



# Maryland Women's Hall of Fame & Maryland Young Women Leaders Awards

*2022 Induction and Awards Presentation*



*Making History, Building Our Future*

**Thursday, March 17, 2022**

*Presented by*

**Maryland Commission for Women**

**Women Legislators of the Maryland General Assembly, Inc.**

**Maryland Department of Human Services**

**The Foundation for the Maryland Commission for Women, Inc.**

# Maryland Commission for Women

51 Monroe Street, Suite 1034 ■ Rockville, MD 20850

[www.marylandwomen.org](http://www.marylandwomen.org)



*Yun Jung Yang, Chair*

The Maryland Commission for Women was first established in 1965 and was set in state law in 1971. An office in the Department of Human Services, the Commission is a 25-member advisory board whose duties outlined in its enabling legislation include: study the status of women in our state, recommend methods of overcoming discrimination, recognize women’s accomplishments and contributions, provide informed advice to the executive and legislative branches of government on the issues concerning the women of our state, and direct attention to the critical problems confronting women. Commissioners are appointed to four-year terms by the Governor, with confirmation by the Maryland State Senate, and serve without compensation.

## Officers

**Yun Jung Yang, Esq.**, Chair, Montgomery County  
**Tawanda A. Bailey**, First Vice Chair, Frederick County  
**Carole Jaar Sepe**, Second Vice Chair, Frederick County



*Tawanda Bailey,  
First Vice Chair*



*Carole Jaar Sepe,  
Second Vice Chair*

## Commissioners:



**Row 1 (L-R)** Andrea G. Bottner, Tammy Bresnahan, Deborah L. Cartee, Gloria Chang, Jenny Pena Dias-Hayes, Essita Duncan, Judith Kain Emmel, Kathryn M. Fiddler

**Row 2 (L-R)** Kristi S. Halford, Eugenia Henry, Lauren Lambert, Patricia McHugh Lambert, Beth Anne Langrell, Brenda McChriston, Dr. Maria B. Menucci, Roberta Pardo

**Row 3 (L-R)** Luanne Ruddell, Corinna Yi-Yuan Kuo Shen, Maxine Griffin Somerville, Evelyne S. Steward, Lenita A. Walker, Rev. Tamara E. Wilson

## Staff:

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director | Tammy Wise, Management Associate

## Letter from Secretary Padilla Department of Human Services



*Lourdes R. Padilla, Secretary*

Congratulations to the extraordinary women who will be inducted into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame this year, and to the exceptional young women who will receive the Maryland Young Women Leaders Award.

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) is the state's primary social service provider, serving over one million people annually. The Department, through its 24 local departments of social services, aggressively pursues opportunities to assist people in economic need, provide preventive services, and protect vulnerable children and adults in each of Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City.

Our vision is of a Maryland where people independently support themselves and their families and where individuals are safe from abuse and neglect.

We are the proud home of the Maryland Commission for Women and are pleased to support its work to assure that every resident of our great state, regardless of gender or identity, has access to the same opportunities to achieve their very best.

The Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and Maryland Young Women Leader Awards are one way of highlighting the contributions women have made and continue to make to our history and our future. We commend the Commission for Women for this work and extend our very best wishes to all of this year's honorees.

Lourdes R. Padilla

Department of Human Services



## 2022 Achievement and Recognition Committee



*Roberta Pardo  
ARC Chair*

**Roberta Pardo, Chair**  
**Lauren Lambert, Vice Chair**  
**Maxine Somerville, Vice Chair**

### **Committee Members:**

Andrea Bottner, Deborah Cartee, Gloria Chang, Judith Emmel  
Brenda McChriston, Corinna Shen, Evelyne Steward

Since the inception of the Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame in 1985, the Commission for Women has memorialized the often unknown or overlooked contributions of women to our state’s and our nation’s history.

Every year in March, we recognize women whose achievements are of historic significance and whose accomplishments help to advance the rights of women and girls. Each year, the Commission for Women also recognizes young women in high school with records of academic excellence, outstanding leadership and extraordinary community service.

The theme for our celebration of Women’s History Month this year is Valiant Women: Making History, Building Our Future.

In March, 2022 we are inducting five extraordinary women into the Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame, and we are recognizing five young women – future leaders, every one – with the Maryland Young Women Leader Award.

Much appreciation is due to all the ARC Committee members who worked so hard on this project this year.

Please explore this publication to learn more about the Commission for Women, The Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame, the Maryland Young Women Leaders Award, and to learn more about each of our honorees.

Thank you!



## 2022 Maryland Women's Hall of Fame

*Maxine Griffin Somerville, ARC Committee Vice Chair*



*Maxine Griffin Somerville*

This year, as we celebrate Maryland women who have made history, we honor a woman who worked in the National Security Agency's computer coding program before any of us knew much about computers at all. We honor the first woman astronaut to go into space after the Challenger disaster. We will honor two extraordinary human and civil rights advocates and a woman whose advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities is unprecedented.

These exceptional women all had a vision of a better world, and in this booklet, we pay tribute to them and to thank them for their extraordinary and selfless dedication.

The [Maryland Women's Hall of Fame](#) is a rich source of biographies of women who made significant and lasting contributions to the history and culture of our state and our nation. Established in 1985 as a partnership between the Maryland Commission for Women and the Women Legislators of Maryland, the Hall of Fame honors Maryland women whose lives and work are of historic significance to the economic, political, and cultural life of the state.

Each year the Maryland Commission for Women and the Women Legislators of Maryland call for nominations of women who have made history in fields such as the arts, athletics, business, community advocacy, education, government, the humanities, human rights, law, medicine, the military, philanthropy, and science. We are so appreciative of the independent, all-volunteer committee representing leaders of state-wide women's organizations that reviewed the nominations and selected those to be inducted into the Hall of Fame this year. Biographies of the honorees are displayed at the website of the Maryland State Archives at: <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/educ/exhibits/womenshallfame/html/index.html>. A physical exhibit of the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame is located on the campus of Notre Dame of Maryland University in Baltimore.



## 2022 Maryland Women's Hall of Fame Selection Committee

**Margie Kotzalas**, Secretary, Business & Professional Women of Maryland (BPW/MD)

**Rachel Mygatt**, Board of Directors, Maryland Women's Heritage Center (MWHC)

**Roberta Pardo**, Commissioner, Maryland Commission for Women

**Maxine Griffin Somerville**, Commissioner, Maryland Commission for Women

# Maryland Women's Hall of Fame Honorees

1985 – 2021

## 1985

Margaret Brent \*  
Rachel Carson\*  
Hon. Rita C. Davidson \*  
Hon. Gladys Noon Spellman  
Harriet Ross Tubman\*

## 1986

Lillie Carroll Jackson \*  
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton\*  
Henrietta Szold\*  
Jeannette Rosner Wolman  
H. Margret Zassenhaus, M.D.

## 1987

Clara Barton\*  
Frances Ellen Watkins Harper\*  
Juanita Jackson Mitchell  
Mary Shaw Shorb, Ph.D.  
Helen Brooke Taussig, M.D.\*

## 1988

Hon. Barbara Ann Mikulski  
Sadie Kneller Miller \*  
Mary Eliza Risteau \*  
Martha Carey Thomas \*  
Verda Freeman Welcome

## 1989

Bertha Sheppard Adkins \*  
Eugenie Clark, Ph.D.  
Hon. Lavinia Margaret Engle\*  
Lena King Lee  
Estelle R. Ramey, Ph.D.

## 1990

Hon. Lucille Maurer  
Enolia Pettigen McMillan  
Pauli Murray\*  
Adele Hagner Stamp \*  
Mary Lemist Titcomb\*

## 1991

Rita R. Colwell, Ph.D.  
Mary Elizabeth Lange\*  
Claire McCardell\*  
Bessie Moses, M.D.\*  
Alta Schrock, Ph.D.

## 1992

Annie Armstrong\*  
Anna Ella Carroll\*  
Rose Kushner  
Hon. Margaret Collins Schweinhaut  
Carmen Delgado Votaw

## 1993

Hon. Rosalyn Blake Bell  
Lucille Clifton  
Elizabeth King Ellicott\*  
Jean Spencer\*  
Martha Ellicott Tyson\*

## 1994

Hon. Rosalie Silber Abrams  
Mary Elizabeth Banning\*  
Harriet Elizabeth Brown  
Hon. Constance A. Morella  
Mary Adelaide Nutting\*

## 1995

Jill Moss Greenberg  
Mary L. Nock\*  
Amanda Taylor Norris, M.D.\*  
Nettie Barcroft Taylor  
Euphemia M Goldsborough  
Wilson\*

## 1996

Madeleine L. Ellicott\*  
Ethel Llewellyn Ennis  
Mary Digges Lee\*  
Brigid G. Leventhal, M.D.\*  
Barbara Robinson

## 1997

Diane L. Adams, M.D.  
Sol del Ande Mendez Eaton  
Catherine R. Gira, Ph.D.  
Hon. Helen L. Koss  
Rosa Ponselle\*

## 1998

Constance Ross Beims  
Mary Katherine Goddard\*  
Elaine Ryan Hedges\*  
Mary Carter Smith

## 1999

Florence Riefle Bahr\*  
Lillian C. Compton\*  
Edith Houghton Hooker\*  
Elizabeth Fran Johnson  
Bernice Smith White

## 2000

Constance Uriolo Battle, M.D.  
Lois Green Carr  
Sonia Pressman Fuentes  
Josephine Jacobsen  
Rosetta Stith, Ph.D.

## 2001

Kathleen Feeley, S.S.N.D.  
Misbah Khan, M.D.  
Charmaine Krohe, S.S.N.D.  
Eunice Kennedy Shriver  
Sandra W. Tomlinson, Ph.D.

## 2002

Mabel Houze Hubbard  
Florence P. Kendall  
Mary Young Pickersgill\*  
Hon. Lorraine Sheehan

## 2003

Viriginia Walcott Beauchamp  
Edith Clarke\*  
Hon. Kathryn J. DuFour  
Ruth L. Kirschstein, M.D.  
Etta H. Maddox\*  
Deborah A. Yow

## 2004

Emily Edmonson\*  
Nancy Grasmick, Ph.D.  
Esther McCready  
Margaret Byrd Rawson  
Vivian V. Simpson\*

## 2005

Shoshana S. Cardin  
B. Olive Cole\*  
Susan R. Panny, M.D.  
Edyth H. Schoenrich, M.D.,  
M.P.H.

## 2006

Susan P. Baker  
Liebe Sokol Diamond, M.D.  
Bea Gaddy\*  
Marilyn Hughes Gaston, M.D.  
Rebecca Alban Hoffberger  
Grace Snively\*

## 2007

Colonel Annette M. Deener  
Sally T. Grant  
Prasanna Nair, M.D., M.P.H.  
Karen H. Rothenberg, J.D.,  
M.P.A.  
Hon. Audrey E. Scott

## 2008

Eleanora Fagan, "Billie  
Holiday" \*  
Ramona McCarthy Hawkins,  
R.Ph.  
Ellen Moses Heller  
Hon. Pauline Menes  
Toby Barbara Orenstein  
Emily Wilson Walker, M.D.\*

## 2009

Ilia Feher\*  
Diane Griffin, M.D., Ph.D.  
Harriet Legum  
Allyson Solomon  
Anne St. Clair Wright\*

## 2010

Claire M. Fraser-Leggett, Ph.D.  
Anne Catherine Hoof Green\*  
Irene Morgan Kirkaldy\*  
Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps  
Bernice R. Sandler, Ph.D.  
Lillie D. Shockley

## 2011

Lucy Diggs Slowe\*  
Carol Greider, Ph.D.  
Barbara Holdridge  
Ligia Peralta, M.D.F.A.A.P.,  
F.S.A.H.M.  
Gertrude Poe  
June Willenz

## 2012

Maureen Black, Ph.D.  
Margaret Dunkle  
Hon. Diana Gribbon Motz  
Hon. Nancy Kopp  
Alice Manicur, Ed.D.  
Gwendolyn Rooks

## 2013

Hon. Helen Delich Bentley  
Hon. Jean B. Cryor\*  
Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.

Hon. Ellen Sauerbrey  
Linda Shevitz  
Beatrice Tignor, Ed.D.

## 2014

Dorothy Bailey  
Agnes Kane Callum  
Renee Fox, M.D.  
Susan Goering  
Henrietta Lacks\*  
Ann Cipriano Rees

## 2015

Hon. Beverly B. Byron  
Gail de Planque, Ph.D.\*  
Mary S. Feik  
Katherine L. O'Brien, M.D.  
Linda Singh  
Sue Fryer Ward\*

## 2016

Sophia Arabatzis Balis, D.D.S.  
Oretha Bridgwaters-Simms  
Mary C. Goodwillie\*  
Elaine Danforth Harmon\*  
Joanne Katz, Sc.D.  
Lizette Woodworth Reese\*

## 2017

Marsha Coleman-Adebayo, Ph.D.  
Carolyn W. Colvin  
Hon. Donna Edwards  
Mary Elizabeth Garrett\*  
Katharine Blodgett Gebbie, Ph.D.\*  
Kathleen Genevieve "Katie" Ledecy  
Helen Maroulis  
Lilian Welsh, M.D. \*

## 2018

Sandra I. Barnes, Esq.  
Sandra Williams Ortega, Ph.D.  
Emily Saunders Plummer \*  
Rita L. Robinson  
Hattie N. Washington, Ph.D.

## 2019

Hon. Marielsa A. Bernard, Esq.  
Augusta T. Chissell\*  
Dominique Dawes  
Virginia Hall\*  
Hon. Rosa "Rosie" Gumtaotao Rios  
Evelyn Williams Townsend\*  
Phyllis B. Trickeett  
Pauline Woo Tsui\*

## 2020

Victorine Quille Adams\*  
Evelyn O. A. Darden  
Claire L. Parkinson, Ph.D.  
Nancy Grace Roman, Ph.D.\*  
Leslie R. Wolfe, Ph.D.\*

## 2021

Elizabethn "Liz" Bobo  
Margaret Briggs Gregory Hawkins\*  
Rev. Dr. Ruby Reese Moore  
Nancy K. Welker, Ph.D.  
Celeste Revillon Winans\*

\* Posthumously inducted



## **Dorothy (Dottie) Toplitzky Blum (1924 – 1980)** **Computer Scientist, Cryptanalyst, Information Technology Pioneer**

*Nominated by Eileen G. Buckholtz*

Dorothy Toplitzky Blum, known to all as Dottie, was a computer pioneer, cryptanalyst and one of the most significant computer scientists in the country during the early days of computing. She was also one of the most outstanding women in government at the time. As an Armed Forces Security Agency and National Security Agency employee, Dottie worked on the Army's Bombe used for breaking codes during WWII and helped develop Harvest/Stretch – IBM's most sophisticated system of that era. She worked on early versions of FORTRAN, a scientific computer language especially helpful to NSA.

She was one of the first to apply computer processing to solve difficult cryptologic problems. For 30 years, she was an extraordinary manager and master planner for computing and telecommunications at NSA. Just as important to her legacy was her support and mentorship for so many women computer scientists, now recognized as “Queens of Code.” Dottie served as a board member of Women in NSA (WIN), the agency's women's empowerment group. She was a senior advisor and provided career guidance that helped create career opportunities for many women.

Dottie was born in New York City in 1924. At the age of 16, she enrolled as a Chemistry major in Brooklyn College. However, it was a course in Cryptanalysis that changed her life and led her to accept a job with the war effort in Washington, D.C. As a member of the Signal Intelligence Service, she worked on cryptanalysis of enemy messages, codes and ciphers for the Army and control of the Army cipher and other computer machines.

She earned the respect of her mostly male co-workers and often represented the group at training and meetings like the Association for Computing Machinery, which was established in 1947. By the 1950s, Dottie was actively involved with the new first-generation computers and technology. Both Dottie and Grace Hopper are listed on the 1948 roster of the fledgling group.

In the 1960s, she worked as a computer scientist and manager designing critical computer systems and automate processes – both business and operational. In 1972, she was appointed Chief of the NSA Computer Operations Organization (C7), the only woman manager in the organization at the time and one of the highest-ranking women in the entire agency.

In the mid-1970s, she was appointed chief of the planning organization, taking on the massive job of evaluation, forecasting, and supporting computer and telecommunications requirements for NSA organizations world-wide. Her insights and knowledge of technology, end-users and the mission, developed the roadmap for NSA's IT success for the next decade.

To honor her memory, WIN created the Dorothy T. Blum Award, presented annually for more than 30 years to recognize NSA employees for excellence in employee personal and professional development.

In 2004, Dottie Blum was inducted into NSA's Hall of Honor. In 2017, the agency named the Dorothy Blum High Performance Computing Center in her honor.

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*“NSA is one of the most exciting places to work if you're in the Computer Science area. This is because of the wealth of applications that we have and the different fields to which computers have been applied. If you look around, there is not any discipline at NSA, including the areas of Management and Administration, to which computers have not been applied in some form.” – Dorothy Toplitzky Blum*



**Mary Cleave, Ph.D., P.E.**  
**NASA Astronaut, Environmental Engineer**

*Nominated by Claire Parkinson, Ph.D., Maryland Women's Hall of Fame Inductee 2020*

Born on February 5, 1947 in Southampton, New York, Mary Cleave grew up in Great Neck, New York and graduated from Great Neck North High School in 1965. She graduated with honors from Colorado State University earning a bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences in 1969, and then earned a Master of Science degree in Microbial Ecology from Utah State University in 1975 and a Ph.D. in Civil and Environmental Engineering in 1979. While still in graduate school and until June 1980, she was employed at the Utah Water Research Laboratory and the Ecology Center at Utah State University, working on such topics as the effects of increased salinity on freshwater phytoplankton productivity.

In May of 1980, she was selected as a NASA astronaut. In 1985, she became the tenth woman to fly in space; and in 1989, she became the first woman to fly after the devastating 1986 *Challenger* explosion. During the first of her two Space Shuttle missions, STS-61B in 1985, she was the mission's flight engineer and operated the Shuttle's robot arm. During her second mission, STS-30 in 1989, she deployed the *Magellan* spacecraft on its journey to Venus, where it collected valuable information about the surface, atmosphere, and magnetic field of Earth's sister planet. In total, Dr. Cleave logged 10 days, 22 hours in space, orbiting the Earth 172 times and traveling 3.94 million miles.

Dr. Cleave moved to Annapolis, Maryland in 1991 to begin work at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt and has lived in Annapolis ever since. While working at Goddard, Dr. Cleave was appointed Project Manager for an ocean-focused satellite instrument (SeaWiFS), leading it through its development and early operational phases. SeaWiFS launched in 1997 and for the next 13 years collected an extraordinarily valuable dataset that has increased the understanding of climate change, oceanography, and atmospheric science. The mission had been at risk of cancellation when Dr. Cleave took over and reset its course, much to the benefit of the thousands of people who have used or been helped by the SeaWiFS data.

In 1998, she transitioned to NASA Headquarters, where, among other things, she became the first woman to lead NASA's Science Directorate. As Associate Administrator for Science, her responsibilities extended from Earth environmental measurements to spacecraft orbiting the Sun and spacecraft probing the outer reaches of the Solar System.

Since retiring from NASA in 2007, Dr. Cleave has been an active volunteer, speaking frequently to students and adults about her experiences as an astronaut and encouraging girls to pursue interests in science and engineering. Her volunteer activities include annual participation in the National Air and Space Museum's Women in Aviation Day, service as a member of the Annapolis Commission on Aging, participation on corporate boards and advisory committees, volunteering with the Maryland Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Festival, and speaking at several events of the Maryland Women's Heritage Center.

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*"As an early beneficiary of the efforts of the incredible women in Maryland who worked in support of Title IX, it is an honor to be part of this group. I would not have been able to accomplish what I did if they had not accomplished what they did." – Mary Cleave*



## **Gloria Richardson (1922 – 2021)** **Civil Rights Activist**

*Nominated by Tya Young, Granddaughter*

Gloria Richardson was the first woman in the country to lead a grassroots Civil Rights organization outside of the deep south. She helped found – and lead – the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee (CNAC) during a period of civil unrest more than 50 years ago caused by racism and lingering segregationist practices.

One of the most influential leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, even at the age of 99, she was a towering figure in American history. Throughout her life, she spoke truth to power and continued to inspire people around the world – and in her hometown.

Ms. Richardson’s story began in Baltimore during the Depression. Born to John and Mabel Hayes in 1922, She and her family moved to Cambridge, Maryland when she was six. Her mother’s family – the St. Clairs – were prominent and politically active. Her grandfather – Herbert St. Clair – owned real estate, operated numerous businesses and was the sole African American member of the City Council.

At the age of 16, Ms. Richardson left Cambridge to attend Howard University. She graduated in 1942 with a B.A. in Sociology and worked for the federal government during World War II. When the war ended, she returned to Cambridge. Despite her degree and intelligence, no agencies would hire a black social worker. She married Harry Richardson, a local schoolteacher, and was a homemaker for 13 years while raising their children.

Her formal foray into the Civil Rights Movement grew from her daughter Donna’s participation in protests of segregation and racial inequality in Cambridge. Ms. Richardson helped form – and was selected to lead – the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee, a civil rights campaign in her hometown.

She advocated economic justice, demanding not only racial desegregation but also good jobs, housing, schools, and health care. She was an early supporter of the use of violence in self-defense when necessary. In an iconic photo, she is seen boldly pushing away a national guardsman’s rifle after Maryland Governor Millard Tawes enacted martial law.

In July 1963 – while her city was still under the Guard’s police presence – she met with U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy to negotiate the “Treaty of Cambridge,” an agreement covering desegregation, housing and employment issues. The following month, she took to the stage at the pivotal March on Washington, one of six “Negro Women Fighters for Freedom” on the program; however, the male organizers permitted none of the female freedom fighters a turn at the microphone.

As a steadfast and resolute leader of this human rights campaign, she developed effective strategies and used creative tactics to advance Black liberation, working to dismantle Maryland’s system of white supremacy that, among other offenses, denied Black people access to public accommodations and fair employment opportunities, and access to adequate housing and healthcare. Never willing to compromise on Black people’s rights, Ms. Richardson became a model of leadership for younger activists, especially women, from all racial backgrounds.

In 2017, the state of Maryland honored her legacy by dedicating February 11 as “Gloria Richardson Day,” making her the only living person on record in the state to have an official day declared by a governor in her honor. Today, visitors to Cambridge are greeted by an image of Gloria Richardson boldly demanding justice. One of dozens of African Americans featured on a 50’ x 20” mural, she is prominently placed left of center next to Dorchester native and Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman.

Even up to her last moments, she maintained the same radical demeanor to civil rights activism that she held for decades. As she watched from her New York City apartment window, she was inspired by the younger generation, of multiple races, protesting for racial equality after the killing of George Floyd.

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*“A first-class citizen does not beg for freedom. A first-class citizen does not plead to the power structure to give him something that the whites have no power to give or take away. Human rights are human rights, not white rights.”*

*– Gloria Richardson*



**Beatrice (Bea) Rodgers, MSW,  
Community Activist for Persons with Disabilities**

*Nominated by Linda Raines, Mental Health Association of Maryland*

Bea Rodgers made significant contributions to Maryland residents with disabilities throughout a career spanning more than half a century. Born in Hibbing, Minnesota, Ms. Rodgers moved to Maryland in 1965 as a young woman. She earned a master's degree in 1968 at The National Catholic School of Social Service, The Catholic University of America. Her community advocacy for people with disabilities started with the Mental Health Association of Prince George's County in 1968 where she served as a volunteer, Board President and later Executive Director. In 1983 she was appointed Director of the Prince George's County Commission for Individuals with Disabilities and in 1995 was appointed by the Governor as Director of the Maryland Office for Individuals with Disabilities.

Ms. Rodgers has provided public policy consultation and leadership and played a pivotal role in securing profound advances on disability-related issues at the county, state and federal levels of government. She has directed and worked with many public and private sector human service programs including the Prince George's County Department of Social Services, Community Crisis Services, College Park Business and Professional Women's organization, the ARC of Maryland, and the Mental Health Association of Maryland. During her tenure at various agencies, she mentored numerous young women, many of whom moved into administrative and executive leadership positions in various fields.

She has demonstrated leadership in organizational development, systems change, community organization and coalition building, and public policy. She has been actively involved in efforts to promote equitable services and programs for all citizens including her leadership role in the 1972 development of the first hotline in the United States for deaf individuals.

As Director of the Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities, Ms. Rodgers was responsible for state compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and developed numerous outstanding and enduring programs supporting people throughout Maryland. While co-chair of the state's task force to implement the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead vs. Georgia*, she led Maryland's expansion of community-based disability services which resulted in the closure of two state residential institutions. In 1989, with the creation of the Guaranteed Loan Program administered by the Maryland Assistive Technology in her agency, hundreds of Marylanders received lower guaranteed loans to secure needed assistive technology. Each year, while new loans are secured, other loans are repaid, with an average of 3% or less defaulting.

Her office led the establishment of the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), starting in 2000, from which more than 400 Maryland youth with disabilities have benefitted. This unique one-week leadership program for high school students encourages independent living and offers leadership skills and career-goal setting, with many returning to share their new-found careers. This valuable program has spread across the country to more than 30 states. Among her many other advocacy roles over the course of her distinguished career, she was appointed to the Prince George's County Commission for Women in 2021.

Ms. Rodgers has been tireless in her quest to leave her community a better place than she found. She is a consummate professional and consumer advocate who brought disparate communities together in common cause to build the services people need and ensure the rights to which they are entitled.

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*Throughout my career, I have been blessed with many opportunities that allowed me to work with and on behalf of children, adolescents, adults and seniors in collaboration with numerous disability advocates. It has been my philosophy that with opportunities comes a responsibility to give back – it has been my intent to live up to this to the best of my ability whether I was working in government, volunteering and/or working in the non-profit sector. – Bea Rodgers*



## **Odessa M. Shannon (1928 – 2020)** **Education and Human Rights Advocate**

*Nominated by Arthur Williams*

Odessa M. Shannon was born in Washington, D.C. on July 4, 1928 to Gladys and Raymond McKenzie. She was educated in Washington's public schools, graduating from Dunbar High School as Valedictorian with a perfect SAT score. The only black student in her class, she earned her B.A. from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, graduating on the Dean's List.

Ms. Shannon began her public career as a teacher in Baltimore public schools. She knew of Montgomery County public school's reputation, so she and her family relocated from Washington D.C. to Silver Spring, Maryland as her daughter was about to enter the first grade. She lived in Silver Spring for the remainder of her life.

Early on, she realized it was necessary for African Americans to organize to ensure equality in her new community, and her passion for Montgomery County politics was born. She entered the federal government in the computer field. While actively participating in Montgomery County civic duties, she continued to rise through the ranks to one of the highest nonpolitical positions in the Senior Executive Service: National Program Director for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In this position, she was responsible for the operation of 49 field offices nationwide and the work sharing agreements with all the state and local human rights agencies.

After retiring from the federal government, Ms. Shannon's focus turned to her local community. She was the first black woman ever elected to the Montgomery County School Board in 1982 and served there until she was appointed Special Assistant to the County Executive in 1984. She was the first woman ever to hold this position. From 1995 to 2008, she served as Executive Director of the Montgomery County Human Rights Commission.

While raising her two children, she served as President of the local Jack and Jill chapter and then as Regional Director of the Eastern Region. Ms. Shannon served on the Board of Directors of several organizations including Montgomery Housing Partnership, Harriet's List, United Way, the Montgomery County Arts Council, the Regional Institute of Children and Adolescents, and Positive Shades of Blacks. She was one of the original directors of the National Political Congress of Black Women. A graduate of Leadership Montgomery in 1997, she was also a member of the Coalition Opposed to Violence and Extremism.

She was the founder of the Montgomery County Human Rights Hall of Fame and is included in the Women's History Archives of the Montgomery County Commission for Women. Ms. Shannon received numerous awards throughout her career for her many accomplishments and advocacy including the Lifetime Achievement Award for Volunteerism from President Obama, the Distinguished Community Leadership Award from County Executive Leggett, Maryland's Hornbook Award for Outstanding Service to Education, the MCPS Award for Distinguished Service to Public Education, and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Award for Exceptional Achievement in Advancing the Rights of Minorities and Women.

She was listed in several Who's Who, including Who's Who in Black America, the World's Who's Who of Women and the Hall of Fame of the International Who's Who of Business and Professional Women. She was awarded the Outstanding Public Service Award from the American Society for Public Administration, and the Women of Vision Award from the Montgomery County Commission for Women. For her significant achievements and contributions, the County named a middle school in her honor. She devoted her last years to serving with the 1977-2 Action Group and served as a commissioner on the Montgomery County Commission on Aging.

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*"Becoming the first woman, or first black, or first black woman, or the first anything, requires that you have a hard head, a tough skin, a certain amount of courage (or what some people would call sheer foolhardiness), and a lot of support from the people who care about you."*

*– Odessa M. Shannon*

## 2022 Maryland Young Women Leaders Award

*Lauren M. Lambert, ARC Committee Vice Chair*



*Lauren M. Lambert*

The [Maryland Young Women Leaders Award](#) was first established as the Women of Tomorrow Award in 1997 to recognize extraordinary young women who have demonstrated an exceptional commitment to leadership, community service and academic excellence. In 2021, the name of the award was changed to more accurately reflect its purpose of recognizing and encouraging future women leaders. With a generous donation received from the Pai Ping Foundation to the Foundation for the Maryland Commission for Women, the honor will include a \$500 scholastic award for each student. Five extraordinary young women were selected for this award from the more than sixty nominations received from across the state. We are very pleased to introduce these outstanding students and future leaders.



## 2022 Maryland Young Women Leaders Award Selection Committee

**Sharon Johnson**, Maryland Women's Bar Association

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**Roberta Pardo**, Commissioner, Maryland Commission for Women





**Anna Devoto, 12th Grade**  
**Southern High School, Anne Arundel County**

*Nominated by Ashley Blanchette, School Counselor, Southern High School*

Anna Devoto is a senior at Southern High School in Anne Arundel County. She has a weighted GPA of 4.59. Anna is President of Southern High School's Acts of Kindness Club, choreographer, assistant director and dancer for Southern High School Dance Company, third baseman for the Southern High Varsity Softball team, President of Science National Honor Society, and volunteer coordinator for Gigi's Playhouse GenG Youth Board where she collaborates with other high schoolers to fundraise and plan major events to benefit individuals with Down Syndrome. Last spring, she coordinated easter basket building for nursing home residents and last winter she coordinated blanket wrapping for veterans at the Holyoke Soldier's Home.

She is a student volunteer for the Anne Arundel Medical Center Pediatric ER/inpatient wing where she supports patients and families, and aids nurses in daily tasks. This past summer Anna volunteered for the Children's National Hospital Summer Volunteer Program where she designed and published a database of activities and games for patients as well as delegated responsibilities within a group to build a website and write a report. In the summer of 2020 Anna was a babysitter for a child on the autism spectrum and prepared materials and assisted in conducting virtual speech and occupational therapy for the child two to three times a week.

As someone who has always had a passion for math and science, Anna has been pulled towards medicine. However, personal experiences have directed that passion towards pediatric medicine, specifically. With an interest in neurology, she hopes to major in neuroscience while preparing for medical school with the dream of becoming a pediatric oncologist. She has always had a special place in her heart for children, but views medicine as an opportunity to employ math and science in a professional realm. The past couple of years have been especially challenging for her, having to care for family members while being away from home for extended periods of time, but such experience has proved invaluable as it has provided great motivation, teaching her to view obstacles through a positive lens.

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*As a leader, I aim to inspire positivity by healing children and bringing hope to uncertain situations. Leaders are those most entrusted by others and I therefore hope to be a leader in all aspects of my life while pursuing a career I love.*





**Sara Huelskamp, 12th Grade  
Northern Garrett High School, Garrett County**

*Nominated by Kaitlin Shirko, School Counselor, Northern Garrett High School*

Sara is a senior at Northern Garrett High School, where she has been President of the Class of 2022 for the last four years. She serves on the executive board of the Maryland Association of Student Councils as the Divisional Liaison representing the western region of the state. As President of the Garrett County Association of Student Councils, she is responsible for organizing county student council events. She participates in her school's mock trial team and is currently co-captain and a lead attorney. Sara is a member of the Bittering 4-H Club and is an active participant in the Garrett County Agricultural and Maryland State Fairs, where she has won numerous ribbons.

Sara has participated in FIRST robotics for seven years and is currently a member of FIRST Tech Challenge Team (FTC) 2818 G-FORCE, where she serves as lead electrician and editor of the engineering portfolio. She was named an EngineerGirl Ambassador by the National Academy of Engineering in 2019 and in 2021 and was named an FTC Dean's List Winner in recognition of her leadership and dedication to FIRST's mission. Living in a small, rural community with limited access to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), Sara is dedicated to exposing youth to opportunities in science and engineering. She is currently coaching a FIRST LEGO League Explore team and volunteers countless hours to bring STEM activities to local youth, as well as volunteering at local and state robotics events.

With a passion for volunteering, Sara has over 600 service hours documented with the school system. She believes in the importance of serving local organizations and making an impact in her community. She volunteers with local service organizations, such as the Kitzmiller Lions Club, the Garrett County Farm Bureau, Hospice of Garrett County, and local churches, as well as other organizations.

Sara plans to attend West Virginia University to study criminology and psychology. She intends to continue serving others and working to improve her community.

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*A leader knows the importance of giving back to her community. A good leader knows how a small action can have a great impact.*



**Gabrielle Moore, 11th Grade  
St. Charles High School, Charles County**

*Nominated by Justin Ryan, School Counselor, St. Charles High School*

Gabrielle Elise Moore is an 11th grade Honors and AP student at St. Charles High School in Waldorf, Maryland where she serves as the Student Government Vice President. She currently has a 4.4 GPA and has always had high honors (including straight As all three years of middle school). She is representing St. Charles for the second year as a Model UN Liaison (after placing second overall in 2021), and was selected for the Mock Trial Team as the key defense witness.

Gabrielle was recently appointed to the Charles County Youth Advisory Council, and serves as the Environmental Affairs Chair of the Charles County Association of Student Councils. She has interned for Congressman Steny Hoyer for the past two years. Gabrielle is the Teen President for the Southern Maryland Chapter of Jack and Jill of America. In addition, she is the First Vice President and “Miss Top Teen” of the Southern Maryland Chapter of Top Teens of America. She is also Financial Secretary for Top Teens Area II, and the Charles County NAACP Youth Council Secretary.

Gabrielle has participated in several prestigious academic and leadership programs, including with the United Nations, the U.S. Naval Academy, Harvard University, Spelman College, Maryland Leadership Workshop, Howard University and Hampton University. Gabby was inducted into the National Junior Honor Society in 2018 and is applying for membership in the National Honor Society in 2022. She is currently an Ambassador with the Young Black Leadership Alliance and a member of the National Society of High School Scholars. Gabrielle has aspirations of one day combining her loves of science and law into a successful career. She and her family are members of Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia.

In less than two years, Gabrielle overcame two traumatic injuries. The first was an injury to her right (dominant) hand in middle school while playing volleyball. With her right hand in a cast, Gabrielle taught herself to write with her left hand and maintained her perfect 4.0 average. In her first few months of high school, Gabrielle dislocated her knee and spent months on crutches. She eventually had knee replacement surgery – followed by months of grueling physical therapy. Once again, Gabrielle maintained high honors and her extracurricular activities.

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*The world has an abundance of many things, except for kindness.*



**Mirna Obeid, 12th Grade  
Clarksburg High School, Montgomery County**

*Nominated by Kimberly Moore, Teacher, Clarksburg High School*

Mirna Obeid is a senior at Clarksburg High School in Montgomery County, with a 4.58 weighted GPA. Mirna is a first-generation immigrant and a vibrant, hardworking, extraordinary young adult. Born in Syria, she moved to the U.S. in 2016 at the end of 6th grade. Placed in the English as a Second Language (ESOL) class, teachers weren't expecting her to take regular English classes until her sophomore year of high school, but her test scores showed enough proficiency for her to enroll in grade-level English classes in 8th grade.

Despite the challenges of acclimating to her new environment in middle school, Mirna won the American Legion Award in her 8th-grade graduation.

In high school, Mirna took many challenging Honors and Advanced Placement courses and earned high scores and grades. She also took an Architecture class at a technology school and a Methods of Construction class at her community college through a scholarship.

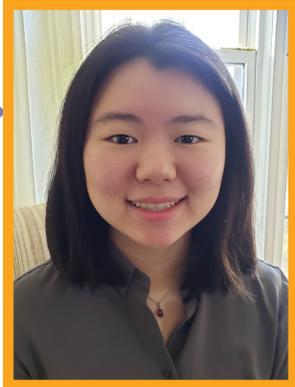
In her thirst to constantly challenge herself, Mirna made it a mission to participate in many extracurricular activities to expand her knowledge and experience. She joined the her school's debate club in her freshmen year and won three county-wide debates. She was part of the Student Government Association at her school, and interned for a county-wide college preparedness program - Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES). She is also pursuing many leadership positions as a founder and president of her school's tutoring club, as president of the National Social Studies Honor Society school chapter, as treasurer of the National Honor Society school chapter, and as president of her technology school's Skills USA chapter.

In addition to applying to 11 colleges during her senior year, Mirna balances her role in all of her leadership positions, takes two Advanced Placement classes, and works as a customer service representative on weekends to save for college.

Mirna intends to pursue a career in Architecture in hopes of bringing a divided world closer together through buildings that furnish positive societal growth and leave a positive impact on their inhabitants.

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*With great dreams, ambitions, and willpower, the limit is no longer merely the sky, but beyond it.*



**Allison Xu, 10th Grade**  
**Walter Johnson High School, Montgomery County**

*Nominated by Janelle Ryan, Teacher, Walter Johnson High School*

Allison Xu is a straight-A student, with a 4.0 unweighted and 4.57 weighted GPA. She is the secretary of her school's DECA/FBLA Club and won first place in marketing at DECA States, which qualified her for the 2021 international competition. She also participates in Mock Trial and Spanish Honor Society.

Allison is passionate about writing. Her poetry and short stories have been published in several anthologies and many literary journals such as The Weight Journal, The Daphne Review, and Teen Ink Magazine. Her work has been recognized by the New York Times, Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, Bluefire Creative Writing Contest, and more. She is a member of the Youth Advisory Board of the Society of Young Inklings and a journalist for her school newspaper and county online newspaper.

During the lockdown in early 2020, she created a "Story-writing Package for Grades 1-5," a printable product teaching children creative writing. She posted it on a digital selling website for \$7.99 and raised about \$600, all of which was donated to the Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center for their Covid-19 patient care.

In early 2021, to fight against anti-Asian hate, she led an initiative, "Reading Books from AAPI Authors," to build a bridge between AAPI authors and young readers. She collected over 250 brand-new books sent by AAPI authors and donated them to 15 K-12 schools in Maryland for their AAPI Heritage Month celebrations. Her project encourages open mindsets and respect for diversity.

She is now leading a team of high school students on a new initiative called "Simply Soft Skills" which helps teenagers build soft skills such as communication, creativity, and leadership. On their website, [simplysoftskills.org](https://simplysoftskills.org), Allison and her team create resources that bring a wealth of tips and expertise on soft skills. She also invites experts with specialties in different areas of soft skills to share their insights on her podcast.

Allison was awarded the Dr. Alan Cheung Community Leadership Scholarship for her contribution to community service.

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*The seed of hope is always there; someone just needs to be willing to plant it.*

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