

a new low. Ten years ago, Pinellas County ranked 38th of 67 counties in Florida for overall health and today, it ranks 17th. Also, out of Healthy St. Pete came St. Pete Eats: A Cookbook, which Dr. Tomalin published during the pandemic. It emphasizes healthy ingredients and recipes are taken from her own as well as from the city's independent restaurants as a salute to "the special role our small businesses play in this paradise of a place we call home." Proceeds from the book helped support small businesses affected by the public health crisis.

Before returning to the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg for her full circle moment, Dr. Tomalin was chief operating officer and vice president for strategy for Eckerd College in St. Petersburg. Now as president and chief executive officer of the Foundation, which has a mission to understand health disparities and support community-driven solutions to achieve health equity, Dr. Tomalin is passionate about helping to rewrite the story of St. Petersburg's underserved communities so they can attain their full potential.

As a fifth-generation St. Petersburg native, Dr. Tomalin is the oldest of two daughters born to Yvonne and David Jelks. She grew up in West St. Petersburg, attending Bay Point Elementary School, Bay Point Middle School, Tyrone Middle School and graduated from Boca Ciega High School. She says she had an idyllic childhood, cradled by her extended family of about 250 relatives, who mostly live in St. Petersburg or within miles. During her formative years, Dr. Tomalin was an Ebony Scholar, a program that provides institutional and financial support to high-achieving African-American students and was the vision of Vyrlle Davis, an education giant who became Pinellas County's first Black area superintendent. Her interest in journalism began early—her childhood best friend's mother was an editor at the then-St. Petersburg Times. Dr. Tomalin received her bachelor's degree in journalism from Florida A&M University, her master's degree in business administration from the University of Miami and her doctorate in law and policy from Northeastern University.

Dr. Tomalin was a Poynter Institute scholar writing stories for the St. Petersburg Times when she met her future husband, sports and outdoors writer Terry Tomalin. They raised two children, Kai and Nia, and were married for 17 years until his passing in 2016.

Dr. Tomalin also worked at the Palm Beach Post and television stations in Tallahassee, Florida and Louisville, Kentucky, as well as radio in St. Petersburg.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize Dr. Kanika Tomalin, who is honorably carrying forward the legacy of her deeply rooted St. Petersburg family while making an indelible mark on progress for St. Petersburg, the Sunshine City that is moving along the margin of excellence from great to iconic where opportunity shines on all.

HONORING THE LIFE OF GWEN-DOLYN "GWEN" BENSON-WALKER

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Gwendolyn "Gwen" Elaine Benson-

Walker, my former chief of staff, who died on February 2, 2024.

Gwen worked for me in various capacities for 20 years, starting as my scheduler and ultimately becoming my chief of staff. As my chief of staff, Gwen fostered a collaborative environment and helped me hire the best and brightest for my office.

Gwen was also a devoted mother and grandmother, and had a passion for wellness, physical fitness, and world travel. After her retirement, Gwen traveled the world and lived in Spain from 2013 to 2022.

Gwen was not only beloved by her family, friends and colleagues, she was also beloved by me. I am honored to have known Gwen, and I will be forever grateful for her service to Congress, as well as to the District of Columbia.

Again, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in honoring the life of Gwen Benson-Walker.

RECOGNIZING DIRECTOR OF CASEWORK DECONTEE SAWYER FOR HER EXCELLENT WORK ON BEHALF OF MINNESOTA'S THIRD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

HON. DEAN PHILLIPS

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my Director of Casework, Deontee Sawyer, for her work on behalf of every constituent in Minnesota's Third Congressional District. This week, Deontee will depart my office for a new opportunity serving as Rep. ANGIE CRAIG's Casework Director, and I could not be more proud or grateful for her service.

As Director of Casework, Deontee masterfully led my casework operations and team of caseworkers, working tirelessly for our constituents. Deontee has always gone above and beyond to advocate for constituents, lending her expertise to a wide range of cases and crises. As a true servant-leader on the front lines, she restored Americans' faith in government one passport, immigration case, tax return, and VA benefit at a time.

A St. Cloud State University graduate, Deontee was an organizer on my first campaign in 2018, before joining my congressional staff as a Constituent Advocate. Her impressive success in that role and dedication to service led me to promote her to Director of Casework in 2023. From the beginning of her time with my office, Deontee demonstrated her commitment to our ethos that "Representation Begins with Listening" by connecting casework to policymaking. When Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) status was about to expire for the Liberian community, Deontee worked with our legislative team to introduce the bipartisan Protect Our Liberian Community Act. She and our team worked diligently on this issue until a pathway to citizenship for Liberians on DED was included in the NDAA that passed at the end of my first year in office.

Deontee has been our office ethos of "Radical Hospitality" personified for the past five years. She has been the heart of our casework team since our office opened—a role that allowed her to seamlessly blend her

professional experiences as a mental health professional and community organizer. No case has ever proven too big or too small for Deontee; she treats every constituent with an expert blend of professionalism and compassion. She has put her effortless way of connecting with people to work building authentic connections with communities throughout Minnesota's Third District.

Deontee's positive energy, radiant smile, enthusiasm for trivia, and inclination to dance after receiving good news on behalf of a constituent will be deeply missed by her colleagues. She has been a leader in our office, never afraid to share what is on her mind and stand up for her beliefs. Deontee knows the importance of bringing joy into work that can often feel heavy. She encourages team members to have fun in their jobs and celebrate hard-fought wins, and she demonstrates genuine care for her colleagues' wellbeing.

The people of Minnesota's Third Congressional District were lucky to have her expertise and leadership, and she will be dearly missed. However, I'm extraordinarily happy that this expertise will continue to serve the nation and the people of Minnesota's Second Congressional District. I wish Deontee all the best in her future endeavors and thank her for her five years of faithful service to this Nation.

RECOGNIZING TAMPA BAY'S TRAILBLAZER, GLORIA JEAN ROYSTER, IN HONOR OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

HON. KATHY CASTOR

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this Black History Month I rise to celebrate the life of a local trailblazer, author, and historian, Ms. Gloria Jean Royster.

Ms. Royster is a resident of north downtown Tampa where she regularly advocates for safer pedestrian access and infrastructure, and quality-of-life issues for residents living in her River Arts District neighborhood. In late 2022, she contributed to the story and history of Ashley Drive and the surrounding area for the City of Tampa's application for the Reconnecting Communities Grant Pilot Program/Ashley Drive Redesign Project. When the city was awarded the grant it shared credit with Ms. Royster for helping to tell Tampa's story as part of the application. Ms. Royster shared this significant achievement with some of the historic residents who were impacted by demolished communities and with her River Arts District community leaders. This project will include removal of an interstate ramp and open streets which fulfills a dream of Ms. Royster and her neighbors for direct pedestrian access to The Tampa Riverwalk.

She retired to Tampa to be a full-time tourist and ended up volunteering in her community. An avid Tampa history buff and researcher, Ms. Royster currently spends her time telling the story of Tampa through her signature Tampa History Postcards, which include many historical nuggets of Tampa's Black community. Ms. Royster helped erect the Madame Fortune Taylor Bridge Historical Marker (2018) in downtown Tampa and she is the creator of the Tampa Bay History Center Madame Fortune Taylor Walking Tour, which she led for

three years and received a "Best of the Bay 2021" nomination for Best Walking Tour. Madame Fortune was born into slavery and, after gaining her freedom, became a Tampa businesswoman who owned more than 30 acres of land in the late 1880s but sold it as part of an agreement that a bridge be built over the river which would connect East and West Tampa. The historic bridge was built in 1892 and named after Taylor.

Ms. Royster is a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but life has taken her many places, and she considers Chicago, Illinois home, where she raised her only child Ike Murray, Jr. (ret. USAF), and where four of her seven siblings live. Ms. Royster has a passion for her two strengths, caring for others or writing about them. After high school she taught and cared for 2-year-olds at a pre-school in Raleigh, North Carolina before entering the hospitality industry. While in college she was hired as a Feature Writer for Muhammad Speaks Newspaper in Chicago (later Bilalian News and The American Muslim Journal).

While observing her story subjects she caught the hospitality bug again and left journalism for several years.

When she lived in Atlanta, Ms. Royster worked as a community grassroots organizer and was nicknamed the "The Quiet Riot." It was at this time she was encouraged by her mother, Ms. Doris L. Muhammad Royster to write children's books. Ms. Royster wrote her first children's book manuscript while spending time with her young nephew. He was a window to her destiny. She wrote her second children's book manuscript "GO! In The Snow" and self-published in 2019. Her third children's book manuscript, "Al Li Gator and J. Louis Bat", which takes place at the Bat House in Tampa near the Historic Fortune Taylor Bridge will be released this spring and we will see other book projects in the future.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the entire Tampa Bay community, I am honored to recognize Ms. Gloria Jean Royster for her outstanding contributions to keep our local Black history alive and using it to create positive change in the future as well as her selfless acts of community service in uplifting her neighbors.

RECOGNIZING SETH UTTERBACK

HON. BRUCE WESTERMAN

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and admiration that I rise today to recognize a remarkable student currently attending classes at Cass Job Corps, located in Franklin County, within the bounds of Arkansas' esteemed Fourth Congressional District. Seth Utterback embodies the spirit of dedication, leadership, and excellence that we strive to cultivate in our youth.

Throughout his time at Cass Job Corps, Seth has experienced tremendous growth and success, particularly within the culinary program where he has truly distinguished himself. Serving as both a dorm president and lead chef in the culinary arts trade, Seth exemplifies servant leadership, tirelessly ensuring that his fellow students feel welcome and supported on campus. His commitment to the success of others is truly commendable.

Seth's passion for culinary arts is evident in his unwavering dedication to honing his skills. His natural talent, coupled with his strong communication and teamwork abilities, sets him apart as a standout student and a valued team player. Whether he is mastering new techniques or assisting his classmates, Seth consistently goes above and beyond, embodying the values of reliability, respect, and positivity.

In addition to his exemplary academic and leadership achievements, Seth has been selected to represent Cass Job Corps at the Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., a testament to his exceptional leadership qualities. Furthermore, his participation in the Work Experience Program through WIOA has provided him with invaluable real-world skills and experiences under the guidance of Mr. Mike Brown, further preparing him for success in his future endeavors.

Looking ahead, Seth's ambitions extend beyond the borders of Arkansas as he plans to attend Treasure Island Job Corps in California, with the long-term goal of becoming a chef on a cruise line. His determination, outstanding work ethic, and unwavering commitment to his dreams serve as an inspiration to us all.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Seth Utterback on his achievements and in wishing him continued success as he embarks on the next chapter of his journey. Seth is truly a testament to the limitless potential of our Nation's youth, and I have no doubt that he will continue to make us proud in all his future endeavors.

HONORING CHIEF PATRICK PARKER

HON. JACK BERGMAN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, Chief Patrick Parker grew up in Petoskey, Michigan as the oldest of 11 children and carried with him from a young age a sense of duty and responsibility. In high school, Chief Parker played football for the Petoskey Northmen, was a Proud Eagle Scout of Troop 7, and graduated in 1979. Chief Parker then attended North Central Michigan College where he earned an Associate's Degree and later received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Lake Superior State College.

Chief Parker started his fire service career in 1983 as a volunteer and morphed into a part-paid/on-call firefighter and EMT. He filled many roles such as Firefighter, Lieutenant, Captain, and Battalion Chief; and in 2004, he was promoted to the rank of full-time Deputy Chief. On January 1, 2006, Parker became the Chief of the Grand Traverse Metro Fire Department, encouraging his members to foster an atmosphere where everyone is empowered to give their best and live up to the credo: *Omnis Cedo Domus—Everyone Goes Home*.

Additionally, Chief Parker is involved professionally in the Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs Board, Northern Michigan Fire Chiefs Association Board, Grand Traverse County Local Emergency Planning Committee, Local Planning Team and 911 Advisory Board. Chief Parker is the founding member of MI-Mutual

Aid Box Alarm System Division 3701, which at the time of its founding included all of Region-7. He is the chairperson of the MABAS-Michigan Special Operations Work Group, the State's Urban Search and Rescue Team, overseeing Michigan Task Force-1. Chief Parker was Michigan's representative to the Great Lakes Division (GLD) of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), and he currently is the immediate past president of the GLD.

Always looking for new ways to help his community, Chief Parker is involved with many local boards and committees, serving as the President of the American Red Cross—Northern Michigan, Camps and Services member of the Rotary Club of Traverse City, board member of the Rotary Camps & Services with the Knights of Columbus No. 9979, and board member of the Michigan Crossroads Council—Boy Scouts of America. He is the founding member and President of the Grand Traverse Region First Responder Alliance, a 501(c)(3) organization founded to find solutions to the unmet needs of the region's first responders.

Chief Parker is also a dedicated husband, enjoying 39 years of marriage to his wife Michelle and their 3 golden retrievers. In his spare time, he is known for being an avid hiker, hunter, and Great Lakes boater, and he enjoys camping and snowmobiling in the wintertime.

Mr. Speaker, it's my honor to congratulate Chief Patrick Parker on an exemplary career and legacy of giving back to his community. I thank him for his humble service and wish him and his family the best in their future endeavors.

HONORING THE LIFE OF BETTY HOLZENDORF

HON. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, it is in the spirit of bereavement that I rise to recognize the remarkable life of former Florida State Senator Betty Holzendorf. As a dedicated public servant, community leader, and advocate for social justice, her impact on the city of Jacksonville and the great State of Florida and its people will be felt for generations to come.

Senator Holzendorf passed away on February 29, 2024 at the age of 84.

As a lifelong resident of Jacksonville, Senator Holzendorf dedicated her life to the betterment of her community. She received her bachelor's degree from Edward Waters University and her master's in educational administration from the University of North Florida, the latter of which has a road named after her on campus.

As a former public school teacher and administrator at her alma mater, Edward Waters University, she was committed to quality education and began her career in public service in 1975 as an affirmative action officer under Jacksonville Mayor Hans Tanzler. Following several years of service in this role, she joined the staff of Jacksonville Mayor Jake Godbold as City Council liaison, where she developed the political skills that would catapult her into the Florida House of Representatives in 1988.