

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL AWARDS  
FOR  
**Distinguished Service  
to Public Education**  
in Montgomery County



*Thursday, May 3, 2018*  
*Reception 5:30 p.m.*  
*Ceremony 6:00 p.m.*  
*Carver Educational Services Center Auditorium*



## PROGRAM

### *Reception & Entertainment*

Richard Montgomery High School Jazz Combo

### *Welcome & Acknowledgments*

Mrs. Shebra L. Evans

Vice President, Board of Education

### *Presentation of Awards*

Members of the Board of Education

### *Closing Remarks*

Mrs. Shebra L. Evans

Vice President, Board of Education

### *Group Photograph of Award Recipients*

## PURPOSE

The Montgomery County Board of Education established the Awards for Distinguished Service to Public Education in 1997 to recognize and show appreciation to individuals, groups, and organizations that have made exemplary contributions to public education in Montgomery County. This evening is a celebration of all the award recipients who work tirelessly on behalf of public education and the children of Montgomery County.



## 2018 HONOREES

### **Community Individual**

Nancy Floreen

James Garrant

Daniel Riddle

### **Community Group**

Milagro Flores—Gaithersburg Mothers' Club

### **MCPS Staff**

Kristen Eccleston

Sulma Flores

Genevieve Floyd

Matthew Johnson

Kevin Shindel

Barbara Woodward

### **School Service Volunteer**

Mary Gross

Karen Ward

### **Individual Pioneer**

Michael A. Durso

Odessa Shannon

## *Nancy Floreen*

During the past three years, Councilmember Nancy Floreen has been at the heart of unprecedented efforts to support public education in Montgomery County. She has worked tirelessly to permanently enhance the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Operating Budget and secure greater investment in the physical infrastructure of MCPS through a change in a key revenue source for the school system, the Recordation Tax. In addition, she worked tirelessly to overhaul the Subdivision Staging Policy to make sure MCPS has funding to build new schools when population growth occurs in the county, as well as implement a moratorium on community expansion if school population exceeds certain percentages. Any one of these much-needed improvements would have been greatly appreciated and considered a major victory for our community. Councilmember Floreen helped make them all happen.

The Education First Budget of 2016 will forever be remembered as a watershed moment in both this county and in the annals of advocacy. It was the nexus of several different issues that would ordinarily be dealt with individually over several years: class sizes, school-capacity issues, community growth, HVAC needs, and many other challenges. Councilmember Floreen knew the importance of getting the proper funding in place to make sure MCPS remained among the top tier of school systems nationwide. Accomplishing this feat took courage and Councilmember Floreen has that in abundance. In addition to the 600 teachers that were hired as part of the 2016 budget, MCPS also was able to add numerous pupil personnel workers, counselors, psychologists, and paraeducators to schools to provide much-needed support to students.

Councilmember Floreen's recent contributions have helped make possible permanent systemwide game changers that will have a lasting, positive effect on each and every student, teacher, staff member, administrator, parent, family member, and the entire community. Her leadership in the area of educational funding has forever improved our school system. She is seen by many as one of the more fiscally conservative members of the County Council and certainly one of the most no-nonsense people around. Yet, in 2016, during her year as Council president, she took on issues no one else would dare touch, simply because it was the right thing to do for the community. As a public servant for more than three decades, she has made it her mission to make Montgomery County a great place to live, work, play, raise a family, and obtain a great public education.

Councilmember Floreen is to be commended for her hard work and dedication to our schools, students, and community. She is to be applauded for her steadfast commitment to public education.

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## *James Garrant*

Mr. James Garrant is the epitome of an active and involved community individual. Although Mr. Garrant's passion for ensuring that all students have access to real-world opportunities is incalculable, he has proven strategies for reaching the traditionally underrepresented student population of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Mr. Garrant goes above and beyond the call of duty to obtain internships for students; to secure funding to support student activities, support robotics programs in schools, and obtain the necessary after-school instructional materials for numerous projects; and to serve as a volunteer for various after-school robotics and engineering programs. As an active participant on the MCPS Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology Program Advisory Committee (PAC), Mr. Garrant has assisted in analyzing program data, developing themes, and presenting organized information to other program advisory groups as well as work alongside the Science, Technology, and Engineering team to develop Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timely action plans/goals. Mr. Garrant is vested in the MCPS technology and engineering program, and the MCPS Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs truly appreciates his perspective regarding the expansion of innovative engineering and robotics programs and the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pipeline to traditionally underrepresented and underserved student populations.

It is important to note that Mr. Garrant's efforts to increase opportunities for students do not stop at the school house door. For example, Mr. Garrant has established National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) chapters around the district, including an all-girls NSBE Jr. chapter. He has arranged for the science team to meet with the presidents of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Morgan State University, and Howard University to establish postsecondary articulation and partnerships at local Historically Black Colleges and Universities. This year, Mr. Garrant acquired a \$4,000 grant that allowed 150 students to attend a STEM summit on the campus of Morgan State University. Students had the opportunity to dialogue with Leland Melvin, an African American astronaut and a football player in the National Football League, as well as one of the "Hidden Figures" African American female aerospace engineers who is currently working on "sonic boom" projects for NASA.

Mr. Garrant's contributions to MCPS, the science team, various schools, after-school programs, and the PAC are incalculable. Mr. Garrant is committed to making a difference in the lives of children and deserves to be recognized for his dedication to students and his tremendous support of public education.

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## *Daniel Riddle*

Officer Daniel Riddle has been employed by the Montgomery County Police Department (Police Department) since 1990 and has been a school resource officer (SRO) for the past 12 years in the Damascus High School Cluster of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). In Montgomery County, the SRO is a sworn uniformed police officer who serves as a liaison between the Police Department and the school system. Officer Riddle's current assignment as an SRO includes a total student population of nearly 4,000 students in the following schools: Damascus High School, John T. Baker Middle School, Hallie Wells Middle School, Clearspring Elementary School, Lois P. Rockwell Elementary School, and Damascus Elementary School.

The daily duties of an SRO include meeting with parents, teachers, school administrators, and students to discuss issues of concern within the school community; coordinating crime prevention, conflict resolution, safety, gang, and drug and alcohol awareness programs; and attending community meetings to exchange and discuss crime-trend information, problem areas, cultural conflict, and truancy intervention. Officer Riddle participates in these activities, and more, on a daily basis. He is a distinct presence within the community, and is informally referred to as "the Mayor of Damascus High School."

Officer Riddle not only knows everyone at his school, he is trusted by the administration to assist with conflict resolution and mediation. Students know they always can come to Officer Riddle for assistance or advice. As Officer Riddle walks through the hallways of the school, the students greet him warmly with a high-five or a fist-bump. It takes a special kind of police officer to be successful in the SRO setting. First and foremost, that officer must be tactically sound and a master of his or her profession, have a mature demeanor, and be able to handle the politics associated with being part of MCPS and the Police Department. Also, these officers must have both empathy and patience as they work with staff members, parents, and students. Officer Riddle has these qualities. His plain-speaking, old-fashioned style of policing is appreciated by the community in which he serves. Furthermore, Officer Riddle's military background enables him to maintain a tactical mindset, working hard to keep the students under his care safe and secure.

Officer Riddle has demonstrated distinguished service to public education, not only on duty, but off duty as well. Officer Riddle serves in his capacity as a law enforcement officer at local sporting events, parades, community days, meetings, and interventions. He has served as an athletic coach in the community, mentoring hundreds of students involved in football, soccer, basketball, and lacrosse.

Officer Riddle is a good man who has helped build a great learning environment inside Damascus High School and is respected by his peers in law enforcement, staff, parents, and most important, students. Officer Riddle is to be commended for his hard work and dedication to our schools, students, and community. He is to be applauded for his dedication to public education in Montgomery County.

### *Milagro Flores—Gaithersburg Mothers' Club*

In 2012, Mrs. Milagro Flores founded the Gaithersburg Mothers' Club (Mothers' Club) as a vehicle to provide information, resources, assistance, and training to immigrant women with children in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Since that time, she has garnered well-deserved respect for her extraordinary ability to organize and support immigrant women and help them and their families thrive in the school system. She goes above and beyond to ensure advocacy for mothers so that they are empowered to support their children as they obtain an education, as well as to access community services for their families.

Mrs. Flores and her Mothers' Club have been involved with MCPS in many ways; however, they have been incredible assets, in particular, to the Gaithersburg community and Gaithersburg Elementary School. For example, Mrs. Flores realized that a critical barrier to parents becoming involved with their children's education was their lack of ability to speak English, so she organized both a weekly English Speakers of Other Languages class and, through the Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative, an English conversation class. Discussion topics have included success in school, homework, the importance of reading with children, and effective participation in parent-teacher conferences. Both classes continue to be well attended. In addition, she constantly coordinates resources for families involved with Linkages to Learning, a partnership program that is dedicated to improving the well-being of children and their families through a collaborative delivery of school-based services that address the social, economic, health, and academic success of children.

Among the many services offered by the Mothers' Club, Mrs. Flores facilitates parenting classes on a variety of topics. With her calm, loving personality, she has made many women feel more confident and, has provided a community of friendship for women so they do not feel alone. Those who know "Mily," as she is affectionately called, think she is the epitome of goodness and kindness, strength and gentleness, fortitude and grace. She has used her confidence and innate leadership skills to inspire and empower parents in the Gaithersburg community to help their children succeed in school.

Mrs. Flores continually looks for opportunities to help women realize their potential and improve their lives and their families' lives. She has recruited instructors and organized classes on nutrition education, self-esteem and motivation, and CPR training. She organizes and provides transportation and childcare services to enable mothers of preschool-age children to attend these programs. Mrs. Flores created and maintains a Facebook page to provide current information related to the school system and community events.

Mrs. Flores and the Gaithersburg Mothers' Club are to be commended for all of the wonderful support they have provided to students, parents, and public education in Montgomery County.

## *Kristen Eccleston*

For the past three years, Mrs. Kristen Eccleston has worked to develop a program that addresses the needs of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) who have a history of anxiety, school avoidance, depression, suicide ideation, self-harm, and various other mental health disorders. This self-contained program, Enhanced Emotional Disabilities Program (ED Program), at Col. Zadok Magruder High School (Magruder) reached its capacity of 40 students quickly. The ED Program has created a safe environment where students are able to access mental health services from a full-time social worker, participate in project-based learning experiences once a week at the Kingsley Environmental Center, and gain work experience through a grant that was provided for students to develop and run their own small business within the school.

The specific impact of service provided by Mrs. Eccleston to students through her work with the ED Program is immeasurable. Mrs. Eccleston has developed the ED Program at Magruder to create a safe space for students who are unable to come to school or be successful in school, due to severe mental illness. The ED Program has given students, who were once disconnected from their home school and peers, an environment that allows them to connect with peers who are facing the same social/emotional and academic challenges. Students who once were afraid to walk into a comprehensive building are seeing academic success and connecting with peers, because of the support that is provided to them in returning to a school environment. Thanks to the ED Program, students who were once school avoiders are now regularly attending school and earning credit toward their high school diploma.

By developing and implementing this unique program, Mrs. Eccleston is able to support the school system by providing a learning environment that can address the needs of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) students who were once unable to access the level of support required for their success prior to coming to Magruder. The ED Program also provides a public setting for students who once were placed in private programs.

This school year, Mrs. Eccleston will have her first graduating class with students and parents who originally thought that graduation may not be possible. She has enabled students to gain social and life skills that they would have not been able to gain in the mainstream setting or while out of school. Furthermore, the ED Program helps students to manage their mental health needs and to receive the supports they require to access coping strategies and social skills that will allow them to graduate with a high school diploma and become an integral part of the Montgomery County community.

Mrs. Eccleston should be celebrated for creating a wonderful program that meets the needs of a special population of students and ensuring that they have the supports and services to be successful. She is to be commended for her commitment to all students and to public education.

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## *Sulma Flores*

Mrs. Sulma Flores is a vital assistant to the administrative staff of Lucy V. Barnsley Elementary School (Barnsley) in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). She goes above and beyond her assignment as a paraeducator to support the students and parents of the Barnsley community. Mrs. Flores eagerly fills in when needed and goes the extra mile with a positive attitude. She knows most, if not all, the students at Barnsley, and everyone knows her. She is very helpful and supports student learning. For example, she fields phone calls, facilitates the enrollment process, resolves bus issues, provides interpretation services during parent-teacher conferences, and most important, helps English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students with navigating the school system and with any other needs they may have. Mrs. Flores also taught a before-school Spanish program for students. She heads the “Best Gifts” program at Barnsley, to make sure all students’ needs are met, whether it is providing students with coats in the winter, school supplies to use during classes, or books for reading at home. Mrs. Flores serves on the school’s outreach committee, where she organizes and attends a homework club, picnics, and events for the students who reside at the Crystal Springs apartment complex. Barnsley families feel comfortable communicating with Mrs. Flores and greatly depend on her.

Although Mrs. Flores is an employee of MCPS, she also is invested as a parent in the high quality of education for her family, neighbors, and friends. As a member of the Barnsley community, she attends many parent and staff events and meetings that focus on improving the MCPS curriculum and the school system as a whole, such as matters relating to the budget, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), safety, calendar, professional advancement, and employment at MCPS.

As a vocal and passionate member of the Service Employees International Union Local 500, not only does Mrs. Flores understand her community’s need for assistance from a local perspective, but she also understands the big picture of becoming involved and being a zealous advocate. Mrs. Flores sees the big picture that she is not fighting for just herself, but she is fighting also for the benefit of her students, the parents of her students, her neighbors, and local merchants. She participates in numerous meetings, marches, and rallies to support and advocate for the causes in which she believes, including public education.

Mrs. Flores is a truly exceptional employee who is dedicated wholeheartedly to her work and always gives more than 100 percent to any endeavor in which she engages. She is caring, giving, and dependable. Mrs. Flores should be recognized for the wonderful service she had provided to the Barnsley and MCPS communities and for her support of public education.

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## *Genevieve Floyd*

For more than 17 years, Dr. Genevieve Floyd has served the students, staff, and various stakeholders of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) with passion and excellence. Dr. Floyd began her time in MCPS as a classroom teacher, using her knowledge of mathematics and her skills to educate and build the confidence of students. Subsequently, she designed and implemented a Human Service Professions Academy at Montgomery Blair High School. Dr. Floyd also dedicated her time to the social and cultural development of students by serving as the sponsor for a variety of extracurricular organizations, including the African American Club; Step Team; and the Intelligent, Vivacious, Outstanding, Respectful, Young (IVORY) Ladies club, to name just a few.

Dr. Floyd's service to the community continued as she moved to central office. During her first year as an administrator, she volunteered to work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Parents' Council and established a high school Hispanic Parent Council. She also worked with the NAACP as the MCPS Academic, Cultural, Technological, and Scientific Olympics (ACT-SO) coordinator. During her personal time, Dr. Floyd spoke with parents involved in church groups, the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Association (MCCPTA), and other community-based organizations, in an effort to empower students and parents within Montgomery County. She is a creative visionary, committed to education and building programmatic opportunities that enable students' secondary and postsecondary success. Dr. Floyd's desire to build opportunities for students allowed her to successfully manage and oversee career and postsecondary opportunities for students across the district, a role she has served in for 10 years.

Dr. Floyd has demonstrated a heart to serve not only MCPS students and parents, but the staff as well. She serves on the executive board of the Montgomery County Alliance of Black School Educators (MCABSE), is the acting vice president of the Montgomery County Association of Administrators and Principals (MCAAP) Central Services Administrators' Chapter, and a member of the MCAAP Board of Directors. In these capacities, she has served on several committees, led the organization of professional development opportunities, and represented central services staff in contract negotiations.

Through Dr. Floyd's visionary perspective, creativity, leadership skills, desire to educate all students, and heart to help those economically disadvantaged, she has led and/or enabled the awarding of more than \$50,000 in scholarships. She personally organized the donation of toiletries for homeless women and children, as well as school supplies to support more than 200 needy students. Also, she led the development of a process to award professional development funds to teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels.

Dr. Floyd is a dedicated employee who is applauded for her many years of service to MCPS, commitment to all students, and her unwavering continued support of public education.

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## *Matthew Johnson*

Mr. Matthew Johnson is passionately dedicated to the students of Watkins Mill High School (Watkins Mill) and also to the families and community members of the school and the county. He has brought together staff, students, parents, police officers, local businesses, and even outside agencies to create events, initiatives, and opportunities that benefit everyone. He always is looking for ways to improve Watkins Mill and connect with the community; and he approaches each project with a rare blend of enthusiasm, persistence, compassion, and humor. Mr. Johnson has become a recognized leader and role model for students, and exemplifies the spirit of what teaching and learning are all about. He ignites an excitement in his students and the staff around him that is infectious and undeniable. He makes great things happen.

In addition to being an inspiring science and biology teacher to all his students, Mr. Johnson's positive and seemingly endless energy is infectious and was a motivating force behind an organized effort to build enthusiasm and increase school and community pride. Mr. Johnson founded the Orange Nation campaign. He created this campaign because he saw the urgent need to galvanize the students and create an energetic and positive school spirit. Since the inception of the Orange Nation campaign, he has taken it to unbelievable heights. Mr. Johnson created and developed the first annual Rock the Block, an end-of-year block party to celebrate the Watkins Mill Cluster, where more than 100 students volunteered and various community businesses participated. There were free t-shirts, popcorn, cotton candy, a rock wall to climb, and even a dunk tank. It was a rousing success, and all organized by Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson is proud of the Watkins Mill community and wants all students to have the same pride. He demonstrates this through organizing uplifting and high-energy pep rallies and spirit contests and consistently showing up at Watkins Mill events ready to cheer and make everyone else want to cheer. Students, staff, and families have benefited from Mr. Johnson's energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to Watkins Mill. He is engaging families, building relationships throughout the community, and making students proud of the Watkins Mill Cluster.

Mr. Johnson should be recognized for his support of public education and the service he has provided to the students, staff, and community.

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## *Kevin Shindel*

Mr. Kevin Shindel is an outstanding social studies teacher at Montgomery Blair High School (Blair) and, since 2015, the amazing sponsor of OneBlair, a student organization dedicated to making Blair a more connected and inclusive school. With more than 200 members, OneBlair promotes critical thinking, honest and courageous conversations on race and equity, safe and organized civic activism, and student empowerment. Under Mr. Shindel's leadership, OneBlair has given Blair students from diverse backgrounds a platform to discuss their commonalities and differences; has allowed students from various school programs and communities to get together, who would not otherwise have such an opportunity; and has provided a platform for a coordinated focus on inclusiveness.

Mr. Shindel has worked to make OneBlair a multifaceted organization that supports Blair's students. For example, OneBlair hosts a technology drive so that electronics (such as printers and desktop computers) are provided to students in need. OneBlair works to assist English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students to better meet their needs and ensure that they are included in both school and policymaking activities. OneBlair promotes a Friends Network, in which a number of diverse students are placed in a cohort during freshman year to support one another during their high school experience. They are encouraged to support each other socially and academically and bring their families together to get better acquainted during mealtimes, sports events, and other activities.

Under Mr. Shindel's direction, OneBlair also works toward improving the overall culture and climate of Blair and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). OneBlair provides students with valuable academic and job skills that show leadership, self-direction, and problem solving, which are required skills for college and employment. For example, Wednesday lunch dialogues help students to plan their topics, compile resources, and facilitate discussions, which are held twice a month after school in the media center. OneBlair hosts interracial dialogues and plans activities, discussions, and guest speakers for the week-long Blair interracial dialogue held during the school year. OneBlair students become trained facilitators and help plan Study Circles dialogues that bring different classes together to discuss issues of race and racial inequality. OneBlair held implicit bias training for staff and students, with the goal of helping participants identify unconscious biases and reducing the negative effects those biases have on individuals' beliefs and behaviors.

Thanks to Mr. Shindel's leadership, OneBlair is an amazing student organization that has established successful programs and activities focusing on our diverse, changing society in MCPS and schools across the nation. Mr. Shindel is a great educator and is deserving of being honored for his dedication to public education, advocacy for promoting better school climates, and commitment to all students.

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## *Barbara Woodward*

Dr. Barbara Woodward began her teaching career in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) more than 24 years ago as a middle and high school teacher. She also served as an administrator in multiple capacities at Watkins Mill High School, Baker Middle School, and Somerset Elementary School. She has worked in the Office of the Chief Technology Officer as an instructional specialist and at Tilden Middle School as a staff development teacher. She has served as an assistant principal and principal intern at Robert Frost Middle School.

Dr. Woodward has demonstrated effectively her ability to lead the instructional program and to create a welcoming and safe learning environment, focused on high expectations. She espouses her vision for excellence in teaching, learning, and commitment to the adolescent learner.

Dr. Woodward believes in serving the community, creating a sense of school pride, and developing traditions that are clearly evident from the first day of school when the building opens. She is an innovative thinker who was excited to begin the journey of creating the best conditions for students and staff to thrive at the new Hallie Wells Middle School (Hallie Wells) when it opened in August 2016.

As the first principal of Hallie Wells, she started to select staff a year before the school opened, and choose wonderful, talented staff members. Dr. Woodward is very professional and knowledgeable, and she makes all the students and parents feel welcome at this new middle school. As a result, Hallie Wells is like a community center for students and parents.

Everyone can see her love for students, the school, and her job in the way she talks about her students. Following the recent shooting at a school in Florida, Dr. Woodward sent an e-mail of encouragement to all the parents at Hallie Wells, to help make them feel better about sending their children to school. She explained what they are doing at the school to ensure the safety of their students and shared measures that parents could take to make their children feel safe at school. During STEM night at Hallie Wells, she was present and talking to students and parents, making everyone feel welcome and part of the school community.

Dr. Woodward is an incredible administrator and is deserving of being honored for her dedication to public education.

# SCHOOL SERVICE VOLUNTEER ---

## *Mary Gross*

Ms. Mary Gross is the epitome of a dedicated volunteer, committed to supporting students whenever possible. All three of Ms. Gross' children attended Brooke Grove Elementary School (Brooke Grove), and she was a very active volunteer during all the years of her children's schooling. When her youngest child was promoted to middle school, Ms. Gross' service at Brooke Grove did not end. Although her children no longer attend the school, Ms. Gross has continued to volunteer every week at Brooke Grove, where she has provided an enormous amount of help and support for the staff and students. Ms. Gross continues to give much of her time in whatever capacity she is needed at the school. She is dedicated to service and is efficient, highly organized, friendly, reliable, highly capable, and dependable week after week. Helping others is at the core of her being and that is why she is motivated to give so freely of her time to benefit others.

Now that her children are in middle school, high school, and college, Ms. Gross continues to volunteer at Brooke Grove one day a week, every week. She copies documents, laminates, cuts things out, organizes materials, files documents, creates documents, compiles data, prepares materials for staff professional development, creates and produces resources for students, makes manipulatives for teachers to use with their students, serves as a chaperone for in-school events, and completes any task or serves in any role that the school administration asks of her.

Ms. Gross's willingness to help out each and every week has provided invaluable service to the staff and students of Brooke Grove. Through her service, she has helped to provide pertinent, meaningful, and useful resources to Brooke Grove's teachers. These resources have helped teachers to deliver more effective instruction to their students. Her manipulatives and classroom resources have helped teachers to deliver more effective instruction and have made a positive impact on students' learning.

By continuing to serve the Brooke Grove community, Ms. Gross has had a significant impact on special school events, such as Brooke Grove Around the World, Curriculum Night, Go for the Gold Reading Incentive Program, Mobile Science Lab, and numerous other schoolwide events.

Ms. Gross is a perfect role model for students, staff, and the community in leading by example to help others selflessly. She is being celebrated for her invaluable service and longstanding dedication to volunteering at Brooke Grove, and her support of public education.

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## *Karen Ward*

Mrs. Karen Ward, a Clarksburg High School (Clarksburg) parent, has worked tirelessly to build a positive school culture and climate. During the last few years, Mrs. Ward has supported the Clarksburg community by donating her time, active participation, and financial resources. Mrs. Ward serves as the Clarksburg High School Athletic Booster president (Booster Club) and is a member of the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). By committing herself to improving the quality of education supports for extracurricular activities and the fine arts, as well as the culture and climate of the school, including economically disadvantaged students, Ms. Ward has had a positive impact on Clarksburg in numerous ways.

Mrs. Ward gives countless hours to the Clarksburg community every week, all for the benefit of the students and staff. She is respected and highly organized and is always willing to go the extra mile for anyone seeking her assistance... and she does so with a smile. Mrs. Ward is an exemplar of supporting and volunteering at the school as shown by her efforts to ensure school pride, support athletics, and work to assist staff in the classroom. For example, Mrs. Ward has assisted on numerous occasions in serving meals to students and staff. At the Allied Sports Banquet, she displayed the giving spirit by coordinating donations of student t-shirts. Through her efforts as the Booster Club president and organizing fundraising activities to support the athletes at Clarksburg, funds have been provided for new equipment, new uniforms, improved fields, and beautification of the school campus. Furthermore, Mrs. Ward has been one of the driving forces behind getting the Booster Club presidents from other Montgomery County Public Schools high schools together to share ideas regarding how to run a successful program. Her guidance and expertise have helped other schools grow their programs, which ultimately benefit students throughout Montgomery County.

Here is one particular example of how Mrs. Ward identifies a need and works to ensure that the need is met. In June 2016, three Clarksburg students were killed in a car accident on the eve of graduation. All three young men were involved and well-known members of the community, so the entire community was at a loss. Mrs. Ward channeled her grief into leading by reaching out to all of the victims' families to offer condolences and to assess needs. She rallied others to provide support through organizing vigils, contacting churches, creating programs, and providing food and refreshments. She designed shirts with the hashtag #ClarksburgStrong and ensured that all students could afford to get one. Mrs. Ward did all of this without ever overstepping her boundaries and without any desire for accolades or praise. Mrs. Ward united the community in its darkest days.

Mrs. Ward's selfless dedication and passion for volunteer service have made her an invaluable member of the Clarksburg community. She is to be commended for her commitment to supporting public education.

# INDIVIDUAL PIONEER

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## *Michael A. Durso*

Mr. Michael A. Durso has served more than 44 years in public education. He began his career as a social studies teacher, and subsequently served as a principal in the school systems of Arlington, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., before beginning his tenure in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Mr. Durso served the students of Montgomery County for 22 years as principal of Springbrook High School (1996–2009) and as an elected member of the Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) (2009–present).

As a member of the Board, Mr. Durso has provided distinguished service to MCPS since the inception of his service in 2009. He has been elected and served as an officer for four of the nine years that he has been a member of the Board. He served as vice president for one year prior to his service as president. Mr. Durso is very organized, ensuring Board business is handled as expeditiously as possible. He has been instrumental in improving opportunities for increased communication with and among Board members by including the Board vice president and one Board member in rotating items meetings with the superintendent of schools. Mr. Durso worked with his colleagues to improve relations with the County Council during his 2016–2017 term as Board president by working closely on the budget with Council President Nancy Floreen. His sense of humor has the effect of defusing tense situations and his organizational skills ensure that Board meetings are conducted efficiently.

MCPS owes Mr. Durso a debt of gratitude for his leadership in selecting a new superintendent of schools. His leadership produced a superintendent who has the support of all members of the Board and the larger Montgomery County community. Mr. Durso's leadership in recognizing the need for and leading the subsequent change in superintendents for MCPS has brought greater stability to the school system, as well as set MCPS on the path of offering greater opportunities for all students and improving student achievement.

Mr. Durso is the “Lou Gehrig” of education in that he has been an “iron man” in attending numerous school events, meetings, and conferences. Currently, he serves on the Board of Directors of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, which is an umbrella organization for the 24 county boards of education in the state of Maryland, and was appointed in 2013 to serve on the Maryland Center for School Safety Governing Board (2013–present).

Mr. Durso has been a source of support and strength for all the people he has come into contact with during his career. He has supported students in getting the best education, mentored teachers and staff on the job, and given sage advice. He is respected (and loved) by students, staff, parents, elected officials, and the larger MCPS community.

Mr. Durso is a true pioneer and highly deserving of the Award for Distinguished Service to Public Education.

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## *Odessa Shannon*

Mrs. Odessa Shannon has worked tirelessly for more than 40 years on behalf of students, especially students of color, to receive educational opportunities commensurate with those of all citizens of Montgomery County, the state of Maryland, and the nation. She began her public career as a teacher in the Baltimore public schools. Later, she entered the federal government in the computer field and rose through the ranks to attain one of the highest nonpolitical positions in the federal Senior Executive Service as the national program director for the Equal Opportunity Commission. As the national program director, she was responsible for the operation of 49 field offices nationwide, and work-sharing agreements with all of the state and local human rights agencies. Later, she was deputy director of the Montgomery County Department of Family Resources and executive director of the Montgomery County Human Rights Commission (previously the Human Relations Commission).

In the early 1970s, Mrs. Shannon was one of a 26-member citizen advisory committee that investigated the concerns the Black community raised about racial problems and education within Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). With the support of the Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) and superintendent of schools at that time, the advisory committee's work culminated in the Black Action Steps, which ultimately became 33 steps monitored for implementation within MCPS. Among other items, the Black Action Steps addressed ways to promote academic achievement as well as address the disproportionate identification of African American students for special education services and disciplinary action.

Mrs. Shannon brought all of her previous educational and work experience to bear when she was elected to the Board in 1982. Her campaign for the Board marked the first election of an African American woman in a policy-making political position in Montgomery County. Although Mrs. Shannon resigned from the Board in 1984, she continued to be involved in public education and MCPS. She is an active member of 1977-II, an advocacy group dedicated to supporting and helping African American students reach a level of equal access to educational programs and success that will better their lives as citizens. In addition, Mrs. Shannon serves as a member of the Superintendent's Budget Steering Committee, which advises MCPS and the superintendent on the development of the yearly operating budget. Her thoughtful wisdom in this area led the school district to carefully think about the implementation of programs that greatly benefit students of color and provide more opportunities for all students to leave MCPS with a solid foundational education preparing them for college and career. Mrs. Shannon has testified numerous times before the Board and other public entities in support of public education. Furthermore, she is known for her tough questions, thoughtful deliberations, and an unwavering commitment to ensuring that all students receive a world-class education.

She has received numerous awards throughout her career for her many accomplishments and advocacy, including the NAACP (Washington Committee) Legal Defense and Educational Award for Exceptional Achievement in Advancing the Rights of Minorities and Women, and Maryland's Hornbook Award for Outstanding Service to Education.

Mrs. Shannon is a true pioneer and highly deserving of the Award for Distinguished Service to Public Education.

# PREVIOUS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD WINNERS

## 2017

The Highwood Theatre  
Code.org  
Richard Reynolds  
Kids in Need Distributors  
Steven Boden  
Michael Shpur  
Carol Petersen  
Nicholas Saadipour  
Daman Harris  
Lisa Büttner  
Gary Temple  
Patricia B. O'Neill

## 2016

Dottie Fitzgerald  
Joe Hooks  
Melissa McKenna  
Montgomery County Business Roundtable  
for Education  
Bruce Crispell  
Geoffrey Edgar  
Patricia Janus  
Fernando Moreno  
Jeanette Simmons  
Paul Geller  
Anthony Giles  
Larry A. Bowers

## 2015

Joe Kessler  
Robert Thomas  
Arthur Williams  
Conflict Resolution Center of  
Montgomery County  
Liberty's Promise  
Montgomery County Alliance of  
Black School Educators  
Passion for Learning, Inc. (Cynthia  
Rubenstein)  
Strathmore Education (Lauren Campbell)  
Imagination Stage (Bonnie Fogel)  
Stephanie Brant  
Patricia Hurd  
Mary Scott  
James Lipton  
Stuart and Marilyn Morrison  
Sherry Reba  
Emily Talaga  
Isiah Leggett

## 2014

Susan Gardiner  
Steve Peterson  
Neal Wilson  
Commonweal Foundation  
Down Syndrome Network of  
Montgomery County, Inc.  
Carl Stein-RE/MAX Pro's Realty Company  
Washington Area New Auto  
Dealers Association  
Leroy Hyson  
Octavia Jeffries  
Michelle Newton  
Charles Overly  
Kris Secan  
Mario Parcan  
Hank Heller

## 2012–2013

Richard Edelman  
Larry Edmonds  
Antonio Hernandez-Cardoso  
Katya Partan  
Savers, Inc.  
Leo Schwartz  
Michael Calvert  
James A. Distler  
Ronald Frezzo  
Kevin Ambrose  
Victoria Couch  
Kelly and Thomas Giblin  
Irene Coleman and Siham Eldadah

## 2011

Laurie and Steve Augustino  
Pamela H. Moomau  
Kaiser Permanente  
Shulman, Rogers, Gandal, Pordy &  
Ecker, P.A.  
Whole Foods Market–Kentlands  
Marla Caplon  
Eric A. Davis  
Denise Stultz  
Tuyet B. Tran  
Don Hauprich  
Isabella Mia Lee  
James McMann  
Bruce Adams  
Bonnie Cullison  
Stewart Edelstein

## 2010

Samantha Lint  
Kay Romero  
Monte Tarbox  
Montgomery County Students Information  
Technology Foundation, Inc.  
Potomac Valley Alumnae Chapter of Delta  
Sigma Theta Sorority  
Audubon Naturalist Society—GreenKids  
Michael Priddy/Intervise Consultants, Inc.  
Michael Campbell  
Erick Lang  
Joe Rubens, Jr.  
Building Services Team  
College Gardens Elementary School  
Pamela Slater, Vivian Nation, George Powell,  
Opral Samuels, Rico Wims, and  
Yu-Lan Yinlin

## 2009

Officer Marcus Dixon  
Emily McDonell  
Admissions and Enrollment Management at  
Montgomery College  
Junior Achievement of the National Capital  
Area Montgomery County District Office  
Montgomery County Students  
Construction Trades Foundation, Inc.  
Deloitte  
United Communications Group  
Karen Crawford  
Susan Freiman  
Daric Jackson  
Susan Marks  
Linda Wanner  
Bernard Warfield  
John Burley  
Mark Freedman  
John William Smith

## 2008

Ana Brito  
Thomas M. DeGonia, II  
Patti Twigg  
The Christ Episcopal Church of Kensington  
College Tracks  
PALA: Padres y Alumnos Latinos en Acción—  
(Latino Parents and Students in Action)  
Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc.  
Montgomery County Teachers Federal Credit  
Union (MCTFCU)  
Giles R. Benson  
Andrea Bernal  
James M. Douglas  
Gail Fribush  
Karen C. Woodson  
Pat Adam  
Anjan Choudhury  
Joan Karasik  
George B. Thomas, Sr.

## 2007

Joan Donovan  
Evelyn Liu  
Karen Benn Marshall, Ph.D.  
Chinese American Parents and Students  
Association (CAPSA)  
IMPACT Silver Spring  
Project Change  
Jon Enten, Enten & Associates  
Riderwood Village Retirement Community  
Lockheed Martin Corporation  
Aggie Alvez  
Dianne Jones  
Elaine Petrulakis  
Michael A. Thomas  
Aashish Dewan  
Rebecca (Becky) Faherty  
Paul Rockwell  
Dr. Gabriel Jacobs

## 2006

Matt Boratenski and the American  
Film Institute (AFI)  
Choice Hotels International,  
Office of the General Counsel  
Julie Bennett  
Glenn Kikuchi  
Chinese Culture and Community Service  
Center, Inc.  
Montgomery County Police Community  
Outreach Section  
Project Reboot  
Douglas Duncan  
Robert Barnes  
MCPS Green Building Program  
Darryl Norwood  
Diana Sayago  
Bernice Albert  
Robert Paulsen

## 2005

Mark Drury and Shapiro & Duncan  
William Schlossberg and The Gazette  
Art Billings  
Nguyen Minh Chau  
The African Immigrant and Refugee  
Foundation  
Conquista tus Sueños (Realize Your Dreams)  
Hospice Caring, Inc.  
William Porter  
Michael Subin  
Robert Barnes  
Nivea Berrios  
Virginia Bumblis  
Susan Bain  
David Lechner

## 2004

Gene Kijowski  
Melvyn Leshinsky  
Eileen Lavine  
Identity, Inc.  
Progress Club of Rockville  
Rotary Club of North Bethesda  
Ana Sol Gutierrez  
Teresa Wright  
Joseph J. Lavorgna  
Jerry M. Marco  
Joan Rackey

## 2003

AmeriDream, Inc.  
Lockheed Martin Corporation  
Dr. Yvette Butler  
Theodore W. Urban  
Linkages to Learning  
Margit Meissner  
Susan Barrett  
Dedra H. Greene  
James J. Laws

## 2002

Fitzgerald Auto Malls  
Startec Global Communications  
Esther P. Gelman  
John Lopes  
Ruby A. Rubens  
The City of Gaithersburg  
Interages  
Mental Health Association of  
Montgomery County  
Blair G. Ewing  
Joseph Howard  
Owen Nichols  
John F. Brooks, Jr.  
Carol Burke  
Richard Sprecher

## 2001

The Nellis Corporation  
Nextel Communications  
Dr. Alan Cheung  
Diane Cockrell  
Marina McKee  
Career Transition Program of St. Luke's House  
The Washington Opera  
Lillian B. Brown  
Robert Hines  
Larry A. Bowers

## 2000

Wanda Brown of PEPCO  
Elida Vargas-Carrasco  
James and Linda Cafritz  
Lois Stoner  
Michelle Turner  
Benjamin Banneker Honors Math  
and Science Society  
Hispanic Parents Committee at  
Albert Einstein High School  
Mary Ann Bowen  
Lawrence Shulman  
Richard Wilson  
Betty Collins  
Sandra Shmookler

## 1999

Pennie Abramson and Barry Scher of  
Giant Food  
GE Information Services  
Ron Leung  
Lois Robertson  
Montgomery County Branch of the  
NAACP Parents Council  
After School Activity Coordination Program  
(ASAC)  
Gene W. Counihan  
John L. Gildner  
Ronald M. Feffer  
Kevin Keegan  
Madeline Griffin

## 1998

Douglas Schiffman  
Montgomery County Students Automotive  
Trades Foundation  
African American Festival of Academic  
Excellence  
Sharp Street Hosts an Academic Resource  
Program (SHARP)  
Hanley J. Norment  
Carol M. Hyatt  
Samira Hussein  
Phillip F. Gainous  
Dr. Dawn Thomas

## 1997

Marriott Suites of Bethesda  
General Electric Information Services and  
Elfun Society  
Howard Hughes Medical Institute  
I. Austin Heyman  
Hugh Packard  
George B. Thomas, Sr. Learning Academy  
American Coalition for Assistance and  
Mentoring Program (ACAMP)  
National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
Lucille Maurer  
Roscoe Nix  
Gerard F. Consuegra  
Amado "Sonny" Narvaez  
Juanita Sweadner



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