



**Cook County Board President  
Toni Preckwinkle**

and

**The Cook County Commission  
on Women's Issues**

Present

*The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual  
Peggy A. Montes  
Unsung Heroine  
Awards Breakfast*

78 EAST WASHINGTON STREET  
CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER  
PRESTON BRADLEY HALL  
EIGHT IN THE MORNING  
TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY  
THURSDAY, THE FIFTH OF MARCH





**23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Peggy A. Montes  
Unsung Heroine Awards Breakfast  
Thursday, March 5, 2020  
8:00 – 10:00 a.m.**

## **PROGRAM**

### **Welcome**

Judy Hsu, Anchor, ABC 7 Chicago  
Mistress of Ceremonies

### **Remarks**

Audra Wilson, Chairperson  
Cook County Commission on Women's Issues

Toni Preckwinkle, President  
Cook County Board of Commissioners

### **Presentation of Awards**

Judy Hsu

### **Closing**

Judy Hsu



**The Cook County Commission  
on Women's Issues**

**COMMISSIONERS**

**Peggy A. Montes**  
**Chairperson**

Dr. Frances G. Carroll  
Dorian K. Carter  
Claudia Castro  
Rebecca Darr  
Vera G. Davis  
Eileen Dordek  
Michelle Garcia  
Trina Janes  
Susette Lunceford  
Marjorie A. Manchen  
Iris Millan  
Echelle Mohn  
Kelley Nichols-Brown  
Danielle Ruffatto  
Hon. Ginger Rugai  
Dr. Aparna Sen-Yeldandi  
Judy Weiner Arvey  
Rev. Dr. Janette Wilson  
Bernarda Lo Wong





## **Cook County's Unsung Heroines**

As an annual event in observance of Women's History Month, the Commission on Women's Issues honors one woman from each of the seventeen County districts, and an eighteenth honoree, selected by the four at-large members of the Cook County Women's Commission. All eighteen women are recognized for their vital contributions to their respective communities. The award places these women's achievements within the larger fabric of history and commemorates the powerful impact women have had on the development of our social, cultural, economic, and political institutions. The County honors these remarkable women as a way to bring their stories to light, to thank them publicly, and to celebrate the tradition of achievement and commitment to the greater good that is embodied by women leaders throughout the history of Cook County. Although their stories do not usually make the news, their contributions are truly newsworthy. These women are being recognized for using their time, talent, spirit, and enthusiasm to enrich and improve the lives of others.

### **Peggy A. Montes Unsung Heroine Award**

Peggy A. Montes, an educator, fundraiser, leader, and champion of women's issues and rights, was the driving force behind the creation of the very first Unsung Heroine Award for the women of Cook County. As a way to recognize and honor her remarkable achievements, in 2010 the award was renamed the "Peggy A. Montes Unsung Heroine Award." On March 16, 2010, the Cook County Board of Commissioners acknowledged Ms. Montes in a special way by introducing a resolution honoring her as a true heroine and officially renaming the award in her honor.





## **Phyllis M. Logan**

### **1<sup>st</sup> District**

**Vera Davis, Cook County Women's Commissioner**

**Brandon Johnson, Cook County Commissioner**

Phyllis M. Logan is a native of the Garfield Park neighborhood and longtime resident of Cook County's 1st District. A 30-year veteran in the real estate industry, Phyllis has a passion for mentoring those new to the profession. Phyllis volunteers in her community to fight against predatory lending, foreclosure, and gentrification. Phyllis is also an active civil rights advocate for equitable economic concerns that affect small business owners.

As the VP of Operations with VOCMA, she is credited for renewing the vision, building capacity, establishing public and private relations, designing and facilitating educational programs for adults, high-school students, and creating after-school programs for K-8 graders. Under her leadership, over 2,600 Cook County residents received assistance.

Phyllis is an active member of many community groups including the Austin African American Business Network Association, the Austin Chamber of Commerce, the Chicago Black Chamber of Commerce, the Dearborn Realist Board, and the NAACP National Board's Resolution Advisory Committee to name a few.





## **Dr. Carrol Collum**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> District**

**Dorian Carter, Cook County Women's Commissioner**

**Dennis Deer, Cook County Commissioner**

Dr. Carrol Collum is a community organizer, education and business consultant, mentor, and an author who takes pride in empowering clients through education and training as a leadership development professional.

She established iInspire Enterprises to provide entrepreneurial training to existing and aspiring business leaders who desire to transform the lives of their clients and local communities. In 2008, Dr. Collum launched True Believers Outreach Ministries, a reflection of her desire to be an example of the believer in all things. One of her most profound accomplishments was in 2013 with the establishment of True Believers Community Connections, a non-profit organization that addresses issues, crisis, and needs of individuals and families whether local or abroad.

Dr. Collum is also a published author. Her book entitled *The Mentor's Manual: Guidelines to Giving and Receiving Wisdom* requires readers to think differently about the role of mentors and to better appreciate the value in mentoring relationship.

Currently, Dr. Collum operates an Illinois approved training academy where she routinely conducts basic security, firearms, health and safety, and concealed carry courses. She is the owner of CYC Enterprise, Inc., which conducts real estate investments, property management, and tenant screening placement services.





## **La Shawn Stanton**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> District**

**Dr. Frances Carroll, Cook County Women's Commissioner**

**Bill Lowry, Cook County Commissioner**

La Shawn is a proven, values-driven and collaborative leader who brings more than 15 years of experience to leadership teams. Known for her thoughtful, proactive approach, La Shawn evaluates organizations, identifies gaps, and creates solutions that align a company's most valuable asset - its people - with the business vision, mission, and strategy.

As Senior Director of Human Resources for Tribune Publishing, La Shawn is the strategic HR business partner to the Chicago Tribune and corporate functions. She is responsible for guiding and coaching the senior leadership team on performance management, organizational development, employee relations, leadership development, talent assessment and acquisition, total rewards, employee engagement, and compliance.

Along with her contributions as an active HR thought leader, La Shawn is passionate about closing the educational and socio-economic disparities by supporting quality education for children and youth in underserved communities in Cook County, and equality and advocacy for women and girls. As a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated and The Links Incorporated, she has served in both elected and appointed positions, including Scholarship Committee Chairman, awarding over \$100,000 in scholarships to high school and college students.





## **Lanette Warbington**

### **4<sup>th</sup> District**

**Echelle Mohn, Cook County Women’s Commissioner**

**Stanley Moore, Cook County Commissioner**

Lanette Warbington, sole proprietor of LWarbington World of Fashion and Accessories, is a well-respected business owner and philanthropist of Cook County’s 4th District. Affectionately known as “The Original Purple Pop-Up Jewelry Diva,” Lanette’s brand and personality has an impact that goes beyond the world of fashion and accessories.

Lanette is best known for her philanthropic character. She has donated 2,000 pairs of earrings to local organizations such as Christmas in the Wards, Ronald McDonald House, and homeless shelters. Lanette’s community service includes bingo with seniors, feeding the homeless in Tent City, mentoring with the organization Black Girls Rock, volunteer with the Women of Steele, One Hundred Black Men and Operation Push. At her church, Salem Baptist Church, she is instrumental in the ministry to feed the homeless.

A trailblazer in creating opportunities for impoverished communities, she’s employed over 100 young adults through the Illinois Back to Work program. Lanette goes above and beyond, connecting the youth with resources that are beneficial for their academic success.

Lanette states “my gift is to bring happiness to the world and make people smile, that’s what fashion does for me. When you look good you feel good in Jesus name.”





## **Lorena Varela**

### **5<sup>th</sup> District**

**Kelley D. Nichols-Brown, Cook County Women's Commissioner**

**Deborah Sims, Cook County Commissioner**

Lorena Varela is the President and Executive Director of Comunidad En Acción de IL (CEA), an organization that strives to enhance, strengthen, and recognize the image of Hispanics by forging partnerships, fostering alliances, and communicating with organizations and residents.

A proud daughter to two loving parents who came to the United States as immigrants from Mexico, Lorena decided to address the lack of services or programs in south suburban Cook County for the Latino community. Lorena credits her inspiration to create a positive impact on her community and advocate for social justice to Victor H. Rodriguez, a respected community activist in Chicago's La Villita area who is known for changing the neighborhood.

In October 2017, CEA organized the first DACA march in Chicago Heights where Lorena was joined by immigration activists to stand for the rights of Latinos. Currently, Lorena has partnered with the Chicago Heights Public Library, Prairie State College, St. Paul's Church, pro-bono immigration attorneys, and other organizations in south suburban Cook County offering free on-going educational workshops such as Conosca Sus Derechos (Know Your Rights) Public Charge workshops and ESL classes. Lorena also hosts the annual Dia De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebration and holds suicide and mental health awareness programs.

Lorena stands in the gap for Latino and undocumented minorities and has become an anchor and resource for the underserved. Lorena states "Humans have basic rights, no matter what country they are from."





## **Mia Carter**

### **6<sup>th</sup> District**

**Susette Lunceford, Cook County Women’s Commissioner**

**Donna Miller, Cook County Commissioner**

Mia Carter currently holds the position of Coordinator of Police Community Relations for the Village of Matteson. In this capacity, Mia works with the youth on various community service projects, allowing them to see police in a different light. Mia believes local police departments are instrumental in early intervention to keep youth out of the court system. Running this program requires going beyond the call of duty, and Mia meets with youth at their jobs, attends their extracurricular activities, and sometimes even attends family events to maintain a connection with them.

During the summer, Mia is part of the 5-week character building program for at risk youth in 6th-10th grade. Mia states “No price can be placed on the time and energy used by her and the other officer volunteers to ensure success for these programs.”

Mia also serves as President and Chairperson of Matteson Rotary Club Youth Committee, Rich Township District 227 School Board member and volunteers in other organizations in the community. She is a mother of two children and longtime resident of the 6th District.





## **Sandra Mendez** **7<sup>th</sup> District**

**Michelle Garcia, Cook County Women’s Commissioner**  
**Alma E. Anaya, Cook County Commissioner**

A resident of the Little Village neighborhood and proud daughter of Mexican immigrants, Sandra Mendez made it her mission to make the world a better place and learned to advocate for others by participating in farmers and industrial workers’ rights movements, carrying on her mother’s legacy.

Sandra worked in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) for 28 years for different special education departments. After retiring from CPS, Sandra became deeply involved in her community including the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS), the Local School Council (LSC) and Parent Advisory Council (PAC) of the Greater Lawndale High School of Social Justice.

In addition, for the past eleven years, Sandra has devoted her weekends to her role as a catechist for the Archdiocese of Chicago’s Special Religious Development (SPRED) Program, which serves children and young adults with disabilities at St. Pius Church in Pilsen. She is also a volunteer with Project VIDA, an entity that offers care and support services to individuals and their families impacted by HIV/AIDS.

Despite mobility challenges, Sandra is often described as an “Energizer bunny” who tirelessly devotes her spare time to her community. Sandra is convinced that every day is an opportunity to learn from others and to help from bottom of her heart.





**Janece Ortiz**  
**8<sup>th</sup> District**

**Iris Millán, Cook County Women’s Commissioner**  
**Luis Arroyo, Jr., Cook County Commissioner**

Janece Ortiz has served Chicagoland communities for the past 15 years. Each one of her roles has grown from her passion to improve the quality and assistance offered through community services empowering youth, families and underserved communities. Her current commitments include serving the Medical Organization for Latino Advancement (MOLA), UNICEF USA and the Northwest Housing Center. Northwest Housing Center is very dear for her because it is working closely for the growth and development of her very own community - Belmont Cragin.

Aligned with her passion for improved community services, Janece has most recently served as the Director for the City of Chicago’s CityKey program, an optional, valid, government-issued photo identification card for all Chicago residents regardless of a resident’s housing status, criminal record, immigration status or gender identity.

Janece was also part of UNICEF KidPower program which served a total of 30,000 CPS students by promoting healthy life styles and allowing them help youth who live in communities of need in South America, Africa and Asia. She is also very proud to have been part of the All of Us Research Program at Northwestern University where she worked closely with National Institute of Health (NIH) to ensure engagement across the nation was inclusive of the Latinx population.





## **Dr. Carolyn V. Kirschner**

**9<sup>th</sup> District**

**Marjorie Manchen, Cook County Women's Commissioner**

**Peter Silvestri, Cook County Commissioner**

A resident of Park Ridge, Dr. Carolyn V. Kirschner is dedicated to the care and empowerment of cancer survivors. Dr. Kirschner utilizes a holistic approach with attention to physical, emotional and spiritual health as the care plan for a long and healthy life. Dr. Kirschner volunteers in many wellness education programs and teaches yoga to survivors.

Dr. Kirschner has been dedicated to empowering women for many years. Immediately after completing her medical training, she and her husband Greg moved their family to Jos, Nigeria where they served as medical missionaries. While abroad, they cared for women with childbirth injuries. Dr. Kirschner is proud they raised their children to appreciate diversity and to serve others.

Dr. Kirschner earned her 3-year Bachelor of Arts degree at Northwestern and received her M.D. and residency in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Illinois Chicago.





## **Colleen Martin**

### **10<sup>th</sup> District**

**Neha Gill, Cook County Women's Commissioner**

**Bridget Gainer, Cook County Commissioner**

Colleen Martin is a distinguished member of the 10th District community known for her volunteer work. For the past 11 years, Colleen contributes her time at Queen of All Saints Catholic Church as a teacher of religious education to children ages 11-17. Beyond the classroom, she provides communion to residents of a local nursing home and aides in the preparation of the altar for religious holidays.

Throughout the year, Colleen volunteers at Misericordia Heart of Mercy, a non-profit dedicated to providing care that maximizes potential for persons with mild to profound developmental disabilities, many of whom are also physically challenged. Colleen's volunteer work previously included the Maryville Center and Michael Reese Hospital. While at Maryville, Colleen worked with troubled youth and at Michael Reese Hospital she assisted infants with predisposed addiction to drugs. Colleen's philanthropic volunteer work has included fundraising for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.





## **Gerri Neylon**

### **11<sup>th</sup> District**

**Hon. Ginger Rugai, Cook County Women’s Commissioner**  
**John P. Daley, Cook County Commissioner**

Gerri Neylon is a radiation and oncology nurse for adults and pediatric who founded Christmas Without Cancer, a non-profit to ease the financial and emotional burdens resulting from cancer diagnosis. The impetus for Christmas Without Cancer was a 28-year-old, pregnant new homeowner with a bright future, diagnosed with a bleak prognosis just days before Christmas. Gerri felt compelled to support the family in some way beyond her professional life. Uniting with the community, Gerri brought joy into the new mom’s life with two full vans of diapers, gift cards, food, and toys. Six months later the young mom passed away; in her memory, her husband asked to continue this meaningful project and pick another family for the next Christmas.

Christmas Without Cancer has grown into an all-volunteer organization raising more than \$100,000 and now operating year-round. The organization has assisted with medical bills, mortgage payments, rents, tuition, insurance deductibles, medications, groceries, gift cards, transportation costs for out of state treatments, and many more initiatives.

In Gerri’s words, “Nobody plans for cancer and there is always a loss of income with it. We just try to take the burden off the whole family, physically, emotionally and financially.”





## **Carolina Brueck**

### **12<sup>th</sup> District**

**Danielle Ruffatto, Cook County Women's Commissioner**

**Bridget Degen, Cook County Commissioner**

Carolina and Larry Brueck are the creators of Landon's Closet, a group that hand knits and delivers blankets to Illinois hospitals. After losing their child, Landon, one month before delivery, one of the Brueck's most vivid memories of that time was the blanket that Landon was wrapped in. They inquired about the blanket and learned it was given by a group that was no longer donating.

This experience spurred the idea for Landon's Closet. Carolina and her family purchased materials and found someone to teach their family and friends how to knit. Showing unbelievable courage in the face of a terrible loss, Carolina has donated her home, time and money. Blankets are donated to families dealing with the loss of a child or who have a child in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Since 2013, the group has donated more than 4,570 hand knit blankets and 740 hats to over 48 hospitals in Illinois.





## **Kathy Tate-Bradish**

### **13<sup>th</sup> District**

**Trina Janes, Cook County Women's Commissioner**

**Larry Suffredin, Cook County Commissioner**

Kathy Tate-Bradish brings energy and commitment to her civic and community development volunteer work in the greater Evanston area and globally over more than 35 years.

She founded and runs the ABCs of Sex Education to teach HIV/AIDS education and offer workshops in rural Kenya. She developed a curriculum which trains Kenyan farmers to teach their peers HIV prevention with a focus on role-plays and breaking social taboos around sex education and HIV testing. The program has reduced teen pregnancy by 25% and increased condom use and HIV testing by 20%. She has transformed the initial volunteer organization to a structured professional Kenyan NGO with field staff and a Managing Director. More than 70,000 Kenyans have been taught by ABCs' trained community educators since 2008.

Locally, she is active with the League of Women Voters and has moderated countless forums around Cook County and advocated for reform and participatory democracy. She actively volunteers with the Evanston Lighthouse Rotary Club, North Shore Senior Center, Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired and New Foundation for Hope.





## **Agnes I. Wojnarski MD**

### **14<sup>th</sup> District**

**Judy Weiner Arvey, Cook County Women’s Commissioner**

**Scott Britton, Cook County Commissioner**

Dr. Wojnarski has a passion for the environment and is a true representative of the “think globally, act locally” philosophy of environmental stewardship. In 2014 Dr. Wojnarski and a friend co-founded the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission.

Dr. Wojnarski is not afraid of a challenge. She has been a leading and driving force in the Commission’s efforts to preserve, protect and restore natural areas in the City, and to raise awareness of environmental issues in our community. Through her, and the Commission’s work, natural slough and prairie areas have been restored and maintained. She leads by example and is the first to work on clearing invasive plants, managing a prairie burn, or collecting seeds.

Through her initiative, hands-on environmental education programs have been established with area elementary and high schools, local Girl and Boy Scout troops and individual members, Park District summer camp participants and other community youth organizations. Through strong relationships she has built with the Cook County Wild Things community, Morton Arboretum, Chicago Wilderness, Field Museum and other area organizations, she has also provided a steady lineup of top-rate speakers for the Natural Resources Commission’s monthly “Nature Speaks” presentations, another program she has helped to establish. While investing so much time and energy to the environment Dr. Wojnarski is also practicing physician.





## **Sherrine Peyton**

### **15<sup>th</sup> District**

**Rebecca Darr, Cook County Women’s Commissioner**

**Kevin Morrison, Cook County Commissioner**

Sherrine Peyton has over thirty years of experience in social service specializing in community organizing and strategic planning for community health. Peyton has worked with youth, families, schools, police departments, elected officials, businesses, faith-based organizations and social service agencies to improve the lives of youth and families in the 15th District for the past five years. Peyton facilitates conversations on race, equity, and inclusivity. As the Division Director of Kenneth Young Center’s Community Collaboration Division, Peyton convenes a coalition to address issues such as LGBTQ inclusivity, substance use prevention and recovery, teen pregnancy prevention, healthy relationships, delinquency and violence prevention, and youth experiencing homelessness. The coalition has grown from one project to eleven. Last summer, the program offered its first annual free week-long day camp for middle school youth in the district. In October 2019, Peyton and her team opened the first LGBTQ+ Center for Youth and Young Adults in the Northwest Suburbs.

Peyton and her wife Monica have a blended family of six adult children and three grandchildren. They are proud residents of the 15th District and enjoy the restaurants, parades, festivals, art fairs, and cultural events the area has to offer.





**Nadine Boyle**  
**16<sup>th</sup> District**  
**Jeffrey Tobolski, Cook County Commissioner**

A self-motivator, Nadine's commitment for professional development paved her way from a waitress to obtaining a degree in liberal arts from Northwestern Illinois University, paralegal training and Certified Legal Assistant certification. Improving her education over 14 years, Nadine is again following her passion to help others as a financial aid assistant helping students secure government loans.

In the 1980's, Nadine and her late husband David R. Boyle co-founded a citizens group called the Can Do Committee which organized advisory referendums and concentrated on citizen and homeowner issues. Nadine was a volunteer at her husband's legal clinic that provided free legal services to the most underserved: immigrants, refugees and low-income working-class citizens often concerned about unfair employment practices, rising property taxes and complicated immigrations regulations. Her civic activism is marked by many years of participation in Cicero's Town Hall meetings from budget issues to voting, homeowners and business concerns.

Nadine has been a volunteer for other groups such as the Rape Victim Advocates, Habitat for Humanity and the Hines VA Hospital.





## **Nancy Mott**

### **17<sup>th</sup> District**

#### **Sean Morrison, Cook County Commissioner**

For many years, Nancy Mott has been a tireless advocate for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. Nancy's passion to help women and girls victimized by domestic abuse lead her to complete an intensive 40-hour Domestic Violence Training and founded the Domestic Violence Outreach Ministry (DVO). DVO Ministry's mission is to provide support, guidance, counseling, and education for the prevention of domestic violence through community resources, advocacy and outreach programs, with emphasizing October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Nancy has led the effort in the southwest suburbs to raise awareness of the prevalence of both domestic violence and trafficking in these communities. DVO Ministries provides resources in January, recognized as Human Trafficking Awareness Month. She organizes events, speakers, and other outreach to shine a light on problems that people are often unwilling to admit exist.

Working closely with the Archdiocese of Chicago, she presently serves on the Catholic Charities Parish Outreach Committee Southwest Region in Blue Island. Nancy volunteers with other Catholic Churches coordinating the care for the elderly, sick and homebound with hospitality and food, with P.A.D.S. a homeless shelter and Respect Life Committee.





## **Diara Brooks** **At-Large District**

**Janice Lopez, Cook County Women's Commissioner**

**Andrea Raila, Cook County Women's Commissioner**

**Dr. Aparna Sen-Yeldandi, Cook County Women's Commissioner**

**Audra Wilson, Cook County Women's Commissioner Chairperson**

**Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Board President**

Diara Brooks is an entrepreneur and resident of Chicago's Washington Heights neighborhood. She is passionate about empowering students K through 8 at the Wendel E. Green Public Elementary School and has served on the Green Local School Council for over a decade. Diara's mission is to see Washington Heights elementary school remains in its high Level 1 rating.

In the community, Diara oversees multiple businesses under one family-owned roof, including a beauty salon, barber shop and body ink art. Diara, a graduate of Kenwood Academy High School, attended Chicago State University and is a licensed barber and instructor from Cain's and Larry's Barber Colleges.

Diara's spirit of giving was sparked volunteering with her family for the Little Brothers, Friends of the Elderly. As an adult, quietly giving back is Diara's mantra. For a combined 12 years, Diara has provided free haircuts, winter coats, gloves, hats, and school supplies to students.

Her business is an open Safe Haven for kids. On any day you can find Diara mentoring Wendel students after or during the school day. She is an outspoken advocate for businesses in her community, raising the consciousness in young minds of the many African American contributions in innovations, business, and education.





## **Cook County Commission on Women's Issues Commissioner Biographies**

### **Audra Wilson, Chairperson**

Audra Wilson is the Executive Director of the League of Women Voters Illinois. Previously, Audra served as Deputy Chief of Staff for United States Congresswoman Robin Kelly in the Second Congressional District of Illinois. Prior to this role, she spent seven years on the faculty at Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law as an Adjunct Professor and Director of Diversity Education and Outreach. In addition to launching several major diversity initiatives, Audra developed and taught a seminar analyzing the history of U.S. welfare programs and impact of social attitudes on contemporary welfare policy. Audra also served as the Deputy Press and Policy Director on Barack Obama's U.S. Senate campaign. Audra began her legal career as a Welfare Advocacy Staff Attorney with the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law where for five years, she focused her work on food security issues and advocacy for low-income working families.





### **Janice Lopez, At-Large**

Janice Lopez is currently an Assistant Vice President Business Relationship Manager at JP Morgan Chase & Co. For over two decades, Janice has worked in the area of business and economic development. As the former Managing Director of Entrepreneurial Services for the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC), she worked with both start-up and established business owners, with an emphasis on women entrepreneurs in underserved communities, to help them not only launch their businesses but also establish a solid foundation for growth and sustainability. At the WBDC she advocated for parity in the marketplace and access to capital for women and minorities. She looks forward in continuing advocating for women and girls as an advisory member of Women in Comedy and board member of the Northwest Side CDC. Janice is native Chicagoan. She received a B.S. in Finance from Northeastern Illinois University.

### **Dr. Aparna Sen-Yeldandi, At-Large**

Dr. Aparna Sen-Yeldandi has worked over two decades in public and private sectors in the areas of teaching, information technology, university research and strategic planning. During her tenure in the City of Chicago and Chicago Housing Authority, she has worked with many human services agencies and spearheaded many inter-governmental projects. Commissioner Sen-Yeldandi is the former Executive Director of Apna Ghar (Our Home), a human rights organization working to end gender violence. Commissioner Sen-Yeldandi served as a Co-Chair on the Board of Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network. She also serves on the advisory council of Women's Economic Justice. Commissioner Sen currently works for the State of Illinois in her role of Executive Management.





## **Andrea Raila, At-Large**

Andrea is the CEO, founder of Andrea Raila & Associates, a 25-year public policy and tax consulting firm. Andrea works to advance women in the financial field through career mentorship and women internships, such as paid positions for Loyola Gannon Scholars in the Gannon Center Women in Leadership Program. She concentrates support to disadvantaged Cook County women, girls, and the juvenile and women's justice systems. She has served on the board for the Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers (CLAIM) playing a pivotal role in their merger into the Cabrini Green Legal Aid (CGLA). Andrea is nationally recognized for her tax and public policy expertise. She serves on Mundelein College Alumnae Board at Loyola University and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce's Tax Committee. She is a proud mother of three: two daughters, and a son, in high school, college and the first just embarking on career life.

## **Vera G. Davis, 1<sup>st</sup> District**

Vera Garner Davis is a retired educator from Chicago Public Schools. Since retirement, she has worked with several organizations that provide needed services to the community. She is a member of Carey Tercentenary African Methodist Episcopal Church where she serves as President Pro Tem of the Steward Board and has served in many other capacities including Christian Education Director and Sunday School Superintendent. She has sat on the boards of Loretto Hospital Foundation, Family Focus Foundation, Illinois Hunger Coalition, Illinois Partnership Office Advisory Council, Hands Up Recovery and The University of Chicago Advisory Committee for Cancer Research. She is married to the Honorable Danny K. Davis, Representative of the 7th Congressional District of Illinois.





### **Dorian K. Carter, 2<sup>nd</sup> District**

Dorian K. Carter is Special Assistant to the Chairman and Co-CEO John W. Rogers, Jr., of Ariel Investments. Commissioner Carter serves her community through an unwavering commitment to improving the lives of women and girls. In 1999, she co-founded The Glass Slipper Project, a 100% volunteer program that provides impoverished junior and senior high school girls with proper attire to attend their prom. Since its creation, the Glass Slipper Project has dressed more than 23,000 girls throughout the Chicago region. In addition to her efforts on behalf of The Glass Slipper Project, Dorian also serves on the Local Advisory Board for New Leaders. Commissioner Carter is a member of The Cook County State's Attorney's African American Advisory Council. She is also a member of The Links, Inc.

### **Dr. Frances G. Carroll, 3<sup>rd</sup> District**

Dr. Frances G. Carroll is a retired educator and former principal of the Nancy Jefferson Alternative School located in the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. Commissioner Carroll is a current member of the Life Member Youth Guidance Board of Directors, a Trustee at the University of Illinois, a member of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and a Central Region Representative to the International Connection Committee. She has served on the Program Planning Committee to assist in the selection of the public meetings and partnered with community groups in planning health fairs for her district. Dr. Carroll assisted Cook County in the planning of domestic violence legislation, the County Child Care Initiative, collected cell phones for victims of domestic violence, and lobbied for equal pay for women.





### **Echelle Mohn, 4<sup>th</sup> District**

Commissioner Echelle Mohn is the Director of Technology for the Calumet Public School District 132. An educator with over 27 years experience and passionate about computer science, Commissioner Mohn helped develop a challenging curriculum to teach students technological and financial literacy skills. She established Founder of Future Innovative Technologies (FIT), a professional development group that encourages youth and young adults to create socio-economic development equity spaces through entrepreneurship. She is an active member of her community, serves as Chair for the Lindblom Math & Science Academy Parent Advisory Council and is Founder and President of the South Deering Manor Community Association. She serves her church as a member of the Media Ministry, Church in Society, and Financial Consortium Council. Her three sons, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Kevin, Jr., are her greatest pride and joy.

### **Kelley Nichols-Brown, 5<sup>th</sup> District**

2018 Unsung Heroine recipient Kelley D. Nichols-Brown is the Director of the Chicago Heights Public Library with a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is also a combat war veteran who served in the United States Army Reserve from 1990–2002. Since 1991, Kelley has worked in public and academic libraries and has implemented many successful programs which she has presented to the Illinois (ILA) and American (ALA) Library Associations. For nearly a decade, Commissioner Nichols-Brown has been an active participant of Supreme Martial Arts Academy, LLC (SMA), a taekwondo school co-owned and operated by her husband and six sons. SMA has competed in state and national tournaments and does community outreach at libraries, schools, and community centers. Kelley continues to be an advocate for literacy, youth, local talent, and the less fortunate by implementing innovative programs and collaborating with other community organizations.





## **Susette Lunceford, 6<sup>th</sup> District**

Susette M. Lunceford has 20+ years of experience as a human resource professional. She currently serves as the Director of Training & Development at a minority-owned managed care organization. Over her career, Susette has been an advocate for equal employment opportunities in the workplace. Prior to her current role she served as an independent consultant and designed and taught workforce entry programs for individuals in underserved communities. Susette and her husband focus many of their volunteer efforts by participating in organizations that assist youth gain access to educational resources. She holds a bachelor's degree from Andrews University, an MBA from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and an MA from Roosevelt University.

## **Michelle Garcia, 7<sup>th</sup> District**

Michelle Garcia has been working for Access Living as the Latino Community Organizer since 2009. Her work focuses particularly on educating and collaborating with the Latino community about disability rights and services. Through her work she has had the opportunity to collaborate with other Latino groups and organizations that work within the Latino Community, which has helped expand their knowledge about disability-related issues. She is the coordinator of a Latino advocacy group called Cambiando Vidas, whose mission is to create social change within the Latino Community. As a Community Organizer, Michelle is responsible for increasing the number of Latino leaders with disabilities; as well as raising awareness of disability issues and how they intersect with issues such as immigration and healthcare within the Latino community. Her work includes planning numerous educational forums and events in different areas of the city, to educate Latinos with disabilities about disability rights and services.





### **Iris Millán, 8<sup>th</sup> District**

Iris Millán is the District Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at City Colleges of Chicago. She is a passionate advocate for immigration, hunger, education, and women’s issues, among other causes. Iris serves on the boards of nonprofit and civic organizations and she recently completed her fellowship in the Illinois Women’s Institute for Leadership Training Academy. Iris holds a MA in Higher Education Leadership and a BA in Political Science, both from Northeastern Illinois University. Iris is a devoted mom, a passionate community organizer, and a proud Mexican immigrant. She lives in the Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago with her loving partner, Eddie, and their two children. They are a proud Mexican and Puerto Rican household.

### **Marjorie A. Manchen, 9<sup>th</sup> District**

Marjorie A. Manchen is the executive administrator of the Office of the Mayor, Village of Schiller Park. She is also the Village Clerk of River Grove, has achieved designations as a Certified Municipal Clerk from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks and a Registered Municipal Clerk with the Municipal Clerks of Illinois. Additionally, Commissioner Manchen has been an attorney with the law offices of Smith & Smith, concentrating her practice in domestic relations, guardianships, probate and other family law matters, as well as municipal work. Commissioner Manchen was admitted to the U.S. Supreme Court in 2018 and was a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) in Kane County, IL, where she represented abused and neglected children.





## **Neha Gill, 10<sup>th</sup> District**

Neha is the Executive Director at Apna Ghar. She has led consultations, trainings, advised local and international NGOs, government officials, and UN agencies on providing services to survivors of gender-based violence. In 2014, policies and procedures for survivors of gender-based violence that she helped establish were formally adopted by the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq. Neha has extensive cross-cultural experience having worked on gender issues in East Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. She received her Master of Science degree in International Public Service with certificates in Public Policy and International NGO Management from DePaul University in Chicago, and a bachelor's degree in International Relations from Knox College in Galesburg, IL.

## **Ginger Rugai, 11<sup>th</sup> District**

Ginger Rugai served as a Chicago Alderman from 1990 to 2011. Commissioner Rugai began her career as an English teacher at Queen of Peace High School. Before becoming Alderman, she served as Assistant Director of the Beverly Area Planning Association, a member of the Illinois Senate Staff and Administrative Aide to State Senator Jeremiah Joyce. She was elected for her first term as Alderman in February 1991 and re-elected four times. Alderman Rugai was appointed to former Mayor Daley's Task Force on Women's Health and the Cook County Commission Women's Issues. She is also active in the Mercy Home for Boys and Girls Leader Council. She received her BA and MA from Loyola University and a Doctor of Public Policy (HC) from Saint Xavier University. Ginger and her husband, Ado, have three children and nine grandchildren.





### **Danielle Ruffatto, 12<sup>th</sup> District**

Since beginning her career, Danielle Parisi Ruffatto has passionately represented those who otherwise would not have access to an attorney. In her current position as the Domestic Violence Legal Clinic's Director of Emergency Services, Danielle supervises the attorneys and Client Support Coordinator in the Emergency Services Division, and represents survivors of domestic violence Order of Protection cases. Previously Danielle served as the Director of Pro Bono and Training, managing DVLC's interns and volunteers and overseeing staff training, and worked as a DVLC staff attorney, representing clients in Order of Protection and Family Law cases. Danielle is an adjunct professor at DePaul University College of Law. She received her BA, with honors, from DePaul University in 2001 and her JD from the University of Illinois in 2004.

### **Trina Janes, 13<sup>th</sup> District**

Trina Janes was appointed by Commissioner Larry Suffredin and represents the 13th County Board district. Commissioner Janes is a native of Evanston and now lives with her family in Skokie. She is a consultant with Haymarket Public Strategies. Commissioner Janes is a graduate of Evanston's public schools, Bates College and the Kellogg School of Management. She served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco and is past president of the Chicago Area Peace Corps Association and past Executive Committee member of the National Peace Corps Association. Commissioner Janes' most important role is being the mother of two energetic boys. She co-founded a Cub Scout Pack, coached their soccer team and is active with the PTA.





## **Judy Weiner Arvey, 14<sup>th</sup> District**

As a 35-year resident of Northbrook, Judy Weiner Arvey has been very involved in the community. After graduating from National Louis University, Judy went on to be a teacher at Skokie School District 68 for seven years. Judy continued her service to the community as an active member of District 30's PTO, Glenbrook North Parents Association, Glenview North Booster Club, Northfield Township Democrats and Northbrook Civics Foundation. Judy recently retired, though she stays busy helping a friend in the event planning business. She also currently serves as a Mission Brook Sanitary District trustee and is a member of Moms Demand Action. In her free time, Judy enjoys reading, movies and travel.

## **Rebecca Darr, 15<sup>th</sup> District**

Born and raised in Alton, Illinois, Rebecca Darr completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Illinois. Prior to joining WINGS, she lived in San Jose, CA, working with homeless families and as the director of a nonprofit alternative school for abused children and adolescents. While in California, she earned her master's degree in clinical psychology. Rebecca Darr joined WINGS as Executive Director in 1999 and was named the Chief Executive Officer in 2014. Under her leadership, the organization has become one of the largest agencies in the state of Illinois providing services and housing to homeless women and children, and to victims of domestic violence. In 2005, WINGS built and opened the first and only domestic violence shelter in northwest Cook County and over the years added 30 units of transitional and permanent housing to allow women and children sufficient time to heal from the trauma of abuse. On Valentine's Day in 2016, WINGS opened the first new domestic violence shelter in the city of Chicago in over a decade. Darr serves on several other boards and state-wide coalitions as part of her effort to advocate for stronger legislation and increased resources to prevent and end domestic violence.





*Thank you*







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