



# *Tribute!*

eliminating racism  
empowering women **ywca**

## 2019 AWARDS CELEBRATION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2019

With Title Sponsor



FIFTH THIRD BANK

# AGENDA

## **YWCA Tribute Awards**

November 13, 2019

Noon to 1:30 p.m.

DeVos Place

Grand Rapids, Michigan

## **Welcome**

Lonna Wiersma

*President, YWCA Board of Directors*

Charisse Mitchell

*CEO, YWCA*

Women of Achievement Recognition

Title Sponsor Presentation

Susan Vogel-Vanderson

*Managing Director, Fifth Third Private Bank*

## **Luncheon**

## **Awards Presentation**

Emily Irish

*Co-chair, Tribute Awards Planning Committee*

Todd Harvey

*Co-chair, Tribute Awards Planning Committee*

# ADVOCACY



## **Dana Doll**

Co-Founder / Executive Director  
Treetops Collective

*Nominated by Linda Nicholson  
Grinstead*

Dana Doll has long been in the work of welcoming. As a teenager, her parents started doing refugee foster care and she gained three Sudanese siblings as well as a sister from Ghana. This experience propelled her to earn a degree in International Development. Dana then worked in East Africa with women who had been displaced by war. Returning to Grand Rapids, she began to work in refugee resettlement, eventually cofounding Treetops Collective.

Treetops Collective was founded on the belief that belonging is different than resettlement. Resettlement is accomplished through caseworkers and initial supports, however belonging comes through community and feeling at home. Treetops' community programs have impacted the lives of refugee women, but it has also impacted the conversation of immigration and refugees in West Michigan. Dana has a firm belief that although policy solutions around forced migration are global, the real work of welcoming is always designed and delivered in communities. Communities decide whether or not refugees will continue to survive on the margins, or if we will work together and ensure that every member of our community has the chance to set down their roots and flourish here.

Treetops is part social enterprise – selling clothing and other home goods

to increase awareness and support the cause – and part programming. In the Sister Circles program, participants engage in cross-cultural partnerships, learning each other's cultures, goals, and dreams while also learning about financial planning, accessing healthcare, and enrolling in school. The result is finding the partners can benefit each other while also breaking down barriers between larger groups in the community.

The issue of refugees is by nature always politicized. Treetops has been a voice and force for recognizing the gifts and abilities refugees bring to West Michigan. The group's advocacy has been mentioned in the *New York Times* as well as local media. Under her leadership, the organization established itself as a stable nonprofit. Building a sustainable foundation of diverse revenue has been key, with a highlight coming in 2018 when she and the board launched a "\$100,000 in 100 days" campaign through social media and exceeded their goal.

When refugees arrive in Grand Rapids, they are here because they have been forced to flee their homes because of persecution, war, or violence. Many suffer psychological trauma. Amid the fears and isolation that can cause, there is Treetops. Through Dana's experience, education, and innovative spirit, the organization is able to welcome refugee women and help them plant deep roots here – benefitting not just the women, but our community as a whole.


**Miranda Krajniak**

Executive Director

Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts

*Nominated by Kristen Taylor*

Miranda Krajniak joined the UICA in 2013, a critical time in the organization's history: After decades as an independent institution, UICA merged with the Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University (KCAD). Miranda's approach, which wed institutional sustainability with the community's ownership and history, successfully transitioned UICA to stability. Woven into her vision for the organization is a belief in art as a way to push boundaries of expression, to break down barriers, to amplify voices, and ultimately, to create change.

Growing up in a low-income household shaped Miranda's desire for access to the arts, and is a central tenet of her work. In 2018, UICA became the first art museum in Grand Rapids to participate in the Museums for All program, which offers low-cost admission to low-income residents and visitors. Under her leadership, UICA developed a partnership with DisArt for the DisArt Festival, which created an equitable arts experience for people with disabilities. UICA also presented *US IS THEM, Here + Now*, and the *Heartside Community Meal* by artist Seitu Jones in 2017.

Jones' important work about food access, sustainability, culture, and self-determination for marginalized people was awarded the juried Grand Prize at ArtPrize. These exhibitions, their educational program, and how UICA presented them to the community led to important results. In 2017, UICA's constituents had the same ethnic/racial demographic breakdown as the surrounding Kent County. Additionally, UICA's black and African American audience was almost twice the percentage of national art museum attendance.

Beginning her career as a receptionist after putting herself through school, Miranda has worked her way up and succeeded in a difficult field. Before working at UICA, she founded the Growing Young Artists program for children of migrant workers in Saugatuck. Her hard work has been recognized through several honors: Grand Rapids Business Journal's 40 Under 40 and 50 Most Influential West Michigan Women, as well as a nominee for the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce Young Athena award.

Miranda recognizes UICA's unique role and opportunity as an arts institution with no permanent collection. It has a charge to present the art of today. And as demonstrated through six years at UICA, she will use that charge to better her community.



# BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT, INDUSTRY, AND LABOR



## **Valissa Armstead**

Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Spectrum Health

*Nominated by Ovell Barbee*

Working for a company that is one of our community's largest employers, Valissa Armstead brings firsthand, expert knowledge to the table for Spectrum Health's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) efforts.

Through Valissa's guidance, Spectrum Health's leadership signed the #123forEquity Pledge and Talent 2025 CEO Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. These commitments enabled Spectrum Health to establish a strategic plan around eliminating health disparities and growing a diverse and inclusive team.

Valissa often notes that health disparities annually cost the United States more than \$100 million. Her department looks closely at those disparities in our community, in both patient populations and the workforce, identifying the barriers and then asking: "how do we address those barriers?"

She previously worked as an engineer, and as a direct result, understands the importance of data as the foundation for strategic recommendations. She also speaks regularly about her experience beginning her career as an African American and personally being the target of sexism and racism. She uses those experiences to fuel, inform, and guide her as she charts Spectrum's path.

Valissa is a thought leader in her field, with Spectrum Health's DEI earning several awards under her leadership: Diversity Best Practices Inclusion Index Company (2018), Project Search Employment Outcome Award (2016, 2017, 2018), West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum Social Responsibility Leadership Award (2018), LINC Up Community Spirit Innovation Award (2018), Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce Diversity Visionary Award (2018), and the Michigan Salute to Diversity Award (2019).

Faith, healthy living, and improving the wellbeing of our community are all very important to Valissa. She is a board member of the Kingdom Life Ministries Community Development Corporation and assists with grant writing and program development that supports families as they become self-sufficient. Her passion for running has been channeled into the Sisters Taking Action Reversing Statistics (STARS) group, encouraging women, particularly women of color and moms, to make fitness and healthy living a priority for themselves. She sets her own example, having recently completed the International Niagara Falls Marathon and the Berlin Marathon in Germany.

Valissa's ability to build relationships and lead innovative strategies are an asset to both the Spectrum Health workforce and the patients they serve.

# COMMUNITY SERVICE



## **Misti Stanton**

Assistant Vice President,  
Diversity and Inclusion Officer  
Mercantile Bank

*Nominated by Tina VanValkenburg*

Misti Stanton's heart for community shines in a multitude of ways, in the workplace and outside of it.

With the goal of bettering the lives of others – starting with literacy and learning for the next generation, a large portion of Misti's efforts with youth have centered on Grand Rapids Public Schools. Having been involved with the district for over 25 years, she coordinated an elementary literacy program (HOSTS – Help One Student to Succeed) which received a National Exemplary Award for being one of the best HOSTS sites in the nation. Misti also served as the Schools of Hope Coordinator for Harrison Park Elementary, developing a training curriculum for volunteers to tutor children one-on-one and help build the critical reading skills needed to succeed in school and life.

Her contributions go beyond the classroom, having coached basketball, volleyball, and track and field at Central and Ottawa Hills High Schools for 15 years.

Inspired by an idea from her daughter, Alexis, and named in memory of her own mother, Misti created the Estelle L. Smith Reading Corners. Something of a cross between a comfy sofa and a

mini-library, Misti was able to create 18 Reading Corners throughout the Grand Rapids and Wyoming Public Schools.

In her role at Mercantile Bank, Misti oversees a robust college internship program. Working to ensure meaningful experiences for the future professionals, Misti has included guest speakers, field trips, special projects, mentoring, and community service. She also began a collaboration with GRPS to connect high school students with banking as a potential career. A consistent message to her students and interns is that you must know your community in order to serve your community.

One of the key ways Misti serves is by bringing her leadership to boards and committees — and indeed, an in demand board/committee member she is. She is the current Board Secretary for the Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative (ELNC) and Vice Chair of the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Network; a member of the KConnect Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workgroup; and sits on the boards of Senior Neighbors and the Grand Rapids Student Advancement Foundation.

For Misti, a life geared toward community service is simply the only way to be. And by equipping young people throughout her career, she is building a legacy that will grow for generations to come.

# PROFESSIONS



## **Michelle Rabideau**

President

Saint Mary's Foundation

*Nominated by Deb Bailey*

Philanthropy involves fundraising, strategic planning, donor stewardship, board development, and community relations. But ultimately, philanthropy is about people. And Michelle Rabideau is a people person.

For 24 years, Michelle has led philanthropic efforts in the world of healthcare, currently as president of the philanthropic arm of Mercy Health Saint Mary's. In a field where high turnover is an issue, she has created an environment that encourages staff retention and allows each member to grow in their roles. The team has high standards and in turn, high performance.

In her 18 years at the Saint Mary's Foundation, Michelle has raised over 75 million dollars. These funds have a direct impact on the patients Mercy Health Saint Mary's serves. Her innovative approaches to philanthropy include "Up Next," one of the first efforts in this community to engage the next generation in leadership and philanthropy through a year-long immersion into health care and the role of philanthropy. The program was soon replicated by several local nonprofits. She also developed the Grand Girlfriends program, providing funding for the special needs of women seeking healthcare. Group members contribute and vote on which initiative

for women they want to fund, with over 350 women investing \$1,000 to help other women during times of need.

A Certified Fund-Raising Executive, the highest level of certification in the development profession, Michelle is considered one of the top development leaders in the community. She has received the Benjamin Franklin Award for Outstanding Fundraising Professional from her peers through the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Her community leadership goes beyond the hospital. Governor Rick Snyder appointed Michelle to the Michigan Community Service Commission, which uses service and volunteerism to address Michigan's most pressing social issues. She has served on the East Grand Rapids School Board and is committed to public education, supporting several districts with innovative partnerships and efforts. She is a frequent representative on the national stage for her sorority, Kappa Delta, and presents on leadership development for women.

Recognized as one of the 50 Most Influential Women in West Michigan by the Grand Rapids Business Journal, Michelle delivers results in a competitive field with a rapidly changing environment. Her style is entrepreneurial and innovative, while placing an equal focus on staff development and community impact.



# SPORTS, FITNESS, AND WELLNESS



## **Jewellynne Richardson**

West Michigan Jewels of Africa,  
One Stop Culture Shop  
*Nominated by Sharon LaChappelle*

Jewellynne Richardson, or Mama Jewel, as she is known in the community, extends her reach from the community's youngest members to its eldest. No matter your age, she seeks to get you moving, feeling healthy, and connected to your history.

On Tuesday nights, you will find her at Baxter Community Center teaching African drumming and dance. It's a form of exercise, but also includes storytelling and history. She has taught this class for nearly a decade, offering intergenerational music and movement where participants take part in whatever way they feel comfortable. Her mantra is that people need to know who they are and where they come from – and that anyone can dance and drum.

Jewel regularly travels to perform throughout the state. Wherever she goes, she is often teaching and performing flanked with her children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, sisters, brothers, and often her 95-year-old father. She has taught each of them drumming and dance, and they now make up the team that helps her teach. She continues to study African dance, drumming, history, and culture by connecting with dance and drum

groups all over the country and with groups that visit from Africa. She and her family often make their own outfits and sometimes instruments from dried gourds.

In keeping with her vision, Jewel is the owner of the One Stop Culture Shop on Eastern Avenue. There, she promotes wellness through hair care and more. The space is filled with natural hair and skin products in addition to African drums, clothing, jewelry, books, and art. Visitors see her as not just a hair stylist, but also a counselor, encourager, resource connector, and advocate. The shop also serves as a gathering space, hosting community discussions – including one that was featured in a Michigan Radio story on NPR.

Jewel leads as an empowered woman. She speaks words of encouragement to all who come through her shop, loving her community any way she can. She regularly attends workshops to learn more about effective advocacy and how to make policy change, from voter engagement to addressing structural racism.

The sound of the drum is Jewel's call to community, inviting all to join and connect. As participants feel validated and confident, armed with the history of their people, they bring this spirit out into the world.



# JUDY LLOYD STUDENT LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP

PRESENTED BY THE YWCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## Judy Lloyd

September 18, 1945 to June 1, 2005

*"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."*

*-John Quincy Adams*

It was this way with Judy Lloyd as well. Her kindness and extraordinary grasp of the issues facing our community inspired countless people to follow her lead. She was a role model for us all, the most graceful and respected of leaders. Judy led in a quiet, unassuming way as she connected individuals and organizations to the benefit of those most in need. She was a cheerleader and a touchstone, knowing who to bring to the table to get a job done and then devoting herself wholeheartedly to the tasks needed to get there. She touched hearts and strengthened our community at the same time. Judy's passing was met with an outpouring of generosity in her memory, which the YWCA has housed at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation and directed to long-term support of our services — all to create a community supportive of women and their families that Judy loved so much.

Judy's two decades of influence at the YWCA is immeasurable. She participated on the Tribute Planning and Selection Committees and helped establish and grow the YWCA's Circle of Women Celebration (now Open Circle) exponentially. Judy was a member of our Finance Committee, helping manage finite resources to effectively address the seemingly

infinite challenges facing women and girls. She led the YWCA's Board of Directors during some of the organization's most historic moments and helped lay the foundation for fundamental change in the national YWCA. In each moment, with each task, Judy offered those she worked with warm words of encouragement and the practical hands-on help to succeed beyond expectations.

With a corps of volunteers who resemble Judy's dedication and quiet leadership, the YWCA has worked hard over the last century to create an environment that allows women and girls to thrive and lead. The Tribute Student Award is an extension of that. We honor those young women who — while still in high school — have already shown themselves to be gifted, competent models for us all. The connection between these young women and Judy is natural and apparent. It is most appropriate that the scholarship should bear her name.

Inspired by Judy's life and work, the YWCA Board of Directors chose to establish the Student Leadership Award in her honor. It is designed to offer practical help to this and future student honorees as they work to fulfill their dreams. It is in this way that we recognize Judy and commit ourselves to a future motivated by her values and example.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Charisse Mitchell'.

Charisse Mitchell, YWCA CEO

# STUDENT HONOREE

RECIPIENT OF THE JUDY LLOYD STUDENT LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP



## **Midian Johnson**

Senior,  
City High School  
*Nominated by Kate O'Keefe*

Midian Johnson is an extraordinary student leader with dreams not just for herself. She is looking to create positive long-lasting change for her entire community by addressing systemic issues. She doesn't shy away from tough conversations; she has found her voice and makes it heard. She has a desire to know and contribute to social justice – while also having fun along the way. It is with this intentional approach that she leads in the classroom and beyond.

Midian sits on the Principal's Advisory Group at City High, and takes this role seriously, particularly as a woman of color. She is a member of the Ambassador Program, a welcoming committee for the school, and also participated in the EPIC Exchange Leader program, which brings students together from all grades to create a more cohesive learning environment. This summer, she was chosen as the first Bank of America Student Leader, a national program recently launched in Grand Rapids. Through that, she completed an internship with local nonprofit Family Promise of Grand Rapids, which provides emergency

shelter and basic needs for families experiencing homelessness. The culmination of the program was a trip to Washington DC for a week of advocacy. She also contributes her insights on the Grand Rapids Community Foundation's Youth Grant Committee.

This accomplished student has an innate ability to think critically about tough issues. She is in the process of creating a Women's Empowerment Club at City High along with two classmates. The group seeks to foster a culture of advocacy and peer mentoring in the school. In each meeting, Midian speaks her mind and her heart. She is precise in what she wants to communicate as she knows other women and girls of color are watching.

With a rigorous course load at her prestigious school, an international baccalaureate world school ranked 38th in the nation, Midian excels. She will receive the renowned IB Diploma this spring. Midian has worked strategically toward her goal of attending her top choice school, Howard University. She plans to pursue a career in medicine as a maternal fetal medicine specialist. She has seen how issues around health disparities negatively affect people of color, and she has a fire in her soul to change it.