



Congressman John Garamendi's

WOMEN'S INITIATIVE NETWORK

- *When Women Succeed, America Succeeds* -

2016 WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

"It is the undeniable strength in women, a strength borne of compassion and not force that has brought so many of you here today. Each and every one of you has a heart of service. Your life as a mother, counselor, teacher, business woman is a testament to that fact"

Patricia Garamendi

California Assembly

Dear Women Leaders,

It is my honor to welcome you to our 2016 Women of the Year awards. The honorees today represent some of the most outstanding and dedicated women in the 3rd Congressional District. Nominated by their peers, these women and the leadership they have provided are being recognized for playing an integral and crucial role in improving the lives of everyone in their communities.

During the last 50 years women have made great strides in America. It used to be almost unheard of to see women as elected officials, CEOs, senior military officials, doctors or attorneys, but today some of our most successful leaders in the world are women. This progress has not come easy and many women before you have worked hard and strived to achieve the independence and rights you have today. I realize there is more work to be done to ensure that women have equal pay, flexible work schedules and affordable education. Each of the honorees will be a vital part of the future successes for women. I am inspired by each one of you here today and firmly believe when women succeed, America succeeds!

Congratulations,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Garamendi".

Congressman John Garamendi



Nancy Aaberg

Marysville – Yuba County

Nancy Aaberg has dedicated her career to Education; a career that spans over 44 years. Her career experiences includes over 25 years of teaching mathematics at the high school and community college levels, along with adjunct faculty for Brandman University, CSU Chico, CSU Sacramento in education courses; and Yuba College in mathematics.

Nancy currently serves as Superintendent for the Yuba City Unified School District. In her capacity as an administrator, she's also worked on the leadership team for the National Science Foundation grant to the California Department of Education known as *Math Matters*. She's served as the Interim Director the Northern California Mathematics Project at UC Davis.

Nancy is committed to her community, serving in different capacities in Friday Night Live, United Way, Community Health forums, Summer at City Hall programs and church.

Nancy holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics from Gettysburg College and a Master's in Education from CSU Chico.

Nominated by Preet Didbal



Helen Andrews

Fairfield – Solano County

Originally from El Paso Texas, Mrs. Helen Andrews came to California in 1975 and served as a Recruiter for the University of California, Davis for over twenty years. After settling in Solano County and becoming an active member in the community, she and her husband were selected into the Honorary Commander Program at Travis Air Force Base in 2009. Since that time, Helen has virtually adopted the Travis Airmen’s Council, also known as Airmen Committed to Excellence or ACE. In this capacity, she has been personally committed to helping develop these young service members as our future leaders by opening her home and hosting executive council meetings and leadership planning forums. Helen has provided a home-away-from-home to hundreds of Airmen by hosting large, camaraderie-building events including barbeques, overnight camp-outs, and warm holiday celebrations. She also hosts military spouse groups to help recognize the sacrifices made by the spouses and families of our military members. Her devotion to the young men and women serving our country has been boundless and transformative, setting her apart as a passionate role model and community leader.

Nominated by Rebekah Benson



Christina Baird

Vacaville – Solano County

Christina Baird is an advocate for children, donating her time and efforts to many non-profit organizations that serve children and their families.

Christina was appointed by the mayor to serve on the Vacaville Community Services Commission. She is acting President of the Optimist Club of Solano County, sits on the board for the Solano Partnership Against Violence, and volunteers with the Solano County Office of Education’s Career Technical Education program for high school students. She also helps the Stewards of Children by facilitating their “Darkness to Light” program, which trains members of the community on how to help prevent child abuse.

Christina owns a successful public relations and marketing business and is a published author. She has also served as an ambassador for her local Chambers of Commerce and was awarded the KI Jones Award for service to the Chamber.

I am pleased to honor Christina’s devotion to helping others, protecting children, and bettering her community.

Nominated by Dionne McCullar



Susan Barrett

Maxwell – Colusa County

Susan Barrett grew up in the rural community of Maxwell where she received an excellent education nurtured by teachers who took a special interest in both their work and their students. As a young participant in the FFA program, Susan had the opportunity to travel and compete with other students interested in agriculture. These experiences inspired Susan to give back to the community she came from by becoming a teacher which would allow her to ensure that students a similar educational experience.

Susan recently retired after 33 years of teaching Business Education and serving as the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) local Chapter Advisor at Colusa High School. Susan received state-wide recognition as California's Top Chapter Advisor in 2005 and Susan is in the FBLA National Hall of Fame.

Reflecting on her recent retirement, Susan stated, “I chose a career that I loved and where I felt I could make a difference in the lives of students using structured, yet nurturing and attentive ways that my own former teachers had used to inspire me.”

Nominated by Jennifer Corriea



Rebecca Belk

Fairfield – Solano County

Rebecca Belk demonstrates her deep caring for children both in her professional and personal life and has dedicated herself to serving her community as a member of law enforcement. Rebecca currently works for the Fairfield Police Department supervising the Personnel and Training Unit. She is responsible for recruiting, hiring, and training qualified law enforcement officers. She is also a Peer Support Team member as well as supervisor of the Crisis Negotiation Team, playing an important role in protecting her community.

Over the course of her career, Rebecca investigated crimes against children, demonstrating her dedication to protecting and caring for children. She and her husband recently decided to become foster parents and are in the process of adopting a young child in need.

Rebecca's dedication to her work protecting her community and providing compassionate care for children is an inspiration to her peers.

Nominated by Shawn Byrne



Nicole Braddock

Vacaville – Solano County

Nicole Braddock serves her community through both her work as the Executive Director of the Solano Land Trust and her volunteer efforts with local children.

Nicole's work at the Solano Land Trust helped the organization earn the National Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Award, raise over 20 million dollars for conservation and acquire the 1,500 acre Rockville Trails Preserve. These achievements have had an immeasurable impact on environmental health in her community.

Nicole also helped establish the Napa County Parks and Open Space District, serves on the advisory committee for the Bay Area Open Space Council, and is a member of the management team for the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Nicole is a recognized expert in land conservation, and routinely shares her extensive knowledge regionally, statewide and nationally through panels, workshops and conferences.

Nicole also volunteers her time outside of work, helping cub scouts earn their Wildlife Conservation Achievements, maintaining trails at the Solano Lake Boy Scout summer camp, and helping support families in need during the holidays. She also organized members of the community to assist with relief efforts in areas of Lake County impacted by wildfires.

Nicole's expertise in her field, volunteer work with children, and tireless efforts on behalf of environmental conservation make her an inspiration to her community.

Nominated by Michele Frost

Rosario Burton

Vacaville – Solano County

Rosario Burton generously donates her time and talent to the David Grant Medical Center at Travis Air Force Base providing counseling and comfort to patients in need.

Rosario earned both a graduate degree in Clinical Psychology and a doctorate in Addiction Counseling. Although she is a retired mental health provider, she is an active member of the National Board of Addiction Examiners and donates her time providing counseling at David Grant Medical Center. She has received a Certificate of Appreciation for her work at Travis Air Force Base as well as a commemorative coin from President Obama for her selfless dedication serving the men and women at Travis Air Force Base.

Rosario is also a skilled inventor and a successful author of the book “Yes, Anyone Can.” She regularly demonstrates her dedication to serving others and truly enjoys the work she does volunteering.

Nominated by Annie Bacon



Mary Lou Byer

Yuba City – Sutter Counter

Mary Lou Byer, more commonly known as Mama Lou, is described as the guiding light at the Yuba-Sutter Food Bank and the mentor to its current President. Mary Lou has been volunteering at the Yuba Sutter Food Bank for 25 years and is one of its Founders. About 45 years ago, Mary Lou received grant funding through the Older Americans Act and established an office in downtown Yuba City. For 20 years, Mary Lou operated a bi-county service center for Yuba-Sutter seniors providing education, resources, and food distribution.

Mary Lou shares the story of the early days when she and her husband had to borrow a heavy-duty pickup and drive themselves to Sacramento to pick up food for distribution. This eventually morphed into the Yuba Sutter Food Bank that we know today.

Mary Lou grew up in Martinez, California and was born the 15th of 17 children in her family. She moved to Yuba County in 1951 with her husband and still lives there today.

Nominated by Joanne Ellis



Neickol Cook

Clearlake – Lake County

Neickol Cook is an active member of the Citizens Caring for Clearlake, whose mission is to beautify and keep the community free of debris. Her work with this organization helps members of the community to understand the importance of recycling while improving the environmental health of Clearlake.

Neickol regularly makes personal efforts to better her community. She helps clean illegal dumpsites throughout the city, encourages school participation in recycling efforts, and assists less fortunate families facing eviction.

During the tragic fires in Lake County, Neickol went out of her way to help her fellow citizens. She checked on people impacted by the fires and kept their loved ones apprised of their condition. She also helped people evacuate and transport the belongings they were able to salvage.

Neickol's optimistic spirit is an inspiration to countless Clearlake citizens. While Lake County suffered great loss due to the fires over the past year, Neickol was a great comfort to her fellow citizens.

Nominated by Barbara Christwitz



Donna Critchfield

Colusa – Colusa County

Donna Critchfield has an impressive record of public service having served as both a Councilwoman and Mayor of the City of Colusa as a Councilwoman from 2007 through 2014. Donna's service does not end there; she is a founding member of the Colusa Library Literacy program and still serves today as a tutor and tutoring program instructor. She is a longtime Colusa Soroptimist and worship leader, preacher, and Eucharistic minister of the St. Stephens Episcopal Church.

The grand-daughter of Swiss immigrants, Donna's parents were farmers in Yuba and Sutter counties. Following graduation from Colusa High School, Donna graduated from Yuba Community College and began her career in the insurance industry where she still works today as a sales agent serving the Colusa community. Donna is known best for her bright mind, kind spirit, commitment to faith, family and community and above all, for her integrity.

Nominated by Shelly Kittle, Dale and Jeannie Klever

Erin Cucchi

Yuba City – Sutter County

Erin Cucchi is a graduate of Chico State University and lives in Yuba City with her husband Dan and daughter Emma. Over the past 18 years she has dedicated herself to the youth and agriculture of Yuba-Sutter. Erin currently serves on the Yuba-Sutter Fair Board and has been a 4-H Club Co-Community Leader and Parent leader since 2000.

Erin has also continued to serve on Board of the Sutter Yuba 4-H Council for the past 21 years in several capacities and the Yuba Sutter Fair Junior Live Stock Auction for the past 10 years. Erin has been the annual Jog-a-Thon fundraising Chair at Franklin School for the past 4 years and this year alone raised \$20,000. Erin has volunteered in many capacities at Franklin Elementary School spearheading many fundraisers and school events, as well as a coach for their sports teams. Erin has served as an active member of the Sutter Arts Association, Sutter Junior Swim Foundation and Smiles for Kids Foundation.

Nominated by Barbara LeVake



Tara Dacus

Fairfield – Solano County

Tara recognized the need for a scholarship program and brought together the community in order to provide opportunities to underprivileged students. As President of the Fairfield-Suisun Rotary Club, Tara established the Rotary Success Scholarship and Rotary 4-Way Test Good Citizenship Award program. Her leadership was instrumental—she solicited the financial, operational, and personal support needed in order to ensure success. Both programs provide support, mentorship, and recognition for the outstanding young people of the community. These programs have been extremely successful and as a result were featured at the April 2016 Rotary Conference as a model for implementing similar programs throughout the district.

The scholarships awarded through these programs have helped students who show outstanding character, determination, and leadership. Since the Rotary Success Scholarship's founding, thirteen students have been offered scholarships to Solano Community College. The award includes free tuition, books, meal passes and a laptop.

In addition to her volunteer work, Tara is a small business owner. She operates a highly successful and award-winning full-insurance brokerage firm for State Farm Insurance. Tara's involvement in the community and civic mindedness make her an exemplary citizen of Fairfield.

Nominated by William K. Wesley and Heather Sanderson



Carolyn Denton

Orland – Glenn County

Carolyn has been a tireless Orland advocate since she moved to Glenn County which includes leadership roles in the Orland Women's Improvement Club and the Orland Business Improvement Club. Carolyn was a creator of the annual Avenue of Lights, a one-mile long holiday light show that has received national recognition. For the past 22 years, as a leader in her church, Carolyn has led the annual All Church Bizarre and leads the quilt project to bring warmth to those in need.

Carolyn also served as the President of the El Cajon Postal Union, and it was noted in the Wall Street Journal that she and her husband Byron were the first husband and wife to both serve as Postal Union Presidents at the same Post Office in American history. Carolyn continues to serve as Vice President of the California American Postal Worker Union Auxiliary today.

Nominated by Becky Brummett



Sandra Esparza

Vacaville – Solano County

Sandra is a former President of the Solano County Soroptomist Club, helping advance programs that support women and girls of all ages. As a chairperson for the Live Your Dreams program, Sandra continually sought out the young women participants to ensure they were assisted by the Club in their aspirations of furthering their education. Her work in the Soroptomist Club under multiple positions has given these young women a mentor and friend to admire. In 2009, Sandra started a Relay for Life team that has raised \$159,101 to date, second in the community only to Genentech. As member of the Solano Leadership Council for Relay for Life, she meets regularly with volunteers and coordinators to help plan volunteer recognition, build volunteer capacity, and promote events in the community.

Upon the tragedy of losing her oldest brother to cancer, Sandra found a silver lining in a dark storm and began the Stan Foster Memorial Golf Tournament in his name. Every year, the tournament's committee selects one member from the community who is facing a particular hardship to receive help. The tournament creates a support network for that individual and upon conclusion of the tournament, 100% of the proceeds are given to the recipient or their family to help however it is needed. To date, the tournament has helped 23 local community members and families. Sandra is a devoted wife, loving mother, caring grandmother, and a pillar of her community.

Nominated by Nancy Vasquez



Elly Fairclough

Davis – Yolo County

Elly Fairclough has faithfully served communities in Yolo County and throughout Northern California for over two decades. Throughout her distinguished career in public service she has worked for Supervisor and Assemblymember Helen Thomson, Congressman Mike Thompson, and Congressman John Garamendi. Elly has volunteered at local organizations such as the Yolo Community Foundation, Davis Schools Foundation, Davis Democrats, and the Yolo Arts Council. Elly recently retired from the Yolo County Democratic Central Committee where she served as Secretary, Committee Chair, and local Representative.

As District Director for Congressman Garamendi, Elly always made sure to promote youth involvement and the advancement of women in the workplace, spearheading the Congressman's Women's Initiative Network. A former preschool teacher, Elly was deeply involved in the yearly Congressional Art Competition which encouraged and recognized the artistic talent of young constituents.

Today, Elly continues to remain deeply involved in the local community and is an inspiration to those around her.

Nominated by Helen Thomson



Anne Fletcher

Yuba City – Sutter County

Anne Fletcher has dedicated her life to community service and civic engagement. She has generously donated her time to many charitable organizations in her community, such as Casa de Esperanza, a shelter for battered women. Anne has also served as a Director and President for the Yuba Sutter United Way and was honored with the prestigious Pedro Award for selfless service.

Anne is a founding member of the Alliance for Hispanic Advancement, a nonprofit devoted to improving the quality of life for people of Hispanic heritage. She also served for 12 years on the Community Memorial Museum Commission as well as the California State Bar's Judicial Nominees Evaluation Commission. Anne is an active member of the Yuba Sutter Women's Coalition, the Women's Initiative group, the Sutter County Friends of the Library, the Sutter Buttes Garden Club, the One Stop Homeless Informational program, and the Yuba-Sutter Stand Down for homeless and low-income veterans.

Anne is also a founding Board member of Bridges to Housing, a program that helps the homeless obtain deposits for rental housing and the Sutter Yuba Homeless Consortium. In Anne's spare time, she knits blankets for the Linus Project for serious ill and traumatized children at area hospitals. Anne leads by example and urges others to do as she does by helping where they can.

Nominated by Debbie Porcayo and Robert Laycock



Kay Green

Fairfield – Solano County

As an active and vibrant member of her community, Kay Green is an inspiration to those around her and has dedicated her life to bringing happiness to others. Her creative drive for betterment has led her to enhance the retirement community she calls home by projects to promote art in public spaces. She also launched an initiative to place hummingbird feeders outside the windows of less mobile residents so that they too can find joy in nature. Kay also began a tradition of placing a lit Christmas tree outside the dining room of the dementia wing during the holidays for those residents to enjoy.

Kay is a leader within her community through the educational Garden Group she formed, her work as the Chairperson of the Bocce Committee, and her time volunteering to call Bingo in the skilled nursing wing. She continuously finds ways to better her community and bring joy to others.

Kay's commitment to making others happy through her own kindness and service reminds us all of how much we are able to give of ourselves simply through our own compassion.

Nominated by Denise Flowerday



M.R.C. Greenwood

Davis – Yolo County

Dr. M.R.C. Greenwood is a nationally recognized leader in higher education, nutrition, and health sciences. As a Distinguished Professor Emerita of Nutrition and Internal Medicine at the University of California, Davis, she has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to our national health and scientific community. Dr. Greenwood's leadership and dedication to scientific advancement is reflected in her service as Associate Director for Science in the White House Office of Science and Technology during the Clinton Administration, as well as her tenure as the first female President of the University of Hawai'i.

Dr. Greenwood has also had a long relationship with the University of California system, which includes some of the world's premier research institutions. In addition to her current role, she has served with distinction in numerous leadership positions across the UC system, including tenures as Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, Chancellor of UC Santa Cruz, and Dean of Graduate Studies and Vice Provost at UC Davis.

Dr. Greenwood's continued leadership in higher education and contributions to national health policy will play an important role academia for years to come.

Nominated by Elly Fairclough and Judith Stern



Dilenna Harris

Vacaville – Solano County

Dilenna Harris has made her mark through her public service on the Vacaville City Council and in the private sector.

Before being elected to the City Council in 2008, Dilenna was a founding partner in an alternative energy company, and later became CEO of a residential and light commercial corporation. She ran the company for 20 years before selling it and turning her attention to the nonprofit sector, where she served as a Development Director and later as Director of Community Relations.

Dilenna is also involved in supporting our armed forces: she is the immediate past Chairperson of the Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee and also serves on the Travis Community Consortium, where she works to strengthen community support for the mission at Travis Air Force Base.

Dilenna is an appointee to the Select Committee for City/School Relations, and serves on the Solano County Economic Development Corporation and the Board of the Vacaville Chamber.

This tireless commitment to public service and community development is exemplary, and I'm honored to recognize Dilenna for her achievements.

Nominated by Travis Air Force Base



Marilyn Hays

Woodland – Yolo County

Marilyn Hays is a community activist, mentor, and dedicated volunteer who has supported numerous organizations, including Yolo Unite, the Woodland Unified School District, I AM Remnant, Inc., Greater 2nd Baptist Church and the Culture C.O.-O.P. Born and raised in Woodland, Marilyn has a deep connection with the community and uses that bond to improve the lives of those around her.

Woodland's African-American community has been especially affected by Marilyn's tireless efforts. Recognizing the lack of resources that this community often faces, she founded W.E. People, an African-American community-based organization designed to network and collaborate with existing resources in communities to create connections between available resource and the people who need them. W.E. People is committed to improving the quality of life for youth in Woodland and surrounding areas by offering programs, projects and special events reflecting the local community's history and culture.

Marilyn continues to touch hundreds of lives with her advocacy, hard work, and commitment to the community. Her efforts serve as an inspiration to us all.

Nominated by Dixie Clark and Rev. Terri Hobart



Linda Hickman

Dixon – Solano County

For the past 50 years, Linda has worked with community members, benefactors, and local organizations to provide gifts and clothes to tens of thousands of underprivileged families and children. She is an original member of the Dixon Toys for Tots Community Christmas Program and the founder of the successful “Coats for Kids”. As a result of her hard work and selfless spirit, many of our local families are able to find relief during the holiday season.

Linda has always understood how important youth activities and sports are to a community. She founded the Dixon Little League and the Dixon Girl’s Softball League. Over the years, Linda has kept close ties to these organizations, serving in many different capacities from Board member to team coach. As her two sons joined Little League and participated in after-school programs, so did Linda, volunteering her time to Future Farmers of America, 4-H, and many others.

When Linda is not volunteering her time, she enjoys outdoor sports and is an excellent marksman. Linda is a wife, mother, and grandmother to her loving family members who live in Dixon. Her career in the Dixon Unified School District and her service and leadership in many non-profit organizations makes Linda an exemplary member of this community.

Nominated by Ted Hickman



Lynnette Irlmeier

Woodland – Yolo County

Lynnette Irlmeier is the current Executive Director of Empower Yolo, a twenty-four hour crisis intervention and emergency shelter that provides confidential counseling, training, legal assistance, and other services for individuals and families affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, and child abuse. Empower Yolo also provides resources to promote health, stability and self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

In 2015, Lynnette oversaw the merger of Empower Yolo and the Yolo Center, two programs with the mission of promoting safe, healthy, resilient communities. With greater size and scope, the merger allowed Empower Yolo to improve services for the county's most vulnerable residents and maximize program funding. As a result, Empower Yolo has been able to expand its program offerings and become Yolo County's family justice center, in cooperation with The Yolo County District Attorney's office.

Lynnette also serves on the Homeless Poverty Action Committee (HPAC) Policy and Procedures Subcommittee, the Northern County Central Valley Roundtable, the Contractors' Alliance, First 5 Family Resource Centers Group, United Way, and the Family Violence Coordination Pilot Project. Ms. Irlmeier also participates in regional and annual meetings of the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence and the California Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Through Lynnette's leadership and vision, she has been able to generate a strong sustaining support system within the community and Empower Yolo's positive impact in the community will only grow in the coming years.

Nominated by Catherine Farman



Jennifer Jelavich

Yuba City – Sutter County

Jennifer Jelavich is an active member of the Sutter County Nutrition Action Plan; a diverse team of 64 partners working to create healthier choices and lifestyles for Sutter County residents. Sutter County Public Health received a SNAP-Ed funded by the USDA to implement a comprehensive local nutrition education and obesity prevention program with a focus on increased fruit and vegetable consumption and increased exercise. Through Jennifer's leadership, a pilot program was established at Bernard State PreSchool called, 'Food for Thought' aimed at minimizing child hunger over the weekends when the national school lunch program is unavailable and allowed families to take home fresh local fruits and vegetables home to prepare themselves over the weekends.

In addition to food, families received educational information about healthy living and nutrition. At Jennifer's suggestion, 30-minute assembly presentations were provided to all students and teachers at Bernard State PreSchool as well called, 'My Plate' with sample tastes and recipes of healthy eating.

Jennifer has also been actively involved in the Sutter Yuba Community Foundation, I Can Bike Foundation, Sutter Buttes Little League and the Parent Club. Jennifer's passion and commitment to improving an individual's quality of life through education, development and practice of healthy choices and habits continues to inspire those who observe her leading by example.

Nominated by Kim Sangha



Marsha Krouse-Taylor

Yuba City – Sutter County

Since 1977, Marsha Krouse-Taylor has served as the founding Executive Director of Casa de Esperanza, which helps women and children who have been victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, or sex trafficking. Under Marsha's leadership, the shelter was renovated to fully meet ADA standards, increased capacity from 13 to 50 beds, tripled programs, created a culturally diverse staff, and increased its funding 10 fold. This has allowed Casa to serve over 40,000 people.

Marsha handles every challenge with determined direction, calm, faith and hope. Even through the most difficult challenges, Marsha continues to persevere with an optimism that is unshakeable, all while making time to ensure that clients, staff, and her own family receive the best care.

Marsha was a founding member of the Yuba County Family Violence Prevention Council, Colusa County Domestic Violence Task Force and Child Prevention Council, Sutter County Domestic Council and Child Abuse Prevention Council, Tri-County Sexual Assault Response Team, Faith Based and Domestic Violence Summit, Community Health Forum on Violence Against Women, Restoration Railroad, and the Child Assault Prevention Network.

Marsha already has a lasting impact on the community including her work: drafting Assembly bills, developing and implementing Tri-County Assault and ID (CAP) Projects, developing sexual assault training curriculum and protocol for Beale AFB, and coordinating with Tri-County courts to provide services for battered women and their children.

Nominated by Julie Gill Shuffield



Julia Lopez

Vacaville – Solano County

Julia Lopez is a tireless supporter of her community and has a great passion for helping others. Her professional work and volunteer activities continuously demonstrate her commitment to improving her community.

Julia is a skilled fundraiser who generously uses her talent to serve many non-profit organizations. She raised funds for the Dixon Teen Center, Dixon Family Services, Vacaville's Opportunity House, and the Solano Midnight Sun Breast Cancer Foundation. She also started an annual Adopt-a-Family Christmas program to provide extra help through holidays for Solano County families in need.

Julia is an 18-year member and former President of the Dixon Rotary Club. She serves as the Vice President on the Board of Directors for the Dixon Teen Center, and also serves on the Board of Directors for Court Appointed Special Advocates for foster children and other at-risk youth in Solano County.

Julia's unwavering support for her community and extensive volunteerism are an inspiration to us all.

Nominated by Dave and Carol Johnson, Ed Farewell, and Bruce Gondry



Betsy Marchand

Davis – Yolo County

Betsy Marchand has been a significant force within the public sector for more than 40 years. Her achievements, impact on the quality of life for the people she has served and her unique qualities of leadership leave an indelible imprint. Her skills, leadership qualities, and personal essence exemplify what public service can and should be.

Betsy's portfolio is vast; as the first woman elected to the Yolo County Board of Supervisors, she served six terms before retiring in 1997 and was instrumental in the formation of the Vic Fazio Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, the largest state-managed wildlife area in California. She is a founding board member of the Yolo Basin Foundation; currently Chair of the Community Board of Dignity Health's Woodland Healthcare and served for eleven years on the Tribal Gaming Commission at Cache Creek Casino Resort. She has also been an adviser/consultant for the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation and her work has resulted in better communications and relationships between the County, the Capay Valley community and the Tribe.

Betsy has made public service her life and continues to stay involved with the many needs of Yolo County. She is a popular mentor for both men and women and continues to keep her many networks available for others.

Nominated by Nancy Pennebaker and Sue Heitman



Jody Meza

Orland – Glenn County

Jody Meza demonstrates true dedication to her work as a public librarian and goes above and beyond her duties to nurture literacy, reading, and culture in her community.

During a time when county libraries are particularly hard hit by budget strains, Jody had worked tirelessly to prevent the libraries in her community from closing. As a graduate of San Jose State with a Library Science degree, Jody has used her knowledge and skill to maintain and expand the library services available to members of her community. She has strengthened the library and computer literacy programs that are so vital to the rural area, and has consistently worked to insure her community has access to quality reading materials.

Jody has dedicated herself to maintaining the invaluable public resource of the libraries in her community. She regularly exceeds the requirements of her job to insure that everyone has access to literature, education, and culture available in public libraries around the country.

Nominated by Tim Crews



Sandy Person

Fairfield – Solano County

Originally from San Diego, California, Mrs. Sandy Person relocated to Solano County in 1987 after graduating from National University. After an early career in real estate, she became an instructor with City College of Chicago teaching military service members in the Programs for Afloat College Education (PACE) Program. While gaining experience by serving in multiple industry positions in Solano County, Sandy’s energy and contagious “we can do anything” spirit has earned her the respect of industry leaders as well as many accolades of achievement.

Since 1999, through her work on the Solano County Economic Development Corporation and now as its President, she has put her region on the map to attract countless new industries and create hundreds of jobs in the district. As the former Chairperson of the Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee and the current Civic Leader community representative to the Commander of Air Mobility Command, Mrs. Person continues to be a fierce advocate for all issues concerning the mission of Travis Air Force Base.

Sandy has been a remarkable force behind the energy and vision driving industry growth in Solano County and continues her work to make California’s 3rd Congressional district a vibrant, dynamic place to live and work.

Nominated by Skip Thomson



Laura Petty

Vacaville – Solano County

Laura Petty has dedicated her life to making the justice system more equitable. She demonstrates her commitment to her community through her volunteer work and civic engagement.

Laura graduated from both undergraduate and law school with highest honors, earning her the J. Lani Bader Award for academic excellence from the Golden Gate University School of Law. While in law school, she also earned several prestigious internships and volunteered for Project Open Hand, delivering meals to homebound HIV/AIDS patients. Laura is a founding partner in her law firm and has dedicated her legal career to making the legal system accessible for children and the socially disadvantaged.

Laura has also dedicated her time to the betterment of her community, both through volunteer work and political engagement. She is the current Parliamentarian for the Solano County Central Democratic Committee, and a member of the Northern Solano Democratic Club. She also served on the Board of Directors for the Vacaville Public Education Foundation and the Vacaville Unified School District Measure A Citizens' Oversight Committee.

I'm proud to recognize Laura's commitment to serving her community through her career pursuits, civic engagement, and volunteer work is an inspiration to all.

Nominated by Robert Warshawsky

Patricia “Cookie” Powell

Dixon – Solano County

Cookie Powell has dedicated her life to serving the less fortunate in her community, using her career and volunteer work to make a difference in the lives of those around her. As the Executive Director of Dixon Family Services, she has worked to enhance the services and housing opportunities available to those in need, and under her leadership, the organization received recognition from the Solano County Board of Supervisors. As a mother, Cookie played an active role in improving her children’s school and extracurricular environments by working to bring health education to teens, serving as a member of the school site council and parents association, and sitting on the boards for the school’s girls’ softball and youth football teams. She has also donated her time to Meals on Wheels, the local Chamber of Commerce, Northern Solano CalWORKs, the Solano County EBT Transition Committee, the Solano Transportation Authority, and her community’s Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs prevention teams.

Cookie works tirelessly on behalf of children and seniors, and played a leading role in the formation of both the Dixon Advocates for Children organization and the Advocates for Dixon Seniors organization. She also helped the Dixon Teen Center achieve non-profit status and played a major role in opening the Dixon Family Services Thrift Store. Today, she remains highly involved in the “Yes on Kids” initiative to provide for all of Solano County’s children. Cookie’s exemplary generosity and service have been a helping hand to so many, strengthening the fabric of our community and the well-being of Solano County residents of all ages.

Nominated by Jackie Powell-Hogg



Carol Pruett

Vacaville – Solano County

Carol Pruett serves as the Chief Administrator of the Dixon Chamber of Commerce, and without her positive leadership, Dixon would not have the reputation of generosity, community spirit, business enthusiasm, and strategic growth that this small town enjoys today. Carol serves as the Ambassador of Dixon to all levels of local government, and her tireless community involvement is central to executing the Dixon May Fair, Dixon Rotary International activities, and countless other community and family focused events.

Carol coordinates, advertises, solicits donations, and promotes the Dixon's top fundraiser, the Epicurean Fete, which funds the Dixon May Fair each year. She has also served as Chairperson of the Dixon Relay for Life for three years where she raised record amounts of money for the Cancer Society.

Carol was also honored to be selected as a key civil leader and named to be an Honorary Commander for Travis Air Force Base where she has forged stronger ties between the Dixon community and the Air Force Base. She is also a member of the Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee and has coordinated the Band of the Golden West Concert in Dixon for the past two years. Carol's leadership, spirit, and character are without compare in her community and she is greatly deserving of this recognition.

Nominated by Dave and Carol Johnson, Wendi Hendershot, and Jack Batchelor



Nicole Riley

Yuba City – Sutter County

Nicole Riley grew up in Yuba City, California, the daughter of a military family, and became involved with gymnastics at a young age. After high school, she competed for the University of California, Santa Barbara as a NCAA Division I gymnast and graduated with a Bachelor's of Arts in Biological Sciences. She later received her Master's Degree in Physician Assisting from Western University of Health Science but decided to return to her passion for gymnastics.

Nicole now owns Riley's Gymnastics Academy (RGA), one of the fastest growing minority owned businesses in the Yuba-Sutter Area. Through RGA, Nicole has provided countless children with the necessary confidence building and problem solving skills needed to succeed in both the sport and in life.

Nicole has also given back to the community by participating in community events such as the Franklin School Boutique, the Relay for Life Cancer Walk, the Sutter County Fair, the Marysville Christmas Parade, and is partnering with "Me and Mine Magazine" for the 1st Annual Cartwheel-a-Thon to raise funds and awareness for pediatric cancer. Nicole's extensive volunteer efforts demonstrate her devotion and commitment to serving her community.

Nominated by Lonetta Riley

Terry Rivera

Colusa – Colusa County

Terry Azevedo Rivera has had tremendous impact through her Youth Empowerment Services (Y.E.S.) program, a nonprofit benefiting the children of Colusa County. Created in memory of Terry's mother, Eleanor Azevedo, a humble and generous woman who gave all she had to her 17 children. Y.E.S provides financial assistance to families that may not have the resources to pay for their child to participate in extracurricular activities.

Since its founding two years ago, Y.E.S. has already served 100 young people in Colusa County. To maximize the impact of the organization, Terry asks parents whose children participate to volunteer with Y.E.S, providing more positive role models for the participating children. Terry is also organizing an annual Fall Community Walk to raise more funds that will enable Y.E.S. to touch more lives.

Terry is always looking for ways to help the children of our community and is also involved in other projects such as Friday Night Live, Stagehands Theater and Little League. Terry often says that “no child should miss an opportunity to laugh and play with friends” – a mission she works tirelessly to support.

Nominated by Gloria Estrada



Yvonne Robbins

Fairfield – Solano County

Yvonne is a dedicated member of several organizations throughout Solano County. Her time is often donated to the individuals that make up our community; visiting those who are sick, isolated, and in need of kindness and empathy. Through programs at St. Stephen Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Yvonne prepares and distributes food to the elderly and disabled, and mentors students in the community.

Yvonne is a lifelong member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, which supports community education programs, and the Delta Kappa Gamma International Society, whose goals are to uplift and support the education of all women. She also serves as the treasurer for Church Women United, a movement which celebrates unity in diversity, and works for a world of peace and justice.

She understands the importance of education, spending 37 years as a teacher in the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District. In her retirement, she continues to be involved in education advocacy, donating scholarships to the Assist-A-Grad Scholarship Foundation and joining the California Retired Teachers Association.

Yvonne has been married for 53 years, and with her husband Benjamin has one daughter, two grandchildren, and one great-grandson. She is a devoted member of the Fairfield community, and is a perfect example of someone who has turned a career into a lifelong passion. Through her earnest compassion and empathetic spirit, she continues to improve the lives of those around her.

Nominated by Delores Da'Venport, Dr. Frances Nelson and Benjamin Robbins



Lea Rosenberg

Davis – Yolo County

Lea Rosenberg is an inspiration who has been actively serving her community for over 40 years. When her children were in school, she began volunteering in the Parent Teacher Association, serving as President at two different schools. Eventually, she also served as the President of the University Farm Circle, President of the Davis Art Center, President of the Davis School Arts Foundation, Soroptimist International of Davis, Davis Odd Fellows Lodge, and the Davis Rebekah Lodge. In addition, she is also on the Boards of Yolo County SPCA, Sutter Davis Hospital Foundation, and Davis Helping Hands.

Through her leadership and participation in many organizations, Lea has made an immeasurable impact on the community. She has raised funds for community groups, supported foster children and acted as a mentor at Progress Ranch, which provides a nurturing home environment for children at risk.

A long-time Davis resident, Lea remains committed to her community. She is an invaluable resource to organizations devoted to volunteerism, and continues to be an example of selflessness and dedicated servitude.

Nominated by Dave Rosenberg



Estella San Juan

Vacaville – Solano County

Estella San Juan is a devoted public servant and her tireless dedication to helping others in need has earned her recognition as a leading senior citizen of Vacaville. As an Army Veteran, she used her GI bill towards her college education and earned her Masters Degree in Education. Estella strongly believes in education and serves on the Assist-A-Grad committee which helps raise funds and select high achieving high school students for scholarship assistance.

Through her leadership in the church, Estella worked to provide hot meals for homeless men, women, and children in the community, and continues to support the needy with her involvement in the Meals-on-Wheels program.

Estella's heart has always been in the classroom and was recognized as Teacher of the Year two times. Her students knew her as the teacher that truly cared about them and she would often sacrifice the little money she had to buy those most needy children clothing and bicycles. Students often rushed to her car at the beginning of the day to welcome her to school. When she officially retired from teaching, she became an Elementary School substitute teacher until the age of 80 when her hearing began to fail.

Estella genuine caring for others is recognized by every organization she has touched and by every person who knows her, and she is most deserving of this recognition.

Nominated by Lynda Valerio



Debra Springsteen

Browns Valley – Yuba County

Debra Springsteen has dedicated her life to serving others both through her career as a Registered Nurse and her many volunteer efforts benefiting the community.

Debra realized her career dreams by becoming a Registered Nurse and has worked as such for over 20 years. She currently works in the cardiology wing at the Rideout Hospital in Marysville. Last year her peers awarded her Nurse of the Year, recognizing her devotion to her work and her patients.

Debra has also donated her time volunteering at many fundraising events benefiting children in the community. For the past three years, she has particularly enjoyed participating in an annual fundraiser benefiting the Children Miracle Network. She is also a member of the Yuba Sutter Cowbells, an organization of cattlemen who provide scholarships to students in the Yuba Sutter area. These scholarships benefit students specializing in the fields of beef production, beef husbandry, or other related agriculture fields. All of Debra's volunteer efforts demonstrate her commitment to serving the youth of her community.

Nominated by William Springsteen

Christine Stifter

Orland – Glenn County

Christine Stifter is a dedicated volunteer who continuously offers her time and talent to serve her community. Christine is a member of the Orland Women's Improvement Club where she helps raise funds for local non-profit organizations such as the humane society, the senior center, and the volunteer fire department. Through her volunteer work she also helps raise money for scholarships available to local high school students.

Christine is also a skillful writer of grant proposals, having successfully secured several grants for an annual rummage sale, the Orland Historical and Cultural Society, and Glenn County's own Special Olympics.

Christine volunteers as the chairperson of Heritage Trail, helping put on the Glenn County Fair, serves on the Orland Ambulance Board, helps organize the Annual 4th of July celebration, and assists with FFA projects at local schools. She also helps rally members of the community to provide bicycles and helmets to students in need. Christine is a dedicated servant of her community who sets the gold standard for volunteerism.

Nominated by Salina Edwards



Jean VanderGheynst

Davis – Yolo County

Dr. Jean VanderGheynst has dedicated her career to the pursuit of science and engineering innovation and is determined to share the possibilities of STEM with as many people as possible; she began her career at UC Davis in 1996 as an Assistant Professor after earning her Masters and Doctorate at Cornell University in Biological and Agricultural Engineering. After establishing tenureship in 2007, Dr. VanderGheynst was asked to serve as the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Study in 2007 and has served as the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Study since 2013. She also served as the College of Engineering's first female Dean when she was appointed Interim Dean from July-October 2015.

Dr. Jean VanderGheynst, through the Renewable Energy Systems Opportunity for Unified Research Collaboration and Education (RESOURCE) Program, which she began in 2010, funded fellowships for 33 PhD students at UC Davis, reached 1,130 students through in-class science education, and partnered with 34 teachers at high percentage free and reduced price lunch recipient schools.

Dr. VanderGheynst is an inspiring leader, educator, mentor, and humanitarian who brings extraordinary passion to the cause of advancing educational opportunities and the quality of education for students at every level. The impact of her work continues to extend globally through those she has taught, through the significance of her research, and through the quality of her service to the public and her profession.

Nominated by Lauren Jabusch, Bryan Jenkins, and Alisa Lee



Sandra Waterhouse

Walnut Grove – Sacramento County

Sandra Waterhouse serves as a very successful Youth Build coordinator out of the Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps. She serves as a team leader for groups of 18-25 year olds as she introduces them to and guides them in learning the skills associated with all aspects of construction.

Sandra inspires at-risk young adults to fulfill a signed commitment to study for and obtain their high school diploma. Many crew members are referred to their program from the county Probation Department and Sandra's commitment to the program was expressed best by a young Conservation Corps member, 'Sandra tells it like it is. Between her and the crew, there is mutual respect. She gets it.'

Sandra goes above and beyond her assigned duties, which often entails rising before 4am on a weekend to drive more than 100 miles for a Habitat for Humanity or similar project. She believes that investing in our youth is an investment in our nation's future and her devotion to these young adults gives them hope in a tangible, marketable way. Sandra and her organization are helping to give our youth the educational achievement and work skills they need to find a path out of juvenile delinquency toward a brighter future.

Nominated by Summer Morris

Keetra Welling

Fairfield – Solano County

Keetra Welling is a member of the North Bay Stand Down Committee and serves as both the Military Liaison and the Logistics Coordinator. Since 2010, she has organized ongoing fundraising events to support the Stand Down and has been instrumental in helping coordinate organizations, community members, and local leaders in support of the Stand Down.

Her role as Operations Manager of Community Action North Bay further exemplifies her commitment to veterans and non-veterans alike. Through her work with this organization, she helps provide supportive housing and rapid re-housing services to those in need. Each year, Keetra's services help over 150 families and individuals out of homelessness through her inherent ability to build trust and motivate those around her.

Keetra has created an exceptional partnership with both the Vacaville and Fairfield Police Departments in connecting recently released inmates with basic services of food and shelter. She has been a vocal advocate for both the City of Vacaville and City of Fairfield's Homeless Outreach Teams and works proactively with the Solano County Veterans' Treatment Court as a volunteer. Keetra also works with the local food pantry to help serve over 1,500 families each month. Keetra's dedication to our veterans, homeless, and hungry is exemplary and her work has had a direct impact on the lives of many of our community's most disadvantaged.

Nominated by Ruth Matz



Kristy Wright

Woodland – Yolo County

As the Chief Executive Officer and Corporate Secretary for the Woodland Chamber of Commerce, Kristy Wright has made extraordinary contributions to the local community of Woodland. She has spent numerous years volunteering her time serving as a member of the Soroptimist International of Woodland and helping local high school students gain necessary skills to find a job.

Through her leadership, the Woodland Chamber of Commerce has strengthened its Work Ready Certificate Program, started hosting the nationally known program “Coffee with a Cop”, assisted with Google’s “Let’s Put Woodland on the Map” internet and website program, and had its first annual Ag Tour and Luncheon to highlight food processing and seed technology companies in her community.

Through her tireless promotion of Woodland and its business community and her dedication to the local students, Kristy has become a role model for the next generation of women leaders.

Nominated by Phil Hogan and Jim Hilliard



Mariko Yamada

Davis – Yolo County

Mariko Yamada was born in Denver, Colorado after her family's release from the Manzanar War Relocation Center and later earned a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Colorado, Boulder and a Masters in Social Work from the University of Southern California. Mariko first began her public service career in Washington, D.C. at the U.S. Census Bureau and later joined the U.S. Department of Commerce.

After moving to Davis in the late 90's, Mariko was appointed as a Personnel Commissioner for the City of Davis and to the Yolo County Health Council. Following that, she then went to work for Yolo County Supervisor David Rosenberg and in 2003, Mariko was elected as Yolo County Supervisor for District 4. During her tenure, she established the Yolo County Commission on Aging and Adult Services. In 2008, Mariko was elected to the California State Assembly where she saw thirty-one of her bills signed into law. In the Assembly she served as Chair of the Assembly Aging and Long Term Care Committee and senior member on the Assembly Committees on Agriculture; Water, Parks & Wildlife; and Veterans Affairs.

A professional social worker now in her 42nd year of public service, Mariko can always be counted on to lend an ear or dispense advice. She has been married since 1983 to Janlee Wong, also a social worker, and they are the parents of two accomplished adult daughters.

Nominated by Betsy Marchand



Rosalind Young-Reid

Fairfield – Solano County

Rosalind began her public service as a San Francisco Police Officer, and after her career as a police officer was cut short due to an on-duty injury, Rosalind continued to serve our most vulnerable youth through our education system. Rosalind volunteered as a Commissioner for the Solano County Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Commission, where she created partnerships with at risk youths and their families to determine how to best serve those at the Solano County Youth Facility.

While Rosalind was working full-time with the Vallejo City Unified School District as a Student Attendance Review Worker, she facilitated several “Parent Project” classes for parents, knowing that an educated student can overcome the disadvantages of their socio-economic background. With this in mind, she conducted home visits to truant students and worked with parents to ensure their children were able to get to school. For over 26 years, Rosalind has been a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, taking many leadership roles in committees, helping raise \$90,000 for college scholarships, mentor young women, and build partnerships with local youth advocacy organizations.

Rosalind is passionate about effective, strategic interventions to push students towards academic success and serve as a bridge between our disadvantaged youth and educational opportunities.

Nominated by Dionne McCullar

Garamendi California District 3

