

2017 KATHARINE F. ERSKINE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Honored For Their Commitment to their Profession, Community and YWCA Mission



ELIZABETH BACON *ARTS & CULTURE*

Elizabeth Bacon serves as the Coordinator for the Clemente Course in the Humanities, administered by Worcester Interfaith with major support from MassHumanities, WPI, The Stoddard Charitable Trust and the Greater Worcester Community Foundation. The program removes barriers to higher education for Worcester's low-income individuals. She supports a diverse student body ranging from high school drop-outs to new immigrants, helping them find a better path for themselves and their families, and engages all of Worcester's colleges, the faith community, nonprofits, government, and artists in this effort. The Clemente Program was cut in 2000 due to budget deficits, but Elizabeth, working with other local leaders, brought it back and has been able to provide the course completely free—books, childcare, transportation, and meals included.

An accomplished educator, Elizabeth has taught elementary and middle school students for 30 years. She is the Founding

Director of two extracurricular civics programs for Worcester students: Blackstone Canal Horse and Wagon Tours—a youth leadership development program that teaches high-school students to explore and present Worcester's rich history to visitors, and This is MyCity!—a civics education program for elementary students. As Treasurer of the Board of Directors at Seven Hills Charter Public School, Elizabeth was able to bring Neighborhood Strings to the school, giving students access to violins, cellos, and other stringed instruments. In addition to her educational pursuits, Elizabeth is involved in the Worcester Women's History Project and the Jane Fund. She is also part of the YWomen speak series at the YWCA, furthering her commitment to racial justice.



CHRISTINE CASSIDY *BUSINESS & LAW*

Christine Cassidy is Senior Vice President and Chief Communications Officer at Fallon Health, where a civic-minded sensitivity and community focus are at the heart of her success. In 2014, Christine led Fallon's rebranding campaign where the company changed its name from Fallon Community Health Plan to Fallon Health. Under Christine's leadership, Fallon has been able to successfully convey the value that health plans bring to the community, shifting the high-tech, often confusing image of health insurance to a more high-touch, face-to-face experience through the Fallon Health Information Center. Christine has also enhanced Fallon's internal communications for the organization's 1200 employees by launching an enterprise-wide intranet—a system that encourages employees to interact and communicate with one another—and the V-Team—a group of employees from a variety of departments who serve as a resource for employee

feedback. In addition to her role as a leader and mentor at Fallon, Christine is also a member of the Becker College Board of Trustees, the United Way of Central Massachusetts Women's Initiative, Girls, Inc. Board of Directors, and a committee member of the Worcester Women's Leadership Conference, which, in its eighth year, brings nationally-recognized speakers and role models to Worcester and brings women together to build their careers and share their experiences. Through her work with these organizations, Christine addresses the disparity of the lives of women and advances the cause of some of the most at-risk and underserved girls in the community.



GINGER NAVICKAS *COMMUNITY, SOCIAL SERVICE & GOVERNMENT*

Ginger Navickas was the Department Director for Domestic Violence Services at the YWCA of Central Massachusetts for 40 years until her retirement in 2012. During her tenure, she created a multi-faceted program of intervention services, prevention, and education that has become a model of domestic violence services across the state. In addition, she was Director of Transitional Housing at the YWCA, providing housing and services for at-risk women, including many immigrants and refugees. Her outstanding work has been recognized with several awards, including the Jane Doe Inc. Activist Spirit Award, the Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance (MOVA) Gerard D. Downing Leadership Award, and the Worcester County Bar Association Liberty Bell Award. Ginger has served on the Board of Directors of Employers Against Domestic Violence (EADV) and was the Chair of the local EADV chapter. She was Chair of Worcester's Coordinated Community

Response Network (CCRN), and, with the District Attorney's office, co-Chaired the High Risk Response teams in Leominster/Fitchburg, Clinton, Gardner/Winchendon, and Ayer. She also served on the Governor's Advisory Committee on Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault. In her retirement, Ginger continues to serve on the Daybreak Standing Committee and remains active in several community organizations, including ArtsWorcester, CASA, JHC Hospice and League of Women Voters. In her many roles, Ginger has mentored countless women and girls in the community, and she remains an invaluable committee member, advisor, volunteer, and advocate.

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MARY JO MARIÓN-FARRELL *EDUCATION*

As Assistant Vice President for Urban Affairs and Executive Director of the Latino Education Institute (LEI) at Worcester State University, Mary Jo Marión-Farrell lives and breathes her commitment to racial and social equity, using research-based curriculum to create high-impact programming for youth and families and coordinating research that informs policy and practice. Such programming includes early college programming; doubling the number of families served through LEI education developmental programs; revamping programs to create a continuum of services model for students ranging from pre-K through adult; increasing educational access and equity for Latino families aspiring to enroll in college; co-chairing the Mayoral Commission on Latino Educational Excellence in Worcester; developing and implementing a successful family engagement model; and assisting with replication

efforts in public schools in Springfield. Mary Jo coordinated and published research with Worcester State University faculty in the areas of School Discipline, Post-Secondary Education, and Student Achievement. Under her leadership, the LEI has effectively improved the social and cultural capital of hundreds of first-generation Latino families. Prior to her appointment at Worcester State University, Mary Jo served as Special Assistant and Chief Policy Advisor to the President of MassBay Community College, Associate Director of the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and Program Director for the National Council of La Raza—the Nation's premiere Latino advocacy organization. As a Bolivian immigrant, Mary Jo has committed much of her professional life to advancing policy issues affecting Latinos in the United States and Massachusetts in particular.



SARA CONNOR, N.P. *HEALTH, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY*

During her more than two decades of experience providing medical care as a family nurse practitioner in community health, Sara Connor has exemplified the outstanding qualities of sensitivity, understanding, and compassion in her care for patients, frequently going beyond the call of duty in addressing their needs. For the past ten years, Sara has served as the NP and Manager of the UMass Memorial Ronald McDonald Care Mobile, providing medical and dental care to medically underserved children and families at 11 community sites and 20 elementary schools in low-income neighborhoods across Worcester. Under Sara's leadership, the Care Mobile continues to significantly impact the health of Worcester's most at-risk community members, including immigrants and refugees. Guided by a strong belief in comprehensive care, Sara works to ensure that her patients are connected to insurance, a medical home, and other

needed social support services, including housing, advocacy, legal services, education, and food security. As a clinical instructor for UMass Graduate School of Nursing, Sara has mentored women by providing an opportunity for students to learn about the social and cultural factors that impact health equity among people of color and medically underserved populations. In addition to her work on the Care Mobile, Sara also volunteers as co-Chair of the Worcester Free Clinics Coalition, a group of free medical programs that assist people who face barriers to accessing healthcare.



DENEZIA FAHIE *2017 SPIRIT OF LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT*

Junior class president at North High School, Denezia Fahie works as a sexual health peer educator with the Get Real Teen Council of Planned Parenthood of Central Massachusetts, where she empowers other teenagers to educate their peers, families, and communities about human sexuality and health. Motivated by her commitment to teen sexual and mental health, Denezia has advocated for the inclusion of health classes as a vital part of high-school curriculum, and is involved in teaching a special curriculum to health-care providers that focuses on LGBTQ needs in health care. Denezia is also part of Planned Parenthood's Social Media Task Force, where she reaches out to youth via outlets such as Facebook and Instagram. She traveled to Boston to lobby at the Massachusetts State House, and to Washington, D.C. to participate in the Women's March on Washington. Denezia recently took a

leadership position with Girls Choice, a college-readiness, leadership, and empowerment program where she works to help other young women gain self-efficacy and empowerment. In addition to her work with Planned Parenthood and Girls CHOICE, Denezia is active with several social and racial justice organizations, including Black Legacy Now, Black Lives Matter, and is an ally of the Student Immigrant Movement. Denezia seeks to use these experiences and associations to one day build a political career where she can represent communities of color and continue to advocate for teens' health at local, state, and federal levels.
