

2015 Women of Achievement

Christiana Foglio-Palmer, Entrepreneur for Affordable Housing

Christiana received a bachelor's degree in economics from Douglass College and earned a master's degree in city and regional planning with a concentration in housing finance and economic development from Rutgers University. She is a licensed planner in New Jersey and is the founder, owner and CEO of Community Investment Strategies (CIS), Inc., based in Lawrenceville. CIS specializes in the development of affordable housing communities and urban redevelopment in New Jersey. Its philosophy is to "go beyond bricks and mortar to create 'place' and 'pride' and to provide quality communities to people of modest income", especially for women and minorities, a demographic that is reflected in the company's hiring practices. CIS has built award winning low and moderate income housing communities throughout New Jersey, providing in-house finance, development and construction and on-site property management.

Christiana served as Director of Policy Planning and Economic Development for the City of New Brunswick and as President of the New Brunswick Development Corporation, a not-for-profit real estate development company. She is recognized for creating the foundation of New Brunswick's economic rebirth. She was appointed to serve on the State Housing Commission and during the administrations of Governors Florio and Whitman she served as the Executive Director of the New Jersey Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency. She was responsible for creating the New Jersey Housing Policy.

She served as the chairman for a statewide non-profit, City Works, which targets commercial development in urban areas and has received numerous awards, including the Urban Land Institute's Edward J. Bloustein Award for exemplary Achievement in Civic Leadership, New Jersey Business of the Year and Top Woman-Owned Business in New Jersey.

This Woman of Achievement was nominated by Valerie Anderson, Executive Director – Associate Alumnae of Douglass College.

Linda Caldwell Epps, Educator and Promoter of Cultural History and Identity

Linda graduated from Douglass College with a bachelor's degree in American and African American studies and earned a master's degree in American studies from Seton Hall University and her doctor of letters degree from Drew University. She completed the Institute for Higher Education Management program at Harvard University and is a Leadership New Jersey Fellow. She was an educator in the greater Newark area for over 30 years and is nationally recognized for creating and implementing diversity programs.

As a campus leader at Bloomfield College for over 26 years, she rose to serve as Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students before becoming Vice President for College Relations. She helped to create a campus-wide student assessment project and transformed residential facilities into theme houses to enhance core competencies.

Linda later became Vice President, Institutional Relations at New Jersey Network Public Television and Radio, where she oversaw the NJN Foundation Development Program and worked to increase institutional resources.

Currently she is President and CEO of 1804 Consultants, an organization that provides services to cultural and educational institutions that include grant writing, strategic planning, curriculum development and evaluation, research and management, and public presentations.

She has served as President and CEO of The New Jersey Historical Society, Board Chair of Aljira Arts and Cultural Organization, New Jersey President of the National Council of Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, Chair of the Education Committee for The New Jersey Shakespeare Festival and board member of the NorthStar Charter School. She is a Deaconess in the Bethany Baptist Church in Newark.

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Meghan Wren, Educator and Advocate for New Jersey's Environment

Meghan attended the University of Pennsylvania and studied environmental and marine science at Stockton State College. She is the founder of Bayshore Center at Bivalve, where she currently serves as Executive Director and CEO and as Director of the Delaware Bay Museum. She has engaged in a lifelong program to educate the community about the environment of southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay region.

Meghan led the efforts to restore the 1928 oyster schooner A.J. Meerwald and to secure its listing on the New Jersey and National Registeries of Historic Places and to have it designated as New Jersey's official Tall Ship. The Meerwald travels the New Jersey coastline, offering educational programs on the history of the schooner, how to protect the environment, New Jersey's watershed, and the importance of oysters to our environment. Her collection of information, publications, artifacts and oral histories related to the maritime heritage of the Delaware Bay and the oyster industry is interpreted in displays at the Museum. She launched special events such as Delaware Bay Day, a free annual seafood and folk life festival drawing over 7,500 visitors. She led a collaborative process that resulted in the Cumberland County Delaware Bayshore Recovery Plan, initiated the Rising Tides Forum for New Jersey's Bayshore in response to a need for community dialogue and climate change planning, and as a result of all of these endeavors, has developed a volunteer corps of over 400 individuals.

In 2013 Meghan was the first person to complete the 13.1 mile swim across the Delaware Bay using English Channel rules to bring attention to the need for additional support for Hurricane Sandy recovery and the Bayshore communities.

This Woman of Achievement was nominated by Linda Foster, volunteer and member of the Board of Trustees of Bayshore Center at Bivalve and member of the Woman's Club of Vineland.

Phyllis Adams, Champion for Social Justice

Phyllis Adams is a recognized statewide and national expert and advocate in addressing domestic violence as one of the most pressing social issues of our time.

Since receiving a master's degree in counseling psychology from Seton Hall and a master's degree in social work from Rutgers University, Phyllis has been an active educator and trainer of academia, nonprofit social services and law enforcement professionals. As Coordinator of Professional Training with the Jersey Battered Women's Service, she was instrumental in partnering with the Prosecutor's Office to develop the Morris County Crisis Response Project. She served as Assistant Executive Director of the YMCA of Eastern Union County and developed and oversaw the statewide network of Domestic Violence Response Teams for the New Jersey State Police.

As Executive Director of Women Aware, Inc. since 2007, she heads one of New Jersey's leading domestic violence agencies and the only such agency providing comprehensive services in Middlesex County. Under Phyllis' leadership the agency offers services that include a 24-hour crisis hotline, emergency shelter with beds for women and children, permanent supportive housing, support groups and counseling, children's services, legal advocacy, outreach and community education and training. Three programs: the all-volunteer Domestic Violence Response Team, PALS (Peace: A Learned Response) and the Batterer Intervention Program, were developed, implemented and now serve as statewide and national models. Her vision to establish permanent, affordable and supportive housing became a reality in 2013, and Women Aware made history as the only domestic violence agency in New Jersey to offer this service.

Phyllis continues to be instrumental in changing the lives of survivors of domestic violence.

This Woman of Achievement was nominated by Patty Whitehouse, NJSFWC Past State President, 2010-2012

Suzann Bresler Goldstein, Advocate for Resolution of Healthcare Issues

Suzann graduated from Douglass College with a bachelor's degree in sociology and earned a master's degree in sociology from Rutgers University. She left the Rutgers doctoral program in medical sociology to care for her daughter Stacy who was diagnosed with breast cancer at age 25. Stacy died from the disease in 2001 at the age of 37. A second daughter, Valerie, had been diagnosed with bone cancer in 1969 at age 3. She died six years later.

Shortly after the death of Valerie, Suzann and her husband Edwin founded the Valerie Fund. This well-recognized nonprofit organization provides support for comprehensive healthcare of children with cancer and blood disorders in medical centers and hospitals in New Jersey, Philadelphia and New York City. After the death of Stacy, they renamed the breast cancer center at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey to the Stacy Goldstein Breast Cancer Center at RCINJ. It is New Jersey's only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center. In 1992 Suzann was appointed to the New Jersey State Department of Health Parental and Child Health Advisory Committee and in 2003 to the New Jersey State Child Placement Review Board. In 2010 she was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Foundation of the University of Medicine and Dentistry New Jersey. Suzann's commitment to public service and to resolving healthcare issues have been recognized with numerous awards.

Suzann currently works as a freelance writer and poet and is working on publishing personal essays and poems. She authored a memoir, The View from Within: One Mother's Story, and is co-authoring a book on resilience in mothers with special needs children. By sharing her life, she gives hope and inspiration to others.

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