

RECOGNIZING MS. MARY  
CHRISTOPHER

**HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 30, 2026*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a truly special individual whose dedication and servant's heart have made a meaningful difference in our community, Ms. Mary Christopher. Ms. Mary is a tremendous blessing to all who have the privilege of working alongside her. Her willingness to step in wherever she is needed—without hesitation and without seeking recognition—reflects the very best of community service. She approaches every task with diligence, professionalism, and a level of skill that ensures the work is done thoroughly and thoughtfully. Mary's commitment goes far beyond simply completing assignments. She brings energy, enthusiasm, and a contagious passion for serving others. Her positive spirit uplifts those around her and serves as a powerful reminder of why community service matters. Whether assisting with daily responsibilities or supporting broader initiatives, she consistently demonstrates reliability, excellence, and heart.

What truly sets Mary apart is her attitude. She serves with joy. She works with purpose. And she inspires others through her example. Her presence strengthens every team she is part of and makes the lives of those around her easier, brighter, and more hopeful.

Mr. Speaker, for her dedication, her tireless work ethic, and her unwavering commitment to serving others, I am proud to recognize Mary Christopher as a 2026 Hero Among Us for Florida's 12th Congressional District. She exemplifies the spirit of compassion and service that makes our community strong.

CELEBRATING THE OPENING OF  
THE HILLVIEW JUNIOR HIGH  
SCHOOL REPLACEMENT CAMPUS

**HON. JOHN GARAMENDI**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 30, 2026*

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the opening of the new Hillview Junior High School Replacement Campus in Pittsburg, California—a transformative investment for the Pittsburg community and a major milestone for the Pittsburg Unified School District.

On January 7, 2026, students walked through the doors of this state-of-the-art campus for the first time, marking the culmination of a large-scale construction effort that began in November 2023. This project reflects years of planning, collaboration, and steadfast community support.

The development of the new Hillview campus included several significant milestones. Built adjacent to the former school site, the new campus features modern classrooms, improved facilities, expanded parking areas, and sustainability-focused upgrades such as solar energy systems. These enhancements ensure that Pittsburg students have access to a safe and innovative learning environment.

Hillview Junior High School has been a cornerstone of Pittsburg since its founding in

1958, serving generations of families and shaping the lives of countless young people. The opening of the replacement campus honors that legacy while ushering in a new era of educational opportunity.

This achievement was made possible through the enduring support of the Pittsburg community, which shares in the belief of the power of strong public schools and the vital role they play in supporting youth, families, and our Nation's long-term success.

On behalf of the constituents of California's 8th Congressional District, I am proud to honor the opening of the new Hillview Junior High School Replacement Campus and to recognize the educators, community leaders, students, and residents whose dedication made this milestone possible. This campus stands as a testament to Pittsburg's enduring commitment to its children and its future.

HONORING COLONEL PAULETTE  
SCHANK AS A DISTINGUISHED  
LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA  
FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

**HON. DARREN SOTO**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 30, 2026*

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Colonel Paulette Schank as a Distinguished Leader in Central Florida for Women's History Month. Colonel Paulette Schank served with distinction for 25 years in the United States Air Force, dedicating her career to leadership, service, and caring for others. Since retiring from military service, she has continued her lifelong commitment to improving the lives of veterans and members of her community through advocacy, healthcare, and volunteer service.

As a member of Congressman DARREN SOTO's Veterans Advisory Board, Colonel Schank is a trusted consultant when legislation affecting veterans is considered. Her knowledge and experience help ensure that policies reflect the real needs of those who have served our nation.

Colonel Schank also contributed significantly to the Friends of Fisher House's efforts, supporting outreach, education, and fundraising initiatives that helped bring the Orlando Fisher House to Lake Nona. The Fisher House now provides lodging and comfort to families whose loved ones are receiving care.

A dedicated healthcare professional, Colonel Schank built a distinguished career as both a nurse anesthetist and nurse practitioner. She recently earned her doctorate from the University of Central Florida, further strengthening her commitment to improving access to quality healthcare. She also volunteers at Shepherd's Hope, a free medical clinic that serves uninsured patients in Central Florida.

Her service extends to the Central Florida Red Cross, where she assists with hurricane and disaster response shelters and participates in programs supporting local veterans. She also volunteers with the Orlando VA Medical Center's animal visitation program, bringing her Shih Tzu, Wooki, to visit veterans in mental health units and the community living center each week.

Colonel Schank also serves on the board of the Central Florida Veterans Memorial Park,

helping ensure that more than 1,200 fallen Central Florida veterans are remembered and honored year-round. Her life of service was recognized in the book "A Truth Worth Telling," where she is featured in the chapter titled "Selflessness."

RECOGNIZING MS. SOFIA  
SUNDBERG

**HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 30, 2026*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary volunteer whose compassion and leadership have touched tens of thousands of lives, Ms. Sofia Sundberg. Through her dedicated service to the Alzheimer's Association, Sofia has made an exceptional and lasting impact on individuals and families facing the challenges of Alzheimer's disease. Her volunteer efforts have reached more than 40,000 constituents, a testament not only to the breadth of her service, but to the depth of her commitment to ensuring that no family faces this journey alone.

Sofia brings empathy, professionalism, and purpose to every role she undertakes. Whether engaging with families in need of critical resources, assisting with educational initiatives, or supporting community outreach events, she ensures that each individual feels heard, supported, and empowered. Her ability to connect with those navigating the difficult realities of dementia makes her an invaluable presence within the organization and within our community. What truly distinguishes Sofia is the compassion that fuels her work. While the measurable impact of reaching tens of thousands is extraordinary, her greatest contributions are reflected in the comfort she brings to caregivers, the clarity she offers to families facing uncertainty, and the hope she inspires in communities committed to advancing awareness and research. She embodies the core values of service, dignity, and excellence, and she sets a powerful example for volunteerism.

Sofia's dedication has significantly strengthened the reach and effectiveness of the Alzheimer's Association's mission. Through her tireless efforts, she has helped expand access to information, support, and connection-resources that are life-changing for families confronting one of the most difficult diagnoses imaginable.

Mr. Speaker, for her unwavering dedication, her compassionate leadership, and her profound impact on tens of thousands of individuals and families, I am proud to recognize Sofia Sundberg as a 2026 Hero Among Us for Florida's 12th Congressional District. Her service reminds us that one person's commitment can transform lives and move us closer to a future without Alzheimer's disease.

RECOGNIZING THE ROCHESTER  
OLYMPIANS

**HON. JOSEPH D. MORELLE**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 30, 2026*

Mr. MORELLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the incredible Olympians from the

Rochester community who represented Team USA at the 2026 Winter Olympics: Dylan Walczyk, Christopher Lillis, and Haley Winn. These exceptional athletes proudly represented our region on the world stage, competing with determination and excellence at the Winter Games last month. Their achievements reflect the strong tradition of athletic dedication and excellence that our community has long fostered.

Our local athletes demonstrated their remarkable abilities in various Olympic events. From the slopes to the rink, these competitors faced the very best athletes from around the world. Two of Rochester's own reached the top of the podium and brought home Olympic gold medals. Haley Winn competed in women's ice hockey and helped lead the team to a gold medal victory, defeating Canada in the championship game. Christopher Lillis competed in the freestyle skiing mixed team aerials competition, securing himself a second gold medal after winning the same event at the 2022 Winter Olympics.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the entire Rochester community, I congratulate these Olympians on their extraordinary athletic achievements at the 2026 Winter Olympics. We are incredibly proud of their remarkable accomplishments and contributions to inspiring the next generation of athletes in our region and across the country.

HONORING RHONDA SPENCER AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

**HON. DARREN SOTO**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 30, 2026*

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Rhonda Spencer as a Distinguished Leader in Central Florida for Women's History Month. Rhonda Spencer has experienced an exceptional year. She has worked incredibly hard to improve not only her and her family's lives but also the lives of working people throughout the state of Florida.

Rhonda is an Orlando native, born April 18, 1977, to Mr. Ronald Spencer and Ms. Kathy Williams. She is the mother of three incredible children: Ahyll, Zariah, and Autavious, who she has raised with her husband, Alain, right in the heart of Central Florida. After living in Jacksonville for some time, she relocated back to Orlando, where she encountered significant challenges as a working mom, including homelessness, food insecurity, and the responsibility of raising children amidst these adversities.

Rhonda has proudly worked for Aramark at the Lockheed Martin facility on Sand Lake Road for fourteen and a half years as a food service worker, making sure that the folks who build the machinery that keeps our country safe are well fed and taken care of. Many of them are proud members of UAW Local 177. Rhonda and her coworkers decided that they too deserved the benefits that come with a strong labor union and a fair contract. In March of 2025, she and her coworkers achieved just that, winning incredible raises, quality and affordable healthcare, and a pension with their union, Unite Here! Local 362.

Rhonda and her family are now living in a beautiful home in Orlando and enjoying all those hard-won benefits. What really makes her special, though, is that even after winning all that, she and a team of almost all women returned to Jacksonville to help her fellow food service workers there achieve the same this past October.

Rhonda Spencer represents the epitome of the American Dream, and the strength that women show every day in our great country.

RECOGNIZING SALLY WELLMAN

**HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 30, 2026*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary advocate, educator, and volunteer, Sally Wellman, whose selfless dedication and tireless service to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community are truly deserving of recognition. After an impressive 40-year career at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, where she served as both a teacher and coordinator, Sally relocated to Florida with a clear mission: to remain an active part of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) community. In December 2021, she joined Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of Florida (DHHSF), and her presence has strengthened the organization in countless ways. Sally tutors students ranging from elementary school through college, helping each reach their full potential. She supports DHHSF in every capacity—assisting with events, fundraisers, and innumerable behind-the-scenes tasks—always quietly ensuring that the work of the organization moves forward seamlessly. She serves as the backbone of many DHH-related activities in the community, yet rarely seeks recognition for her efforts.

Her impact is wide-ranging; she tutors children through the Deaf Literacy Center, volunteers at major Deaf community events, teaches American Sign Language (ASL) to interpreting students at St. Petersburg College, and provides evening tutoring to support student success. She also serves on the Wine Tasting and Silent Auction fundraising committee, contributing her time, energy, and expertise to secure sponsorships, assemble auction baskets, and coordinate logistics—efforts essential to the event's success.

Beyond her work with DHHSF, Sally is deeply involved in her broader community. She volunteers with the American Cancer Society, coordinating the Tampa area's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk for Survivors, and serves on her sorority's scholarship committee, which awards \$1.3 million annually. She participates in service projects such as the New Life Program for the Homeless and initiatives supporting Moffitt Cancer Center, demonstrating her unwavering commitment to helping others in every facet of her life. Sally humbly describes her favorite work as engaging personally with Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals through tutoring and social events, yet her quiet leadership extends far beyond what most ever see. Her dedication, generosity, and passion for improving the lives of others leave a lasting impact on countless individuals and on the community as a whole.

For her selfless service, quiet strength, and extraordinary commitment to empowering Deaf

and Hard of Hearing individuals, I am honored to recognize Sally Wellman as a 2026 Hero Among Us. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Sally Wellman for her remarkable contributions, leadership, and unwavering dedication to our community.

HONORING KATHARINE "KAYE" PARTIN WHALEY AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

**HON. DARREN SOTO**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 30, 2026*

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker I rise to honor Katharine "Kaye" Partin Whaley as a Distinguished Leader in Central Florida for Women's History Month. For more than three decades, Katharine "Kaye" Partin Whaley has been a driving force in education, community service, and cultural preservation in Osceola County. A respected educator for 32 years, she has influenced thousands of students as a classroom teacher and, for the past nine years, as the Reading Coach at Harmony High School. Her dedication to academic excellence has earned her three Teacher of the Year awards and two Disney Teacherific Awards, reflecting her long-standing commitment to elevating student achievement and supporting educators across the district.

Kaye's leadership extends far beyond the classroom. A fifth-generation Osceola County rancher, she remains actively involved in her family's ranching operations. Her deep community roots are also evident in her long service to the Silver Spurs Club, where she has strengthened one of Osceola County's most treasured traditions. Over the years, she has contributed in numerous operational roles including concessions, ticketing, souvenirs, posters, stock support, and other behind-the-scenes efforts essential to producing rodeo events that bring families, visitors, and economic vitality to the region.

As Silver Spurs Parade Chairman for the past eight years, Kaye revitalized the historic parade, returning it to downtown St. Cloud and reinvigorating community participation. Her most ambitious accomplishment came in 2024, when she led the Silver Spurs Quadrille in its first-ever appearance in the Rose Parade in Pasadena, California. Through extensive planning and coordination, she organized the transport of 25 members and horses, earning national recognition for Osceola County and showcasing the cultural importance of the Silver Spurs Rodeo.

Now serving as the 2025–2026 Big Boss (President) of the Silver Spurs Club, Kaye brings unwavering dedication, vision, and a heart for service. Her priorities remain focused on strengthening family-friendly rodeo entertainment, expanding community impact, and supporting organizations that enrich Osceola County. Kaye Whaley continues to lead with passion, integrity, and a deep commitment to her community.