

HONORING KAMALAKAR SHENAI AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 5, 2023

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, on May 26, 2023, I recognized Kamalakar “Kam” Shenai as a distinguished leader in Central Florida for Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Kamalakar “Kam” Shenai emigrated to the United States from India in 1976 with \$208 in his pocket, an engineering degree, a determination to work hard, and a heart full of ambition. Along the way, he earned a master’s degree in mechanical engineering from UC Berkeley and an MBA in Marketing from RIT.

Mr. Shenai’s career started as a salesman in Buffalo, New York, which became a 35-year corporate journey. A span that culminated into being the head of marketing operations for North America at a Fortune 500 company and then chief client officer for a privately held global company.

Mr. Shenai has been a Central Florida resident since 2014 and in his retirement has served on several boards, is on the Kidney Advocacy Committee for the National Kidney Foundation, and is the co-founder of Asian Pacific Islanders Coming Together (ACT).

One of the most notable examples of Mr. Shenai’s commitment to making positive change in the AAPI community is his work on ACT, a non-partisan organization. ACT’s mission is to engage, educate, and empower the AAPI population to amplify their voice through voter participation.

Mr. Shenai is also involved with the National Kidney Foundation. As a kidney patient himself, he has been an active member of the Kidney Advocacy Committee, where he has worked to meet with federal lawmakers and urge them to support the organization’s legislative agenda.

Mr. Shenai lives in Lake Nona, Florida with his wife of 50 years, has two children—a daughter and a son—and is a proud grandfather of four grandchildren.

Mr. Shenai’s motto, “Do common things uncommonly well,” is a testament to his commitment to excellence and his desire to make a difference in the lives of those around him.

RECOGNIZING NEVILLE RAY, 23 YEARS WITH T-MOBILE USA

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 5, 2023

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Neville Ray for his thirty years of work in wireless network management, and to congratulate him on his retirement as T-Mobile’s President of Technology and Strategic Network Advisor to the CEO.

Throughout his 23 years with T-Mobile, Neville has played a critical role in architecting the carrier’s transition from 2G to 5G and leading a best-in-class team. He is responsible for the management and development of the com-

pany’s wireless network, technology services, and technology operations.

Neville’s colleagues recognize him as a strong, adaptable, and innovative leader. According to T-Mobile CEO Mike Sievert, Neville “takes the crown as the nation’s overall network leader” and “has made T-Mobile’s network a true competitive weapon.” T-Mobile’s 5G network was the first to offer coverage in all 50 states, largely thanks to Neville and his team, who anticipated that the 5G era would be won or lost on mid-band spectrum.

Neville has helped T-Mobile achieve numerous company milestones, including the first launch of Wi-Fi calling with a hotspot in 2007, the first launch of video calling using LTE or Wi-Fi in 2015, and the first-ever World Series 5G experiences in 2020.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Neville Ray for his career helping T-Mobile innovate and succeed, and I wish him a happy retirement.

HONORING THE WOODEN FLOOR

HON. J. LUIS CORREA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 5, 2023

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the achievements of one of the foremost creative youth development nonprofit organizations in the country, The Wooden Floor.

In 1983, Beth Burns, who at the time was a sister with the order of St. Joseph of Orange, founded the organization under the name Saint Joseph Ballet as a summer dance program for at-risk youth. The program was an immediate success, and by 1989, the organization was receiving national recognition and serving 150 students in a donated 4,000-square-foot space in downtown Santa Ana.

In 1998, college scholarship awards were established for the growing number of graduates enrolling in higher education. The following year, the organization grew to a 21,000-square-foot campus with three dance studios, education, and community centers, which were funded by supporters who raised a total of \$6.8 million for the construction and establishment of their Endowment Fund.

By the early 2000s, they grew to serve 375 students with expanding services, including academic assistance, college preparatory guidance, crisis intervention, and intensive dance immersion with leading dance choreographers from around the country.

After over 20 years, founder Beth Burns retired in 2005, remaining connected to the organization and honored as a Board Emerita.

2005 also marked the first year that 100 percent of their graduates enrolled in college, a feat that has continued to this day. In 2009, the organization changed its name to The Wooden Floor, with the tag line “From here, you can step anywhere,” to reflect the comprehensive nature of their supportive model.

Locally, The Wooden Floor expanded in 2018 to serve an additional 100 students and their families at a second location in Santa Ana, totaling nearly 500 students year-round who are served from 3rd through 12th grade. Celebrating 40 Years of Impact in 2023, with national and international grants and awards, an innovative brand refresh and the launch of an Endowment Campaign called Step Forward, The Wooden Floor is positioned to pro-

pel young people forward well into the next 40 years through its new mission statement: “To inspire and transform the lives of young people through the power of dance and access to higher education.

I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the exceptional contributions and achievements of The Wooden Floor.

HONORING ASHOK PATEL AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 5, 2023

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, on May 26, 2023, I recognized Ashok Patel as a distinguished leader in Central Florida for Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Ashok Patel was born in Nairobi, Kenya. His grandparents had moved to East Africa from India in the early 1900s. When he was just four years old, Ashok moved with his family to London. There, he directly experienced the challenges of being raised in an ethnic minority community and yet learned to integrate positively into the prevailing British lifestyle. He was deeply attracted to the faith of his forefathers, Hinduism, in particular BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. Thus, though a brilliant student, he followed his heart and dropped out of college to live a life of study and meditation in India.

After several years, he was asked to begin reaching out to Hindus around the world to elaborate and teach the traditions of the world’s oldest religious tradition. Ashok did this with a particular focus on the young and vulnerable. He became a highly respected writer, speaker, and life coach, traveling across the world. He actively coordinated acclaimed international events, such as the Cultural Festival of India held in New Jersey and the All-World Religions Conference sponsored by the United Nations in New York. He has received various awards and felicitations.

Although settled in London, Ashok accepted the challenge of immigrating to the United States. He successfully entered the hospitality and tourism industry and later diversified into the retail grocery trade, actively working with other small businesses to help them succeed.

Today, he owns and manages Prayosha Vacation Homes, an innovative property management company specializing in short-term vacation rentals. Ashok is a director of the Osceola Chamber of Commerce, vice chair of the Small Business Council, president of the Downtown Kissimmee Leads Group, and serves as a voluntary director at Osceola Community Health. As a successful Osceola businessman, Ashok continues to help small businesses succeed.

Ashok is a highly respected leader in the Indian community of Central Florida and is involved in inter-community relations. He is an active volunteer leader of BAPS Charities international.

HONORING DR. ELLEN JUNN

HON. JOHN S. DUARTE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 5, 2023

Mr. DUARTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great admiration and respect to honor Dr. Ellen Junn, the esteemed President of Stanislaus State. Dr. Junn's unwavering commitment to excellence in education and her outstanding leadership have had a profound impact on the university community, its students, and California's Central Valley.

Throughout her tenure, Dr. Junn has consistently demonstrated a deep understanding of the transformative power of education. Under her guidance, Stanislaus State has flourished, reaching new heights in academic achievement, student success, and community engagement. Her vision and dedication have paved the way for innovative programs and initiatives that have enriched the educational experience for students and provided them with the tools to succeed in the modern world.

Dr. Junn's commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive campus environment is truly commendable. She has championed access to quality education for all, ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to thrive. By prioritizing the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students, faculty, and staff, she has created a campus that celebrates the unique perspectives and experiences that each individual brings to the table.

Under Dr. Junn's leadership, Stanislaus State has forged strong partnerships with local industries, government agencies, and community organizations. By fostering these collaborations, she has created numerous opportunities for students to gain real-world experience and develop the skills needed to excel in their chosen fields. This commitment to experiential learning has not only enhanced the educational experience but has also strengthened the university's ties to the community it serves.

Dr. Junn's impact extends far beyond the walls of Stanislaus State. She has been an influential voice in higher education, advocating for policies and initiatives that benefit all students and institutions. Her leadership has been recognized and respected at the state and national levels, further solidifying Stanislaus State's reputation as a force for positive change in the education landscape.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Dr. Junn is known for her compassion, approachability, and dedication to the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. She leads by example, embodying the values of integrity, resilience, and empathy. Her genuine concern for the success and happiness of those around her has created a vibrant and supportive campus community.

As we honor Dr. Ellen Junn, we express our gratitude for her transformative leadership, unwavering dedication, and remarkable achievements. Her vision and passion have made a lasting impact on Stanislaus State and the lives of countless individuals who have had the privilege of being a part of this remarkable institution. We wish her continued success in her future endeavors, knowing that her legacy will continue to inspire and shape the future of education.

HONORING THE LIFE OF EVELYN DIXON WILLIAMS

HON. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 5, 2023

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise to recognize the remarkable life of Evelyn Dixon Williams, who sadly left us at 107 years old.

As a woman of faith, Evelyn Williams was a leader and lifelong member of New Jerusalem First Missionary Baptist Church where she served as a Deaconess and Sunday School teacher. Mrs. Williams was a compassionate and generous person, regularly visiting homebound and nursing home residents in the Dania/Liberia community; sharing food, gifts and spiritual encouragement.

Mrs. Williams was active in community organizations such as the Broward Civic Improvement Association, which focused on improved housing and roadways, black business and employment opportunities, and equity in public accommodations. She served in the Order of the Eastern Star—devoted to religious, charitable and educational work. An ardent supporter of education, Mrs. Williams financially assisted area youth in pursuing their higher education and professional goals. She and her husband Alonzo were business owners with rental property and gas stations including a station in Dania.

The Broward County Historical Society and the City of Dania Beach have recognized Mrs. Williams for her many years of community service and activism, which included registering voters and serving as a dedicated elections poll worker for more than 50 years.

Truly an inspiration, Mrs. Williams is remembered for her quiet dignity, kind and generous spirit, and legacy of service to family, church and community. My heart is with her family in mourning the loss of this kind, generous, and compassionate soul. We were forever privileged to have shared this time with her. May her memory be for a blessing.

HONORING HELEN O'CONNOR AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 5, 2023

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, on May 26, 2023, I recognized Helen O'Connor as a distinguished leader in Central Florida for Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Daughters of South-Asian mothers know the pressure for perfection, the grind toward pleasing others, especially mom. Helen's family expected her to follow traditional Filipino ways—for the daughter to stay in her parents' home and take care of them until their passing. Facing potential shame, Helen left. She knew her gifts existed for her community and not for mom alone.

Within an international English school and Valencia College, Helen O'Connor has collaborated with professors, exploring ways to

improve instructional approaches and reflect on unknowingly harmful practices. She actively seeks inclusive approaches to hiring and designs and builds new standard operating procedures that remove overlooked barriers to student success. Helen championed this in PERT outreach programs, emphasizing the necessity for learner-centered activities. This engaged students who had not met qualifying scores in reading or writing and led to 84 percent of attendees making qualifying writing scores and the majority making qualifying reading scores.

Her ripples in the community go beyond Central Florida. Helen joined Writing Center leaders, introducing strategies to incorporate Linguistic Justice with Writing Center directors internationally. She also influenced ways to better center agency to their tutors and students' voices alike. Through her ideas, Helen brings consistency and structure. She normalizes compassion and vulnerability by inviting others to be their authentic selves in the workplace.

By encouraging healing spaces and embracing the complexity of intersectional identities, Helen spreads compassion while building her own path. She didn't stay in her mother's home but brought her mom to hers. She learned the constant pressure and ridicule her mother faced and the struggle between loving one's culture and being shamed because of it. This duality drives Helen, and she works without rest to ensure others can find clarity in their own identity, and above all, their voices.

HONORING THE FEARLESSNESS, PERSEVERANCE AND LEGACY OF JAMES "JIMMIE" MATTERN

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 5, 2023

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of James "Jimmie" Mattern.

Jimmie was born in Freeport, Illinois on March 8, 1905. From an early age, he was fascinated with mankind's newfound ability to take to the skies. His fascination quickly turned to passion, and in 1926, he embarked on his first solo flight. Jimmie spent the next several years as a pilot for cargo, passenger, and stunt planes, before changing course and setting his ambitions on breaking world records.

In June of 1933, less than a year after an attempt at a tandem world speed record that ended with a crash landing in Belarus and a brief imprisonment in a Soviet prison, Jimmie set out from Floyd Bennett Field in New York to complete the first-ever solo flight around the world. Unfortunately, Jimmie once again crash landed in the USSR and had to navigate the frozen wilderness of Siberia before being rescued by nomadic fur traders. This year marks the 90th anniversary of Jimmie's historic solo flight.

Following his awe-inspiring escapades, Jimmie became an international celebrity, spending the next several years touring the world recounting the epic true tales of his adventures.

Jimmie's courageous attempt to challenge the limits of human capabilities inspired a generation of American aviators to reach for new