

## RECOGNIZING WILLIAM LEWIS

**HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, May 10, 2024*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the unique contributions made to our community by one of my constituents, William Lewis. A distinguished Army veteran, William, also known as Bill, has been an integral part of the Board of Directors for a local non-profit, One Community Now, serving as a dedicated volunteer since 2013. Bill's commitment extends beyond his role at One Community Now; he serves as a deacon at the First United Methodist Church of New Port Richey and is an active member of the American Legion Post 79. As a leader in Operation Stand Down, Bill plays a pivotal role in fundraising and establishing connections with various Veteran organizations throughout the Tampa Bay area, including American Legions, VFWs, Am Vets, Eagles, Elks, and others. His dedication is evident in his weekly support for veterans at our Veteran Support Center, where he provides lunch and assistance to homeless and at-risk veterans. Bill brings his extensive business experience and strong work ethic to One Community Now's Board meetings, contributing to the organization's strategic direction. At his church, Bill assists his wife, Jean Ann, in managing the food pantry, making personal deliveries of food and supplies to shut-ins. He actively participates in the Pack-A-Sack program, leveraging his network to secure donations of food items. Bill's readiness to respond to any call for assistance reflects his heart for Veterans, children, and anyone facing hunger, driven by his commitment to serving the Lord. In addition to his roles at One Community Now, his church, and at the American Legion Post 79, Bill actively engages in various committees and programs, such as The American Legion's Oratorical Contest, the Christmas Wreaths Across America and the Cub Scouts of America. Despite approaching his 80th birthday in April, Bill's shows no sign of slowing down. He continues to demonstrate an unwavering dedication to others.

It is clear that Mr. Lewis has made a profoundly positive impact on our community, and I am grateful for his service.

CELEBRATING DR. RACHAEL  
MAHMOOD, THE 2024 ILLINOIS  
TEACHER OF THE YEAR

**HON. BILL FOSTER**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, May 10, 2024*

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise during Teacher Appreciation Week to celebrate an educator from Aurora, Illinois. Dr. Rachael Mahmood, a fifth-grade teacher in Indian Prairie School District 204 at Georgetown Elementary School, was named the 2024 Illinois Teacher of the Year.

Dr. Mahmood has taught in her district since 2005 and came to Georgetown Elementary

School in 2015. Dr. Mahmood was selected from a group of 13 finalists from across the state and is the first person from Indian Prairie School District 204 to be chosen as Illinois Teacher of the Year.

As the daughter of a Russian mother and an Indian father, Dr. Mahmood found her passion for teaching by overcoming obstacles she faced as a mixed-race student. Her dedication to service, education, and equity has allowed her to make a lasting impact on the lives of her students—whether it be helping them succeed in their studies or achieve their extra-curricular goals.

Dr. Mahmood has also become an indispensable leader beyond the classroom, pioneering various cultural and social initiatives to create an inclusive environment where students can connect with their peers. As one administrator notes, she “embodies the qualities of an exceptional educator and inspiring leader.”

At the end of the 2023–2024 school year, Dr. Mahmood will go on sabbatical, touring schools around the state of Illinois and sharing some of her valuable insight with her fellow educators.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Dr. Rachael Mahmood on being named Illinois Teacher of the Year and thank her for her commitment to improving education for young people in the Aurora community.

## RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF VOLUNTEER FAIRFAX

**HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, May 10, 2024*

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 50th Anniversary of Volunteer Fairfax, a non-profit focused on engaging people and organizations to amplify their community impact.

Volunteer Fairfax was created in 1974 and was known then as the Voluntary Action Center of Fairfax County (VAC). In the late seventies, VAC referred 211 volunteers to worthy causes in support of the greater Fairfax County community. Today, the organization engages over 6,000 volunteers annually who donate more than 18,000 hours serving more than 650 nonprofits and public agencies, a value of over 600,000 added to the community.

Over the past five decades, Volunteer Fairfax has had many milestones, and evolved into the organization they are today. In 1992, the focus of the VAC had begun to change and the center was renamed Volunteer Fairfax. Staff began utilizing an electronic process to accommodate the growing interest from volunteers and created a youth volunteer directory to assist students who are looking for service opportunities.

In 1993, Volunteer Fairfax Hosted their first Volunteer Service Awards to showcase the vital role volunteerism plays in our community. In its first year, 350 people attended the County-wide event. Since its inception, over 3,000 individuals, groups, and corporations have been recognized for their volunteer efforts.

Among the many programs and offerings of Volunteer Fairfax, they have served as the designated lead agency for recruitment and deployment of affiliated and spontaneous volunteers, as well as the management of spontaneous volunteers during an emergency in Fairfax County since the early 2000s. Emergency Response activations include Hurricane Isabel, Derecho. Winter Storm Jonas, and, most recently, the Centreville fires in May 2018. Volunteer Fairfax continues to fulfill its mission by mobilizing people and resources to meet community need through involvement in Fairfax County and Regional Emergency Response and Recovery functions.

Volunteer Fairfax believes that volunteerism, as an ideal and a practice, is a vital part of our American history and heritage. They build their programs around the needs of nonprofit and public agencies and individuals throughout Fairfax County in ways that are flexible and accessible to anyone who wants to get involved. From their Alternative Community Service (ACS) for court and attorney referred clients, to the RSVP-Northern Virginia program that is part of AmeriCorps Seniors, to corporate partnerships that allow people in any industry to take part in volunteer efforts. Volunteer Fairfax is making sure that everyone has a chance to be of service to our community.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Volunteer Fairfax on 50 years of service. Their efforts, made on behalf of some of the most vulnerable populations in our community, truly merit our highest praise. The staff, Board of Directors, and volunteers from Volunteer Fairfax help make Fairfax County one of the best places to live, work, and play. I ask my colleagues to join me in applauding these remarkable citizens on half a century of service to our community.

## RECOGNIZING HEATHER FIEDLER

**HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, May 10, 2024*

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Heather Fiedler of Arvada, Colorado, for winning the Image Award from the Arvada Chamber of Commerce.

The Arvada Chamber issues the Image Award to exceptional individuals who have a demonstrated commitment to the Arvada community and its public image.

For over 10 years, Heather has been an active member of the Arvada Community Garden, leading their efforts to provide fresh food, community, and gardening education to all Arvadans. She also plays a primary role in the Garrison Garden Paseo project and teaches over fifteen gardening classes every year to over four hundred attendees. Heather's hard work and dedication to the Arvada gardening community has fed and enriched the lives of hundreds of citizens and visitors alike. This award is a true testament to the leadership Heather has displayed as a gardener and leader in Arvada.

On behalf of the people of Colorado's Seventh Congressional District, it is my honor to congratulate Heather Fiedler for winning the Image Award and thank her for her contributions to our community.

## RECOGNIZING JAMES DINICOLA

**HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, May 10, 2024*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the unique contributions made to our community by one of my constituents, James DiNicola, through his volunteerism with local non-profits. As a Korean War veteran approaching his 90th birthday, James embodies the essence of unwavering dedication to community service and a selfless commitment to others. James's years of service in the Army during the Korean War laid the foundation for a lifetime dedicated to volunteering. Currently, he devotes his time to four non-profit organizations: One Community Now, Sleep in Heavenly Peace, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, and Holy Spirit Episcopal Church. At One Community Now, James is a cornerstone of Operation Stand Down, where he assists with bike transportation for veterans, contributes to maintenance work, and provides invaluable encouragement to younger veterans navigating their challenges. His active involvement in the annual Pack the Park event reflects his dedication to the community, handling pumpkin pickups and managing food donations for hungry children. With over six years of unwavering commitment to One Community Now, James stands as a testament to steadfast volunteerism. For 3 1/2 years, James has been an indispensable volunteer at Sleep in Heavenly Peace, assembling beds for children and personally delivering them to their homes. His service extends to his church, where he selflessly aids in setting up for funerals, tends to landscaping, and tackles various maintenance jobs. In his community and family, James serves as a mentor, dog walker, and a source of encouragement to everyone he encounters. Remarkably, Jim still dedicates 20 hours a week as the maintenance person at Blue Jay Estates in Clearwater. James DiNicola's tireless and selfless service, notwithstanding his age, epitomizes the true spirit of heroism and community dedication. His unwavering desire to be a genuine servant for the glory of God resonates in every aspect of his volunteering. James is an inspiration to everyone he serves with, consistently maintaining a supportive and positive attitude.

It is clear that Mr. DiNicola has made a profoundly positive impact on our community, and I am grateful for his service.

## RECOGNIZING BISHOP ROBERT D. TAYLOR'S SERVICE AND APPOINTMENT TO BISHOP

**HON. DEBBIE DINGELL**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, May 10, 2024*

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Bishop Robert Delano Taylor Sr. on the occasion of his appointment to Bishop of the Southwest Michigan Agape Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ. His significant service to his congregation, ministry, and community is worthy of commendation.

Bishop Robert D. Taylor has served as the pastor for Glad Tidings Church in Detroit,

Michigan since 1987. In this role he has been a beacon for the community, epitomizing the values of life-long service and dedication. Bishop Taylor has touched so many lives during his time at the Glad Tidings Church and beyond. During his career, he established the Robert D. Taylor Ministries, where personal growth and transformation is emphasized. The mission here is focused on creating lasting change, not only in the community but also on the global scale. This noble work has a positive, lasting influence on its members and the greater community, and is truly inspiring. Under Bishop Taylor's leadership, the Glad Tidings Church has served as a pillar in the Detroit community. Their message reaches so many, especially considering the church has a live-stream option, allowing those who cannot be physically present to join in the mass. This church serves the wider community as well, including providing free clothing for those who are in need.

Notably, on November 17, 2023, Bishop Taylor was elevated and appointed to Bishop for the Southwest Michigan Agape Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ. This tremendous accomplishment is well deserved and serves as a testament to Bishop Taylor's distinguished career of service. This appointment reinforces how influential Bishop Taylor's faithful career has been and elevates him to a position where he will be able to serve with even greater range. In this office, Bishop Taylor will continue to serve Glad Tidings Church as well as the wider ministry.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Bishop Taylor for his lifetime of public service. His commitment to his faith, community, and mission is truly inspiring. I join Bishop Taylor's family, friends, and congregation in extending my best wishes to him during his transition in his service, where I am sure he will continue to serve his community faithfully well into the future.

## HONORING KEVIN LYNCH

**HON. DONALD S. BEYER, JR.**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, May 10, 2024*

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Kevin Lynch on his retirement from National Industries for the Blind (NIB) after serving in various positions within NIB for more than 30 years. For the last 15 years, Kevin has served as president of the organization. When you include his work for two of the nonprofit agencies within the NIB network prior to coming to NIB, his career within the program has spanned 40 years helping to create employment opportunities for people who are blind.

I am fortunate to have the headquarters of NIB located in Alexandria, Virginia, within the Congressional District I represent. I have enjoyed opportunities to visit with Kevin and leaders of associated nonprofit agencies over the year.

Through its network of associated nonprofit agencies, NIB is the largest employer of people who are blind in the country. NIB notes that they "create opportunities for people who are blind to become wage earners and taxpayers, reducing their reliance on government support and increasing engagement with their communities." I sincerely appreciate these ef-

forts and the critical work NIB does to empower the blind community in Northern Virginia and across the country.

I would like to thank Kevin Lynch for his leadership at NIB and his long career in creating jobs for people who are blind. I wish him well in his retirement and honor his legacy over the last 40 years.

## RECOGNIZING NORMALEE LEE

**HON. BRITTANY PETTERSEN**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, May 10, 2024*

Ms. PETTERSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Normalee Lee of Arvada, Colorado for winning the Arvada Chamber of Commerce's Image Award.

Normalee has spent years working to make Jefferson County a better and safer place to live. She has volunteered in all divisions of the Citizen's Police Academy Alumni Association and is a former Chairperson and longstanding volunteer for the Arvada Police Department. Additionally, she helped make the annual Bike Rodeo event run with Apex Parks and Recreation District a success. Arvada Chamber Image Award winners are selected for the positive image of Arvada they portray within the community, and Normalee has done just that.

On behalf of the people of Colorado's Seventh Congressional district, it is my honor to congratulate Normalee Lee on winning this award and thank her for her service to our community.

## RECOGNIZING CATHERINE SCHELAND

**HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, May 10, 2024*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the unique contributions made to our community by one of my constituents, Catherine Scheland, has exemplified outstanding dedication and selflessness as a volunteer with a local non-profit, One Community Now. Cathy plays a pivotal role in the organization's Veterans program, serving as a team leader for Operation Stand Down. Her commitment is truly commendable, dedicating over 180 hours each year to the event's setup, overseeing the Chaplains' area, and co-directing the transportation area. Beyond the event, Cathy personally delivers bicycles to veterans in need throughout the year, using her own resources to provide locks and lights. She serves as a mentor, offering support and using her own funds to assist homeless veterans with housing. In the organization's Pack A Sack initiative to fight childhood hunger, Cathy is also actively involved, ensuring children have food every weekend of the year. She not only contributes her time but also financially supports the program. Cathy's engagement extends to the agency's annual Pack the Park fundraiser, where she plays a vital role in securing sponsors, donations, and volunteers. Cathy's dedication isn't confined to our One Community Now; she volunteers with other