

by the HIRE Vets Act and is the only federal-level Veterans' employment award that recognizes companies for Veteran hiring, retention, and professional development. To receive this honor, companies must meet strenuous criteria regarding percentages of Veteran employees that are hired and retained, as well as provide resources to those employees that help with integration and personal growth. It is designed to highlight the companies and employees working to support our Veteran population.

While this is Lori's first time receiving the award at Stanadyne, it is, in fact, her fifth award since the HIRE Vets initiative was established in 2019. An outstanding accomplishment, her receipt of this award speaks highly of her devotion and steadfast loyalty to those who have courageously defended our Nation. Lori is a wonderful example of what all executives should be doing to support our service men and women as they transition back to civilian life.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in recognizing and thanking Ms. Lori Ready-DiGiovanni and her dedication to supporting the Veteran population.

CONGRATULATING MR. KYLE BUCHANAN ON HIS APPOINTMENT AS PRESIDENT OF CRESTWOOD MEDICAL CENTER

**HON. ROBERT B. ADERHOLT**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 23, 2026*

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Mr. Kyle Buchanan on his appointment as President of Crestwood Medical Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

A native of Tusculumbia, in Alabama's 4th Congressional District, Mr. Buchanan brings more than two decades of experience in health care leadership, along with a strong record of improving hospital operations, advancing patient care, and strengthening workforce engagement. During his tenure as president of Helen Keller Hospital and Red Bay Hospital, he achieved meaningful progress in physician recruitment and retention, while enhancing the overall stability and performance of those institutions.

Mr. Buchanan has consistently demonstrated a commitment to servant leadership—understanding that the foundation of quality patient care begins with supporting dedicated health care professionals. His ability to foster collaboration among physicians, nurses, and staff has made a lasting impact on the communities he has served, and I have no doubt he will bring that same focus and energy to Crestwood Medical Center.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Mr. Buchanan has remained deeply involved in his community. His leadership roles with organizations such as Leadership Alabama, the University of North Alabama Board of Trustees, and the Shoals Chamber of Commerce reflect his dedication to service beyond the hospital setting. He has also been recognized for his contributions with Citizen of the Year honors and remains active in his church, where he serves in leadership roles.

Crestwood Medical Center serves as a critical provider of health care for families

throughout Huntsville and the surrounding counties, many of which make up my congressional district, and its continued success is vital to the well-being of North Alabama. I am confident that under Mr. Buchanan's leadership, Crestwood will continue to build upon its strong foundation and expand access to high-quality care for the community.

On behalf of Alabama's 4th Congressional District, I extend my sincere congratulations to Kyle Buchanan on this well-deserved achievement. I wish him continued success as he begins this new role and look forward to the positive impact his leadership will bring to the people of North Alabama.

RECOGNIZING THE 2026 CONGRESSIONAL ART COMPETITION IN PUERTO RICO

**HON. PABLO JOSÉ HERNÁNDEZ**

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 23, 2026*

Mr. HERNÁNDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commend the dedicated judges and leaders who supported the 2026 Congressional Art Competition in Puerto Rico, an annual national artistic competition and experience designed to inspire high school students to explore art, innovation, and history.

The Congressional Art Competition provides students in grades 9 to 12 with a unique opportunity to develop original pieces that address real-world challenges through drawing, painting, and, most importantly, creativity.

Beyond the success of this program stands an exceptional group of judges, professionals, and leaders in art and entrepreneurship who generously volunteered their time and expertise. They carefully reviewed student submissions, evaluating technical execution and originality, while also offering thoughtful feedback grounded in experience and academic rigor, ensuring a fair, thorough, and meaningful evaluation for every participant.

Beyond judging, these leaders demonstrated a deep commitment to mentorship and youth development. By exposing students to professional pathways, they reinforced the message that Puerto Rico's young people can compete, create, and excel at the highest levels. On behalf of the people of Puerto Rico, I extend my sincere gratitude to the judges and leaders who offered their perspectives and expertise to our district's 2026 Congressional Art Competition, and I include in the RECORD their names:

Dr. Irene Esteves, Deputy director of Collections and Exhibitions—Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico (MAPR).

Mr. Walter Otero, Founder of Walter Otero Contemporary Art (WOCA), Gallerist, Curator, and Cultural Manager.

Dr. Melissa Ramos Borges, History of Art Professor—University of Puerto Rico.

Ms. Mariel Quiñones, Curator of the Pío López Martínez Museum—University of Puerto Rico at Cayey.

Ms. Ariana García, Illustrator and Augmented Reality Creator, Artist-in-Residence—Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico (MAPR).

Mr. Fernando J. Montilla, Chief Innovation and Technology Officer, Atlantic University.

Their service reflects the very standards we hold our student innovators to—creativity, col-

laboration, and commitment to artistic expression.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 23, 2026*

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, due to the House Committee on Appropriations markup not recessing on time and holding a vote, I missed the first vote on Wednesday, April 22, 2026.

Had I been present, I would have voted NAY on Roll Call No. 130.

HONORING ILENE PAPPERT ON THE OCCASION OF HER RETIREMENT

**HON. NICOLE MALLIOTAKIS**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 23, 2026*

Ms. MALLIOTAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ms. Ilene Pappert on the occasion of her retirement after more than 50 years of dedicated service to the children and families of Staten Island, including 34 years as Director of Children's Aid Goodhue Center in New Brighton.

For nearly five decades, Ms. Pappert has been a steadfast and compassionate leader, devoting her life to uplifting young people and strengthening Staten Island's North Shore community. A trained social worker, she began her journey at Goodhue in the 1970s and steadily rose through the ranks before assuming the role of Director in 1992. Under her leadership, the Goodhue Center has nourished as a haven where generations of children have found support, mentorship, and opportunity.

Each day, Ms. Pappert could be found greeting children with warmth and care—whether helping with homework, tying a shoelace, or simply offering encouragement. Through after-school programs, summer camps, and family engagement initiatives, she helped create an environment where young people could grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Her leadership ensured that hundreds of children each year benefited from enriching programming in the arts, sciences, athletics, and beyond.

Beyond her work within the center, Ms. Pappert has been a tireless advocate for the Goodhue campus and the surrounding community. She worked closely with local elected officials to secure critical funding for programs and played a key role in preserving more than 40 acres of wooded land for public use, helping to ensure that future generations of Staten Islanders will continue to enjoy this treasured space.

Known for her gentle spirit and caring nature, Ms. Pappert has earned the admiration of colleagues, families, and community members alike. Her recognition as a 2026 Staten Island Advance Woman of Achievement is a testament to her extraordinary impact and enduring legacy.

As she transitions into retirement, we celebrate not only her remarkable career, but the

countless lives she has touched. The Goodhue Center, and all of Staten Island, is stronger because of her service.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Ilene Pappert for her lifetime of dedication and to wish her continued health, happiness, and fulfillment in the years ahead.

HONORING SHIRLEY SHERROD'S  
60TH ANNIVERSARY IN ADVOCACY  
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

**HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.**

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 23, 2026*

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heart full of reverence and deep personal gratitude to honor Mrs. Shirley Miller Sherrod on the 60th anniversary of her tireless work for civil rights, economic justice, and the dignity of underserved farmers and rural communities. An event to celebrate her advocacy and remarkable life will be held on Friday, April 24, 2026, in Albany, Georgia.

A daughter of the Jim Crow South, Shirley Sherrod's life is testimony—written in endurance, courage, and relentless love. Born and raised in rural Georgia, she watched injustice with her own eyes as a young woman: at 17 she witnessed an all-white grand jury refuse to indict the man who took her father's life. From that wound came a vow—to spend her life defending the rights of her people. That vow was kept, not with fire or fanfare, but with steady, sacrificial labor that changed lives and moved a Nation.

Her commitment was strengthened by education and faith. Mrs. Sherrod studied at Fort Valley State University and Albany State University, where she earned her bachelor's degree; she holds a master's degree from Antioch University and is a 1993 Kellogg Fellow. Those classrooms sharpened her mind and equipped her to lead with both wisdom and humility.

Following the example of her parents, including her mother, Mrs. Grace Miller, Shirley set out to make a difference. Together with her late husband, the Rev. Charles Sherrod, she helped found the Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education and co-founded New Communities, Inc., the Nation's first community land trust. For decades they sought to secure land, bread, and dignity for Black families who had been denied both. They fed the hungry, taught the hopeful, defended the dispossessed, and refused to surrender a dream of justice even when drought, discrimination, and punitive government practices deprived them of the land they had nurtured.

When Shirley was appointed Georgia Director of Rural Development at USDA, she carried with her a lifetime of moral authority. When she was wrongfully forced from that office amid deceit and malicious editing, she bore the blow with quiet strength that only deepened my admiration. She returned to the trenches she had always known—the fields, the co-ops, the kitchen tables of small farmers—refusing bitterness and choosing again to build.

For sixty years Shirley has been a voice for those whose voices are too often crowded out: Black farmers fighting to hold their land; chil-

dren denied equal education; families seeking access to markets and capital. She has organized, taught, advocated, and led institutions—The Sherrod Institute, New Communities at Cypress Pond (Resora), The Southwest Georgia Project—that remain beacons of hope and practical help for a new generation.

On a personal note, Shirley and Charles were more than colleagues in the struggle—they were friends and moral companions. They both stood with me in places of decision and pressure; they supported me and, with humility, held me accountable when justice demanded it. Shirley's friendship has been a sustaining gift—her counsel frank, her faith unshakable, her love a steadying hand through seasons of trial.

There are moments in life that narrow everything to one clear truth. For Shirley, those moments have been countless acts of service: cajoling a reluctant lender to hear a farmer's story, sitting late with a grieving family, coaxing young leaders to raise their eyes to both truth and possibility. Her life makes real the Scripture that comforts and convicts us: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves" (Proverbs 31:8). She has spoken—and acted—without ceasing.

Mary McLeod Bethune once urged us to "Invest in the human soul. Who knows, it might be a diamond in the rough." Shirley Sherrod has lived that charge—investing in people, cultivating promise, and revealing the brilliance in communities too often overlooked.

Mr. Speaker, we gather not merely to laud achievements, though they are many, but to give thanks for a life poured out in pursuit of justice and mercy. We honor Shirley Sherrod for sixty years of faith made visible, for the countless lives she has steadied and lifted, and for the example she sets for all who would work for a fairer America.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to join my wife, Vivian and me in celebrating Mrs. Shirley Miller Sherrod—a reformer, a teacher, a friend, and a true steward of hope—and to pledge anew our support for the work she leads so faithfully. May God bless her, keep her, and multiply the harvest of her labors for generations to come.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF  
ALEX PONDER

**HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 23, 2026*

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Alex Ponder for her many contributions and 7 years of service to 9th Congressional District residents as Senior Advisor for District Operations and Outreach on my district staff. Alex has spent the formative years of her career serving the community where she grew up.

Alex was born and raised in the district in Park Ridge and interned with my office while studying at Loyola University Chicago. She made such a strong impression that we invited her to join our team full time after graduation. Over the years, she grew into a trusted and capable member of my staff, serving her community with care and consistency.

In her role, Alex was a constant presence across the district. She built lasting relation-

ships with residents and community organizations and helped ensure our office stayed connected to the people we serve. She skillfully led our Congressional Art Competition, working closely with educators and students to build a program that was well run and drew strong participation from schools across the district each year, lifting up young artists and recognizing their work.

Alex was someone my staff knew they could always count on. She stepped into scheduling, communications, and other roles whenever needed, never treating any responsibility as outside her lane. She helped keep track of casework numbers and distribution and was an essential part of our office team during many transitions. Alex began as an intern in our district office and later came to oversee that same program. She selected and managed the interns who assist our office each semester, helping bring new members onto "Team Schakowsky" and teaching them how to advocate for residents and support a congressional office.

Alex knows how to make constituents feel welcome and listened to. She is kind and compassionate, and helped create a warm environment for constituents who called or visited the office.

Alex advocated for constituents in a number of important areas, and handled a high volume of constituent casework. She became the passport expert in our office and was able to cut through red tape to get constituents their passports quickly, alleviating their anxiety during what is often a stressful process. She helped seniors with Social Security and Medicare, and helped constituents resolve problems with the IRS and immigration. Alex made a real, concrete difference in the lives of so many 9th Congressional district residents.

Alex received a well-deserved and special recognition that reads "Agudath Israel of Illinois hereby recognizes the extraordinary efforts of Alex Ponder. Her dedication to the constituents of Illinois' 9th Congressional District, under the leadership of Congresswoman JAN SCHAKOWSKY, is truly remarkable. As a global pandemic affected new challenges for countless individuals, you gave personal attention to every person in need. Regardless of the hour or day of the week, and often against the odds, you worked tirelessly to ensure needs were met, emergencies were addressed, and best outcomes achieved. On behalf of Agudath Israel and our entire community, we express profound gratitude for constantly going above and beyond the call of duty."

And a constituent wrote this heartfelt note "Your employee Alex Ponder of the Glenview office has gone way above and beyond in assisting our daughter and her family this summer . . . I reached out to Alex Ponder and she spent as much time as necessary to guide us through the various documents and notarizations and other forms necessary. She also arranged a meeting with the U.S. Passport Office in Chicago and followed through to be sure all was accomplished efficiently and properly. This is government service at its best, Jan, and I smile every day as I drive past your house, happy to have you as a neighbor as well as our representative! Young professionals such as Alex are worth their weight in gold, and it's a testament to your office that such talent is recruited and retained."

On behalf of the residents of the 9th Congressional District of Illinois, I want to express