

PRESS RELEASE

March 30, 2017

ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS CELEBRATE WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

(Newark, NJ) – On March 29, 2017, the Essex County Freeholders held their annual Women's History Month Celebration at the Hall of Records. During the event, the Freeholders recognized extraordinary women in Essex County.

This year's honorees included: **The Montclair Chapter of Drifters, Inc., Alixon Collazos Gill** of Montclair, **Jessica G. de Koninck** of Montclair, **Dr. Glenda Johnson-Green** of Irvington, **Eleta J. Caldwell** of Newark, **Mayttee Cordero** of Newark, **Nadine Wright-Arbubakrr** of East Orange, **Karen Hartshorn Hilton** of South Orange, and **Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin** of Newark.

Freeholder Timberlake began the program with remarks, congratulating the honorees and recognizing them as "Superwomen" for the tremendous accolades they each have received. President Timberlake shared a quote from famous poet and civil rights activist the late Maya Angelou, stating, "We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated." Freeholder Timberlake added that despite the many obstacles placed in their pathways, women are fearless, strong, and powerful forces that will not be defeated.



(from left to right) Tracy Munford accepts the Board's plaque from Freeholder Cynthia Toro during the Women's History Month Celebration. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

The Montclair Chapter of the Drifters, Inc., was founded in Montclair, New Jersey, in 1964. The organization was chartered by several individuals, including: Aretha Leslie, Pearl Moore, Anna Jones, Vivian Mitchell, Edythe Wells, Beatrice Wells, Helen Lee, Carolyn Rice, Ernestine Guest and Edythe Pearman. The chapter was installed in 1964 and sponsored by the New York Drifter Chapter. It became the 9th chapter to join the Drifter sisterhood. To assist in expanding, the chapter has sponsored three additional chapters in Ocean Township, New Jersey, Cleveland, Ohio, and Los Angeles, California. Since

1964, the chapter has grown to include 20 members and 5 alumnae. Over the last several years, the organization's programmatic focus has expanded to include scholarships, small grants, and service projects to an average of 30 organizations a year. The chapter has also served a number of communities, including: Montclair, Newark, the Oranges, Plainfield, Paterson, and more. The sisters of the Montclair Chapter of Drifters, Inc., have become well known for their annual brunch, which attracts up to 1,000 people. The fundraiser collects proceeds to allow the Drifters to conduct community programs, provide scholarships for the entire year, and celebrate service to others. Nearly \$100,000 in college scholarships have been distributed over the last 10 years. The organization also supports Jazz House Kids, the African American Cultural Committee of the Montclair Museum, the Montclair African American Heritage Festival and Parade, and more. The chapter also has a reading program for the Montclair Child Development Corporation. The Montclair chapter has also become well known for their "Coffee and Coats" and "Cocoa and Coats

Program”, whereby the organization puts coats on parking meters, donating them to anyone who would like to pick them up, along with a Dunkin Donuts or 7-Eleven gift card as a way to keep people warm. The chapter also works with local food pantries and healthcare programs, including breast cancer awareness with Sister’s Network, AAngelsNJ, and more. The Montclair chapter has been recognized nationally as one of the most dynamic chapters in the organization.



(from left to right) Freeholder Vice President Brendan Gill, Alixon Collazos Gill, their children Kristen and Gabriel, and Freeholder Leonard Luciano gather together during the Women’s History Month Celebration. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Mrs. Alixon Collazos Gill was born in Cali, Colombia, and came to the United States at the age of 14 where she reunited with her mother. She graduated from Long Branch High School and attended Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Latin American Literature. Upon graduating from Rutgers, she spent 11 months traveling throughout Mexico. She established herself in Newark and served as a production assistant for one of the longest running Latino television shows on New Jersey public television (NJN), called Images/Imagenes. She went on to work for the Puerto Rican Federal Affairs as the first non-Puerto Rican to be appointed to the position

of Outreach Coordinator for the Voter Registration program. In 2003, she traveled to the Prague, Czech Republic, where she became a certified English as a Second Language instructor. During her one year stay in Prague, she worked as a teacher at an English language pre-school during the day and an English instructor at an adult language academy. In 2004, she enrolled in the International Studies Master of Arts program at New York University while she worked at a law firm. Soon after, she began working at the office of former Congressman Steven R. Rothman where she served as Director of Constituent Services until 2011. She went on to work as a grant manager at one of the largest full service grant consulting firms in the region, Millennium Strategies. During her two years at the firm, she was able to secure over \$900,000 in funding to municipalities and non-profit organizations from federal, state, and private foundations. She currently serves as the Director of the Latino Outreach Program for Phil Murphy for Governor and a Board Member of LUPE Fund, a non-profit organization dedicated to educating, empowering and engaging Latinas in New Jersey. She is also a Board Member of friends of Hispanic Research and Information Center (HRIC), a non-profit organization that is both a part of and housed in the Newark Public Library and is dedicated to rescuing, preserving, and archiving the history of Latinos in New Jersey. In 2005, she completed a six-month training program with EmergeNJ, a nonprofit organization that identifies, trains, and encourages Democratic women to run for office. She is married to Essex County Freeholder Vice President Brendan W. Gill, and together they have two children, Gabriel (8 years old), and Kristen (5 years old).



Freeholder Vice President Gill (left) presents the Board's plaque to Jessica G. de Koninck (right). PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Ms. Jessica G. de Koninck graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History with High Honors from Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, in 1975. She went on to attend Boston University Law School, where she graduated in 1978 in the top third of her class. In 2011, she graduated from Stonecoast, University of Southern Maine with a Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing. She began her career working for Greater Boston Legal Services in Boston, Massachusetts from 1977 and Boston University Legal Aid in the Summer of 1977. She went on to form De Koninck & Munsen in Boston,

Massachusetts, a practice that emphasized criminal litigation. Soon after, she began working for the Essex County Counsel's Office in Newark, New Jersey, representing the Welfare Section from 1981 to 1982; Governmental Affairs Section from 1982 to 1986; and serving as Section Chief in 1986. Ms. de Koninck went on to work at Vogel, Chait, Schwartz & Collins in Morristown in 1987, Assistant Corporation Counsel in Paterson from 1987 to 1990, and Hyman & de Koninck in Montclair from 1988 to 1995. In 1995, she began working as the Division Director for Trenton Public Schools where she performed all legal work for the district. Soon after, she served as Special Counsel for Trenton Public Schools, where she negotiated collective bargaining agreements, handled all legal matters, and more. Ms. de Koninck began working for the South Orange and Maplewood Public Schools as the in-house Counsel where she was responsible for managing all legal matters for the district board hearings and agenda review. As the in-house Counsel, she prepared legal memorandum, handled personnel issues, oversaw special education mediation, and more. In 2015, she began teaching for the Department of Educational Leadership at Kean University. She has been involved in numerous professional activities, including; the New Jersey League of Municipalities, New Jersey School Boards Association, and the Council of Chief State School Officers, to name a few. She has served as the Vice President and Trustee of the Montclair Public Library and Councilwoman of Montclair Township. She currently serves as President of the Montclair Board of Education and the New Jersey Anti-bullying Task Force. Ms. Koninck has been published in *Global Public Management*, *Montclair This Month*, and *The Montclair Times*. She is a three-time Pushcart Prize Nominee and has been a finalist for the Dobler, the Raynes, and the Ledge poetry prizes. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including: the *Valparaiso Literary Review*, *Poetry Magazine*, *Literary Mama*, *Apple Valley Review* and the *Widows' Handbook*. She is the author of *Cutting Room*, a collection of full-length poems. She is also the author of a chapter book, entitled, *Repairs*. She is the proud mother of two children, Isabel de Koninck and Henry de Koninck.



Freeholder Rufus Johnson (left) presents Dr. Glenda Johnson-Green (right) with the Board plaque. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Dr. Glenda Johnson-Green came to Newark, New Jersey, in 1962 from Mississippi. She graduated from Weequahic High School at the age of 16 as the youngest graduate in her class. After high school, she attended Hampton Institute (now Hampton University), and went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education at Jersey City State College (now New Jersey City University). She also received a Master of Arts degree in Administration from Montclair State University and a Doctorate of Education degree in

Administration Supervision from Seton Hall University in 2001. Dr. Johnson-Green began her first teaching assignment at 13th Avenue School in 1974. She also taught at 15th Avenue School, Alexander Street School, Charlton Street School, Louise A. Spencer School, Peshine Avenue School, Weequahic Evening School, Vailsburg Evening School, Integrity House and the Adult Learning Center. She has served as Vice-Principal at South 17th Street School and Burnet Street School. After only one year at Burnet, she was appointed to Roseville Avenue School as Principal, and two years later, she became Principal of 13th Avenue School, the 2nd largest elementary school in the Newark District with 1,250 students. Two more Principal assignments followed at Boylan Street and Speedway Avenue Schools, and in 1999, she was asked to become Executive Assistant under Deputy Superintendent Anzella Nelms, a partnership that lasted for 5 years. In 2004, she became the Assistant Superintendent of School Leadership Team III supervising thirteen schools and 17 buildings. She currently serves as the Principal of John F. Kennedy High School in Newark, a Special Needs school serving 180 students known as “The Best Kept Secret” in Newark Public Schools. She is also one of the founding members of the Organization of African American Administrators and the Newark Alliance of Black School Educators. She is supported by her family in all that she does and believes in letting the work that she does speak for her.



(from left to right) Freeholder Rufus Johnson stands alongside Dr. Glenda Johnson-Green, Eleta Caldwell, and Freeholder Leby Jones during the Women's History Month Celebration. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Ms. Eleta Caldwell moved to Newark in the late 1940's and graduated from Arts High School. She has always had a love for art and began drawing at the age of 3. She went on to attend Montclair State University in Montclair, New Jersey, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree and Master of Arts degree in Fine Arts. She began teaching in Newark at Weequahic High School. After 10 years of service, Ms. Caldwell went on to serve at Arts High School for 28 years, where her "school life" has gone full circle: first a student at the school, then as teacher, Department Chair, and retiring as Principal. She began working as an exhibiting artist in the early 1970's with Gladys Grauer at her gallery (AARD), in Newark. She started out creating works that were representational and grew to become more abstract. She presently combines genres in mixed media. She has dedicated most of her work, life, and time to the City of Newark. She has exhibited in many shows, including: The Newark Museum, Rutgers University, Montclair State University, The Harlem Museum, The Schomburg, Clockwork Gallery New York City, and Art in the Atrium, to name a few. Ms. Caldwell has had a wonderful career with lovely children. She has always been grateful to Newark for giving her rich and satisfying experiences and enjoys sharing her love for art and teaching in the city she calls home. She believes if you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life.



(from left to right) Mayttee Cordero stands alongside Freeholder Rolando Bobadilla as she receives the Board's plaque. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Ms. Mayttee Cordero was born on June 6, 1979, in the town of Isabela, Puerto Rico. She was raised by her single mother, Eva Cordero, along with her younger brother Jesus. Despite difficulties, her mother managed to overcome the odds and provide for her family. Ms. Cordero quietly collected soda cans throughout her neighborhood in Puerto Rico to trade in for money to bring her family to the United States. Unbeknownst to her mother, she was able to pay for the entire family to come to the United States so they would not be separated. At the age of 12, she and her family moved to the Ironbound section of Newark where she attended

Oliver Street School. At the age of 14, she enrolled in a school program that allowed her to obtain a job, and she began working at Burger King. It was there she learned the components of the business, and she quickly became a manager, demonstrating to her superiors that she was determined and disciplined. Ms. Cordero went on to work for Cablevision Corporation and soon after, began working for Lynne's Car Sales Corporation at the age of 21. While there, she surpassed her sales goals, created many new business relationships, and enabled the business to grow. After spending several years in the sales industry, Ms. Cordero opened Taino's Kitchen Restaurant, an authentic Puerto Rican Cuisine eatery, in September 2014. She utilized her experience in the restaurant business and combined her brother's expertise in cooking to create a successful business. She co-founded the restaurant with her brother who incorporated their family members to create a family run business. In the last 3 years, Taino's Kitchen has grown extensively in popularity and support. Ms. Cordero has given back to the community for the last 4 years through numerous initiatives, including: Thanksgiving Food Drive, Back to School Supply Collection, and many other local youth and charitable programs. She was awarded "Business of the Year Award" from the Essex County Latino American Chamber of Commerce for her dedication, exemplary performance, commitment, and inspiration to the community and the citizens she serves. Ms. Cordero believes true success is shared with family, friends, and the very community she so dearly loves to embrace. She is the proud mother of Luis.



Ms. Nadine Wright-Arbubakrr (left) stands alongside Freeholder Leby Jones (right) as she receives the Board's plaque. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Ms. Nadine Wright-Arbubakrr is a native of Newark, New Jersey, and currently resides in the City of East Orange. She received her early education in the Newark and East Orange School systems and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Management and Marketing from Felician College. Ms. Wright-Arbubakrr worked in the banking industry in various managerial positions for over 25 years, but in 2006, when her then 20-month old son Nassan was diagnosed with Autism, she changed her career path and embarked on a journey to open a center called Nassan's Place. She created Nassan's Place in October 2012 in

response to the lack of accessible and affordable educational and recreational programs for children affected by Autism in and around the urban/inner-cities of Essex County. As the President and founder of Nassan's Place, she serves as an advocate for children and families affected by Autism. Under her leadership, Nassan's Place has presented numerous programs for children and families affected by Autism, including Saturday Inclusion

Enrichment, Inclusion Basketball Camp, Sensory Friendly Movie and Skate Days, and Autism Support Group, to name a few. Ms. Wright-Arbubakrr is married with four children, two step-children, and one granddaughter. When she is not advocating for Autism, she enjoys spending time with her family.



(from left to right) Karen Hartshorn Hilton stands alongside Freeholder President Britnee Timberlake during the Board's Women's History Month Celebration. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Ms. Karen Hartshorn Hilton received a Bachelor of Arts degree from William Smith College and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Massachusetts. She began her career in Philadelphia at WOMENS WAY and later worked as a Direct Service Counselor for Planned Parenthood. Soon after, she transitioned into the public sector and began working as a Senior Budget Analyst for the Massachusetts State Legislature where she worked on social services, children's issues, and public health for the House Ways and Means Committee. She also served as Director of special education rate setting for the state's Department of Administration and Finance. More recently, Ms.

Hartshorn Hilton was the founding Executive Director for EmergeNJ, a political training organization with a mission to increase the number of democratic women holding office. Her work at EmergeNJ focused on recruitment, program development, training, fundraising, and board governance. She has served as a Senior Advisor for Emerge America and managed the launch of Emerge Pennsylvania and Emerge Michigan. She has actively recruited many women to run for public office, and a number of program graduates now hold elected office. Ms. Hartshorn Hilton was also an active volunteer in the Marshall and Jefferson elementary schools in South Orange, and she also served as President of the Home and School Association of South Orange Middle School. She spearheaded funding for "After the Bell Rings," an after school program serving middle school children free-of-charge. Additionally, she served as a Girl Scout leader, where she led two separate multi-age troops over a 12-year period, with the final troop achieving its Silver Community Service Award for enhancements to the Girl Scout Oval in South Mountain Reservation. Over the past 25 years, she has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to making communities stronger through her professional work in government, politics, and the nonprofit sector. She has devoted thousands of volunteer hours to community service and leadership. Children and women's issues have always moved her to action. She currently works as a management consultant for Growth for Good, where she helps area nonprofits reach their full potential in fundraising, strategic planning, and board development. She was Chair of the South Orange Public Library Board of Trustees for more than a decade and currently presides over the Foundation for the South Orange Public Library, which she co-founded to enhance library services in South Orange. Ms. Hartshorn Hilton is a 20-year resident of South Orange and a proud mother of four children.



(from left to right) Freeholder Patricia Sebold presents the Board's plaque to Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin was born on October 23, 1980, to parents who emigrated from Portugal and is a proud, lifelong resident of Newark, New Jersey. As the first in her family to graduate from college, she received a Bachelor of Science degree in

Legal Studies from Saint John’s University, Master of Arts degree in Government and Politics, and a certificate in International Relations and Public Administration. Assemblywoman Pintor Marin began her career as a Special Projects Associate for the Brazilian-American Chamber of Commerce in New York City. During her time with the chamber, she organized conferences for American and Brazilian government officials, prepared budgets, and acted as a liaison with governmental and nongovernmental organizations. She joined Banco Votorantim Securities Inc., in 2008, where she served as office manager, analyst, and business development officer. She was responsible for the daily activities of the New York office, building relationships with clients, and identifying new business investment opportunities. In 2010, she left the private sector to join the Essex County Clerk’s Office, where she serves as the Division Manager of passports and vault recordings. The career change solidified her commitment to public service. In 2013, she was appointed to a vacant seat in the New Jersey General Assembly to represent the 29th Legislative District, the first female Portuguese-American to serve the New Jersey General Assembly. Now in her second term, she has distinguished herself as a champion for the middle class and working families. She has been a voice for immigrants and low-income families. She deeply understands that education can change the trajectory of a child’s life and has been a strong supporter of public schools. She launched her career in public service in 2008 when she was elected to the Newark Public Schools Advisory Board, where she served as Chair of the Board and Chair of the Finance Committee until 2013. She sits on the Budget Committee where she has the responsibility for generating the State’s budget. She is also the Vice Chair of the Commerce and Economic Development Committee and a member of the Telecom and Utilities committee. She has sponsored legislation focusing on various issues, including: job creation and economic development; Medicaid expansion; children with disabilities; and veterans, to name a few. Assemblywoman Pintor Marin is married to Anthony Marin, and together they have two children.

Assistant County Administrator and Speaker Emeritus Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver gave remarks on behalf of Essex County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo, Jr. Assemblywoman Oliver stated that although March has been dedicated as Women’s History Month, Women’s History is celebrated 365 days a year. Women have unwavering strength that has been demonstrated for centuries. She shared that “the hand that rocks the cradle, guides the nation”.

The audience was favored with musical renditions of “The Star Spangled Banner” and “Stronger” by Mandisa performed by Ms. Charmaine Broadbelt-Cousins and her colleague. Reverend Geraldine Clark, the Associate Minister of Calvary Baptist Church in East Orange, also delivered the opening and closing prayers during the program.

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