bedford Day. BED also sponsors an annual Martin Luther King, Jr. memorial breakfast, at which they invite black members of the community to share their perspectives on the state of interracial relations in Bedford and beyond. Marilou's dedication to facilitating inclusion and celebrating diversity has made her an unsung heroine in the Bedford community.



Marilou Barsam, Bedford

Recommended by
Rep. Kenneth Gordon



**Anne Beauregard,
Brockton**

Recommended by
Sen. Michael Brady

Those who know Anne Beauregard know her as a tireless advocate, passionate mentor, and devoted friend, whose dedication and service to the City of Brockton is second to none. During her two terms as Ward 5 City Councilor, Anne would make every effort to keep informed, constantly reviewing materials and meeting with various city department heads- and worked fervently to make sure residents were informed as well, going so far as to print and hand deliver flyers. To list all of Anne's service and volunteer service would fill the contents of an Encyclopedia, but to name just a few she has served on the Real Estate Sub-Committee, Traffic Commission, the boards of Brockton Community Schools and the Adult Learning Center, is a volunteer with the Garden Club and Charity Guild, and runs the gift shop as well as countless programs for the library- never for personal gain but always as a labor of love. She has been an incredible advocate for engaging women in local politics and no one is more deserving of recognition.

Cynthia studied Criminal Justice at Middlesex Community College and UMass Boston. Throughout the entirety of her Boston Police career, Cynthia has been assigned to Area B3 where she has been able to serve members of the community where she resides. Cynthia has spent more than 11 years with the B3 Community Service Office working with various community associations, churches, housing developments, seniors, youth groups, DYS facilities, and schools within the district. Cynthia strives to improve relationships between families and the police. Every summer, Cynthia and her colleagues engage 50+ youth in a six week Teen Police Academy program focused on self-esteem, respect, discipline, and physical fitness. Cynthia engages regularly in youth and police connections and dialogues. She enjoys working with youth from the numerous organizations in District 3 and enjoys meeting monthly with over 30 community groups. Cynthia is also the mother of Zaria, a student at Bridgewater State University.



**Cynthia Beckford-
Brewington, Dorchester**

Recommended by Sen. Nick Collins

"Fluffy" Bergmann has been the director of the Mystic Learning Center at the Mystic Housing Development for over 40 years. She grew up in the development, and has dedicated her life to working with the children, teens and families in the development and the rest of Somerville. The Center provides high quality year-round care for youth aged 5-13 (or 16 with special needs), including after school programming, summer camp, vacation programs and more. It also runs a summer camp, job training and employment program for low-income teens. There is a free drop-in club for kids 8-14; Books of Hope, a paid fellowship for young authors; and a free summer basketball program. Fluffy has been a member of the School Improvement Council at the Healey School, which serves the neighborhood. She has been an educator, a positive force and an inspirational mentor for thousands of young people.



**Florence "Fluffy"
Bergmann, North Billerica**

Recommended by
Sen. Patricia Jehlen



Kathryn Bonfiglio, Belmont

Recommended by
Rep. Dave Rogers

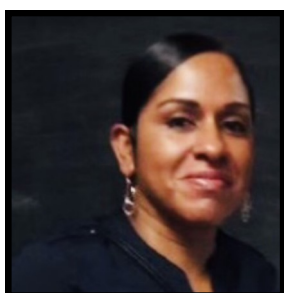
Kathryn Bonfiglio is the President of Belmont Against Racism (BAR), a community-action, all-volunteer organization focused on addressing issues of racism and prejudice. Kathryn has been responsible for organizing many events around Belmont, including the annual Martin Luther King Breakfast, which raises money for the transportation budget for METCO students so that they can participate in more activities after school. BAR also runs events that are designed to help parents talk to their children about race, advance restorative justice in the community, and address income inequality. Kathryn says what brings her the most meaning is meeting inspiring people and helping them have their voices heard, and connecting people to ideas on contemporary and controversial topics. She believes when we see our common humanity, we can move to a more just world. Kathryn also serves on the Belmont Human Rights Commission, a Beyond Ferguson discussion group, and the Massachusetts Human Rights Coalition.

Gail Boutiette serves as the Outreach Coordinator for the Uxbridge Council on Aging. Every day Gail is a beacon of happiness and positive energy for the seniors of Uxbridge. She is committed to providing the best possible experience for those at the Senior Center by consistently working on new programs, raising community awareness, and genuinely connecting with seniors. Gail actively works to meet the needs of seniors through educational opportunities and empowers elders to maintain their quality of life. In addition to her work at the senior center, Gail is actively involved in the town by supporting events like the Uxbridge First Holiday Night and various parades. Gail is a valuable asset to the Town of Uxbridge and serves as a role model to women across the Commonwealth.



Gail Boutiette, Uxbridge

Recommended by
Rep. Michael Soter



**Alyzandra Briosio Vizcaino,
Brockton**

Recommended by
Rep. Gerard Cassidy

Alyzandra (Ally) Briosio is truly a Commonwealth Heroine in the City of Brockton. She continually strives to better our city and genuinely cares about the residents. When she identifies a gap in local activism, she is not afraid to create a new association or program to close it. Most recently, Ally formed the Diverse Initiatives Neighborhood Association (DINA), which as its mission statement notes, "strives to bridge the gap between all the diverse residents of Brockton". Ally does this in her everyday life, without hesitation. She hosts "Everyone Has a Voice", a poetry series at the Brockton Public Library. This program pairs student poets with seasoned poets and fosters community discussion. Ally is an asset to our community and deserves to be recognized!



Barbara Buckley, Middleboro

Recommended by
Rep. Alyson Sullivan

On March 30, 2015 Angela (15), Christina (14) and Mia (5) Varney lost their mom Anne Marie to suicide. Through their grief and in honor of Annie's 35 years on earth, they made 35 "Kindness Blankets". They gave these blankets to different people that may have been struggling in some way, battling health setbacks, or just needing reassurance that they aren't alone. Needless to say their kindness and compassion became contagious. Together with the guidance of a team of five amazing women (Barbara Buckley, Aubrianne Buckley, Maegan Perzentz, Lisa Palmer and Maryann Hall) and an army of volunteers, Annie's Kindness Blankets has since made and given out over 7,500 blankets through donations of time and love. In a world in desperate need of unity and kindness, these ladies define heroism in their efforts to touch the world with kindness through everyone they meet.

Scituate resident, Courtney Cahill, devotes her career and volunteer efforts to supporting survivors of domestic violence. As Chief of the Domestic Violence Unit for Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III's Office, Cahill oversees the prosecution of all domestic violence cases, and coordinates high risk teams, community education, prevention and outreach programs. Cahill is President of Employers Against Domestic Violence, a non-profit organization that educates businesses on the impact of domestic violence on the workplace and creates safer work environments. Cahill's accomplishments include working for 11 years as Chief of the Special Victims Unit, Plymouth County District Attorney's Office. She also worked with the Northwestern District Attorney's Office to host and train over 200 people on creating and enhancing high risk teams across the Commonwealth. Courtney Cahill's unwavering care and dedication to supporting survivors is instrumental in enhancing the safety nets across the Commonwealth for those experiencing domestic violence.



Courtney Cahill, Scituate

Recommended by
Rep. Patrick Kearney

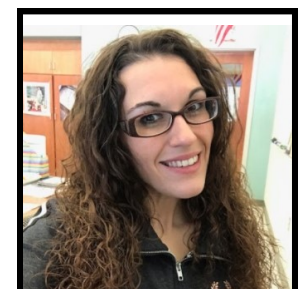


Peg Carbone, Stoughton

Recommended by
Sen. Walter Timilty

Fighting hunger is no easy feat, but Peg Carbone of Stoughton is doing her best to eradicate hunger one can of non-perishable food at a time. In 2011, Peg had noticed that the food pantries in Stoughton were looking for help obtaining donations. True to her nature, Peg answered the call to action, contributing her time and efforts to the cause. In December of that year, she took out an ad in a local paper to announce that she would pick up food donations and checks from residents who were unable to make their way to St. Anthony's Free Market. As a result, the donations started to pour in. People were so moved and inspired by her selflessness that the number of volunteers at the pantry increased as well. For nearly a decade, she has spent her Thursdays driving around in her own car to help feed those who are in need. Peg once said, "In this world of plenty, a child should not be going hungry."

Amy Cardoso, a lifelong Woburnite, is a product of Woburn Public Schools and holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from Salem State University and a Master of Education from UMass Boston. She has been an English teacher at Woburn Memorial High School since 2011, working in a program designated for students who have challenges in a mainstream setting and who need additional support to successfully graduate from high school. She co-advises the WMHS Peer Mediation program, comprised of a group of pupils who are trained professionally by a Mediator to help resolve student conflict within the school. She also co-advises WMHS embRACE, the club designed to be a safe space and network of support for students of color, students who are immigrants, and students who practice non-Christian religions. Amy speaks both Spanish and Portuguese and has provided translation during parent meetings and various Woburn Public Schools (WPS) events to disseminate important school and community-related information to non-English speaking families.



Amy Cardoso, South Yarmouth

Recommended by
Rep. Michelle Ciccolo

Deb Cary is a tireless advocate for the environment. Whether it is education, awareness, conservation, preservation or open space - she truly cares about improving the quality of life for our MA residents. She also strives to teach our youth the importance of environmental issues, conservation and recreation. Deb puts 110% into everything she does. In addition to her work with Mass Audubon, she volunteers on countless boards and commissions, both in her hometown of Princeton and for the state. It is a pleasure working with Deb and seeing the impact of her hard work and dedication today, and for generations to come.



Deb Cary, Princeton
Recommended by
Rep. Kimberly Ferguson



Tiffany Cesero, Plymouth

Recommended by
Rep. Matthew Muratore

Tiffany Cesero is a fierce advocate for children and families. She has organized fundraising events like Touch-A-Truck, and plays key roles at others like Spin-A-Thon, to help raise over \$100,000 to assist children and families. She leads a YMCA committee focused on making summer camp, water safety, and educational programs accessible to all. Tiffany is a champion of education and reducing summer learning loss, while consistently looking for ways to create equity and opportunity for every child in Plymouth. Additionally, she has tirelessly served the Plymouth community as Board Chair of the Old Colony YMCA Plymouth Branch, is a board member of the Salvation Army, and is a longtime Sunrise Rotarian where she currently serves as Treasurer. All while making weekly deliveries for Meals on Wheels. A true heroine, Tiffany gives her time and talent in a multitude of volunteer roles simply because she wants to make her community stronger.

Chrissy Chamberland has been a volunteer in the Boy Scout organization for 23 years, having attended numerous scout functions with her father, who is still a leader in Boy Scouts. Chrissy started one of the first all Girls Troops in the Boy Scouts in Massachusetts and one of only two to attend the 2019 World Scout Jamboree. Troop 163 started a year ago and in addition to being an all girls troop it is also an all-inclusive troop welcoming all regardless of orientation. As the Scout leader, Chrissy is breaking new ground and helping young women to thrive and succeed. In addition, Chrissy coordinates numerous events in Sturbridge including a free holiday tree recycling program and answers every call for activism and assistance to others.



Christine Chamberland, Sturbridge

Recommended by
Sen. Anne Gobi



Sophor Chhour, Lynnfield

Recommended by
Sen. Brendan Crighton

Sophor Chhour has worked at the Lynn Community Health Center for over 25 years as a licensed mental health counselor and runs the Rainbow Adult Day Health Care Bayon Center in Lynn, MA. She also owns the Lynn Primary Care Center, which provides primary medical care and behavioral services to local Cambodian community members. As a Cambodian refugee who escaped the Khmer Rouge in the late 1970s, Chhour came to the U.S. in 1981. Drawing strength from the trauma she experienced as a survivor of the Killing Fields, she was inspired to pursue mental health counseling as a career and in 1997, she graduated from Cambridge College with a Masters in counseling. Teaching, training, and giving back to her patients is her greatest passion. She is inspired to help other Cambodians in the U.S. share their experiences, and give a voice to survivors of all types of trauma.



**Nanina Gaeta Coletta,
East Boston**

Recommended by
Rep. Adrian Madaro

As a lifelong East Boston resident, Nina serves as the Director of the East Boston High School Family Center, where she empowers and mentors families through a range of circumstances. In addition to ensuring youth have access to fundamental resources through her role as Key Club advisor, she encourages them to volunteer in a variety of activities, including the community's annual Thanksgiving Day Dinner and Eastie's Elves, the largest holiday toy drive in our area. Nina is an ardent advocate for improvements to our public schools. She has contributed to numerous community efforts, including the Kiwanis Club, the Impact Advisory Group (IAG) for a major development in our neighborhood, and the Edwards Empowerment Fund. She has modeled a love of service to her community for her fellow East Boston residents, instilling in them a strong commitment to civic duty.

For founding The Peacemakers "Music with a Message" program at Johnson Elementary School in Natick Massachusetts. The Peacemakers was inceptioned in 1997 as a way to improve academic and social learning outcomes and to give each student an opportunity to be part of something and understand that "every voice counts". The Peacemakers is comprised of Johnson School third and fourth grade students. While primarily musical in nature, the learning and collaborative undertakings that students experience stretch far beyond song and lend to rich connections to classroom learning and self. Essential learning around human differences, self-esteem and empowerment, community building, patriotism, character and citizenship and social justice permeate the Peacemaker experience.



Rhonda Garvin Conaway, Natick

Recommended by
Rep. David Linsky



Mya Cook, Malden

Recommended by
Rep. Steven Ultrino

Deanna and Mya Cook were served multiple detentions and were threatened with suspension from their High School because their hairstyle violated school dress code. The girls were forced to sit in detention before and after school. They have been kicked out of after-school sports and banned from the prom. Because of their fight, they were successful in the school's decision to change their policy. They deserve this recognition because they went against something they felt was an injustice and they garnered community support. They are confident young women who used a spotlight in a way that will allow them to continue to be leaders. They have been an inspiration to people of all ages that face discrimination in schools and in the workplace due to the style of their hair. Their actions have helped lead to a better understanding of ethnic hairstyles and a national movement to help pass the Crown Act.



Deanna Cook, Malden

Recommended by
Rep. Steven Ultrino

I enthusiastically recommend Ms. Francine Coughlin to represent her community of North Reading as a 2020 Commonwealth Heroine. Ms. Coughlin served as the President of the Reading-North Reading Chamber of Commerce in 2019. Currently, she is the Founder and President of Rock n' Rescue, a non-profit dog rescue organization, and also serves as Vice Chairperson of the North Reading Historical Commission. Her commitment to the continual improvement of the Town of North Reading is truly commendable. Through her combination of enthusiasm, creativity, commitment to community, and hard work, I am certain Ms. Francine Coughlin exemplifies the kind of Commonwealth Heroine that MCSW seeks to recognize.



Francine Coughlin, North Reading

Recommended by
Rep. Bradley Jones



Tracey Crago, Falmouth

Recommended by
Rep. Dylan Fernandes

Tracey is the Executive Director of Falmouth VIPS, Volunteers in Public Schools, a program that provides schools with organized and engaged volunteers who enrich the curriculum and the lives of the students they serve. Tracey serves as the liaison between the community and the public school system. She helps to promote and coordinate programs such as "No Guff Week," in which students pledge not to speak or text anything negative about others for a week. In addition, she helps with weekend food bags that provide children with food that are at risk of going hungry over the weekend. Under her leadership, VIPS has logged over one million volunteer hours since its inception in 1983. Tracey's efforts have transformed the lives of countless students and volunteers and have built a stronger, more vibrant community in Falmouth. She is a Commonwealth Heroine who epitomizes service above self.



Jennifer Marini D'Antonio, Natick

Recommended by
Rep. David Linsky

For founding The Peacemakers "Music with a Message" program at Johnson Elementary School in Natick Massachusetts. The Peacemakers was incepted in 1997 as a way to improve academic and social learning outcomes and to give each student an opportunity to be part of something and understand that "every voice counts". The Peacemakers is comprised of Johnson School third and fourth grade students. While primarily musical in nature, the learning and collaborative undertakings that students experience stretch far beyond song and lend to rich connections to classroom learning and self. Essential learning around human differences, self-esteem and empowerment, community building, patriotism, character and citizenship and social justice permeate the Peacemaker experience.



Charan Devereaux, Somerville

Recommended by
Rep. Denise Provost

Charan is a musician, but perhaps her highest art is that of bringing our community together. Charan Devereaux's 2015-2017 Union Square Playlist explored the music and history of the city of Somerville, through concerts, lectures, discussions, and an accompanying CD, the proceeds of which benefited the local recording artists and the Somerville Museum. Her 2019-2020 Faith in a City: Exploring Religion in Somerville, Massachusetts, project explored the beliefs, ceremonies and places of worship of 20 local religious groups through music, photography, interviews, video and history as a way of better understanding the City. Devereaux's wide-ranging projects have had an enthusiastic community-wide response. Crowds have gathered at a local microbrewery to hear about how Somerville's economic development has relied on its waves of immigrants. All who participate in these "community based projects" have come away with a deepened understanding and appreciation for the place we share, and have probably made a few new friends.



Liz DiCarlo, Mattapoisett

Recommended by
Rep. Antonio Cabral

Liz DiCarlo has worked on multiple fronts over the past forty years throughout greater New Bedford and Cape Cod and the Islands. She is driven by her belief that every person should be treated with dignity and respect. Whether it was the war on the people of Central America, the devastation from the twin epidemics of HIV/AIDS, the reality that all marginalized and underserved people don't have access to affordable housing, health care and dental services, or the discrimination faced by LGBTQ people and immigrants, Liz worked and works passionately on the front lines ensuring that government and non-profit agencies were and are accountable to the people's needs. As a registered nurse and community organizer for over fifty years before her retirement, she is now volunteering in New Bedford to increase voter/census awareness and civic engagement as well as lobbying to pass the End of Life Options bill in Massachusetts.

Lotte Diomede served on the Commission on Disability and raised tens of thousands of dollars for Children's Hospital. Learning to care for her son, she decided to take actions that would enhance the lives of disabled children throughout the Commonwealth. Lotte and Susan Brown co-founded "SMILE MASS" which enabled creation of universally accessible playgrounds in Sudbury, Boston, Hudson, and Acton and a fully handicapped accessible rental home on Cape Cod. SMILE donated 140 beach wheelchairs to allow children and young adults to experience the joy of movement across the sand and through the water. When Houston flooded because of a hurricane, Lotte gathered and dispatched two truckloads of medical supplies, diapers, and wheelchairs to Texas aiding thirty young adults. After Puerto Rico was damaged by the hurricane, Lotte's team gathered and delivered nine truckloads of food, water and later delivering Christmas gifts to residents in neighboring towns.



Lotte Diomede, Sudbury

Recommended by
Rep. Carmine Gentile



Donna DiVirgilio, Stoneham

Recommended by
Rep. Michael Day

Donna DiVirgilio has dedicated her life to serving the youth of Stoneham. As a fixture at the Boys & Girls Clubs, she has implemented innovative programming, quietly provided emergency assistance to families in need and has been a steadying and positive influence in the lives of generations of children. Donna's service and impact, however, goes well beyond our community's youth. When the recession hit Stoneham particularly hard through programming and service cuts, Donna filled the void. She worked relentlessly to help restore recreational programs for seniors and the community at large; helped save the public swimming pool from closing; and is an ever-present and legitimizing force at traditional community events. Donna has also been instrumental in keeping the town's annual Martin Luther King Jr. program running for more than 20 years and has been steadfast in her commitment to making our community more inclusive for all of our residents.

Paula has been a tremendous advocate for our senior citizens. She's been a great leader who has developed and expanded programs including health care, technology and education. She has been very supportive of our seniors. Additionally, she continues to be a strong advocate and is leading the charge for a much needed new senior center in Wilbraham.



Paula Dubord, Wilbraham

Recommended by
Rep. Angelo Puppola Jr.

Michelle Dunn is the truest example of a Commonwealth Heroine. Dedicated to fighting opioid addiction and giving those fighting substance abuse a second chance, Michelle opened the A.E.D Foundation in memory of her daughter, who lost her fight with addiction and inspired Michelle's life work. A.E.D is a community peer recovery and resource center, dedicated to helping those struggling with addiction. Established in 2014, Michelle used the foundation to assist patients and their families with their struggles. Michelle also helped to establish the Gardner Chapter of the Learn to Cope, as well as Alyssa's Place, founded in 2015. Michelle took the greatest loss a person could face, and made it so that Alyssa's loss was not in vain, and helped those fighting the same battle.



Michelle Dunn, Gardner

Recommended by
Sen. Dean Tran



Andrea Egmont, Amesbury

Recommended by
Sen. Diana DiZoglio

Andrea Egmont, director of Youth Services for the City of Newburyport, has been with Newburyport Youth Services since its inception in 2005. Her background is in youth and human development, substance use prevention and asset building. She is passionate about empowering young people and helping them find their voice, whether it is to advocate for themselves or their community. She is richly deserving of this honor.

Marie Enochty is a longtime Brewster resident and has been an employee of the Boston Public Schools (BPS) for nearly a decade, where she trains and coaches teachers and principals in early education. Marie has spent over 40 years of her life in education. Prior to her time at BPS, Marie worked for Cape Cod Children's Place. She served for ten years as the Brewster representative to the Nauset Regional School Committee and has served for over twenty years as a member of the Brewster School Committee. Marie has served as a board member for the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children, Native American Early Childhood Council at the Boston Children's Museum, Latham Centers, and the Cape Cod Collaborative. Marie has been a vocal leader in her community for funding education and combating racism in every aspect of life. She earned a B.A. in art education from Pratt Institute and an M.S. in education from Bank Street College of Education.



Marie Enochty, Brewster

Recommended by
Sen. Julian Cyr



Marilyn Fitzgerald, Andover

Recommended by
Rep. Frank Moran

Marilyn is extremely dedicated to ensuring that the future generation of our communities is growing to their full potential. Her dedicated time as an educator in our community has been a blessing to so many students, faculty and staff members that interact with her on a daily basis.



Estelle Flett, Norton

Recommended by
Rep. Steven Howitt

Estelle has been a dedicated Veteran's Service Agent in the town of Norton for many years. She is dedicated to her work and has helped numerous veterans in the district. When accepting the recommendation for the Commonwealth Heroine award, Estelle shared "The program insert, the Meaning of the YELLOW ROSE, is a perfect inclusion to the program, we sometimes forget the fight others had to have women recognized."

Kathy Flynn was born and raised in Fitchburg and attended the St Bernard's Schools for 12 years. She went on to get her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Fitchburg State University and Master of Education from Lesley University. She became a beloved first grade teacher in the Fitchburg Public Schools for more than 35 years. She gave many years as a member of the board of directors for the Fitchburg Historical Society. During this time, she became the major curator for all of the Society's exhibitions and played a major role in the Annual Historical Society House Tour. Kathy is also an adjunct professor at FSU as part of the Alpha Program. This is a community/university-based program for adults looking for a variety of broad based educational experiences. She is currently curating the art gallery for the rebirth of the new/old Fitchburg City Hall. Kathy is a loving Aunt to her many nieces and nephews and is widely respected and admired by her family and many, many friends.



Kathleen Flynn, Lunenburg

Recommended by
Rep. Stephan Hay



Alexis Forgit, Milford

Recommended by
Rep. Brian Murray

From her early years, Alexis found that she had a passion for working with the special needs community. Employed as a Special Education Teacher in the Milford Public Schools since 2012, she has many responsibilities such as implementing integrated units of study, structuring curriculum for student success and developing programs for individual students. Since 2014, Alexis has served as the Best Buddies Adviser, managing over 200 students in various activities and events that allow students with intellectual disabilities to participate in an inclusive event and showcase their skills. Alexis also has served since 2011 as a coach of the Special Olympics Swim and Soccer Team. She works with over 40 swimmers to determine ability, designs a swimming plan and helps them grow in additional areas. She was chosen as one of the USA Games coaches for the 2018 Special Olympics Team Massachusetts at the USA Games in Seattle, Washington.

Kristen Forsberg, MPA & MCPPO leads as Assistant to the Town Manager of Leicester and a crucial member of the community. A graduate of Middlebury College, she has more than a decade of experience, currently managing a town of approximately 11,000 residents managing a \$30 million town budget. Forsberg is impactful in her role, most recently hosting a recent Joint Cannabis Policy Hearing at Leicester Public Library with short notice, convening stakeholders for infrastructure issues, and in crucial moments managing town politics and people while gracefully balancing her public administration role. She actively seeks professional education and better practices for her field, an investment not only for herself, but also for the public good that should be celebrated. She is the next generation of Town Managers coming up in her field; she will undoubtedly reach her goals to become a Town Manager in Massachusetts.



Kristen Forsberg, Rochdale

Recommended by
Rep. David LeBoeuf

I am pleased to recognize Julie Gage, the current Executive Director of the James L. McKeown Boys & Girls Club of Woburn, as a Massachusetts Commission of the Status of Women Commonwealth Heroine. Julie truly lives the mission of the Club each day by inspiring youth to find their greatness. Her commitment to the Woburn community at-large and her devotion to providing a safe place for kids are worthy of this special honor. Julie has been with the Club since 2004 and has served as both the Arts & Education Director and the Director of Program Development prior to becoming the Executive Director. Notably she helped lead the club during its 9.5-million-dollar renovation and expansion project. Julie is a graduate of Bates College and in 2014 she completed the Institute for Nonprofit Management and Leadership program at Boston University. Her Club programs have been honored for excellence nationally.



Julie Gage, Somerville

Recommended by
Rep. Richard Haggerty



Catherine Gaudet, Leominster

Recommended by
Rep. Natalie Higgins

Catherine "Cathy" Gaudet is the Nurse Leader for the Leominster Public Schools and a Clinical Nursing Instructor at Mount Wachusett Community College. A graduate of Fitchburg State University and Walden University, Cathy worked for HealthAlliance Leominster Hospital prior to joining Leominster Public Schools. Cathy also gives back to the community in so many ways, including as a member of the Leominster Lions Club and leading the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of North Central Massachusetts. Cathy's commitment to ending the stigma and breaking down barriers to mental health care continues to make Leominster a brighter community.

Maureen Geary has long been a key player in Quincy's continued ascent to a major regional economic driver. As the city's Director of Economic Development, she has been instrumental in cultivating Quincy's reputation as a business-friendly city, working tirelessly to ensure that the city's business district areas and commercial corridors are sustainable, vibrant places. Working closely with Mayor Koch, Maureen has spearheaded a number of initiatives that have brought commerce and growth to Quincy. She has led the charge to revitalize Squantum Point Pier and continues to go above and beyond to realize the ultimate goal of a full-time dedicated ferry service from Quincy into Boston. Through all of her efforts, Maureen prefers to be firmly out of the limelight, focused solely on moving the city forward. For her unparalleled dedication, her admirable passion, and her irreplaceable leadership, I'm proud to nominate Maureen Geary as a 2020 Commonwealth Heroine.



Maureen Geary, Quincy

Recommended by
Rep. Bruce Ayers



Marge Ghilarducci, Berkley

Recommended by
Rep. Norman Orrall

Marge Ghilarducci may have retired from the successful Marge Ghilarducci Agency Inc. in 2002, but she has remained extremely busy. Marge volunteers in many ways, mentoring students at the Somerset Berkley Regional High School for DECA competitions and supporting the arts in the local schools. She has also volunteered her time as Secretary of the Berkley Historical Commission where she has helped obtain many grants to support the quality of life in her hometown. She spearheaded the creation of Berkley Bridge Village Heritage Park that provides access for all abilities to take part in outdoor recreation. Now that her first park has been completed, she is focusing her efforts on making major improvements to another park, St. Yves Park, where she hopes to provide improved ball fields, trails, and equipment.

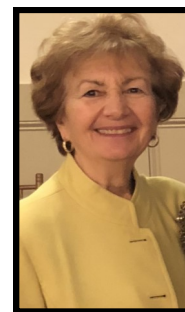


Jacqueline Gillis, Hudson

Recommended by
Rep. Kate Hogan

Jackie Gillis is known as the “Queen of Green,” for her work helping Hudson and its residents become more environmentally friendly. A retired scientist and longtime volunteer, Jackie is currently Hudson’s Volunteer Recycling Coordinator. She recently served on the Hudson Recycling Sustainability Committee, which examined the viability of curbside recycling and trash pickup. She represents this committee and Green Hudson at community events and school programs to educate and raise recycling awareness. Jackie also volunteers at Fresh Start Furniture Bank (FSFB) where she started their recycling program, trained volunteers, and hunts for items that FSFB can use to assist clients. She spearheaded the Textile recycling container program in Hudson to reduce these materials in landfills; proceeds benefit Hudson schools and FSFB. In season, Jackie has worked with local organizations to move excess crops from farmers to food pantries and soup kitchens. Thank you Jackie!

In the last three decades, Eileen Giordano has worked tirelessly serving the community in the Merrimack Valley. A retiree from the Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley, and co-founder and Vice President of Foster Kids of the Merrimack Valley, Eileen has done it all: from managing volunteers, helping to run an organization, and acting as a planner, caterer, and fundraiser for events. Foster Kids of the Merrimack Valley provides a number of services to help hundreds of foster children in the Greater Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, Andover, and North Andover area. Eileen’s care for her community and the impact that she has had on the children she serves make her a true Commonwealth Heroine.



Eileen Giordano, Methuen

Recommended by
Rep. Linda Dean Campbell



Laurie Godwin, Fall River

Recommended by
Rep. Carole Fiola

In 2015, when Substance Use Disorder made its way into her family, Laurie began her work with opioid recovery. After her experience in attempting to navigate the treatment system with her son, it became her mission to repair breakdowns in the system by addressing these issues from the perspective of those who utilize these services. In 2017, Laurie joined with others who shared her experiences, and created Recover Fall River, whose goals, strategies and programs continue to be shaped by the consumer. Recover Fall River planned and executed Fall River’s first ever Overdose Awareness Day Vigil, which is now held annually and attended by hundreds of community members who cherish the opportunity to remember lost loved ones with dignity and respect. Recover Fall River operates a monthly Help Center which provides barrier-free access to treatment, and are working on an anti-stigma campaign for medical professionals who treat individuals with Substance Use Disorder.

Dr. Sara Hamerla has dedicated her life to children both personally and professionally. As a teacher and K-12 administrator, she has been able to work in a variety of instructional programs including: Spanish transitional bilingual, Portuguese transitional bilingual, Spanish dual immersion, and sheltered English. Sara co-authored “The K-3 Guide to Academic Conversations” and is a thought leader in the K-12 academic space. As a mother who has fostered over 20 children with her husband Perry, Sara is incredibly active in her biological, adopted, and foster children’s lives, including leading a Girl Scout troop. Sara is the kind of person that asks people to bring bilingual books for the Framingham Public Schools to her birthday party and continues to grow her engagement in our community. We are extremely fortunate to have a wonderful woman like Sara here in Framingham.



Sara Hamerla, Framingham

Recommended by
Rep. Maria Robinson

During the early stages of the opioid epidemic, Kristin Harrison recognized a need to educate local communities about the realities of substance use, especially among our youth. In a true grassroots effort, Kristin quickly engaged Easton's schools, Easton Police Department, Easton Fire Department, elected officials, the Board of Health, local businesses, pharmacies, and community residents. The organization has received several grants and awards for their work. Kristin has worked with Easton to institute a policy that allows her to collaborate with first responders and provide follow-up to families that have had a family member overdose. Over 5 years later, Easton Wings of Hope is recognized as the official youth substance use prevention coalition in Easton. The coalition's mission is to prevent youth substance use through education, awareness, and policy change. EWoh envisions a healthy Easton where healthy choices are recognized, valued, and accessible to all.



Kristin Harrison, North Easton

Recommended by
Rep. Claire Cronin



Emily Hedspeth, Monson

Recommended by
Rep. Brian Ashe

Emily has been dealing with a rare disease since 2012. During this time, she has spent days and sometimes months in and out of the hospital, which caused her to miss much of her high school days, yet she managed to graduate on time with honors. Even during the most difficult times, Emily persevered with a smile on her face and never let her future plans of becoming a nurse take a back seat. Upon high school graduation, she attended college and even while hospitalized many times, continued to study for her nursing boards which she ultimately passed in December. In an effort to encourage research funding for rare diseases and offer support to others, she volunteered to speak at Rare Disease Day in Boston. Emily is truly a Commonwealth Heroine as she continues to pursue her dream during the most difficult times and encourages others to never give up.

Sue-Ellen Hershman-Tcherepnin has led efforts in Watertown to increase awareness of challenges faced by our immigrant and refugee neighbors and to build trust between immigrants and the police. She is convener of the Watertown Citizens Refugee Support Group (a working group of Watertown Citizens for Peace, Justice & the Environment), which engages in vigils, cultural celebrations, clothing drives, legislative efforts, film festivals and direct support of Massachusetts refugee families in need. Most recently the group initiated a community-wide effort entitled "Watertown Celebrates Iftar," at which local Muslims and non-Muslims share Ramadan fast-breaking and engage in interfaith dialogue. Professionally, Sue-Ellen is a flutist who has performed with symphonies around the world and teaches at MIT.



Sue-Ellen Hershman-Tcherepnin, Watertown

Recommended by
Rep. Jonathan Hecht



Michelle Gagne Hetzler, Fall River

Recommended by
Rep. Alan Silva

Michaela Gagne Hetzler is currently in her tenth year serving as a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and School Adjustment Counselor at the high school level in Fall River. Her advocacy for Social Emotional Learning has led her to speak to diverse audiences regarding the importance of supporting youth mental health. Michaela serves as the community's Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator and assists in organizing various events, including the Police and Public Palooza, Peace by Piece Summit, Fall River Youth & Candidate Night, and the Fall River Youth & Family Fest. Michaela sits on many committees, while also co-chairing the Fall River Suicide Prevention Task Force and Fall River Youth Empowerment Task Force. She enjoys coaching soccer locally, and previous volunteer work includes traveling the country as a national spokesperson for the American Heart Association and assisting to set up a medical clinic in the Bukoba region of Tanzania.



Joanne Hillman, Winthrop

Recommended by
Speaker Robert DeLeo

Joanne has volunteered as a member and Chair of the Winthrop Cultural Council for almost 30 years. In that capacity Joanne has been an advocate for artists and the arts in Winthrop. Because of Joanne's insistence and persistence, the gallery was completed with gallery-quality paint and proper lighting (a fluorescent light fight she found herself embroiled in). I admire Joanne's ability to put up with a lot of flak and her ability to keep focused on the goal of providing a gallery for local artists that is respected throughout the region for its high quality exhibitions. In addition to her background as a photographer, Joanne also has an avid interest in local history. She is a tour guide with "Boston by Foot" where she leads walking tours of Boston's Freedom Trail. Volunteers with that organization must pass a rigorous test of local history before becoming certified as an official tour guide. Joanne was also a member of the (now defunct) Winthrop Community Chorus. Joanne grew up in Saugus. She met her husband Guy Hillman in Photography School. They are the parents of Anna who is a teacher in Salem, MA and are the very proud grandparents of 16-month old Delilah.

Cheryl Holbert Millard has been active in the Peabody community for over 40 years. Cheryl began her civic involvement as co-president of the Center Elementary School PTO. She served diligently as the Title I representative for the school while volunteering at St. John's Church and coaching youth sports. Cheryl has been a longtime board of management member for the Sutton Residence for Women in downtown Peabody, and an appointed member of Peabody's Historical Commission. She is a passionate member of the Garden Club and the No Child Goes Hungry campaign in Peabody, and served as Chair of the Alex Vitale Memorial Park Committee. Cheryl's selflessness has brought much success to these organizations, but she is most well known as Peabody's unofficial photographer. She has lent her photographic talents to well over a hundred Peabody events and spends hours publishing photos on social media for no charge. Her efforts have been vital to downtown Peabody's economic revitalization. Cheryl Holbert Millard is the epitome of what we call Peabody Pride.



Cheryl Holbert Millard, Peabody

Recommended by
Sen. Joan Lovely



Deirdre Holt, Winchendon

Recommended by
Rep. Jonathan Zlotnik

Dee Holt is a fixture at all Winchendon gatherings, celebrations, and events. She is President of the Winchendon Lions Club. Dee is involved with the Winchendon Backpack Program and is also an active member of the Winchendon American Legion Auxiliary Unit 193. In addition, she volunteers her time for her church, the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish. Dee always has a smile on her face and gives 100% of her effort towards anything she is involved with. She is reliable and willing to lend a hand to anyone. Dee makes the Town of Winchendon a better place to live in. She lives with her husband and two daughters.

Beth Huang is the Director of the Massachusetts Voter Table, a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations that uses integrated voter engagement to expand civic access, participation, and representation of communities of color. She convenes MassCounts to prepare the grassroots organizations for the 2020 Census, is a member of the Steering Committee of the economic justice coalition Raise Up Massachusetts, and advocates for increased civic access and voting rights as part of the Election Modernization Coalition. Prior to joining MVT in 2016, Beth worked in the labor and student movements for six years, first as a union organizer at the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees and then as the Student Labor Action Project Coordinator at Jobs With Justice and the U.S. Student Association. Beth is a senior trainer with the Midwest Academy, a national training center for community organizers. She started organizing in Wisconsin in 2008 and holds a B.S. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Beth Huang, Cambridge

Recommended by
Rep. Mike Connolly

Sachiko Ishihara was born in Cheverly, Maryland, but her family moved to New York City and then to Buffalo. She completed her Bachelors in Piano Performance at New England Conservatory and a Masters in Piano Performance at Juilliard. She has been a member of SAA since 1984. Her Suzuki training includes being a Kenkyusei in Matsumoto in 1993 and a long term apprenticeship with Colette Daltier in France. Sachiko has completed European Suzuki Level 5. In 2008, she became a SAA Suzuki Piano Teacher Trainer. Sachiko has been the Director of Suzuki School of Newton since 1998, and in 2009 became the Director of Suzuki By the Green Piano Institute held in Newton, MA.



Sachiko Ishihara, West Newton

Recommended by
Rep. Kay Khan



Cynthia A. Johnson, Hyde Park

Recommended by
Rep. Elizabeth Malia

For over 37 years, Ms. Cynthia A. Johnson remains an active and involved community activist. Her heart is as large as her creative mind, and her passion for supporting families grows stronger each day. In 1983, Cynthia joined the local tenant task force called Archdale Tenants on the Move, Inc. (ATOM), a nonprofit organization, formed by a group of single mothers living in the Boston Housing Authority's Archdale Family Housing Development. Cynthia continues to advocate for the residents of Archdale as a board member - and today - as the Administrative Coordinator of the Center. It's Cynthia's vision, leadership and steady hand, in no small part, that keeps the Archdale community connected and strong. From supporting new, innovative programming and events to providing a stable and safe gathering place for young people and their families, Cynthia is certainly a Commonwealth Heroine to appreciate and celebrate!

Maureen Johnson is an integral part of the Westborough community. Through her extensive volunteer work, she has found a way to support nearly all of the pillars that make a community strong. Whether as President of the Westborough Education Foundation, Chair of the Annual Trivia Bee, Co-chair of the Turkey Trot, or Maureen's service on the Superintendent's Advisory Committee and the High School Guidance Advisory Committee, her impact on our public schools is profound. Maureen champions the effort to renovate and expand our cherished public library as Co-President of the Library Foundation and she helped launch the newly formed Police Foundation. As Treasurer of the Westborough Cultural Council, Maureen works hard to ensure that our community has a robust offering of local cultural events and that we celebrate the arts during the annual Arts in Common festival. Maureen is everywhere and Westborough is fortunate to have her!



Maureen Johnson, Westborough

Recommended by
Rep. Hannah Kane



Alyssa Jones, Salem

Recommended by
Rep. Paul Tucker

Alyssa Jones is a consultant advancing graphic design and user experience design through her company Cooking with Gas Studio. In addition to her success in business and the creative economy, Alyssa is a champion for LGBTQ civil rights. Alyssa for the last 10 years has provided distinguished service and relentless advocacy through her work with the Human Rights Campaign at both the national and regional level. Alyssa is currently a board member for the Human Rights Campaign and serves as the Governor representing the Boston/New England region. In addition to her statewide and national advocacy, Alyssa serves on the Salem for All Ages Task Force and is a founding member of the Salem Arts Association.



Leah Caroline Jones, Beverly

Recommended by
Rep. Jerald Parisella

Leah Jones serves as an integral figure for human rights advocacy in the City of Beverly, in part as Chair of the Beverly Human Rights Committee. Leah and the BHRC see their role as learners, amplifiers, and facilitators uplifting untapped voices in Beverly toward equity and inclusion for all. The committee has led: immigrant rights forums, collaboration with community organizations and city offices, advocacy to uphold transgender rights in Massachusetts, a social justice hip-hop event for kids, and an annual city-wide breakfast (2020's was student-led) where attendees reflect on Dr. King's legacy and recommit to anti-racism work. In addition, Leah works as an international education and public health writer with a focus on programs in Southern Africa and India. She taught adult education classes for more than a decade, and is mom of two young daughters. Leah is grateful to live in a city as vibrant and caring as Beverly.

Aleks Kajstura is an attorney, advocate, public servant, athlete, and artist. As the Legal Director for the Prison Policy Initiative, Aleks advocates for incarcerated individuals. She sheds light on the compound structural problems of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and poverty in the prison system, and on the further complications of incarceration as a warehouse for people who are merely awaiting trial. Aleks is an intelligent, articulate voice for justice, championing people who are too often ignored. Aleks has been published in many national media outlets regarding the need to end prison gerrymandering. She has testified before the U.S House of Representatives Judiciary Committee about the urgency of reducing women's incarceration alongside Piper Kerman (Orange is the New Black book and TV series), Jesselyn McCurdy, Cynthia Shank, and Patrice Onwuka. She is also actively involved in local government serving on the Finance Committee in the town of Sunderland.



Aleks Kajstura, Sunderland

Recommended by
Rep. Natalie Blais

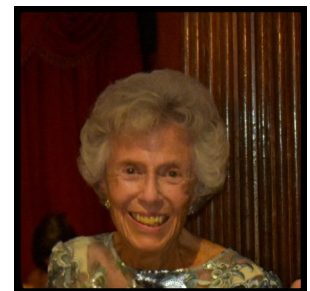


Meena Kaushik, Hopkinton

Recommended by
Rep. Carolyn Dykema

I am pleased to nominate Meena Kaushik of Hopkinton to be a 2020 Commonwealth Heroine. Meena is an active and passionate member of the Hopkinton community, and she serves as the Community Outreach Chair for the South Asian Circle of Hopkinton. Through this work, she has been an invaluable voice for Hopkinton's growing South Asian community and has led local efforts to increase our shared cultural awareness of South Asian culture and to ensure that Hopkinton celebrates its diversity through holiday events, educational experiences, and bringing residents of all backgrounds together to build a welcoming, vibrant community. Meena is also an active member of the scouting community and the Cultural Council, and her commitment to our Town makes her a very deserving candidate for this award.

Marie-Louise Kehoe has dedicated herself to the betterment of the community in her public service as one of the first females elected to the Town of Dedham beginning in the 1970's when she was first elected as a member of the Dedham Select Board. In 1982, with her four children in tow, she knocked on every door in the town and was successful in becoming the State Representative of the 11th Norfolk District, where she served honorably for twelve years. Her civic engagement continues to this day, where she currently serves on many boards and committees including Chairwoman of Dedham Cable, Dedham Council on Aging, with her dream of a new Senior Center now coming to fruition, and as Chair of the historic Old Village Cemetery Restoration Project. Mrs.Kehoe's continued commitment and dedication have left a legacy and positive impact that has transformed Dedham into the wonderful community it is today.



Marie-Louise Kehoe, Dedham

Recommended by
Rep. Paul Mcmurtry

Marcia Kimm-Jackson lives in Hyde Park and is a lifelong resident of Boston. Marcia spent nineteen years as a Human Resources Specialist with the Federal Reserve System before transitioning to personal and professional development coaching with a focus on non-profit work and advocacy for people of color. Marcia is a strong believer in volunteerism and is driven by service to others. In 1996, she founded the West Fairmount Hill Community Group in her neighborhood and serves as its facilitator. Through this group, she founded Hyde Park Helps and volunteers regularly with Hyde Park Main Streets, Keep Hyde Park Beautiful and the Annual Neponset River Clean-Up. She is a volunteer Advisory Board member with the Irish International Immigrant Center, a certified rape crisis counselor and leads a care ministry in her church community. Marcia exemplifies the impact that one woman can have on her community.



Marcia Kimm-Jackson, Hyde Park

Recommended by
Rep. Angelo Scaccia



Cindy Kuenzler, Dracut

Recommended by
Rep. Colleen Garry

Cindy Kuenzler is a devoted community member, mother, friend, entrepreneur and humble steward of what makes Dracut so special. From the time she graduated UMass Lowell in 1991 with a Marketing degree, she set out to make a difference. She opened her own catering company and joined forces with her husband as they embarked on a journey of joint business ownership. She realized early on that she would need to clone herself in order to run a household with 3 beautiful children, while also running multiple businesses: All Sports Heroes, All Sports Promotions, Grazie Restaurant and Four Oaks Country Club. She redesigned them with the customers in mind and created an ambiance at Grazie that is second to none. Each person who dines in feels like they are part of the Kuenzler family. Cindy is gracious and philanthropic to the community. This could not go to a more deserving individual.

Loretta LaCentra is a shining example of a community activist who works tirelessly to make her neighborhood and the City of Revere a healthier and safer place for all to live, work and recreate. As a longtime advocate for herself and her neighbors in the Riverside section of Revere, and a founding member of the Alliance for Health and Environment, Loretta has been a fierce advocate in the fight for environmental justice. She has helped in numerous community based efforts to reduce pollution and promote a cleaner, more sustainable economy. Loretta is engaged, knowledgeable, and persistent – truly a force to be reckoned with. In addition to her environmental advocacy, Loretta gives herself to the community in other ways to help make people's lives better. Loretta is a family woman, devoted to her husband Ricci, two adult children Ricci and Erica, and dedicated caretaker of her elderly parents Louis and Lucille San Miguel.



Loretta LaCentra, Revere

Recommended by
Rep. RoseLee Vincent



Anne Larner, Newton

Recommended by
Sen. Cynthia Stone Creem

Anne Larner, a longtime Newton resident, has been active in her community for many years. Anne began her 15-year career at the MBTA Advisory Board as a Project Manager/Financial Analyst and then advanced to Executive Director, a position she held for the next 12 years. After leaving the MBTA Advisory Board, she went on to work in public and non-profit consulting. Anne's community involvement includes holding leadership positions in several local organizations, such as the Newton School Committee, Historic Newton Board of Directors, Ward 3 Democratic Committee, League of Women Voters in Newton, and Newton Community Schools Commission. She has served as President of both Newton North PTO and Peirce School PTO. Since the 1970's, Anne has been a mentor and inspiration in her community through her volunteer activities, which include involvement in Understanding our Differences and serving as a former team captain at Rosie's Place. Anne's activism and dedication have contributed to the community significantly. Truly a Community Heroine, Anne has long been committed to working with and for the Newton community. She brings her strong negotiation and mediation skills to everything she does, working to find consensus when challenges arise.



Marilyn Lee-Tom, Wellesley

Recommended by
Sen. Becca Rausch

Marilyn is an attorney who has volunteered hundreds of pro bono hours to assist immigrants to become citizens through The Right To Immigration Institute in Waltham. Over the past two years, Marilyn has assisted victims of abuse and asylum seekers to apply for U.S. citizenship, allowing them to gain protection and fulfill their dreams. She also has run a program in Waltham for homeless people, the Community Day Center, and greatly expanded their services and secured a new, larger home for the program. She also led a capital campaign for the Chinese Progressive Association. In 2015, Marilyn's loving husband Douglas Tom passed away after a long battle with cancer. She has continued to raise their two sets of twins with her characteristic warmth, humor, and care, while continuing to pour energy into her community and a scholarship in his name. Marilyn is a joy as a colleague, friend, co-conspirator, and boss. You will never laugh more or eat better food than when Marilyn is in your corner.

Author of the memoir *What We Will Become: A Mother, a Son, and a Journey of Transformation*, Mimi LeMay is the mother of Jacob LeMay, a young transgender boy who notably had the opportunity to ask a question at CNN's Town Hall on LGBTQ issues last October. Mimi, a Marblehead resident, has been vocal advocating for her son since he affirmed his gender and has detailed publicly how her experience of her faith as a Jewish Orthodox woman helped guide her. The telling of her and Jacob's story has helped to broaden an understanding of the family experience of transitioning, and deserves recognition. She is also a member of the Human Rights Council Parents for Transgender Equality National Council.



Mimi Lemay, Marblehead

Recommended by
Rep. Lori Ehrlich

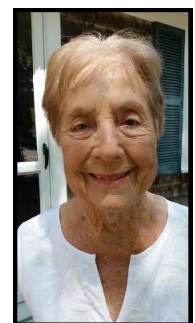


Nancy Stone Lennhoff, North Andover

Recommended by
Rep. Tram Nguyen

Nancy Lennhoff is recognized for her work to actualize Wheels of Hope, a pilot transportation program to bring people of the Merrimack Valley to treatment for substance use disorder. She and her teammates from the Merrimack Valley Project (MVP) obtained funding by advocating for an amendment to the FY2020 State Budget. She then worked with Health Resources in Action and Lucos Transportation to develop the program, which now functions to narrow this critical gap in services. Nancy is a member of The North Parish of North Andover Unitarian Universalist community, where she offers a Serenity Drop In to support those impacted by another's substance use disorder. She was one of members to research and coordinate *Hidden in Plain Sight: The Unexamined History of a New England Town & Parish*, an installation that brings forth less flattering but important aspects of the church history. Nancy is a retired scientist, wife, and mother of two adult sons.

The once grand 35-room Crosby Mansion, built in 1888 in Brewster, spiraled into decay by the 1980s. Though it survived arson in 1991, it was headed toward demolition. Brewster residents formed the "Friends of Crosby Mansion," and asked the state to let them save the mansion. Ginny Locke, a retired school librarian without historic preservation experience, emerged as the group's tireless leader. From 1992 until 2019, Ginny coordinated volunteers and open houses, fundraised, worked with Brewster town officials, and led two cottage renovations on the property that now provide income for mansion restoration. Due in large part to Ginny's leadership, Crosby Mansion stands as a cultural icon featured in photography and art, and hosts weddings and events. Thanks to the volunteers, Brewster leased the property in 2003 and hired a property manager. Ginny Locke, now 89, turned her leadership duties over in 2019 but continues to assist at mansion events.



Virginia Locke, South Yarmouth

Recommended by
Rep. Timothy Whelan

Kimberly has been a steadfast advocate for the town of Plainfield and the Hilltown region for the last thirty years. Most recently, she has volunteered countless hours as the Manager for Plainfield Light and Telecommunications Department, steering the Town through a complex broadband process, and overseeing all aspects of the design, construction and engineering of a town-owned fiber-optic network. This network will give affordable high-speed Internet access to those in the community that previously lacked access. Earlier in her career, Kimberly served as Executive Director to the Hilltown Community Development Corporation working to promote regional equity for her community. Kimberly is an invaluable asset to the region and deserves recognition



Kimberly Longey, Plainfield

Recommended by
Sen. Adam Hinds



Michele Marantz, Longmeadow

Recommended by
Sen. Eric Lesser

A political and community activist since her days at Smith College, Michele carried these ideals into her teaching career in South Hadley and Springfield Central High School as an English and American Studies teacher before retiring in 2009. As a member of the Longmeadow Democratic Town Committee's Executive Committee, she served as Election Coordinator and Candidate Outreach Coordinator. In 2016, Michele became one of the two LDTC Vice Chairs. In addition to her work on the Democrat of the Year Award Committee, Michele has organized the LDTC annual, "Open Discussion," meetings since their inception. She continues to meet with legislators, candidates and work political campaigns. Michele has also committed this stage of her volunteerism to fighting climate destruction as Chair of the Green Team at Sinai Temple in Springfield, Working with the Longmeadow Gas Pipeline Citizens Group. Michele and her husband Steve live in Longmeadow and have three grown children.

Born and raised in Brookline, Hadassah has emerged as a progressive leader across a mashup of communities, weaving together knitters and women's rights advocates (Pussyhat Project), crafters and immigrant rights activists (Welcome Blanket), Town Meeting Members and social studies teachers (Inclusive Brookline), mental health practitioners and synagogues (Spirituality and Mental Health, with Kitty Dukakis), changemakers and farmer's markets (Inspo:Expo). In all her work, there is a common thread; Hadassah creates civic infrastructure and makes it possible for people to transform themselves through dialogue, reflection, and common action. By day, Hadassah is a staff clinician at the Brandeis Counseling Center, and the Lead Therapist at McLean's Spirituality and Mental Health Department, where she has helped develop the hospital's first-ever Spirituality and Treatment groups.



Hadassah Margolis, Brookline

Recommended by
Rep. Tommy Vitolo



Frances Martinez, Lynn

Recommended by
Rep. Daniel Cahill

Frances Martinez born in New York NY from Dominican parents, President CEO of the North Shore Latino Business Association. Since the early 1990's, she has dedicated herself to assisting the needs of the immigrant community, specifically Latinos families. A Co-founder of La Vida Scholars, is the first Latino college prep program designed for honors students in the City of Lynn: www.lavida.org. She is also the president and founder of the North Shore Latino Business Association, which is a private non-profit organization established 2011. It is one of the most active associations on the basis of active membership and overall to its membership. The NSLBA serves as the voice for the Latin businesses and professionals, advocating for opportunities that set them at a higher level. Providing quality workshops, high top events, innovative programs and services and useful and tangible resources that enhance business growth: www.mynslba.com. Frances is a Mother, wife, and professional Latina with an optimistic spirit that overcomes barriers without limitations.



Katherine Martinez, Hyde Park

Recommended by
Rep. Russell Holmes

Ms. Martinez was born and raised in Dorchester and Hyde Park. Her experience in affordable housing began as an Assistant Property Manager for Winn Residential where she helped manage the Lena Park Portfolio. This experience generated a strong connection to the community in which she placed numerous residents into affordable housing. Further, she has been an advocate for the homeless via her work at City of Boston's Fair Housing & Equity and the Somerville Community Action Coalition. Her past positions—including her tenure as Lena Park's Business Manager and Operations Director—have afforded her deep financial and planning experience. Lena Park is in a unique position; it has steadily built a real estate portfolio consisting of six housing developments plus a three-year-old state of the art Community Center, all valued at about \$100 million. Because of this, strategic focus has shifted to include more impactful programming and usage by community organizations.



Mary Jane McGlennon, Gloucester

Recommended by
Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante

A Gloucester resident for over 30 years, Mary Jane McGlennon initially worked with local non-profit organizations in her capacity as a professional fundraiser. As a volunteer, she served as a member and then Chair of Gloucester's Sawyer Free Library Board. In 2012, Mary Jane became the first Board Chair of the Grace Center, a much needed day resource center for the homeless and underserved in Gloucester founded by local clergy. She remained Chair as the Grace Center and grew from an all volunteer part-time program to a professionally staffed full-time organization. Recently, Mary Jane was pivotal in managing the Grace Center merger with Lifebridge North Shore, ensuring that Grace Center's programs and services will meet the needs of its guests into the foreseeable future. She currently serves as Vice President of the Lifebridge Board and also volunteers in the office of Gloucester's Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken.



Siobhan McHugh, Brighton

Recommended by
Sen. William Brownsberger

Siobhan Mc Hugh became a member of the Brighton community in 1989. She began volunteering in the community when her two adult children were young, fueled by the belief that parents should model community engagement behavior for their children. Her volunteer efforts include volunteering at the Oak Square YMCA, establishing *Taste of Brighton at the Irish Immigration Center*, coaching various sports teams, serving on a range of youth council sites and managing the PAL soccer league. In addition, she serves on various boards for community organizations in Brighton including the Faneuil Library Board and the Presentation School Foundation Board. Siobhan has notably run a home daycare center in the community for the last 23 years. She is proud to have passed her commitment to community involvement down to her children, who have also become avid volunteers. Siobhan firmly believes that community involvement makes a community stronger.

Isaura Mendes is a Cabo Verdean woman based in Dorchester. A strong, forgiving, perseverant woman, she founded the Bobby Mendes Peace Legacy in 1999 after losing her elder son to gun violence in the hopes of ending the violence in her community. Through scholarships, healing counseling, and other programs, she has contributed to her mission by addressing the trauma that comes from street violence and by providing a better future to the youth of Dorchester and Roxbury. Isaura promotes the seven Principles of Life, which constantly motivate her to get out of bed and continue her hard work in the community: Love, Forgiveness, Hope, Courage, Faith, Unity, Justice, and Peace.



Isaura Mendes, Dorchester

Recommended by
Rep. Liz Miranda

Margaret Morrissey and her husband came to the United States from the southeastern coast of Ireland, with plans to experience American life for a short time, and that was about 34 years ago. Margaret began working at the Jacob Edward Library, for the Town of Southbridge, some 21 years ago as the Adult Services Librarian. She not only provided the acquisitions of the adult and teen collections, but also conducted outreach programs in the community. She initiated an art exhibit program that has developed into a well-attended monthly event. Margaret has served as the Library Director for the past 11 years. She has created a public space that brings several community agencies together for a range of programs and services. Our office is excited to recognize Margaret Morrissey as an extraordinary woman that continues to make her community a better place to live and work.



Margaret Morrissey, Southbridge

Recommended by
Rep. Peter Durant



MaryBeth Murphy, Haverhill

Recommended by
Rep. Thomas Golden

It is with immense pleasure I recommend MaryBeth Murphy, Program Director of the Megan House Foundation, Inc. The Megan House is a residential treatment home for young women ages 18 to 26. MaryBeth is committed and dedicated to supporting the mission at Megan's House which is to improve the quality of life of its residents through an evidence-based substance abuse treatment program that emphasizes individual dignity, self-respect, and empowerment. MaryBeth has over an eighteen year career in the field and has worked in clinical settings supporting and guiding individuals who suffer with various inner challenges. It has been her life's dream to work with young ladies to promote independence and wellness. MaryBeth's dream has come true as the Program Director for the Megan House. I believe that MaryBeth Murphy has all the characteristics and qualities that represent a Commonwealth Heroine.

Ms. Naylor has served youth and families in Greater Springfield for over two decades through volunteer and civic engagement. She earned a Master's in Nonprofit Management and Philanthropy from (then) Bay Path College in order to switch career paths into the nonprofit sector after receiving her Bachelor's in Business Administration from Our Lady of the Elms College. Ms. Naylor has co-founded two nonprofit organizations; (2018) Parent Villages Inc., (2006) VITAL Center, Inc., and advised several other start-ups, serves in the roles of Director of AmeriCorps and adjunct faculty member at Springfield College and Worcester State University. Ms. Naylor volunteers as a mentor to youth and young adults, actively in her church and community, establishing computer learning centers, a youth summer camp, and other initiatives. Ms. Naylor also serves as an elected member of the Springfield School Committee, Secretary-Treasurer of the MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees) Minority Caucus, and holds seats on the boards of DESE's RIAC (Racial Imbalance Advisory Council), the Young Scholars Fund, Inc., Springfield Partners for Community Action along with educationally and community-driven steering committees. Mrs. Naylor is married to the love of her life, Pastor Mah'dee Naylor, Sr. with whom they share four beautiful children.



**LaTonia Naylor,
Springfield**

Recommended by
Rep. Carlos Gonzalez



Gina Sabbs Nelson, South Hadley

Recommended by
Rep. Aaron Vega

Gina spent her youth traveling to Air Force Bases within the U.S. and Spain with her military family, which shaped her entire life. Her values of empathy come from lessons learned from her parents and from other cultures – gifts that come with widespread travel. Gina graduated from Holyoke Community College with a degree in Law Enforcement and from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in Legal Studies. Gina is the Senior Warden and Lay Eucharistic Minister at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Holyoke. She is also Co-founder and Executive Director of Community Roots; Neighborhood Services, Inc; Founder and Executive Director of the Veterans Lunch Program; and Vice President of the Board for the Greater Holyoke Council for Human Understanding. Gina continually asks: "What keeps people from living their best lives" and searches to remove those obstacles. Married for 35 years to Amherst Fire Chief, Tim Nelson, they have one daughter Jessica.



Anne Nemetz-Carlson, Williamstown

Recommended by
Rep. John Barrett

Anne Nemetz-Carlson has been the President/CEO of Child Care of the Berkshires since 1983. She has a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education and a BA degree in American Studies. Prior to joining CCB, she worked as a teacher in several childcare centers, as an education specialist and a childcare program director. She was an adjunct professor in the field of early child education for MCLA, Berkshire Community College, Southern Vermont College and Kellogg Community College (Michigan), teaching curriculum, programming for infants and toddlers and childcare administration courses. Her volunteer work includes nine years on the Williamstown Elementary School Committee and four years on the Northern Berkshire Health Systems Quality Committee. She is currently the Secretary of the Board of Directors of MADCA (Massachusetts Association of the Day Care Agencies) and served on the Program Committee of the Children's Trust Fund. Anne served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Marshall Islands, where she taught English as a second language in a small missionary elementary school. Under her leadership, CCB has grown in size, increasing the number and variety of programming; she has overseen the addition of the Resources for Child Care Program, the Williams College Children's Center, the Parenting Partnership Program, the Community Partnership Program, the Family Net/Family Resource Center, the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and the ParentChild Plus Program.

Helen "Taffy" Nothnagle is the Chairwoman of the Cohasset Housing Authority and has been a champion in her community and a leader for many causes throughout the South Shore. Taffy works tirelessly as a member of the Elder Affairs Board and the Cohasset Housing Authority. Under her leadership on the Housing Authority, Taffy helped secure funding and recently broke ground on a brand new home for adult disabled individuals after a decade of hard work and planning. In 2016, Taffy was chosen by community members to be the 23rd Cohasset Citizen of the Year for her over 30 years of volunteer service with the Special Olympics of Massachusetts and her involvement in town. Following the birth of their son Jay, who was born with Down syndrome, Taffy and her husband Jeff dedicated their lives to helping those with intellectual and developmental disabilities and are unwavering supporters of the Massachusetts Special Olympics.



Helen "Taffy" Nothnagle, Cohasset

Recommended by
Sen. Patrick O'Connor



Wendy Northcross, West Barnstable

Recommended by
Rep. Sarah Peake

Wendy Northcross is CEO of and has led the 1200+ member Cape Cod Chamber since 1988. Under her leadership, the Chamber has not only excelled at what one thinks of as typical Chamber tasks like marketing and business development, but she has boldly tackled issues that Chambers might not traditionally take on. She is a leader in helping Cape Codders afford their wastewater obligations through the creation of the Wastewater Trust. Working with the Homebuilders Association and local housing advocacy organizations, the Chamber is leading on addressing the lack of affordable housing on Cape Cod. Wendy also is ensuring that the Chamber is at the forefront of addressing diverse environmental issues from the increasing White Shark population to climate change, to the "Blue Economy". If there is something cutting edge going on that will help Cape Codders, you can be sure that Wendy is behind it!

Joanna earned her college degree in Environmental Geography and later began a career as an environmental consultant. After having two children, Joanna shifted gears. In 2017, Joanna joined the North Andover Sustainability Committee and made it her personal mission to make change at a local level. In 2018, she ran a pilot program to compost food waste at two district schools. She used the data she collected from this pilot to successfully secure a grant from the DEP to expand this program to all the public schools in North Andover. Through this process, she has breathed new life into the Sustainability Committee, drawing new members every month. Joanna has engaged our students in the fight against climate change, and continues to fight for and expand green initiatives across the community. She does all this behind the scenes while working, raising a family, and being an all around champion community volunteer.



Joanna O'Connell, North Andover

Recommended by
Rep. Christina Minicucci

Laura Often is a tremendous asset to the Town of Grafton and Commonwealth as a whole. This is specifically apparent through her dedication over the years to numerous committees and boards she has served on within the town, including the North Grafton Elementary School Parent Teacher Group, Walking Wednesday's volunteer coordinator, Girl Scouts co-leader and others. Warm-hearted and friendly, Laura is also the current Chair of the Grafton School Committee. In addition, she is constantly working to make sure that the students within Grafton are engaged in educational field trips and activities, including to the Massachusetts State House. Laura makes herself available to anyone who might need her personal attention. Her ability to manage the operations of multiple committees and boards, as well as be a rock-star mother and wife, prove Laura is a true Wonder Woman for the Town of Grafton and beyond!



Laura Often, North Grafton

Recommended by
Rep. David Muradian



Marie Oliva, Bourne

Recommended by
Rep. David Vieira

Marie Oliva is the Present & CEO of the Cape Cod Canal Region Chamber of Commerce, a non-profit organization serving the Buzzards Bay, Wareham and Sandwich communities for over 22 years. Marie advocates for businesses in the community and assists in getting projects off the ground. She's responsible for developing area businesses and provides yearly local High School scholarships. She supports the community by holding summer concerts and events such as Cape Cod Canal Day here in Buzzards Bay. Marie is organized, personable and knows the ins and outs of business and shares her knowledge readily. Marie was the first female selectmen elected in the Town of Bourne. She is on the Board of Directors for Massachusetts Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives as Treasurer and previously as President. She is a member of Massachusetts Coalition for Sustainable Energy and is always working for improvements on our behalf. She has been part of the Bourne community her entire life and truly loves it.

Flor Palacios came to the U.S. and sought political asylum to flee from the civil war in El Salvador. Flor settled in Chelsea, where she raised her four kids and has become increasingly involved with the Chelsea Collaborative. Through her work at the Collaborative, Flor inspired unseen levels of civic engagement, bringing about countless new participants in Chelsea's political life with a tireless devotion to promoting social change, especially in immigrant communities. She organizes and moves the people of Chelsea, even if they are unable to speak English or vote. Flor has a way of talking to people and earning their trust, and she is fearless at it. In one particularly difficult campaign to raise the Massachusetts minimum wage, Flor single handedly collected over 10,000 signatures from voters. This is just one of countless examples of Flor's dedication and contributions to Chelsea. Flor is our unsung hero of Chelsea.



Flor Palacios, Chelsea

Recommended by
Sen. Sal DiDomenico



Lesa Patrock, Dudley

Recommended by
Sen. Ryan Fattman

Nineteen years ago, Lesa Patrock started a Community Service Learning Project at Dudley Middle School to add Christmas cheer by fulfilling the Santa wish lists of seven struggling children. Since then, Lesa and her students have partnered with YOU Inc. to provide these gifts through the Adopt-a-Child program. This past December, the Dudley Middle School helped to fulfill the wish lists of over 400 children in need. This number served almost half of the 900 children that YOU Inc. was partnering with to fulfill their Christmas lists. While the work Lesa does serves a community in need, her impact goes far beyond those that she helps. Her impact is teaching the middle school pupils generosity, kindness, and what it means to give back; creating a generation of people who will be actively involved in the community.



Kim Pettingill-Long, Shrewsbury

Recommended by
Sen. Michael Moore
Rep. Hannah Kane

We recommend Kim Pettingill-Long as a 2020 Commonwealth Heroine. Her commitment to improving the lives of those in her community is unwavering. Kim's passion for safety is demonstrated in her role with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. She serves as Team Leader for MetroWest & Central Massachusetts and also serves as a State Chapter Lead. Kim is a mentor for Big Brother/ Big Sisters of Central MA/MetroWest. She has also served as a volunteer Facilitator & Mentor for Dress for Success Boston. Kim is a tireless advocate for many in her community. In her hometown of Shrewsbury, Kim has served on the Board of Directors for Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services and also as a Town Meeting Member.

Lynne Poyant has long been a visible community leader on Cape Cod. Since 2005, she has worked for the Town of Barnstable; first as the Director of Community Services and currently as the Director of Communications. Aside from her day-to-day work in the community, Lynne also serves in a volunteer capacity for several organizations including the JFK Hyannis Museum Board of Directors, the Mercy Otis Warren Cape Cod Women of the Year Committee, and as Chair of the JFK Memorial Trust Fund Committee. Previously, Lynne served as President of the Board of Directors of the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod, Event Chair of the Pops by the Sea Concert, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Cape Cod Literacy Council, among other activities. Lynne can always be found with a smile on her face and eager attitude to serve her



Lynne Poyant, Hyannis

Recommended by
Rep. William Crocker



Sue Prindle, Boston

Recommended by
Rep. Jay Livingstone

Sue Prindle has been a neighborhood leader and activist in Back Bay for more than fifty years. She serves as an officer and board member of the Neighborhood Association of Back Bay and is the long-time chair of its Architecture Committee. She has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life in Back Bay. Her efforts have had a huge, positive impact in her community. She has played a key role preserving the historic architecture in the Back Bay, positively impacting development making sure it improves the neighborhood, and was instrumental bringing the first public playground to Back Bay.

Sahana Purohit, along with her husband and children, is a long-time resident of Acton. She has served for over ten years on the Acton 2020 Committee, which successfully advocated for the \$20,000,000 Kelley's Corner redesign. In addition, Sahana serves as the Education Committee Co-chair of the Acton Area League of Women Voters, and was a co-leader on the successful effort to have the 2019 Acton Town Meeting officials' approval of the North Acton Fire Station. She is also an appointed member of the Acton Finance Committee. She has an excellent reputation for doing the critical behind the scenes work to get long-delayed projects approved by the voters of Acton. She has been able to develop a consensus to keep the well-run town moving forward on everything from education and public safety, to recreation and infrastructure.



Sahana Purohit, Acton

Recommended by
Sen. James Eldridge

Ellen Quackenbush is deeply involved with the Concord community where she has lived for over 30 years. She dedicates herself to engaging all residents of Massachusetts in our democracy and to helping everyone meet their basic needs. Ellen is currently one of the leaders of Concord's Complete Count effort, using her passion and organizing skills to ensure every Concord resident is counted in this year's census. For years, Ellen has volunteered with the Concord-Carlisle League of Women Voters. Ellen spearheads a local winter coat drive for Boston City Mission's annual Boston Coat effort, bringing hundreds of coats to children throughout Greater Boston every year. She also serves on the Town's Personnel Board, has advocated for gun violence prevention and immigrant rights both nationally and locally, and continues to engage in activism on both a local and national level.



Ellen Quackenbush, Concord

Recommended by
Rep. Tami Gouveia



Patricia "Patti" Quigley, Wellesley

Recommended by
Rep. Alice Peisch

Patti became active in women's issues after her husband Patrick was killed on September 11, 2001. He was a passenger on the second plane to hit the World Trade Center. Patti was pregnant with their second child, and was overwhelmed by the outpouring of emotional support. Patti became aware of the vast differences between her experience as a widow in America and the treatment of her counterparts in Afghanistan. In 2007, Patti joined Razia's Ray of Hope Foundation to fulfill their mutual dream of educating the next generation of Afghan girls to end cycles of poverty, despair, and terrorism in Afghanistan. She is currently the Executive Director. She is a founding board member of the National Charity League Wellesley Chapter, where she helped mothers and their daughters collaborate on philanthropic activities to support area nonprofits. Patti has a BA in finance from the University of Lowell and has had a successful career as an internal auditor, VP of financial operations, and management consultant at various commercial lending organizations around the country.

Katharine Weston Reardon moved to Hingham in 1979 and immediately embarked on a career spanning over 40 years of public service and leadership, marked by commitment to good government, dedication to conservation and a compassion for people in need. Working toward her certificate in landscape design, she undertook a study to consider possible connections among the many open spaces in the Town of Hingham. That work inspired her to join the board of the Hingham Land Conservation Trust in 1988, where she served for 25 years and as its President from 2003-2013. A final keen civic interest of hers for many years was Wellspring, a local social service agency, founded and dedicated to the memory of a long time friend. Kathy's leadership and public service has left an indelible mark on her community and the region, the positive impacts of which will be enjoyed by generations to come.



Kathy Reardon, Hingham

Recommended by
Rep. Joan Meschino



Nicole Reilly, Rowely

Recommended by
Sen. Bruce Tarr

Nicole's demonstrated desire to serve the community is most prominent in her years of community service and volunteer work. As an experienced and respected attorney, Nicole has and continues to accept numerous pro bono cases, providing legal counsel to individuals unable to qualify for court appointed counsel and others unable to pay for private counsel. "We are thankful to have been able to refer Nicole to survivors. She is a great resource due to her knowledge of domestic violence and criminal law. She has shown her dedication in working with survivors by advocating for them and their children and has taken cases pro bono, as needed," Suzanne C. Dubus, Chief Executive Officer at the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center. Nicole 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.



Yaritza Rizzo, Lawrence

Recommended by
Rep. Marcos Devers

Yaritza Rizzo was born in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico. She graduated from Lawrence High School in 1994, obtained a Bachelors in Psychology from the University of Massachusetts Lowell in 2002, and a Masters in Counseling Psychology from Cambridge College in 2005. She began her professional career as a Social Worker at DCF, where she worked for ten years. Her passion for helping others led to her involvement in the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) in Lawrence. She collaborated with other organizations to provide parents in Lawrence tools and resources that prepare them to understand how children with learning disabilities can learn more effectively. Her current position is at Lawrence CommunityWorks as a Community Organizer. She works in collaboration with schools to help cultivate relationships of trust and respect between school administrators and parents. Her most proud achievement has been to parent her two children Alejandro, who is diagnosed with Autism and Intellectual Disability, and her daughter Monica with her husband Max Rizzo.

Along with her colleague Teresa Tapper, Debra has done a phenomenal job in building the Stoughton Diversity & Inclusion Organization in a very short time. Recognizing that Stoughton had a need for this type of community group, Deb leaped in with both feet to plan, raise awareness, and become heavily involved in town wide events, most recently the celebration of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Her commitment and hard work to build a more inclusive Stoughton truly makes her a Commonwealth Heroine.



Debra Roberts, Stoughton

Recommended by
Rep. Louis Kafka



Stella Rogers, Rockland

Recommended by
Rep. David DeCoste

Stella has been a Rockland resident for many years. She is dedicated to helping others, especially through her commitment to the Rockland Food Pantry. Stella spends 25 to 30 hours per week volunteering her time by organizing food pick-ups from local stores, which includes the Boston Food Bank. Stella goes that extra mile by delivering emergency food supplies to families in Rockland after hours. She is a warm and compassionate woman and is loved and respected by the Rockland Community.

Cheryl Rose is an active member of her community who epitomizes the spirit of the Commonwealth Heroine award. Cheryl never backs down from a cause that is important to her and the causes she fights for invariably benefit everyone around her. She has been a champion for environmental causes, always fighting to protect our water, air, and the health of our planet. She is involved in town committees and boards that advance environmental protection and make Dalton a better place to live. Cheryl is involved in numerous organizations in Berkshire County that push for equality, justice, and the empowerment of all people. Her seemingly limitless energy helps her coordinate and motivate others in pursuit of worthwhile causes. Perhaps most importantly, Cheryl is a truly engaged citizen. She participates in our democracy in a way that is very rarely seen. She engages with elected officials at all levels and tries to understand the political and legislative process completely. She is not afraid to advocate for what she believes in and in doing so raises awareness in others as well. Congratulations Cheryl Rose on this well deserved honor!



Cheryl Rose, Dalton

Recommended by
Rep. Paul Mark

Jennifer Rose has been a tireless advocate in the Waltham community on a number of issues. She is a co-founder of Waltham Concerned Citizens, a local peace and justice group that "thinks globally, but acts locally." Ms. Rose is also a co-founder of the Waltham Farmer's Market, which has helped support local farmers and increased our community's access to fresh produce. She has helped support Waltham's diversity by advocating for immigrants as a founding member of Waltham Immigrant Solidarity. Ms. Rose has also advocated for LGBT individuals as a member of Way Out in Waltham (WOW). She has championed a more vibrant, and inclusive downtown as a member of the Waltham Alliance to Create Housing, Inc. and Downtown Waltham Partnership. Overall, I can't think of no one more deserving of this honor.



Jennifer Rose, Waltham

Recommended by
Rep. Thomas Stanley



Noreen Rosher, South Boston

Recommended by
Rep. David Biele

Noreen has been serving the South Boston community in multiple roles for over thirty years. Professionally, she has spent her career working in neighborhood schools and supporting local youth and teens. In addition to her professional work, Noreen is a dedicated neighborhood activist and advocate. She helped found South Boston's Cityside Neighborhood Association over ten years ago. An active member and leader of the civic association, she has tirelessly advocated on behalf of her neighbors and community on quality of life issues and public safety. Noreen has also been involved in countless charitable endeavors, organizing fundraisers to support local school and youth programs, while also organizing neighborhood events to build community among residents and neighbors.

Patrice serves as the Director of the Douglas Adult Social Center where she has spearheaded an expansion of services and programming offered to Douglas' older residents, while opening doors to those from surrounding towns as well. She has pursued much beautification of the center and has undertaken an ambitious renovation of the space to ensure guests ease of access and safety. In addition to writing grants and directing the center and its programs, Patrice is the town's Senior Out-reach Coordinator, visiting those homebound and coordinating meals and medical services for those unable to visit the center. Patrice is the backbone of a thriving center where people meet to socialize, learn new skills, and celebrate holidays and milestones. Patrice always has a smile, a kind word, and the ability to help her patrons through complex issues.



Patrice Rousseau, Putnam

Recommended by
Rep. Joseph McKenna



Jacqueline Royce, Boston

Recommended by
Rep. Jon Santiago

Jacqueline Royce was born and raised near the Mississippi River in Minnesota. In New Jersey, she co-founded the Atlantic Highlands Environmental Commission in Monmouth County and formed the Friends of the Navesink Highlands. Under her direction with funding from the NY/NJ Baykeeper and NJ Conservation Foundation, the "Many Mind Creek/Sandy Hook Bay: Planning Habitat Restoration of an Estuarine Ecosystem and its adjacent Greenway" was implemented. Funded by State of New Jersey DEP Division of Watershed Management, she was responsible for directing the baseline watershed assessment as the basis for developing the Many Mind Creek Regional Stormwater Management Plan (RSWMP) to address Non-Point Source (NPS) pollution, habitat degradation, and flooding issues. She has been an environmentalist since "Silent Spring" and has never met a watershed or wetlands or benthic macro-invertebrate she doesn't love. She looks forward to walleye ice fishing in the Muddy River.



Laurel Ruma of Medford goes above and beyond in her role as community representative to the working group for the MBTA Green Line Extension. She serves her neighbors and the Medford community by sharing information and amplifying their voices on the largest expansion of public transportation in recent state history. As a longstanding member first of the GLX design working group and continuing to invaluable her work today, Laurel has spent countless hours working with city and state officials and advocating for people in her community to improve the safety, design and community impact of this important project.

Laurel Ruma, Medford

Recommended by
Rep. Christine Barber

Jeri Rumsis deserves a recommendation for the 2020 Commonwealth Heroine Award due to her persistent leadership presence within the Mansfield community, in her role as president of the Mansfield Field of Honor. Jeri is responsible for organizing charitable events in the Mansfield community that fundraises for the Mansfield Town's Veterans Fund, through the sale and sponsorship of American Flags around Memorial Day weekend. Jeri's work not only helps veterans financially but also brings veterans and the community together for a great cause and reminds us all of the dedication and sacrifice those in service have provided. Without Jeri's dedication to the Field of Honor, veteran appreciation would be missed dearly in our community.



Jeri Rumsis, Mansfield

Recommended by
Rep. Fred Jay Barrows



Debra Mann Schmill is a tireless advocate and dedicated member of the Needham community. As the founder and past President of the Needham Community Farm, Debra has demonstrated a commitment to enhancing the community's connection to nature, their food system and each other. Debra has been an integral member of the coalition to educate legislators and members of her community of how food – what we eat, how it is grown, distributed, and wasted – impacts our public health as well as the climate issue globally. Debra's commitment to serving the community is outstanding and she is truly a heroine in our Commonwealth.

Debra Schmill, Needham

Recommended by
Rep. Denise Garlick

Linda Snow Dockser is retiring from the Reading School Committee this year after years of work for the students and parents of her town. She has worked to make Reading a more welcoming community by helping to create the town's Human Relations Advisory Committee and the group Reading Embraces Diversity (RED). Linda also works with the Massachusetts Human Rights Coalition to run the annual Human Rights Convening at the State House, a gathering of Human Rights Coalitions from across the state. While her time on the School Committee is over, Reading and all of Massachusetts will no doubt continue to benefit from her leadership and her commitment to building inclusive communities.



Linda Snow Dockser, Reading

Recommended by
Sen. Jason Lewis

Lynn Strider is the complete example of a Commonwealth Heroine. Starting in 1999, Lynn listened as her daughter shared her desire to play ice hockey in high school. Lynn felt intrinsically motivated to change the tide and provide an opportunity for her child to participate in the sport she loved beyond the youth level. Over the last 20 years, Lynn has championed the Girls ice hockey program at Franklin High School which started with her daughter and now supports over 400 girls in the Franklin Community. Lynn raised her own money, booked ice times, transformed unheated closets to female locker rooms, recruited coaches out of retirement, managed challenging conversations over the rights of club sports, and followed through with moving the program to a varsity level. Lynn's direct efforts have led to hundreds of females involved in youth sports, more female graduates with college athletic opportunities, and an increased awareness around Title IX and the opportunities for female athletes.



Lynn Strider, Franklin

Recommended by
Rep. Jeffrey Roy



Catherine Sugarman, Holliston

Recommended by
Senate President Karen Spilka

As Prevention and Outreach Program Manager for the Natick Health Department since November 2016, Katie Sugarman coordinates the Natick Opioid Task Force, but her effect reaches much farther, both in geography and in the people she impacts. Her collaborative approach to problem-solving spurred the merger of several community substance use prevention efforts to form the Natick 180 Coalition, an admired and effective presence in the town. Katie is known throughout the MetroWest region for her ability to see a need and find a way to meet it; she is a leader in creating grief recovery support groups and arranging the region's first vigils to bring the opioid issue literally into the open. In 2018, realizing that NARCAN was not available to many professionals, including social workers, she launched a distribution program that established MetroWest as the Commonwealth's first region to distribute NARCAN through public health departments.

Reigning as the Boston Hokey Extraordinaire, Joanne Sullivan is the personification of positivity, commitment, and hard work. Joanne keeps Dorchester Avenue clean and continuously makes a major difference in the way people perceive Dorchester. From local business owners to neighbors, many have spoken out about her incredible diligence and pride she shows in her work. To say Joanne goes above and beyond is an understatement. She has spent years breaking down the most effective methods to get ahead in assuring the Avenue stays clean. This involves working just as the sun comes. Why? This time frame allows her to "find more trash and have better access to it", as well as continuing to clean even on her days off. What she does for the community is noticed by many, and is felt by all. It is my honor to nominate her as a Massachusetts Commonwealth Heroine.



J. Cherry Sullivan, Northampton

Recommended by
Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa



Joanne Sullivan, Dorchester

Recommended by
Rep. Daniel Hunt

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Annette Szczygiel is a staple in the City of Easthampton. Annette has dedicated many years to her community as a crossing guard outside one of the city's elementary schools. Her time spent ensuring the safety of children, families, and citizens doesn't just stop on the sidewalk. If you go to any community event in the city you are likely to see Annette's smiling face. Annette not only regularly attends community meetings but also is always volunteering her time. From participating in the citywide clean up, to maintaining flower boxes and providing maintenance on local trails, to Election Day responsibilities and actively participating in community fundraisers, Annette is truly a role model. She goes above and beyond without being asked. She is constantly and consistently making a positive impact in the Easthampton community, which she has called home for over 40 years.

Annette Szczygiel, Easthampton

Recommended by
Rep. Daniel Carey

First generation born American and daughter of Italian immigrants, Lucy has a long history of government service both Federal and Municipal following in both her Sicilian grandfather's steps. Lucy currently supporting the Board of Selectmen in their charge, has not only worked for the Tax Collector and Planning Board, she's also helped steady the helm for the Landing Commission. Lucy served 6 years on the Westport Cultural Council and organized 9 years of film series bringing poignant documentaries to the public for free and continues to do so now. She urged the Planning Board to integrate native plantings for pollinators under the solar arrays being installed. Lucy is also a Beekeeper and maintains dozens of hives in stealthy locations in the area which provide detrimental pollination services to the farms and surroundings they live on. A USA Archery certified L-4 Coach, Lucy teaches Archery to all ages and coaches the Harvard Archery Club pro-bono. While stationed overseas as a civilian, Lucy married her husband, Richard, in the outskirts of Rome, Italy and is a dedicated mother and mentor to her brilliant daughter Hana.



Lucy Tabit, Westport

Recommended by
Rep. Paul Schmid



Teresa Tapper, Stoughton

Recommended by
Rep. William Galvin

Teresa Tapper is an active member of the Stoughton community. She serves as the Clerk for the Stoughton Diversity and Inclusion Organization and has worked with the Stoughton farmers market, community garden initiative, and OASIS (Organizing Against Substances in Stoughton). Teresa has over 30 years of experience in the mental health field and has worked at the Stoughton Youth Commission since 2006. Her prior experience includes work as a Rape Crisis and Domestic Violence counselor, specialized foster care and adoption, and community-based counseling. Teresa received her M.Ed in Counseling and CAGS (Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies) from Cambridge College. She completed the Addictions Certificate Program at Bridgewater State University and is a certified leader for Chronic Disease Self-Management. In 2017, she completed Cognitive Processing Training to treat PTSD from Massachusetts General Hospital and Home Base program. She leads an ongoing adult Bereavement support group for the Stoughton Council on Aging and Stoughton Youth Commission. Teresa is also an Army Veteran.

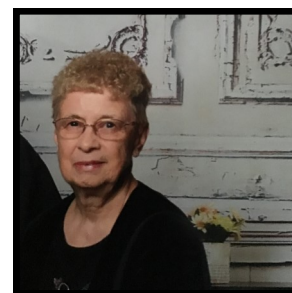
Carlie Tartakov received the Virgil Lagomarcino Award from Iowa State University for distinguished achievement in the field of education. She implemented the school's Dialogues in Diversity program and developed model programs that demonstrated the positive impact of anti-racist multicultural curriculum on school children. She was inducted into the Iowa African American Hall of Fame in 2007. After moving to Amherst, she taught young children at Wildwood Elementary School until she retired. She is a community activist and an active member of the Amherst Democratic Committee. Currently, she is one of the main organizers for Amherst Neighbors, a new organization serving older Amherst residents whose goal is to build a village to support neighbor-to-neighbor connections for older adults through social engagement, volunteer services and sharing information and resources with our Amherst and Pelham community members.



Carlie Tartakov, Amherst

Recommended by
Rep. Mindy Domb
Sen. Joanne Comerford

Marie Thibault's genuine compassion and dedication to helping others have truly made her community a better place. A talented seamstress, Marie has sewn and altered hundreds of costumes and uniforms for Danvers students while volunteering for the Danvers Academy Theatre and the Parents for Music Education. Never looking for compensation or praise, Marie is a "professional volunteer" constantly helping Danvers families in need of assistance. For over twenty years, Marie has volunteered at the Danvers People to People Food Pantry collecting food, stocking shelves, and helping with the day-to-day operations of the pantry. Always going the extra mile to help others and understanding that their clients may be apprehensive, Marie takes the time to talk to each one and strives to make each client feel comfortable and welcome.



Marie Thibault, Danvers

Recommended by
Rep. Theodore Speliotis



Darlene Torre is Chairwoman of the Billerica School Committee. Prior to this she was School Committee Secretary, and before that, a School Committee Member. Darlene was elected Secretary to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees Division I and elected Member of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees Legislative Team. Darlene has been a Town Committee Member and a strong advocate for all the residents of Billerica. It is hard to find a Board or organization in Billerica that Darlene has not been involved with. Darlene has always been a tremendously active and vocal School Committee Member. She is a great supporter of our Billerica students and families guiding the School Committee in maintaining the policies of the Billerica School District, while monitoring the school budget. Darlene is a well rounded and devoted woman to her family and friends. She is well deserving to be recognized as a 2020 Commonwealth Heroine.

Darlene Torre, Billerica

Recommended by
Rep. Marc Lombardo

Graciela Trilla, Ed.D. is a veteran educator in urban public school districts with a passion for working with multilingual children and families. Graciela lives into the values of equity, beauty, peace, and empowerment for social justice through education. She is one of the founders and the Spanish Teacher Leader at Wisteria Montessori. Graciela has long supported and advocated for Latino families and students in Haverhill. Her leadership has helped mobilize and empower Latino parents from across the district. Graciela's persistence and commitment to social justice inspires leaders to do better and never give up on the causes of equity and justice.



Graciela Trilla, Ed.D., Haverhill

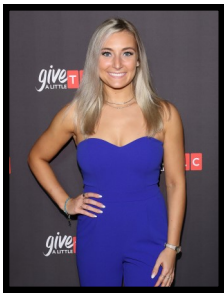
Recommended by
Rep. Andres Vargas



Nicole Valentine, Paxton

Recommended by
Sen. Harriette Chandler

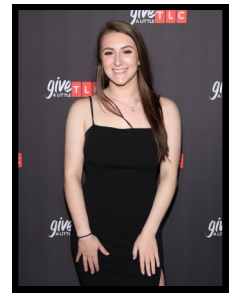
Nicole is incredibly honored to be selected by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women as one of the Commonwealth Heroines of 2020. She expresses that to be recommended by Senator Chandler is in fact an honor in itself. Valentine shares, "Senator, you are a role model, mentor and voice for women across the Commonwealth, and at the moment I find it difficult to express what this truly means to me." Nicole was raised by two amazing individuals who taught her sister, brother and herself the importance of civic responsibility, hard work and to always pay it forward. She strives to serve her community to the best of her ability each day with the same values and integrity put forth by City Manager Ed Augustus and Assistant City Manager Kathleen Johnson. Nicole thanks all involved for this amazing recognition and stated, "I know my parents would be so proud."



Angela Varney, Middleboro

Recommended by
Rep. Alyson Sullivan

On March 30, 2015 Angela (15), Christina (14) and Mia (5) Varney lost their mom Anne Marie to suicide. Through their grief and in honor of Annie's 35 years on earth, they made 35 "Kindness Blankets". They gave these blankets to different people that may have been struggling in some way, battling health setbacks, or just needing reassurance that they aren't alone. Needless to say their kindness and compassion became contagious. Together with the guidance of a team of five amazing women (Barbara Buckley, Aubrianne Buckley, Maegan Perzentz, Lisa Palmer and Maryann Hall) and an army of volunteers, Annie's Kindness Blankets has since made and given out over 7,500 blankets through donations of time and love. In a world in desperate need of unity and kindness, these ladies define heroism in their efforts to touch the world with kindness through everyone they meet.



Christina Varney, Middleboro

Recommended by
Rep. Alyson Sullivan



Martha Velez, Lawrence

Recommended by
Sen. Barry Finegold

Martha Velez is deserving of the Commonwealth Heroine award for her dedicated leadership and service during the Merrimack Valley Gas Explosion, and in the months that followed the crisis. Martha serves as Health and Human Service Director for the City of Lawrence- a promotion she received after going above and beyond in her role as Director of the Lawrence Council on Aging. Despite the fact that her own home and family were impacted by the explosion in September of 2018, Martha immediately set to work providing aid to residents of Lawrence. She worked 20+ hour days providing aid to displaced residents. As residents gradually returned to their homes, Martha assisted residents with filing claims against Columbia Gas, as many people affected in Lawrence were unable to afford legal aid, and speak only Spanish. Since the disaster, she has sacrificed countless hours, without hesitation, working to make her community whole again.

Tracye Whitfield is a lifelong resident of Springfield, small business owner, community organizer, and elected official. She took a workforce development course and became a legal secretary. She went on to obtain a Masters of Science in Accounting and Finance from American International College and is now the Director of Training and Workforce options at Springfield Technical Community College and is the owner of TW Accounting Services. Tracye was sworn in as a Springfield City Councilor and became the third woman of color and second African-American woman on the Council in its 166-year history. Tracye is the co-chairwoman of the Mason Square C-3 policing initiative where she works closely with area residents and police to make life better. She has been a formidable committee organizer on several community projects including the Martin Luther King Community Resource Block Party, the District Attorney's Hoop Hall Basketball Tournament/Job Fair, and many more. Tracye Whitfield truly a Commonwealth Heroine long- deserving of this great honor.



Tracye Whitfield, Springfield

Recommended by
Sen. James Welch

Toni Wiley has served as Executive Director and is currently the Chief Executive Officer and Board Chair of Sportsmen's Tennis & Enrichment Center since 2008. Her previous experience includes over two decades of corporate and nonprofit leadership experience. Ms. Wiley currently serves on a national USTA committee working to build the capacity of inner city tennis and education organizations like Sportsmen's, on the USTA New England Board of Directors, as president of the New England Tennis Association, and as a board member of the American Tennis Association. She grew up in Dorchester, just minutes from Sportsmen's, and continues to reside in the area.



Toni Wiley, Boston

Recommended by
Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz



Jane is widely known in the Berkshires and beyond as a tireless advocate for the environment and someone whose integrity is beyond reproach. In line with advocating for wildlife, Jane has been particularly sensitive to the environmental justice community - the human population without economic means or political muscle. She understands that people suffer similar loss of livelihood, health, and habitat at the hands of powerful interests and she works hard to recruit from and include this population in BEAT's effort to achieve an equitable and sustainable future. Jane brings a keen intellect and knowledge coupled with genuine compassion to her work. She is nimble and adaptable to our changing environments - natural, social and political - recognizing and engaging in new alliances, and endeavors when she sees an opportunity to make a difference. Jane is always reaching out to the broader community and younger generations to inform, educate and involve.

Jane Winn, Pittsfield

Recommended by
Rep. Tricia Farley-Bovvier

Donna Wresinski is the Fine and Performing Arts Director for Framingham Public Schools. Her journey to this position has had a profound impact on the entire city. Donna came to Framingham as a theatre teacher in 2002. Through her tireless work over the years, she has built a theater program and curriculum, which reflect and welcome the larger community. Through her work Donna has made theatre an educational and entertainment opportunity for all. Her local work, in addition to her twenty years as a volunteer member and now Chairman of the Board for The Massachusetts Educational Theatre Guild, have helped to make theatre an integral part of the school, the city, and the Commonwealth. Donna uses theatre to lift spirits and bring students, parents, and community members together. It is never "just a play" for Donna, her goal is always to make a difference in the lives of others.



Donna Wresinski, Framingham

Recommended by
Rep. Jack Lewis



Mrs. Patricia "Penny" Yebba is the soul and heartbeat of the Everett Public Schools Music Department. Her hard work and love of the students has earned her the nickname of "Momma Yebbs". "Mrs. Yebba has always been there for anything that we have needed. We wouldn't be anywhere today without her" says Isabella Mendes, a student who has participated in the Everett Public Schools music department for 6 years. Penny has, without fanfare, donated an exuberant amount of both her own money and personal time for the students to be fed and to be financially supported to go on numerous school trips with the music ensembles. These statewide and nationally recognized music events that the Everett music department has participated in could not be organized and executed without her expertise.

Patricia Yebba, Everett

Recommended by
Rep. Joseph McGonagle



Magalie Yolanda Torres-Rowe, Lynn

Recommended by
Rep. Peter Capano

Magalie Yolanda Torres-Rowe is the Executive Director and Founder of Latina Center MA-RIA, an organization that strives to empower Latina women through education and professional/civic development. Magalie taught at Lynn Public Schools, where she founded the first ever Spanish National Junior Honor Society. Members take part in the 'Big Brothers and Big Sisters' School Service Program, supporting the English Language Learner (ELL) students. Magalie has worked with the Catholic Church for more than twenty years in parishes and dioceses of Peru, Mexico and U.S.A. Today, her ministries involve working to support, educate, and empower her students and their families, who are often members of immigrant communities, as they strive to learn English, adapt to a new culture, and embrace the challenges of life here in the United States. Magalie is a good 'Role Model' for her students because she got a full scholarship from the World Bank for studying her Ph.D at Southern New Hampshire University twenty years ago, then she got her Master Teaching Spanish at Rivier University where she got the High Distinction (4.0GPA). Her dream came true three years ago when she finished her Master Degree at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. Magalie wrote a 'College Guide for Immigrant Parents', and two books: "Todas somos Maria" and " Quieres ser un Lider exitoso o trascendente?"

There are few Clinton residents who have had more of a profound and expansive impact on the community than Tena Zapantis. From serving as Board Member and an treasurer of Wheat Community Connections, a local nonprofit that provides support and services to families facing economic challenges, to her work as a Clinton School Committee member, Tena's activities are defined by selfless service and passion for her neighbors. In addition to her involvement in nonprofit work and education, Tena is an avid advocate for the performing arts as a member of the Clinton Holiday Pops and Chairperson of Clinton Public Schools Friends of Drama.



Tena Zapantis, Clinton

Recommended by
Rep. Harold Naughton



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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