

and loved figure.” He told the Post-Dispatch: “Her performances were very memorable. She had a strong presence and charisma. She read her poems kind of with a jazz beat. Her poems were not like anyone else’s, full of rich imagery.”

Madam Speaker, that career includes more than 50 years of performing, mentoring and teaching. Some call her a “wordsmith” and others call her a “word warrior,” noted Alderman Terry Kennedy, a longtime friend. He read part of her poem “Rivers of Women” noting that her writing cause people to “think differently.”

Born, Shirley Bradley Price in 1940 in St. Louis, Ms. LeFlore graduated from Sumner High School and attended Lincoln University before graduating from then Webster College and later from Washington University with a degree in psychology. Among her many achievements, she is founder of the Creative Arts and Expressions Lab, was an original member of the Black Artists Group (co-founded with her late husband, jazz musician Floyd LeFlore) and another underground activists poetry organization called Harmony.

An artist-in-residence at University City public schools, she taught at several colleges including Lindenwood University, Webster University, Harris-Stowe State University and the University of Missouri-St. Louis. As an assistant dean of students at Webster she inspired students such as “Black-ish” actress Jenifer Lewis, who credits LeFlore with having “saved my life,” the Post-Dispatch reported.

Though getting on in age, “She’s always had an intergenerational perspective,” said her daughter, Lyah LeFlore-Ituen, in the news article. “She wants to inspire young poets.”

“The fire is still there,” and as poet laureate, LeFlore can be an inspiration to young people, her daughter added.

A TV producer and writer, her daughter directed “Rivers of Women” for the Missouri History Museum. She called her mother a “living legend” and is working on a documentary about her. Also, she helped compile her mother’s 2013 book, “Brassbones & Rainbows.”

Among the greats she performed with include saxophonist Oliver Lake, trumpeter David Jackson and singer Fontella Bass. People flocked to hear her read at St. Louis’ Duffs restaurant as part of the River Styx artist series. Her mentors and influences include poet Margaret Walker, writer Gwendolyn Brooks, poet Sonia Sanchez, playwright and poet Ntozake Shange and author James Baldwin.

In New York she performed at the Nuyorican Poets Café and at Weill Hall, a part of Carnegie Hall. And her works have been presented as plays, including “Deliverance,” a production centered on HIV/AIDS.

Poet Amina Baraka has called Ms. LeFlore a “literary griot, writing and telling stories, creating lyrics we can sing and dance to.” Other honors include: the Warrior Poet Award, a board member for Word in Motion, featured in another documentary “Word Warriors III” and other anthologies.

Her activism of the 1960s led her to March on Washington and to join the Poor People’s Campaign. Politics became a part of her poetry. But it was the voices heard in her youth that set the stage for the rest of her life and career.

Last fall Poet Laureate LeFlore was featured in The St. Louis American newspaper, and later reproduced by St. Louis Public Radio.

The article noted she toured the world, playing venues both large and small, from Powell Symphony Hall in St. Louis to “quaint . . . tiny . . . churches” or a “hole in the wall” nightclub or lounge.”

“Some of the places I’ve gone, you wouldn’t want anybody to know you went there to read poetry,” LeFlore said. “But if people asked me, I would go.” “If you’re serious about what you do, keep doing it, keep studying it, keep mastering it and let it live inside you.” And “Listen—especially when you first start out. You need to listen.” It was her listening—her eavesdropping on her mother’s beauty salon clients—that caught her ear and helped shaped her poetry in the years to come.

“They thought I was sitting around playing jacks, but I would be listening,” to the way they talked, what they said, LeFlore told the American. Later, she would go home and write in her black and white composition book, noting that often the way they said things was more striking than what they said. Over time she would note that black people have a “special way with language—in every part of the world—but especially in St. Louis.”

Of her funeral on May 17, 2019, the American reported the near-capacity homegoing service for “Saint Shirley” at Christ Church Cathedral “stretched nearly four hours.” Accolades and memories were offered from speakers from far and near, among them poets, actors, writers and politicians. Actor and writer Kevin Powell called her a “supernatural word warrior” created from “black girl magic.”

Poet Laureate of East St. Louis Eugene Redmond said LeFlore ranked among the great jazz poets for her ability to turn musical form and history into “the cross-fertilization” of literary musical forms and techniques, he said. “She eloped with language and stayed married to music all her days.”

And while people of faith offered words of tribute, LeFlore’s own poems, spoken by the living meant LeFlore “essentially eulogized herself,” the American’s Kenya Vaughn wrote.

Daughter Hope Price-Lindsay said she grew up wanting a mother more like television’s “Leave it to Beaver’s” June Cleaver but instead got Ms. LeFlore, an Afrocentric artist who remained true to her craft, whether life served her “caviar and champagne” or “bone soup.” We learned that LeFlore inherited her poetry from her mother, who inherited it from her mother, who inherited from her mother.

Retired 18th Ward Alderman Terry Kennedy spoke again at her funeral, having grown up with Ms. LeFlore and calling her “a mighty spirit amongst us” who was “small in stature, big at heart.” He comforted guests with Ms. LeFlore’s own words from her poem, “Breathprints.”

“Light a candle for me,” he recited. “Say a prayer. Whisper me into the wind. Lay a love wreath on the altar of your heart and remember my good days amongst you. Weep if you must. It’s good to unburden your tears, but make brief your grief.

“Let the joy of my laughter comfort you,” Kennedy continued in her words. “My spirit will be the music above your head, my love like the wind beneath your wings to lift you in your weary years so that you may see the sunrise. All is well with my soul.”

Madam Speaker, today I give to Congress and the people of America, a glimpse into the life and times of a world-renown and respected poet from St. Louis, Missouri, and her

vision for seeing, touching, feeling the world around us—St. Louis Poet Laureate Shirley LeFlore.

I urge members of Congress to join me in honoring the life and career of St. Louis Poet Laureate Ms. Shirley LeFlore and her art of language and her expression in words, of our life and times. May she rest in peace.

IN RECOGNITION OF CRESTVIEW HIGH SCHOOL KNIGHTS ON THEIR 2019 OHSAA BOYS STATE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

HON. ROBERT E. LATTA

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

Mr. LATTA. Madam Speaker, it is my great pleasure to recognize the Crestview High School Knights of Convoy, Ohio on their victory in the 2019 OHSAA boys state basketball tournament. This was their second championship in five years.

The Crestview Knights completed a historic season with an unexpected win. After a challenging semifinal, the Crestview Knights were considered the underdogs, heading into the championship ranked below their opponent, Berlin Hiland. In the end, they dominated with a 58–38 win, holding Berlin Hiland to 21 points below its season average.

The community of Convoy should be very proud of this team’s hard work and dedication. Congratulations to Coach Best and the Knights on their state title.

IN RECOGNITION OF OZONE HOUSE FOR 50 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

Mrs. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ozone House for their exemplary work assisting homeless youth in the state of Michigan. For 50 years, they have provided comprehensive support services for some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Founded in 1969, Ozone House is a community-based, non-profit agency that provides support services to youth in crisis and their families in Washtenaw County, Michigan. They offer high-quality housing and aid programs designed to assist runaway, homeless, and high-risk youth in the community. Through Ozone House’s programs, these individuals develop essential life skills, improve their interpersonal relationships, and enhance their self-image in order to lead productive, happy lives. Ozone House’s critical efforts have solidified its role as a model of effective care across the nation.

Ozone House’s continued work has been vital to addressing the needs of vulnerable youth in the Washtenaw community, and has received several awards for their dedication. Beyond the need for food and shelter, homeless youth are at greater risk of being victims of human trafficking and assault. Ozone House’s intensive intervention and preventive

services provide these individuals the stability to lead safe, healthy, and productive lives. We thank Ozone House for their commitment to supporting and protecting homeless youth. Their work embodies the duty we have to our community and to empower those most in need.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Ozone House for 50 years of distinguished service. Their efforts to support homeless and high-risk youth in the Washtenaw community is worthy of commendation.

RECOGNIZING COMMAND CHIEF
MASTER SERGEANT MELANIE K.
NOEL

HON. LARRY BUCSHON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

Mr. BUCSHON. Madam Speaker, today I wish to recognize and congratulate a tremendous Airman and native of Vincennes, Indiana, Command Chief Master Sergeant Melanie K. Noel, on the occasion of her retirement from the U.S. Air Force after 27 years of distinguished military service to this great Nation.

Chief Master Sergeant Noel's outstanding career has culminated with her final assignment as the Command Chief Master Sergeant for the Air Force District of Washington. Chief Noel represents the highest enlisted executive level of leadership in the Air Force District of Washington and advises the commanding general on all issues regarding the readiness, training, welfare, morale, proper utilization, and progress of more than 40,000 Air Force military and civilian members in more than 500 locations across 108 countries. Prior to assuming her current position, Chief Noel faithfully served as the 6th Air Mobility Wing's Command Chief Master Sergeant and was also the Senior Enlisted Advisor for the U.S. Air Force's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office.

Chief Master Sergeant Noel entered the U.S. Air Force on April 9, 1992 as a security forces specialist and was later chosen for retraining into the field of personnel administration. Her honorable service has spanned numerous overseas and stateside assignments including two European countries, three States, the District of Columbia, and a deployment in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. In 2006, Chief Noel was competitively selected to become a First Sergeant, spending several years caring for the service's newest Airmen at the "Gateway to the Air Force." Recognizing her leadership potential, the Air Force continued to challenge her with increased responsibilities as an instructor at the U.S. Air Force First Sergeants Academy. Excelling in this demanding position, Chief Noel taught fellow senior noncommissioned officers the intricacies of equitable discipline, professional development, and esprit de corps. Her superb performance at the First Sergeants Academy garnered the attention of Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James Roy, who selected Chief Noel to become the service's first-ever Enlisted Legislative Fellow in the Nation's Capital.

As a true testament to Chief Master Sergeant Noel's exceptional career, she served

as not only the U.S. Air Force's first Enlisted Legislative Fellow but also its sole enlisted representative on Capitol Hill in 2013. During this period, Chief Noel was assigned to the office of Representative Niki Tsongas from Massachusetts. With the Congresswoman's position as Ranking Member on the House Armed Services Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, Chief Noel played a key role as her lead staffer during the headline-making Benghazi hearings. Moreover, she worked diligently to increase congressional awareness of impacts to both the Department of Defense and national security community caused by the 2013 federal government shutdown. Finally, her tireless efforts were critical to the bipartisan passage and implementation of the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act.

Chief Master Sergeant Noel clearly epitomizes the finest qualities of a military leader. Throughout her tenure, she has been instrumental in advocating for Airmen across the globe while strengthening the total force team through innovative solutions, focused resiliency, and exceptional leadership development. Her unrivaled expertise and exemplary professionalism have further resulted in numerous accolades, including the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Air Force Achievement Medal with one oak leaf cluster, as well as annual award recognition at the squadron, group, and wing levels within the U.S. Air Force. Additionally, Chief Noel was the recipient of the Distinguished Honor Graduate Award at the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress and a grateful Nation, I extend our deepest appreciation to Chief Master Sergeant Melanie K. Noel for her many years of extraordinary dedication and selfless military service. There is no question that the U.S. Air Force, Department of Defense, and United States have significantly benefited from Chief Noel's visionary leadership and devotion to the cause of freedom. I wish nothing but the very best for her and her family in the future.

CONGRATULATING EVERETT
WHITCHER ON WINNING THE CITIZEN
OF THE YEAR AWARD
THROUGH THE KEWANEE CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

Mrs. BUSTOS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Everett Whitcher for winning the Citizen of the Year Award through the Kewanee Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Whitcher's dedication to organizations in the Kewanee community is admirable.

Mr. Whitcher is a graduate of Wethersefield High School and went on to pursue his career in the grocery business. Since 1989, Mr. Whitcher has been the owner of the Super Value grocery store, which is now Save-A-Lot in Kewanee, Illinois. In 2015, Mr. Whitcher needed to keep up with the demands of the community so he moved his Kewanee store to a bigger location on South Main Street where he expanded his food and meat inventory. Mr.

Whitcher is an active participant in the local community and has contributed a great deal to Kewanee's economy. In addition to running his business, he assists all the food pantries in Kewanee and donates pet food to the Humane Society. Mr. Whitcher has been an active member of the Kiwanis Club since 2007 and serves on the Board of Directors in a continued effort to give back to his neighbors. I admire Mr. Whitcher's service to the community and thank him for his many contributions as he accepts the Citizen of the Year Award.

It is because of community leaders like Mr. Whitcher that I am especially proud to serve Illinois' 17th Congressional District. Madam Speaker, I would like to again formally congratulate Everett Whitcher for winning the Citizen of the Year Award given by the Kewanee Chamber of Commerce.

RECOGNIZING THE ST. AUGUSTINE
ART ASSOCIATION

HON. JOHN H. RUTHERFORD

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the St. Augustine Art Association (STAAA) on the 95th anniversary of its founding in 1924.

Founded by Spanish explorers in 1565, St. Augustine, Florida, is the oldest continuously inhabited European-established settlement in the continental United States, making it our nation's first city. The STAAA plays an integral role in preserving and promoting the artistic heritage of St. Augustine, and has been described as the epicenter of the local art community. The STAAA Art Center is open year-round and is free to the public, welcoming roughly 10,000 visitors annually. Its gallery hosts exhibitions, concerts, workshops, classes, lectures, and other art-related events. More than 1,000 artists of all backgrounds display their artwork during the gallery's season of juried exhibitions. These contemporary artists make up St. Augustine's present-day art colony.

The STAAA outreach programs serve many, including the blind, local public school students, and patients and caregivers at Flagler Hospital. Additionally, elder groups, community businesses, and others all benefit from STAAA's user-friendly gallery in the heart of St. Augustine. I am pleased to recognize STAAA for its contributions to our unique local culture, history, and community.

RECOGNIZING THE BICENTENNIAL
OF VANDALIA, ILLINOIS

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Vandalia, Illinois, which is celebrating its bicentennial this year.

Located in Fayette County, Vandalia was the state's first capital city. Situated on the Kaskaskia River, the Illinois General Assembly first met in Vandalia in December 1820. At the time, the state treasurer transacted business