

Bertha is gifted with remarkable literary talent. Her work has appeared in hundreds of literary journals and in several collections, and her translation of Beowulf was published in 2000. She has been the recipient several NYSCA and NYFA grants and residency fellowships to the McDowell Colony, the Millay Artists Colony, Jentel, Caldera, Saltonstall, Hedgebrook, and Hawthornden International Writers Residence (Scotland). Using this talent, Bertha has left a permanent mark on the Treadwell community through her work at Bright Hill.

What started as weekly poetry readings, Bright Hill has grown to become an established and respected literary organization, attracting authors and poets both locally and worldwide. Largely the result of Bertha's time and efforts, Bright Hill now offers youth and adult writing workshops, reading series, small press publishing, and boasts an impressive literary library. Bertha's excitement for literature and poetry, combined with an authentic passion for teaching, has fostered an increased appreciation for writing and the arts in the Catskills.

It is an honor to recognize Bertha and Bright Hill for their distinctive milestones. Leaving behind an organization marked by ingenuity, creativity, and passion, Bertha has given Bright Hill a buildable legacy which will grow in future years. I wish Bertha every happiness as she embarks on this new chapter, and I am confident that even in retirement she will continue to be an advocate for the literary arts. The 19th District and New York State are a better place because of Bertha and Bright Hill Press. I thank them for helping to make the Catskills a cultural center.

HONORING DEBRA HOOD OF  
HALEYVILLE, AL

**HON. ROBERT B. ADERHOLT**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 14, 2017*

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the talents, achievements and dedication of Mrs. Debra Hood on the occasion of her retirement as City Clerk of Haleyville, Alabama.

Debra Hood began her career with Haleyville 30 years ago and worked alongside numerous mayors and members of the city council. She has also worked with numerous municipal judges and attorneys in the municipal court system. As municipal judge for the city of Haleyville, I had the privilege to work alongside Debra back in the mid-1990s. Debra's goal was always to advance the city of Haleyville and make it a better place to live, work and raise a family.

During her three decades as clerk, Debra Hood has taken a particular interest in community and economic development. Her work has directly helped the city of Haleyville to continue to be one of the most prosperous communities in Winston County.

Debra, along with other local leaders, played a valuable role in keeping hundreds of jobs in Haleyville through Exxel Outdoors. Exxel provides 100 jobs for area citizens and is one of the major manufacturers of sleeping bag in the nation.

I would be remiss if I did not point out the most important job Debra has had as city clerk: the chief election official of the city. She has overseen numerous municipal elections in

the past 30 years, ensuring that the people of Haleyville had their voices heard at the ballot box.

Debra's family is also immeasurably important to her. She and her husband Gary have two children, daughter Dana Saylor and son Bruce Hood. Debra and Gary have six grandchildren: Sydney, Bryant, Titus, Elijah, Abigail and Lydia.

Representing the city of Haleyville, my hometown, and the Fourth Congressional District, I appreciate the hard work and the dedication that Debra has given the city over the past three decades.

Debra will be missed by those she has served for so many years, but I know she will continue to be active in her community. She has earned this retirement with her years of dedication. I wish her all the best in her retirement.

RECOGNIZING TOM THOMS, JIM  
MILLMAN AND TOM ROWE FOR  
THEIR EXTRAORDINARY COMMUNITY SERVICE—

**HON. CHERI BUSTOS**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 14, 2017*

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Tom Thoms, Jim Millman and Tom Rowe for their extraordinary service to children and families.

These three bicyclists took a 1,827 mile, 21 day bicycle ride from Itasca, Minnesota to Venice, Louisiana. These men set out on this journey with one common goal: to help break the cycle of child abuse by raising money and bringing attention to this pressing issue. They originally set a goal of raising \$42,000, but they drastically exceeded that goal by raising a total of \$108,494. All of the money raised went to three Quad-City charities—Alternatives, the Child Abuse Council, and Bethany for Children & Families. The men spent 146 hours on their bikes, which is the equivalent of six days and one night. Collectively, their bicycle tires spun more than eight million times.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mr. Thoms, Mr. Millman, and Mr. Rowe, once again, for their outstanding efforts and selfless community service. The generous actions of individuals such as these men make me especially proud to serve Illinois' 17th Congressional District.

IN RECOGNITION OF COMPUTER  
SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK

**HON. STEPHANIE N. MURPHY**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 14, 2017*

Mrs. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, when I think about America's future, I know that its success will be driven by the bright, technologically-savvy minds of our young people.

That is why I am honored to recognize the winner of my district's 2017 Congressional App Challenge: Carlson Sharpless, a senior at Lake Brantley High School in Altamonte Springs, Florida.

Translating a good idea into lines of code, Carlson created an app called "Grammarlets," a tutoring program designed to help students

practice their grammar skills for the SATs. His creation stood out among several impressive and unique apps submitted by students seeking to solve everyday problems.

What these students have accomplished is an example of the kind of innovative thinking and entrepreneurial spirit that central Florida is known for.

As a nation, it's important that we continue to make meaningful investments in STEM education and that we empower our students with the tools needed to invent, to innovate, and to improve the lives of all Americans.

TRIBUTE TO RANDY HUGHES

**HON. DAVID YOUNG**

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 14, 2017*

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Randy Hughes. Randy was inducted into the Creston High School Hall of Fame as Distinguished Faculty on Friday, September 29, 2017.

For 36 years, Randy served the Creston community as an educator to their youth. He taught social studies with a relaxed style with which students could relate. He brought current events into the curriculum and related them to our country's history. He coached students for the Academic Decathlon for 10 years, served as the Student Council advisor and coached girls' tennis. After retirement from Creston high school, Randy taught at Southwestern Community College and continued to be an active part of the Creston community.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize Randy for receiving this award, and for providing the youth in Iowa's 3rd district the education that they will need to be successful. It is with great pride that I recognize leaders like Randy in the United States Congress and I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating him for this outstanding achievement and in wishing him nothing but the best.

IN RECOGNITION OF MS. IRIS  
LIZZETTE VÉLEZ

**HON. DAVID G. VALADAO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 14, 2017*

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Iris Lizzette Vélez for her service to my office and the constituents of California's Twenty First Congressional District of California over the past year.

Iris Vélez was born on April 3, 1960 in the beach town of Guánica, Puerto Rico to Iris Lucía Santana Colón and Félix Gilberto Vélez Quiñones. Both high school teachers, her parents instilled in Iris the importance and love of learning at a young age. Iris and her three siblings spent most of their time feeding animals, harvesting crops, and fishing on their grandparents' farm in San German, Puerto Rico. It was during this time that Iris developed a true love and respect for nature.

After spending her youth in Puerto Rico and completing her high school education at the age of sixteen, Ms. Vélez attended the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico, where she received a Bachelor's of Arts in Political Science and Government. Following the completion of her undergraduate studies, Ms. Vélez went on to complete two Master's degrees—the first in Political Science at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, and the second in Public Relations at Sacred Heart University in Santurce, Puerto Rico.

In 1980, Iris began her eight-year teaching career as a Professor of Political Science at the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico but, in 1988, she was able to combine her passions of nature, political science, and public affairs while serving as the Public Affairs Specialist for the National Park Service at the San Juan National Historic Site. After two years of service, Ms. Vélez moved on to work for the United States Forest Service first as a Public Affairs Specialist and later as Program Manager.

In February of 2017, Ms. Vélez accepted a Congressional Fellowship in my Washington, D.C. office through the Brookings Institution. During her time in my office, Iris was a vital member of my team having handled legislative issues relating to natural resources, forestry, and energy policy. Iris was also instrumental in organizing constituent outreach programs to teach fire safety to the people of the California's Twenty First Congressional District. Outside of work, Iris enjoys meeting new people, exploring different places, and attending live musical performances.

On December 15, 2017, Ms. Vélez's time in my office will come to an end as she moves on to continue her dedication to public service. While I know she is very excited about her upcoming journey, she will be greatly missed as a member of my team.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives to join me in commending Iris Lizzette Vélez for her public service to the people of California's Central Valley and wishing her well as she begins the next chapter of her life.

RECOGNIZING TYLER BUSSERT  
FOR HIS STATE TITLE IN CLASS  
1A GOLF

**HON. CHERI BUSTOS**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 14, 2017*

Mr. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Tyler Bussert, a senior at Riverdale High School, for earning the Class 1A title for the Illinois State Golf Championship.

Tyler Bussert shot a 36–37–73 both days at the state meet for a 146 total to earn his title as state champion, and I would like to recognize Tyler for this tremendous accomplishment. Tyler's first place win follows a ninth place finish as a sophomore and second place finish as a junior in the state championship. As a former athlete, I understand the amount of hard work and commitment it takes to earn such a title. Tyler is a competitor with strong dedication and work ethic. I am proud to see such young talent in our community, and to see him represent Port Byron on a state-wide platform.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to again formally congratulate Tyler Bussert on his title, and I join the rest of the community in wishing him every success in the future.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE SERVICE  
OF PHILLIP TODD STEPHENS

**HON. KEVIN BRADY**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 14, 2017*

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Phillip Todd Stephens and his over thirteen years of dedicated service to Team Brady and the people of the Eighth Congressional District of Texas.

A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Todd began his life of public service as a Medical Specialist in the United States Army, which included a posting in the Demilitarized Zone of the Korean Peninsula.

Upon completing his service in the military, Todd went on to earn two Bachelor's Degrees in Philosophy and Political Science at the University of Kentucky and a Master's Degree in Political Science from Eastern Kentucky University.

Soon after his graduation, Todd returned to public service and began working in the Kentucky General Assembly—first in the office of the President of the State Senate and later as a bill drafter for the Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection.

In 2004, Todd relocated to Washington, D.C., where he served as a Legislative Assistant in my congressional office for two years. Dedicated to working for the people of the Eighth District, Todd and his wife, Sarah, relocated their young family to The Woodlands, TX, in 2006. Todd served as my Director of Regional Issues, handling disaster relief efforts, local transportation issues, and many additional policy concerns directly affecting our communities. In 2013, Todd began working tirelessly as the District Director of my congressional offices in Conroe and Huntsville.

Todd's steady and caring personality has guided him throughout his many years of serv-

ice, and his dry humor and wit have time and again worked to encourage those around him and build relationships with the people of our community. He is an active member of Celebration Church and a volunteer with his son's Boy Scout troop—in addition to being a Texas burger and BBQ connoisseur.

Todd and Sarah, who also worked as my District Director, along with their children, Avery and Owen, are a perfect illustration of a family committed to serving their community.

On December 28, 2017, Todd will complete his final day of over thirteen years in my congressional office. While he will be sorely missed by my staff and me, I am fully confident that he will excel in his new role with The Woodlands Township. I am proud to join the entire Eighth District of Texas in thanking Todd for his years of public service and wishing him the best in the next chapter of his life.

TRIBUTE TO WAHL OPTICAL

**HON. DAVID YOUNG**

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 14, 2017*

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Wahl Optical of Council Bluffs, Iowa, for celebrating 80 years in business. Wahl Optical was founded in 1937 by Dr. G.H. Wahl. Today, they have two optometrists on staff who perform many services for their customers.

Bob Wahl, the current owner of his family business, has been working there since 1977. He came into the store to get his glasses fixed and started waiting on customers and answering the telephone. His father saw this and convinced his son to come on board to work in the family business. Bob decided to stay and give it a chance.

Over the years, Wahl Optical has built the reputation of being a friendly business, willing to go above and beyond for their customers. Bob said, "I take a lot of pride in making sure people in the Council Bluffs area have every opportunity to look as fashionable as they want to be."

Mr. Speaker, I commend and congratulate Wahl Optical for its many years of dedicated and devoted service to Council Bluffs, Iowa and the surrounding area. It is with great pride that I recognize them today and I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Wahl Optical for this outstanding achievement and in wishing them nothing but continued success.