



30

WONDERS of the 30th DISTRICT People Edition

presented by Senator Adriane Johnson



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JULIANA STRATTON
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
STATE OF ILLINOIS

Dear Friends,

As Lieutenant Governor of Illinois, it is my pleasure to extend my warmest welcome to you for the 30 Wonders of the 30th District: People Edition! I am thrilled to join Senator Adriane Johnson in honoring the remarkable community leaders whose vision, hard work, and dedication profoundly shape and enrich the district.

The 30th district is more than just a location on the map; it is a rich tapestry woven with stories, talents, and passions of its residents that make the community a vibrant and inspiring place to live.

We commend these 30 leaders who come from diverse backgrounds and fields, each bringing unique skillsets to the community. We thank them for their efforts and achievements that have made an indelible mark on the 30th district.

Respectfully,

Juliana Stratton
Lieutenant Governor State of Illinois

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Hello 30th District and visitors!

As a proud resident of the 30th District, I want to do something that would accentuate the diverse attributes of our community and Lake County. In 2023, we highlighted the wonderful landmarks that make the 30th District such a beautiful community to live, work and raise a family.

This year, we have decided to acknowledge the exceptional people who work, serve, and live in our community with the 30 Wonders of the 30th District: People Edition. In this installation, we are able to honor and recognize the wonderful leaders who have dedicated their time to creating change, motivating, guiding and advocating for the people who reside in the district and beyond.

The impact of each of the Wonders adds value to our community and it's time we acknowledge them in a way that will engage and amplify the district.

It is my hope that this project enlightens all of whom it reaches to the wonders that the 30th District has to offer.

Sincerely,

Adriane Johnson
State Senator of the 30th District

30 Wonders of the 30th District

Who They Are:

The Office of State Senator Adriane Johnson has compiled a list of community leaders – from youth to adults – in the 30th District who deserve recognition. From education to human services, public advocacy and more, each individual has made a wondrous impact in the 30th District. The 30 Wonders of the 30th District: People Edition recognizes each individual's profound work, leadership and dedication that ignites hope and inspiration throughout our community. Residents of the 30th District can be proud to live in a district so full of wonders who are leading the way for the next generation to come. We hope to encourage constituents to take a little time to help us celebrate and learn more about the leaders who live in 30th District.

The Making of the List:

This list was made by you, the residents of the 30th District. The Office of Senator Johnson publicized a brief questionnaire asking constituents to nominate youth and adult leaders who have devoted their time to create change, motivate, guide and advocate for the district. After collecting responses for three months, the individuals nominated were compiled to create a list of leaders in the 30th District. Adult and youth leaders were chosen from various categories including: education, criminal justice, environmental, faith-based, athletic, gun violence prevention, and health and human services categories. One adult and one youth leader was chosen from the public service nominations. Finally, staff members under Senator Johnson nominated their own wonder as well as a few wonderful mentions. The Office of Senator Johnson is pleased to present the *30 Wonders of the 30th District: People Edition!*



EDUCATION LEADERS



Thom Koch – Vernon Hills

- 30 years as a full-time middle school teacher, seven years as a substitute teacher at Hawthorn District 73, and 35 years coaching volleyball; nominated for a Golden Apple Award.
- Served 31 years on the Village Board of Vernon Hills and three years on the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- Over 30 years with the Kirk Players of Mundelein in community theatre.
- Advisory board member for the Southlake Campus of the College of Lake County.

Principal Maytee Diez – Waukegan

- Achieved exemplary status for LEARN John and Kathy Schreiber Charter School in 2022.
- Serves on the board of HEART of the City.
- Mentors teachers aiming for Educational Leadership licenses to strengthen leadership in high-need communities.



Tanner Siegall – Buffalo Grove

- Led and participated in various community events, including fundraisers, the 2021 Mental Health Forum, and Red Ribbon Week for substance use prevention.
- Contributed to the passage of substance use prevention laws, such as the nationally recognized NOPAIN Act.

Kendell Williams – Lincolnshire

- Actively involved in Stevenson's Catalyst Club for six years, focusing on youth substance abuse prevention.
- Worked with lawmakers to support bills on substance prevention and traveled to Springfield to lobby for laws making substances less accessible to minors.
- Participated in Stevenson's Black Student Union, creating a safe space for Black students and leading the Operation Black History Month project.
- Played on Stevenson's varsity girl's basketball team, volunteering to run youth basketball clinics.
- Member of the National Honor Society, contributing to fundraising efforts that provided over \$100,000 in aid to the community.



Aishi Agarwal – Vernon Hills

- Wrote "The Mysterious Family," a children's thriller promoting curiosity, cultural acceptance, and friendship, available in libraries and schools.
- Served on Computer Science Club as vice president of outreach, lead initiatives to promote coding and inclusivity.
- Conducted legislative research, assisted with bill analysis, and managed event booths on an Internship with Senator Adriane Johnson.
- Served as a Teacher Intern at XPerience, teaching coding through hands-on projects, enhancing students' understanding of computer science.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE LEADERS



Pastor George Moore Jr. – North Chicago

- Educational chaplain at Lake County Jail, 2008–Present.
- Founder of Former Inmates Striving Together (F.I.S.T.), 2007.
- Evangelism & Outreach Director at Christian Faith Fellowship Church, 2012–2016.
- Active member of the Eddie Washington Advisory Board, Lake County Criminal Advisory Council, and Restore Justice Board.

Chief Patrick Kreis – Vernon Hills

- Chief of Police in Vernon Hills since 2017, with 33 years of total police service.
- Vice President at Large and Legislative Co-chair of the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police (ILACP).
- President of the Northern Illinois Police Alarm System (NIPAS), aiding 100 communities with mutual aid.
- Active in developing LakeComm, a new county-wide 911 Dispatch Center.
- U.S. Army Special Forces Veteran.



“We honor and recognize the wonderful leaders who have dedicated their time to creating change, motivating, guiding and advocating for the people who reside in the district and beyond.”

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION LEADER

Trey Baker – Mundelein

- Recognized by President Obama for youth activism and storytelling leadership.
- Author of children’s books with Scholastic Publishing and Scholastic Rising Voices Mentor, developing culturally responsive education frameworks.
- Special Advisor to the Obama Foundation’s My Brother’s Keeper Alliance and MBK Chicago Action Team, focusing on mentorship for boys and young men of color.
- Youth Outreach Coordinator for the Lake County State’s Attorney’s Gun Violence Prevention Initiative.



GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION LEADERS



Tierra Lemon – Waukegan

- Worked as a violence recovery specialist at the University of Chicago, assisting victims and survivors of gun violence.
- Provided therapy in private practice to individuals affected by gun violence.
- Currently serve as the Gun Violence Prevention Initiative Director at the Lake County State’s Attorney’s Office.
- Member of the Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy’s second cohort.

GUN VIOLENCE **PREVENTION LEADERS CONT.**



Dr. Donna E King – North Chicago

- 1st Executive Director of Cease Fire Lake County, focused on gun violence prevention.
- EEO Labor Compliance Supervisor at the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).
- Led the Springfield Urban League's Road Builders Services Project,

bringing Illinois Youth Build to Lake County and advancing minority and female participation in heavy highway construction and flagger certification.

- First African American to serve on the American Shores and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) Board of Directors in its 99-year history.
- Board Chair of Vista Hospital's Board of Directors.
- Published author of "The Application of Holistic Life Coaching to MST (Military Sexual Trauma)."
- Vice President and Government Liaison on the Foss Park District Board of Commissioners for over 26 years.

Shawn Lewis – North Chicago

- Program manager of the Lake County Peacemaker gun violence prevention program.
- Former program manager for the cure violence global program.
- Over 15 years' experience managing, mentoring, outreach, investing and directing in high-risk communities.



ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS

Celeste Flores – Gurnee

- Serves as Co-Chair of Clean Power Lake County, developing key relationships with coalition partners and elected officials; attended the State of the Union as Senator Duckworth's guest for contributions to environmental justice.
- Received the Archdiocese of Chicago Hispanic Ministry Gaudium Epes Award, 2020 Energy News Network 40 under 40, and Lake County Women's Coalition Women Rising Award.
- Held multiple leadership roles with Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, including Steering Committee Member and co-chair of the grassroots committee; organized state lobby days and rallies.
- Advocated for significant state legislation including the Future Energy Jobs Act, Coal Ash Act, and Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, among others.
- Sued and settled with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, leading to updated commercial sterilizer standards for the first time in over 20 years.



"The impact of each of the Wonders adds value to our community and it's time we acknowledge them in a way that will engage and amplify the district."



ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS CONT.



Martha and Jeff Weiss – Buffalo Grove

- Co-founded the Buffalo Grove Environmental Action Team (BGEAT) 15 years ago, an active group within the Buffalo Grove Park District.
- Served as Buffalo Grove Park District Commissioners, with Martha in the role for 22 years and Jeff for 1 year.
- Martha has been a Buffalo Grove Rotarian for 25 years, serving as the club's first female president in 2005 and as the Environmental Chair for her Rotary Club.
- In 2023, Jeff led over 1,000 students from Barrington and Buffalo Grove High Schools in environmental projects involving planting native plants and seed collection.
- Founded and leads the Buffalo Creek Clean Water Partnership, co-authoring the Buffalo Creek watershed-based plan.
- Spearheaded the development of Green Infrastructure Plans for the Village of Buffalo Grove and its park district.
- Leads the Buffalo Grove Prairie Guardians, a group dedicated to preserving a virgin prairie under a ComEd right-of-way for 35 years.
- Recently started the Buffalo Grove Land and Water Advocates to improve environmental policies and educate the public on land and water management best practices.
- Facilitates the Waste and Pollution Warriors, advocating for reduced waste and pollution.
- Designed, secured funding for, and leads volunteer events at the Reiner Park Native Tree and Shrub Nursery, recently awarded Level II arboretum certification.
- Serves on the board of the Lake-to-Prairie Chapter of Wild Ones, connecting people with native plants for a healthier planet.

Eduardo Flores – Waukegan

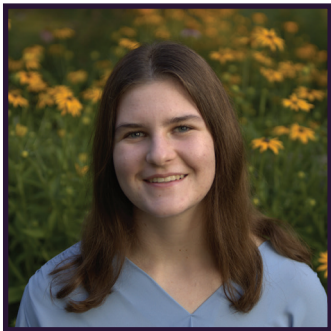
- Co-chair of Clean Power Lake County (CPLC) since 2019, leading efforts in environmental advocacy.
- Active activist, bringing attention to environmental justice issues and testifying before agencies like the USEPA, IEPA, and CDC on topics including coal ash ponds and ethylene oxide exposure.
- Former leader of CPLC's internship program, mentoring interns on environmental justice and guiding them through impactful final projects.
- Conducts CPLC's toxic tours, educating the public about contaminated sites in Lake County and their health impacts.
- Received the Brushwood Center's Youth Environmental Leadership Award in 2021, nominated by CPLC.
- Youth Education Coordinator at the Brushwood Center, managing art and nature programs, and overseeing the distribution of 1,500 Nature Explorer Backpacks this summer.



Emma Wright – Vernon Hills

- Oversaw the cartridge-recycling program for the Grayslake Library community for the last 7 years.
- Led and participated in Adopt-A-Highway for 9 years.
- Assisted with the design, creation, and installation of three Little Lending Libraries on school grounds to encourage recycling of books and educational materials.
- Petitioned to encourage Girl Scouts of USA to stop packaging their badges/insignia in single use plastic.

ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS CONT.



Eliana Bernat – Vernon Hills

- Served as Youth Leadership Advisory Committee for Senator Adriane Johnson organizing a beach cleanup event in Foss Park.
- Served as Clean Power Lake County Intern working on environmental justice initiatives, testified before the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency, and lobbied federal representatives.

- Serves with Helios Energy Lead contributing to sustainability projects on campus, including energy efficiency upgrades and green initiatives.
- Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Peer Mentor supporting academic and career development for students in the WISE Living Learning Community.
- Served as Coming Clean Green Chemistry Intern assisting with policy advocacy, researched chemical disasters, and supported environmental justice efforts.
- Undergraduate Researcher at UW-Madison developing methods for perovskites to enhance next-generation solar cells.

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FAITH-BASED LEADERS

Kim Gerena – Wadsworth



- Founder of Esperanza Music and Arts Academy, teaching music, film, graphics, and performing arts to help empower and build confidence in children.
- Co-founder of the Fellowship Center of Lake County, providing educational programs to empower families, including women, men, youth, and children.
- Co-Founder and Co-Pastor of Christian Fellowship Flock of Lake County, offering spiritual care and support to individuals, families, and organizations for over 16 years.



Pastor Deric Capels – Waukegan

- 30 years of leadership in ministry at Jesus Name Apostolic Church, currently serving as Associate Pastor with a focus on community outreach.
- Co-founder and program manager at Family First Support Center, delivering comprehensive support services to congregants and the community.
- Founded the Lake County Chapter of Live Free Illinois, a faith-based organization advocating for public safety and criminal justice reform, and providing community-organizing training.
- Managed the Community Healing Resource Center, overseeing the launch and initial service implementation.
- Serve as a statewide organizer for Live Free Illinois, building a network of multi-faith congregations dedicated to justice and community issues.

FAITH-BASED LEADERS CONT.



Jefferies Madrigal – Waukegan

- Youth leader at Rebaño Compañerismo Cristiano de Lake County.
- Volunteer for the Waukegan Easter Egg Hunt.
- Organize youth trips and events for the community and church.
- Volunteer at the Back to School event in Waukegan.
- Teach computer and media skills at Esperanza Academy.

Maritza Rodriguez – Waukegan

- Youth leader at Rebaño Compañerismo Cristiano de Lake County.
- Volunteer at Back to School events in Gurnee and Waukegan.
- Volunteer at the Waukegan Easter Egg Hunt.
- Worship Dance leader for young girls at church.
- Organize events and trips for youth at the church.



ATHLETIC LEADERS

Rena Lee – Waukegan

- Recognized as a Project Play Champion by the Aspen Institute for enhancing opportunities for underrepresented youth in sports and play.
- Contributed to creating interactive exhibits for the Waukegan Public Library's Early Learning Center, which won the National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services in 2013.
- Increased youth sports programming by 120% at Heart of the City, expanding access in underserved areas of Lake County.
- Received awards from the Lake County Chamber of Commerce and Hispanic Chamber of Lake County for outstanding community service in 2024.
- Volunteered and worked with various family-centered nonprofits in Lake County over the past 20 years, focusing on literacy, art, health, education, youth development, and sports.



Dave Doerhoefer – Vernon Hills



- Active member of various Vernon Hills High School parent committees.
- Served as room parent for six years at Hawthorn Elementary School.
- Athletic coach for Park District's basketball, baseball, and softball programs.
- Coaches GLSA soccer program.
- Currently coaching Vernon Hills High School softball.
- In 20th year coaching in the Stingers program, with experience coaching ages 12U-18U.
- Varsity coach at Vernon Hills High School for 10 years.
- Member of the National Fast pitch Coaches Association for 15 years and Stingers travel fast pitch program.
- Strong advocate for advancing girls' sports in the Vernon Hills community



ATHLETIC LEADERS CONT.



Mike Jesse – Waukegan

- Volunteered at the Boys & Girls Club of Lake County and Lake Bluff Park District to teach golf to youth, introducing many to the sport for the first time.
- Collaborated with Waukegan Park District staff to integrate golf lessons into the Before & After School Experience (B.A.S.E.) program.
- Organized an open house at Bonnie Brook Golf Course, offering facility tours, putting games, and full swing instruction.
- Initiated Youth Golf Clinics at Waukegan Park District, achieving a 960% increase in participation with 96 children aged 5 to 12.
- Working with John Lewis Middle School to incorporate golf lessons into their physical education curriculum.
- Bonnie Brook Golf Course hosted the IJGA event, attracting nearly 100 junior golfers from across Illinois.



Rishi Gupta – Vernon Hills

- Founded and lead the Athletics committee of Catalyst, a 150-member substance abuse prevention club at Stevenson High School.
- Lead enrichment programs for elementary through high school students at Beacon Place, serving underprivileged youth in Waukegan.
- Advocate for mental health awareness as a member of the Illinois Youth Advisory Board, addressing issues such as depression and eating disorders.
- Active member of Stevenson High School's Varsity Hockey team.
- Mentored 25 freshmen at Stevenson High School through the Freshmen Mentor Program.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES LEADERS

Cristina Cortesi – Lincolnshire

- Substance use prevention specialist at Adlai E. Stevenson High School.
- Founder and Sponsor of the Catalyst Club at Adlai E. Stevenson High School.
- Founding member and current Executive Board member of the Stand Strong Coalition, serving local communities.



Wally Frasier – Mundelein

- 38 years as a police officer, 29 years in Mundelein with 6 years as chief.
- Board Commissioner for the Mundelein Park and Recreation District for 31 years and hold significant roles in the Illinois Park and Recreation Association, including Master Board Member and co-chair of the Joint Legislative Committee.
- Long-time member of the Mundelein American Legion Post 867, serving as Post Commander since 2005, and the President of the Mundelein Police Pension Board since 2003.



HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES LEADERS CONT.



Varnika Maram – Vernon Hills

- Directed special events in Catalyst (Drug Prevention Club) including Streetfest, Jeopardy, Catalympics, and Sticker Shock to educate students through interactive learning.
- Conducted a Narcan training session with over 200 students, certified in Narcan use.
- Attended Mid-Year CADCA training, integrating drug prevention efforts into sports activities to promote healthier student choices.
- Collaborated with the Lake County Health Department and MRC on emergency preparedness, organized ‘Stop the Bleed’ events, and launched a podcast, ‘Empowered,’ presenting at the MRC National Summit.
- Secured grant funding for a Public Health Campaign on Typhoid Fever in Bauchi, Nigeria, and developed a campaign for child immunization, including educational materials and lesson plans.

Jalen Piggs – Waukegan

- Worked with Family First Center of Lake County, providing emergency services for critical needs such as housing and utility assistance.
- Fostered community connections while planning major events like the Unity in the Community series.
- Serve as a children’s program assistant, ensuring engaging activities for youth.
- Organize the clothing closet to provide essential resources for families and manage reception duties to welcome visitors.



PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERS

Jennyfer Cordova – Waukegan

- Volunteered at local shelters, providing support and resources to individuals in need.
- Coordinated community clean-up events, enhancing local environments and fostering community pride.
- Organized and led workshops on financial literacy for underserved populations, promoting financial education and independence.
- Participated in fundraising campaigns for various local charities, helping to raise significant funds for community projects.
- Mentored youth in leadership and activism, helping them develop skills and engage in community service.
- Assisted in organizing cultural festivals and family events, aiming to strengthen community bonds and celebrate diversity.



Kayshap (Kash) Rajesh – Buffalo Grove

- Directed “Policy & Legislation” committee to educate middle school students in Illinois about the harms of substance use through the Snowflake program.
- Organized statewide advocacy lobby days with the Illinois Prevention Network, contributing to legislation regulating the placement of Alcopops and co-branded alcoholic beverages in retail spaces.
- Implemented compliance checks for nicotine vapes across Buffalo Grove, Vernon Hills, and Lincolnshire.
- Amended social host ordinances in Buffalo Grove, Vernon Hills, and Lincolnshire to address substance use at house parties beyond alcohol.
- Participate in decision-making on the 708 board, allocating \$1.5 million in funding for mental health and substance use prevention services.
- Provided insights representing the mental health needs of 80,000 constituents and helped craft a “Community Needs Assessment” distributed to 2,000+ homes in Vernon Township.
- Organized the township’s inaugural youth mental health forum, bringing together 30+ youth and lawmakers.



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WONDERS of the 30th DISTRICT: PEOPLE EDITION

WONDERFUL MENTIONS



Sarah Grover



Sharon D. Epps



Officer Gary Grayer



Pastor Eugene
Robeson



Note of Thanks

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