



Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and the  
Cook County Commission on Women's Issues  
Present

# PEGGY A. MONTES UNsung HEROINES AWARD



**MARCH 10, 2022**  
**10-11:15 AM**  
**VIRTUAL EVENT**

[COOKCOUNTYIL.GOV](http://COOKCOUNTYIL.GOV)

# **25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PEGGY A. MONTES UNsung HEROINE AWARDS BREAKFAST**

MARCH 10, 2022  
10-11:15 AM

## **PROGRAM**

### **25th Anniversary Unsung Heroine Event Welcome Video**

#### **Welcome**

Erika Maldonado, Univision  
Host

#### **Remarks**

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

Toni Preckwinkle, President  
Cook County Board of Commissioners

#### **Presentation of Awards**

Erika Maldonado

#### **Closing**

Audra Wilson

# THE COOK COUNTY COMMISSION ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

## COMMISSIONERS

Audra Wilson  
Chairperson

Vera Davis  
Dorian K. Carter  
Dr. Frances G. Carroll  
Echelle Mohn  
Susette Lunceford  
Michelle Garcia  
Jaqueline Baez  
Marjorie A. Manchen  
Neha Gill  
Hon. Ginger Rugai  
Danielle Parisi Ruffatto  
Trina Janes  
Michelle Kohler  
Rebecca Darr  
Claudia Ayala  
Nancy Mott  
Dr. Aparna Sen-Yeldandi  
Andrea A. Raila

## **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.

# CRYSTAL E. GARDNER

1<sup>st</sup> District

Vera Davis, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Brandon Johnson, Cook County Commissioner

Crystal Gardner is a Union Organizer and Community Activist. Crystal stands firmly in her belief that fighting for social justice on the job and within her communities is an assignment from God, and the only way to enhance the quality of life of our most vulnerable sisters and brothers is through progressive organizing and people power.

A proud Westsider, Crystal has made community her professional and personal epicenter. As a Union Organizer for AFSCME Council 31, Crystal has led numerous collective bargaining victories, including organizing the museum workers at the Art Institute of Chicago and UCAN Residential. Spurred on by the unrest post-George Floyd's murder and the pandemic, Crystal created Active Austin!, a thriving Facebook community dedicated to helping her neighbors connect. She also founded a bipartisan "Protest to the Polls" campaign in 2020 focused on creating community change agents through voter education, engagement and the registration of Black and Latin voters on the west and south sides of Chicago. Crystal currently serves on the board of the Austin, faith-based criminal justice reform organization, The Justice Renewal Initiative, and is a lead for the Austin Coming Together Quality of Life Plan. Most importantly, she wants everyone to know that she is only getting started.

# ASIAHA BUTLER

2<sup>nd</sup> District

Dorian Carter, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Dennis Deer, Cook County Commissioner

Longtime Englewood resident, Asiaha Butler is determined to uplift, inspire and change the perception of her neighborhood - often seen as a death trap.

Butler has served on various boards and councils to ensure residents have a voice to address issues that face the community. Through her leadership, she collaborated with educators, concerned citizens, and parents to develop a comprehensive educational plan for community schools and engaged residents in plans grounded in community planning and development.

In November of 2010, she mobilized residents and co-founded Resident Association of Greater Englewood (R.A.G.E) and serves as Executive Director. R.A.G.E. mobilizes people and resources to force a change in the community.

She served as the Action Champion/Chair of the Englewood Quality of Life Housing and Public Spaces Task Force, leads the Buy the Block Home Ownership Campaign and led the Englewood Public Safety Task Force. Butler recently founded her own real estate development company to ensure that housing development in Englewood happens from the bottom up to avoid gentrification or displacement of current residents.

As a key community strategist and social media maven, Butler has become one of the most recognized and powerful voices from the Englewood community. You can learn more about the work of RAGE at [www.raglewood.org](http://www.raglewood.org).

# ANNETTE NANCE-HOLT

3<sup>rd</sup> District

Dr. Frances Carroll, Cook County Women's Commissioner  
Bill Lowry, Cook County Commissioner

Fire Commissioner Annette Nance-Holt is a 32-year veteran of the Chicago Fire Department (CFD). As the first woman to hold this rank in the history of the CFD, Ms. Nance-Holt has steadily progressed through the ranks of Firefighter, Lieutenant, Training Instructor, Captain, Battalion Chief, Deputy District Chief, 1st Deputy Fire Commissioner to her current position.

A native of Chicago, Ms. Nance-Holt was raised in the Maple Park community on the southside and attended both parochial and public schools. Ms. Nance-Holt's passion has become the passing of common-sense gun legislation. In May of 2007, tragedy hit when her 16-year-old son, Blair Holt, was fatally shot on his way home from school. Since Blair's death, Ms. Nance-Holt has supported parents who have lost a child to gun violence with the creation of the non-profit organization, Purpose Over Pain - an advocacy organization that supports parents who also lost children to gun violence, provides safe and positive outlets for children and youth, and advocates and promotes safer communities in Chicago, Illinois.

Ms. Nance-Holt is a member of St. Sabina Church, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters and the African American Firefighters & Paramedics League, where she once served as President and Vice-President.

# BELLE K. MCCLANDON

4<sup>th</sup> District

Echelle Mohn, Cook County Women's Commissioner  
Stanley Moore, Cook County Commissioner

Belle K. McCclandon is a retiree with over 30 years of service as an Administrative Assistant with Cook County Facilities Management Department and over a decade of successful service in materials management. She is a wife of 30 years who has dedicated her life to taking care of others. Her greatest joy in life is spending time with her loving husband Charles, two wonderful sons, and adorable grandson.

Belle demonstrates strong leadership, organizational, team building, and decision-making skills in everything that she does. Her energy, compassion, and creativity—both orally and written—gives her the ability to effectively communicate with the public and her peers in a professional manner. Her personal cancer survivor story has served as a voice of awareness for others.

Belle is one of the amazing community leaders within the 4th District. She developed and organized the first 8700 South Bishop Block Club, where she currently serves as treasurer. Belle is a 26-year member of the Memorial Missionary Baptist Church and currently serves on the missionary, deaconess, pastor support, Sunday school, and bible-study ministries. As a member of the Missionary Ministry, Belle actively works with other members to adopt a homeless shelter throughout the city to provide food and clothing.



# VIRGIL “VIR” JACKSON

5<sup>th</sup> District

Deborah Sims, Cook County Commissioner

Mrs. Virgil L. Jackson, affectionately known as “Vir”, was born and raised on the near westside of Chicago, where she attended Victor Herbert and Lucy Flower schools. Mrs. Jackson is married to Mayor Lawrence L. Jackson for twenty years and is the proud mother to her eleven-year-old daughter, Morgan. As the First Lady of Riverdale, she has assisted and sponsored many wonderful community events including the Annual Children’s Coat and Hat Drive, where donations are gathered from businesses to purchase coats, hats, gloves, and scarfs for children in need. Mrs. Jackson also supports indigent families with food gift cards and assists in providing emotional support to these families in their time of need. Additionally, she has sponsored and hosted the Annual Riverdale Breast Cancer Awareness and Prevention luncheon. She also supports and volunteers with the Annual Children’s Ice Cream Social, Annual Back to School Party, and Annual Seniors’ Thanksgiving Day Luncheon, serves on the PTA at her daughter’s school, and assists school officials with fundraising. Mrs. Jackson is employed with Tab Service Company for over 25 years; however, she believes her most important duties are those of mother, wife, and daughter.

# LAMEKIA DAVIS

6<sup>th</sup> District

Susette Lunceford, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Donna Miller, Cook County Commissioner

Lamekia Nicole Davis, is Finance and Event expert with over 15 years of experience in the Financial and Non-profit Industry. She arose above her childhood challenges of homelessness and Chicago violence and excelled in her dreams and goals. Being an alumni of Upward Bound program, she studied and pursued Business Administration at Robert Morris College.

Lamekia has worked with I Love Them; a ministry of feeding the homeless on the South Side of Chicago and is a certified mentor with Lincoln's Challenge Academy. Growing up on the West Side of Chicago, Lamekia has always had a love and passion for youth and young adults. In 2013 The Heyy Girl Foundation was birthed; a non-profit organization with mentorship programs for at risk and homeless young ladies. The organization's mission is to empower teenage girls and young women to excel while overcoming life obstacles. Her goal is to one day open a transitional housing shelter for homeless and runaway teens.

Lamekia enjoys teaching financial literacy to youth and will be expanding to private and public school sectors. As the CEO of her business, She hopes to empower the younger generation of young women of color to give back, obtain wealth and entrepreneurship.

# MARÍA ESPARZA

7<sup>th</sup> District

Michelle Garcia, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Alma E. Anaya, Cook County Commissioner

María Esparza is known for going above and beyond to serve the most vulnerable in the Back of the Yards Neighborhood. Born in Zacatecas, México, María immigrated to Chicago over 30 years ago. As a mother of three, she knows the importance of parent engagement and has been an active parent leader that provides mentorship to other new parents. María began as a volunteer at the San Miguel Church, where she taught adults how to read and write in Spanish, as well as teaching English as a second language. Her commitment to her volunteer community work landed her a position as the Family Support Coordinator at the San Miguel School. Maria has championed many initiatives: coordinating food and coat drives, flu and covid vaccines health fairs with healthcare professionals, and connecting her community to mentors, and legal aid. Maria coordinates weekly peace circles, to address the rise in violence and gang activity her community faces during the challenges of the 2-year pandemic. Maria is in the initial planning stages of creating a recreational club for seniors with crafts, board games, and dance classes. Her tireless devotion to creating opportunities for obtaining resources, and connecting families to culturally competent services, has changed the lives of many residents of Chicago's southwest side community.

# ROSARIO VILLALOBOS

8<sup>th</sup> District

Jaqueline Baez, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Luis Arroyo, Jr., Cook County Commissioner

As a mother of 4 young men, Rosa has a growing passion for giving back to the youth and her community. She has worked countless hours in the communities of Belmont Cragin, Hermosa, Avondale, and many others to be able to advocate for those who may not have a voice or may not know about what resources are available to them. Rosa currently serves as a case manager for a non-profit organization (ALSO) that helps victims of violence and at-risk youth secure resources to enhance their living situations. In her spare time, she works with the NPI Ambassadors in the 25th Police District as an ambassador who works with community leaders and DCO's to better serve those within our communities. Rosa notes that the greatest repayment for the countless hours that she invests in working with victims of violence in the community and diverting youth from the streets is seeing the community move forward to live a better life.

# ARIELLE STRAUSS

9<sup>th</sup> District

Marjorie Manchen, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Peter Silvestri, Cook County Commissioner

Arielle Strauss, at age 12, started the Good Breakfast Cereal Drive and Milk Fund as her Bat Mitzvah Service Project. The project turned into Arielle's lifelong passion. The project initially started as a monthly cereal and milk drive at River Grove School. Arielle partnered with the school's student council to hold monthly cereal drives. With the assistance of her family to help Arielle transport the cereal to the food pantry, and fund a treat for the class that brought in the most cereal each month the project took off. With Arielle's energy and compassion the food drive project became an annual fundraising campaign to fund the River Grove Food Pantry. In the last 12 years, over 6,800 boxes of cereal have been collected. Now every August the food drive letter campaign generates donations from local businesses, family, and friends which has raised over \$17,000. Arielle, now 24 years old, the catalyst to a decade-long food drive, has witnessed the generosity of her northwest Cook County suburban community. Arielle could never have imagined that the impact of a young girl's Bat Mitzvah project would continue for over a decade. Arielle is humbled and thankful for how giving her community has been to those less fortunate, and for her own family, especially her mother for supporting and encouraging her dream.

# EVA PANCZYK

10<sup>th</sup> District

Neha Gill, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Bridget Gainer, Cook County Commissioner

Eva Panczyk is committed to Catholic education. For 42 years she has served the Jefferson Park community as a teacher and as a principal of Saint Constance Elementary School. Growing up on the city's northwest side, she attended Our Lady of Victory School and The Immaculata High School. Mrs. Panczyk earned her Principal degree from Dominican University and has held that position for the last 24 years. By developing lasting relationships with Big Shoulders Fund, donors, and patrons, she has made it possible to offer significant financial scholarships to deserving families. Together with the faculty and staff, Mrs. Panczyk works with determination to make sure Saint Constance continues to offer the very best in Catholic education to the families of this community for years to come.

# KATHLEEN CAVALLONE TURNEY

11<sup>th</sup> District

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

Kathleen, "Kathy" Cavallone Turney, the founder of Pat's Pantry, was born and raised in Mt. Greenwood and began her volunteer work at Christ Hospital during her high school and college years.

After college, Kathy became a mother of four children and was active in many neighborhood and school organizations. Kathy began a career with Southwest Airlines and participated in the volunteering programs they hosted: The Southwest Culture Team, Care Team and The Disaster Team. Outside of work, Kathy attended Parkview Christian Church, where she would volunteer by teaching children's Sunday School and leading a women's prayer group.

In September 2019, a tragedy struck Kathy's family. Patrick, her 23-year-old son, suddenly passed away. She organized a local book drive, in his honor, where over 600 books were donated to two local schools and libraries.

Kathy aimed to highlight Patrick's passion for helping others in the Mt. Greenwood community by creating Pat's Pantry. Pat's Pantry operates out of Mt. Greenwood Community Church and provides food assistance to residents in need. The Pantry provides fresh food to make delicious and nutritious meals through partnerships with local businesses and the surrounding community. Kathy's passion for volunteering flourishes through Pat's Pantry and the Pantry has become a wonderful tribute to her son Patrick's memory and his love of the local community.

# **WILLIE SHAW**

13<sup>th</sup> District

Trina Janes, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Larry Suffredin, Cook County Commissioner

Justice is at the core of Willie Shaw's being. She is deeply engaged in social justice work and is committed to improving the lives of others. She is an effective advocate with boundless energy and a passion for justice.

At Mt. Zion Church, she led generations of Girl Scouts, taught Sunday school, served as Superintendent and was Scholarship Fund President. After retiring from a teaching career, she stepped up her volunteerism and community engagement. Willie chairs the Political Action, Civic Engagement, Voter Registration and Social Committees of the NAACP Evanston Branch where she is a life member. She is a facilitator with Armor Down Girls, an after-school empowerment organization, and mentor with Focus Ministries, working with abused and homeless children. She helped pass Black History bill HB 4954 and is on the State of Illinois Inclusive History Committee.

She is on the Evanston League of Women Voters Voter Participation Action Committee. She was President of Northwestern's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) Diversity and Inclusion Program and a study group coordinator. For fun, she's the president of a strictly social club, WOC - Women of Color.

Willie's efforts help others and improve the lives of so many.



# MICHELLE VALIUKENAS

14<sup>th</sup> District

Michelle Kohler, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Scott Britton, Cook County Commissioner

Michelle Valiukenas is a mother who co-founded The Colette Louise Tisdahl Foundation with her husband. The Foundation is a nonprofit whose mission to improve outcomes of pregnancy and childbirth and support families dealing with the loss of a child. Their flagship program financially assists families coping with high-risk and complicated pregnancies, NICU stays, and loss. To date, the organization has helped over 1,000 families in 42 states and given away almost \$1 million in grants. Michelle co-leads a support group for parents who have lost babies participates in Mom Congress and other programs to advocate for legislative change on maternal and infant health issues. In efforts to build awareness and advocate for change, Michelle actively shares her own story of loss and other families she has supported. She has also served on the Northfield Township's Commission on Human Services. Michelle Valiukenas is the proud mom of three; Sweet Pea, who she lost to miscarriage, her daughter Colette Louise who she lost at nine days old; and her only living child Elliott Miguel, who is 18 months old. Michelle lives in Glenview with her son Elliott, her husband Mark, and dog Nemo.

# DOMINICE LAPORTE

15<sup>th</sup> District

Rebecca Darr, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Kevin Morrison, Cook County Commissioner

Dominice Laporte has a passion for advocating for mental health – whether as a volunteer, as the Vice President of Human Resources at Northwest Community Healthcare, or as a board member of the Kenneth Young Center (KYC), a not-for-profit that provides mental health services, youth empowerment programs and care for older adults. When Dominice began as KYC board of directors' chair, she was the only female member. By the end of her two-year term as chair, she recruited four women to the board. She mentors young adults, women, minorities, and people with mental illnesses. She also serves on the Roosevelt University Workforce Advisory Board, was elected president of the local PTA, and was a Scout Leader.

During her more than 25 years in Human Resources, she's created a sense of community and belonging, encouraging employees to connect to their purpose and each other. The daughter of a nurse, Dominice's priority today is to support 4000 employees and frontline caregivers through the pandemic with empathy, providing well-being resources to protect their mental health. For Dominice, building a resilient and connected community means speaking up and making a difference for the most vulnerable. Along with her husband Ray and adult children Michael and Elizabeth, she actively works to eradicate mental health stigma and pave the way for lasting change.

# JAMIE KUCERA

16<sup>th</sup> District

Claudia E. Ayala, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Frank J. Aguilar, Cook County Commissioner

Jamie Kucera has been the Executive Director/CEO at the Pav YMCA for the last 10 years but has served the organization and community in the Y movement for over 22 years. Her mission is to provide others the opportunity to build a healthy spirit, mind and body, even though the most challenging times.

Throughout the pandemic The Y has stepped in to provide necessary resources for the community with limited financial means. The organization has partnered with Alivio Medical Center to administer nearly 10,000 COVID-19 vaccines. The YMCA has provided over 15,000 emergency food boxes to seniors to allow them to stay safely in their home and have sustainable food. Led by Jamie, the Y has created a distribution system to provide shelf stable food items and fresh produce twice a month to the community to fight food insecurity among seniors, distributing over 20,000 bags of food to those in need. The Y also opened their doors to families in need of childcare and remote learning support when schools were forced to close and has been host to over 20 blood drives in the last few years. Jamie has worked tirelessly to secure funding through grants and federal assistance programs to keep people employed and the doors open at the Y.

# **DONNA ADAM**

17<sup>th</sup> District

Nancy Mott, Cook County Women's Commissioner

Sean Morrison, Cook County Commissioner

Donna Adam is the founder of Clean Up - Give Back, a non-profit that conducts trash cleanup campaigns in the Chicagoland area and operates a national "Flexible Service Program" that allows individuals to earn service hours for work, school or court while beautifying their community. She is a resident of Des Plaines and has a passion for building community while engaging volunteers. Donna was one of 22 recipients of the 2020 Governor's Volunteer Service Award, which is the highest award in the state of Illinois for volunteerism. In 2021, Clean Up - Give Back conducted 82 small and large cleanups, (16 of these in the Cook County Forest Preserve), where 1,379 volunteers were engaged, contributing 9,527 service hours to the community, filling 4,582 trash bags, and removing 41,814 pounds of trash from the environment.

# CARLISA N. THOMAS

## At-Large District

Audra Wilson, Cook County Women's Commissioner Chairperson

Andrea Raila, Cook County Women's Commissioner

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

Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Board President

The Purple Ribbon Chef was founded by Carlisa Thomas, a mother, chef, Lupus patient, domestic violence survivor and advocate. After being diagnosed with Lupus in eighth grade, Carlisa became a champion for others who suffered with this illness. She saved money from her summer jobs to run a candy store and used a portion of her earnings to help people with Lupus.

In 2011, Carlisa started her own Lupus organization, Loop-U.s. Its mission is to bring this chronic autoimmune disease that heavily affects women many more times than men to the forefront and provide support for women and girls' needs and to stay healthy and mentally positive.

After leaving an abusive marriage, she combined her skills and passion to start her own catering company, Purple Ribbon Chef. A portion of her revenues are donated to charities.

Carlisa believes women can do anything. "From the beginning of time, we have had to carry the world on our shoulders whether it be supporting our husbands and being the backbone of the family, supporting and raising families on our own, and that incredible thing that we call childbirth. We can start and run successful businesses. We can run multimillion-dollar companies, we can preach, we can teach, we can love, we can nurture."

# COOK COUNTY COMMISSION ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

## COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHIES

### **Audra Wilson, Chairperson**

Audra Wilson is President and CEO of the Shriver Center on Poverty Law, an Illinois-based organization that litigates, shapes public policy, trains, and convenes multistate networks of public interest attorneys to make equal justice and economic opportunity a reality. Audra began her legal career as a Welfare Advocacy Staff Attorney with the Shriver Center 20 years earlier, where she focused her work on food security issues and advocacy for low-income working families. Prior to returning to Shriver, Audra was the Executive Director of the League of Women Voters Illinois and served as the Deputy Chief of Staff for United States Congresswoman Robin Kelly in the Second Congressional District of Illinois for five years. She also 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

## **Dr. Aparna Sen-Yeldandi, Commissioner 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 A. Raila, Commissioner At-Large**

Andrea A. Raila is a Senior Analyst at Raila & Associates and mother of three. She has devoted 34 years to educating the public on private and public financial management, built a 20-year partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank and the Community Investment Corporation advocating financial literacy. She founded Andrea A. Raila & Associates, a public policy and tax consulting firm, recipient of the BBB Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics. Her firm merged into the law firm of Raila & Associates owned by her sister Paula Raila, JD. The firm has a robust internship program that mentors CPS and university students. Andrea values public civil service serving as a Cook County Board of Review Tax Deputy and in the Chicago Comptroller Department's first Taxpayer Advocate Office. She was the first woman candidate for Cook County Assessor's Office in 2010 and 2018. Andrea hosts international exchange students, served on the executive board for the Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers, playing a pivotal role in their merger into the Cabrini Green Legal Aid. Since 2009 Andrea served on the Cook County Commission on Women's Issues and serves as President to the Mundelein College Alumnae & Gannon Scholar Association Board at Loyola University.

## **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 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 35,000 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.

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

Susette Lunceford has 20+ years of experience as a human resources professional. She currently serves as Director, Training and Development at a Chicago-based insurance company. 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 bachelors degree from Andrews University, a MBA from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and a 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.

## **Jaqueline Baez, 8<sup>th</sup> District**

Jacqueline Baez's family has a long history of public service and educational involvement in the 8th District. Jacqueline is a mother, a wife, and an entrepreneur in addition to being a community activist. She holds an Associate of Applied Science in Criminal Justice and an Associate of Arts in Human Science. She started her work in the non-profit sector in 1999, then transitioned to the government sector, and is now the proud owner of a small business. Her community activity includes serving as President of the Humboldt Park Advisory Council and as an Ambassador for the Chicago Police Department's Neighborhood Policing Initiative Program in the 25th District (NPI).

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

Marjorie A. Manchen is the executive administrator of the Office of the Mayor in 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 is an attorney with the law offices of Smith & Smith in Elmwood Park, 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. Manchen also serves as President of the River Grove Lions Club, a charitable organization with more than 90 members.

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

Neha is the Executive Director at Apna Ghar since August 2013. She is the co-chair of the Board of Directors at the Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence, a collaborative membership organization serving the Chicago-Cook region. Neha has extensive cross-cultural experience having worked on gender justice concerns in East Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe and Latin America. She has led consultations, trainings, advised local and international NGOs, government officials, and UN agencies on providing services to survivors of gender-based violence. Policies and procedures for survivors of gender-based violence that she helped establish were formally adopted by the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Neha is a proud recipient of awards, recognitions and media coverage. She received an Executive Scholars Certificate in Nonprofit Management from the Kellogg School of Business at Northwestern University, a Master of Science in International Public Service from DePaul University, and a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Knox College.

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

Since beginning of her career, Danielle Parisi Ruffatto has passionately represented those who otherwise would not have access to an attorney. In her current position as Managing Director of Ascend Justice's Family Law and Protective Orders Division, Danielle directs the Order of Protection program, oversees the Family Law program, and represents survivors of domestic violence Order of Protection cases. Previously Danielle served as the Director of Pro Bono and Training, managing interns and volunteers and overseeing staff training, and worked as a 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. She is a native of Evanston and now lives with her family in Skokie. She is a public affairs and communications consultant. 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. Her most important role is being the mother of two boys. She co-founded a Cub Scout Pack, coached their soccer team and is active with the PTA.

## **Michelle Kohler, 14<sup>th</sup> District**

Drawing on her nearly 25 years of expertise in marketing and business strategy, Michelle is CMO and partner of Audira Labs, a corporate leadership firm. With global marketing experience earned working at a wide range of companies including The Pampered Chef, Shure Inc., RollingStone.com, and various startups, Michelle believes in the power of a good story to inspire and connect people with their passions. This carries throughout all her work: both professional and volunteer. As the daughter of an IL public school teacher, Michelle is passionate about public education and has been honored to serve as a District 28 School Board member for the last six years and current Board Vice President. In addition to her elected position, Michelle is the Communications Director for the Democrats of Northfield Township. She has delved into issue-specific work as a part of the Northbrook Working Families Coalition, a group created to help increase the minimum wage and bring sick leave to Northbrook workers, and is a member of Moms Demand Action. Outside of work, Michelle enjoys exploring the world, listening to her Von Trapp-like family of musicians perform, and spending time with her husband and two children as they try to figure out how to make the dogs behave

## **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.

## **Claudia E. Ayala, 16<sup>th</sup> District**

Claudia Ayala is a published author, award-winning community organizer who has led many grassroots and political campaigns at both the local and national level as citizen, advocate, union leader, political advisor and strategist. She is outspoken, strong-minded, and passionate about community driven policy. Claudia is the founder of The Goaldiggers Network, a group of women self-defining their identity. She captures her experience through her hashtags campaigns and independent blog appearances. Claudia immigrated to the U.S from Mexico City and experienced the challenges young women of color faced in the footprints of environmental injustice and discrimination at an early age. She created personal resilience to overcome psychological, and social struggles of those directly impacted by issues such as job access, women's rights, choice of body, education choice, LGBTQ rights, labor disputes, and inclusion and diversity cause campaigns. In 2018 she launched her own political strategy company CEA Consulting to increase representation of female candidates in public office.

Claudia directs City Communications for the City of Berwyn, Office of the Mayor. Claudia has been instrumental in the development of the City Communications Division, delivering bilingual (English/Spanish) COVID-19 communications and the citywide alerts, and strengthening community partnerships. She is currently serves on the Board of Directors for Break the Silence Foundation, a non-profit who provides assistance and empowers survivors of domestic violence.



## **Nancy Mott, 17<sup>th</sup> District**

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 led her to complete an intensive 40-hour Domestic Violence Training. In October 2013, through the direction of the Archdiocese of Chicago Domestic Violence Outreach, she started a Domestic Violence Outreach Ministry at Sacred Heart Church in Palos Hills, IL and was Community Outreach Coordinator for 5 years. She brought awareness to the community that Domestic Violence, Human/Sex Trafficking, Child Abuse and Sexual Assault all have the same dynamics: power and control and there are resources available that we can direct anyone in need of help to the appropriate organization. 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 human trafficking in these communities.

In September 2016, Nancy passed the test for Illinois Certified Domestic Violence Professional.

January 2019, Nancy started to do community outreach events as All About Outreach. The Mission of All About Outreach is to bring Awareness through community resources, advocacy, and outreach programs for the prevention of Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, Human/Sex Trafficking, Mental Health, Sexual Assault that will empower survivors to have the confidence to regain control of their lives.

Nancy is presently on the Catholic Charities Parish Outreach Committee Southwest Region in Blue Island, IL.

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