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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2023 Business Leaders of Color

Nearly three years after many employers made bold pledges to support diversity, equity and inclusion following George Floyd's murder, it's appropriate to wonder -- and worry -- if we've lost momentum.

That makes this year's list of the 50 Most Influential Business Leaders of Color arguably more important than the inaugural list we jointly published in 2020 because it serves as a measure of not just where we are, and how far we've come, but how much further we must go.

Don't see any, or many, names here from your industry sector or representation from some of our region's top employers? It's possible we overlooked someone. It's also possible it signifies a deeper shortcoming.

New this year, we're pleased to also publish a list of 20 Emerging Leaders, spotlighting outstanding individuals under 40. To qualify for either list, honorees had to work and/or sit on a board for a business or nonprofit physically located in Newton, Needham, Watertown, Waltham, Wellesley, Natick or Framingham. Both lists were culled from close to 200 nominations from area businesses and individuals and selected by an eminent panel of judges, including:

- Maggie Baxter, VP Programming at NBC10 Boston, NECN, and Telemundo Boston
- Nicole Obi, CEO, Black Economic Council of MA
- Eneida Román, CEO, Amplify Latinx
- Qingjian (Q.J.) Shi, Director, Asian Business Empowerment Council, The Boston Foundation
- Darryl Settles, CEO, Catalyst Ventures Development
- Saleha Walsh, VP, Insource Services, Inc

Diversity, equity and inclusion is a best business practice: enhancing recruitment, retention, innovation and fiscal performance. We urge businesses and nonprofits to tap both lists for boards, C-Suites, expert commentators and conference speakers.


Plus, those honored are just part of the story. Everyone here is connected to a larger network of individuals who may be just who your organization is looking for.

Our deepest appreciation to Direct Federal Credit Union and the additional sponsors of this initiative: Insource Services Inc., The Village Bank, Eastern Bank, Fidelity Bank, MORE Advertising, the UMass Foundation and Mark Development. Thanks also to Leader Bank for underwriting our print publication.

And our hearty congratulations and thanks to our 70 honorees for your contributions to the economic, social and civic fabric of our west suburban communities.



Greg Reibman
President & CEO
Charles River Regional Chamber



Colette Phillips
Founder & CEO
Colette Phillips Communications, Inc.
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Mohamad Ali

CEO & Director, IDG, Inc.

CEO of Needham-based IDG, the world’s leading data, research, and media company for the technology industry, Ali has become the tech industry’s one to watch. Before his work at IDG, Ali was the CEO of Carbonite, growing its revenue to over a half-billion dollars in four years, and chief strategy officer at Hewlett Packard, where Ali played a pivotal role in the company’s turnaround. Throughout his career, Ali has received a plethora of awards including the EY Entrepreneur of the Year for New England (2022), CEO of the Year by the Massachusetts Technology Leadership Council (2018), and 100 Most Influential People in Boston by Boston Magazine (2021, 2020 & 2018). Ali has served on various boards of publicly traded companies including iRobot, Henry Schein, Carbonite, and City National Bank. He holds a B.S. in Computer Engineering, a B.A. in History, and a M.S. in Electrical Engineering from Stanford University.



Alexis Avila

Founder & CEO, Prepped and Polished Tutoring and Test Preparation

On a mission to help elementary, secondary, college-level, and adult students improve their grades and test scores, in 1999 Avila founded his South Natick-based company Prepped and Polished Tutoring and Test Preparation, an independent educational services company. Avila and his team have traveled extensively to educate students and work with families across the globe. Known for finding joy and humor in whatever he does, Avila has helped students and adults gain confidence, maximize academic potential, and achieve dramatically improved grades and test scores through his company and 300+ educational videos. Frequently quoted by U.S. News & World Report, Avila regularly speaks about tutoring and test preparation at schools and conferences across the US. Avila is a certified school guidance counselor with an M.A. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a B.A. from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor.



Gilda Barabino, Ph.D.

President, Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering

Before becoming Olin College of Engineering’s second president, Barabino held academic and administrative appointments at the City College of New York, Georgia Institute of Technology, Emory University, and Northeastern University. A chemical engineer by training, with broad interests in global health and interdisciplinary research and education, Barabino has pioneered new engineering approaches to solve problems in medicine. She is an internationally recognized thought leader and highly sought-after speaker and consultant on race and gender in STEM, with a particular focus on creating cultures and climates that support a sense of belonging. Barabino’s accolades include the American Institute of Chemical Engineers’ Award for Service to Society (2019) and the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring (2018) and membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences National Academy of Engineering and the National Academy of Medicine. Barabino received a B.S. from Xavier University of Louisiana and a Ph.D. from Rice University.



Franchesca Carrington

Vice President, DEI & Talent Development, SharkNinja

Carrington is a strategic and passionate leader who is committed to creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive organizations. As the vice president of DEI & talent development at Needham-based SharkNinja, Carrington works to facilitate and deliver partnerships, opportunities, and connections to underrepresented populations to empower, elevate, and amplify unheard and overlooked voices. In her previous role as manager of global talent development at Thermo Fisher Scientific, Carrington was responsible for overseeing the development and advancement of talent on a global scale. DEI and philanthropy are at her core striving to create diverse, equitable, and inclusive organizations that foster belonging and cultivate leaders who are authentic and lead with a DEI mindset. Carrington holds an M.A. in Education from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and a B.A. in Sociology from Savannah State University.



Lennox Chase

Director, Needham Bank

Growing up in Dorchester, Chase learned the value of service to others and how to create job stability through the work of his parents. His mom was a detective in the Boston Police Department, and his father was a small business owner. Chase attended Bedford Public Schools via the METCO program and went on to earn a law degree from Northeastern University. He later founded Chase Legal Services. Chase is committed to giving back to the community as a nonprofit board member and mentor to students and emerging leaders. He has chaired numerous committees for nonprofits that address urban education, expanding access to legal services, and domestic violence issues. As a member of Needham Bank’s board of directors, Chase manages and supervises the bank’s policies and assets and has been instrumental in advancing the organization’s community outreach.



Damien B. Chaviano

Principal, MARK Development

As a principal at Mark Development, Chaviano leads multiple facets of the development process, including permitting, project design, and marketing. He has direct responsibility for the capital structuring and underwriting of the company’s mixed-use projects. A Cuban-American, Chaviano marries a vision for outstanding and inclusive placemaking with an understanding of how to permit, finance, and market projects. Since joining Newton-based Mark Development, Chaviano has built a network of relationships to source and fund a pipeline of 2+ million square feet of development, with an estimated total project cost of \$1 billion. Chaviano is active in various nonprofit organizations, including Milagros para Niños at Children’s Hospital, Newton Community Pride, and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Urban Mixed-use Product Council. Chaviano is a graduate of Middlebury College and received a MSRED from MIT.



Jeff Chin

Principal, CertaPro Painters of Newton

With a background that includes working at eBay, starting his own mortgage brokerage, and serving as a digital marketing executive in startups and businesses, Chin has gained a wide range of experiences in the business world. He has held several board-level positions with local organizations to promote the growth and awareness of the Asian American community including the Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC), the Boston National Association of Asian American Professionals (NAAAP), and ACE Nextgen. Chin holds a B.S. in mechanical engineering from Worcester Polytechnic Institute. After his first career as a manufacturing engineer in the aerospace sector, Chin looked to further fuel his passion for technology by going back to school to earn an M.B.A. from Suffolk University. Motivated by the opportunity and rewarding challenge of growing a small business, Chin later became a CertaPro Painters® franchise owner.



Lino Covarrubias

Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Family Service of MetroWest

A first-generation Mexican American, Covarrubias is the CEO of Jewish Family Service of MetroWest (JFS), a Framingham-based nonprofit organization serving over 7,000 individuals and families annually within the Metrowest and Greater Boston regions. Under Covarrubias leadership in the last 14 years (serving as COO for 11 years), JFS has accelerated the reducing of social, academic, and health inequity in community members experiencing financial distress, poverty, and racism/anti-semitism. During the Covid-19 pandemic, JFS worked to keep immigrant families from being homeless and provided basic needs along with helping older adults in the Jewish community stay safe and connected. The organization provided over 90,000 meals and over 120,000 units of toiletries/sanitary products, learning materials for children, and information in multiple languages to the community.



Guimel DeCarvalho

Vice President of People and Culture & Chief Diversity Officer, Wayside Youth & Family Support Network

A steadfast and transformative leader, DeCarvalho, a licensed independent clinical social worker (LICSW) and Society of Human Resources Management Certified Professional, has been an agent of change at Framingham’s Wayside Youth and Family Support Network, a 500+ employee organization that provides behavioral health counseling and family support services. In 2019, she was awarded the Elizabeth Funk Emerging Leaders Award from the Association of Behavioral Health for her work embedding equity and inclusion across the agency. And in April 2021, under DeCarvalho’s leadership, the Wayside Equity Training Center was launched offering nonprofit leadership teams, boards, and employees customized training designed to advance the unique goals of each organization. DeCarvalho was appointed to the MA Commission on the Status of Women in 2021 by Senate President Karen Spilka and currently is the vice chair of the Legislative & Public Policy Committee.



Gardy Desrouleaux

Founder & Owner, Craft Food Halls

Desrouleaux brings over 15 years of restaurant experience to the Craft Food Hall Project, a 6-location food concept, with operations in both Waltham and Wellesley, focused on evoking culinary innovation to New England food halls. Starting as a host for a prominent restaurant group, Desrouleaux came face to face with his passion and calling. His love for people and his desire to know all aspects of his surroundings led to recognition from his peers and mentors as a respected restaurant professional. Desrouleaux currently sits on the Waltham and Lexington Chamber of Commerce boards as well as the Lexington Tourism Committee. He is a leader in the hospitality industry by advocating for better working environments, financial knowledge, and transparent communication for members of the service industry.



Beverly Edgehill, Ed.D.

Senior Vice President, Organizational Development, The TJX Companies, Inc.

Edgehill is a visionary strategist who sees her purpose as helping organizations stand up to their best and most authentic selves. The seeds of Edgehill’s approach to her work were planted during her childhood in Harlem, giving her a strong awareness of the challenges faced by Black Americans. Edgehill earned a doctorate from Columbia University and holds leadership roles in both the corporate and nonprofit worlds. Currently, she is a senior vice president at Natick-based The TJX Companies, Inc. where she has overseen the transformation of the business’s organizational development, community relations, and inclusion and diversity programs. Before TJX, Edgehill was president and CEO of The Partnership, Inc. where she helped launch a “new conversation about diversity” in the Boston business community.



Jesse Edwards

Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, City of Framingham

Edwards has held leadership roles in diversity, equity, and inclusion/equal employment opportunity sectors since 2013. Early on in his career, Edwards took on roles at the Boys & Girls Club in Nashua, NH, and the Juvenile Probation System in Atlanta, Georgia, supporting the most vulnerable and empowering the next generation of leaders. Later as the director of operations at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell, Edwards led court diversion and college-bound initiatives in Massachusetts. After taking on roles at the City of Worcester and UMass Medical School, Edwards eventually joined Framingham State University. In 2022, he was appointed to take the helm of the Diversity and Inclusion Department for the City of Framingham. Edwards holds a B.S. from Rivier University in Legal Studies, a M.S. from Springfield College in Human Service Administration, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Higher Education Administration.



Latoyia Edwards

News Anchor, NBC10 Boston & NECN

Emmy Award-winning anchor on NBC10 Boston and NECN, Edwards has become a family name across the Boston area. She joined the NBC10 Boston and NECN family in their Needham studios as a morning reporter in 2005, arriving from WWLP-22 in Springfield, Massachusetts, where she had been a weekday anchor. A native of Dorchester, Edwards holds a degree in broadcast journalism from Emerson College and is a former Miss Massachusetts. She began her career as a news writer for WBZ 1030-AM radio, before moving to broadcast television. A trusted voice and leader, Edwards has a gift for connecting with her audiences and the community by listening and speaking from her heart to bring into focus important issues and topics.



Natasha Espada

Founder & Principal, STUDIO ENÉE Architects

Espada has over 25 years of design and construction expertise in both renovation and new construction for institutional, civic, cultural, and commercial clients. In 2020, she was president of the Boston Society of Architects/AIA and co-chair of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice Task Force. Espada has been an adjunct professor at Northeastern University and a design critic/lecturer at Harvard Graduate School of Design, MIT, Yale, Wentworth, MassArt, Roger Williams, and the Boston Architectural College. She is also a member of the Town of Needham’s Planning Board, Climate Action Plan Committee, co-chair of Needham’s Affordable Housing Planning Committee, and board member for Needham United Against Racism. Espada is a graduate of the University of Florida, holds an M.S. in architecture from the University of Virginia with a certificate in American Urbanism, and, in 2021, was awarded an honorary doctorate from Wentworth Institute of Technology.



Ricardo Franco

Director of Family Support Services, Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE)

Franco is a dynamic and impassioned leader in child welfare in Massachusetts, dedicating his career to improving the outcomes of youth in foster care awaiting adoption. As a licensed bi-lingual social worker, ordained minister, and champion of multicultural community engagement, Franco, who immigrated to the U.S. from Columbia in 2003, serves as the director of family support services for Newton-based MARE, steering all family support and faith-based initiatives. He completed his doctoral studies at Boston University School of Theology in 2017, was a 2021 fellow of the Minority Professional Development Leadership Program through AdoptUSKids, and has developed an innovative curriculum to support adoptive parents considering parenting transracially. In addition to this work with MARE, Franco is an adjunct professor at Boston University’s School of Theology, an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church, and volunteers as a court-appointed special advocate for Boston CASA.



Anna Giraldo-Kerr

Founder & CEO, Shades of Success, Inc.

A former technology analyst whose insights have been quoted by CNN, The New York Times, and Businessweek, Giraldo-Kerr currently runs Shades of Success, Inc., a Needham-based learning and development organization she founded in 2002. With clients ranging from first-generation college graduates to senior executives from global corporations, she is a sought-after leadership strategist who believes everyone is a leader. Being part of the solution is her mantra. As such, she is serving a second term as a trustee of the Needham Free Public Library, where she has led many equity and inclusion initiatives. As co-founder of The Lived Experiences Project, she amplifies the voices of people of color in Needham.

We join the Charles
River Regional
Chamber in
appreciation of
the region's
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Leaders of Color"

Congratulations to Insource
honoree DaQuall Graham for his
contributions and leadership.



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Donna Latson Gittens

Founder & CEO, MORE Advertising

Gittens left a successful broadcasting career at WCVB-TV to pursue her long-time passion for launching a boutique media and marketing firm to promote critical social issues and support mission-driven public, private, and nonprofit organizations. Her Watertown-based firm, MORE Advertising, is known as “The Agency of Change” and focuses on social marketing campaigns to promote changes in behavior and attitude. She has served on multiple boards including the Greater Boston Chamber and Associated Industries of Massachusetts, where she co-chairs the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. She’s an avid mentor to female entrepreneurs and has received numerous awards including one from the Red Sox who presented her with championship rings in 2004 and 2007. Gittens holds a B.A. from Park University, an M.B.A. from Northeastern University, and an honorary doctorate degree from Elms College. She is a frequent keynote speaker, host, and moderator for corporate and community organizations.



Kent Gonzales, LEED AP BD+C

VP Development, Northland Investment Corporation

With over 30 years of diverse real estate development experience in the public, private, and non-profit sectors, Gonzales directly managed over \$1 billion of development including residential, office, retail, industrial, mixed-use, renovation/rehabilitation and tenant improvements. In his current role at Northland, he is responsible for managing large-scale and complex, multifamily, commercial, retail, and mixed-use development projects. Gonzales is currently working on one of the largest, all-electric, Passive House, mixed-use, market-rate projects in the US. Located on 22 acres in Newton, the project will combine LEED multifamily standards with Passive House standards to create a resilient, durable, energy-efficient and healthy environment for residents and visitors alike. Gonzales holds a B.S. in environmental design from the University of Colorado at Boulder, a Master of Architecture, Urban Design from the University of Colorado at Denver, and an M.S. in Real Estate Development from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



Cristina Gonzalez

Chief Legal Officer, Staples

In her role as Staples’ chief legal officer, Gonzalez oversees all facets of the Framingham-headquartered office supply company’s legal department including corporate, operations, employment, litigation, and compliance support. She is also responsible for advising senior leadership, developing talent, and managing a significant budget. While at Staples over the last 14 years, she founded and co-chairs HOLA, an employee affinity group for Hispanics and Latinos, and is a founding member of Staples’ Global Diversity Council, a 15-member group of business leaders overseeing worldwide diversity strategies and metrics. Gonzalez holds an M.B.A. from George Washington University and a law degree from Georgetown University. She is involved in numerous boards and professional associations including the Association for Latino Professionals.



DaQuall Graham

Chief People Officer, Insource Services, Inc.

At Wellesley-based Insource Services, Inc., Graham leads the strategy and processes for building and retaining an exceptional team of professionals by optimizing people-centered activities such as hiring, training, professional development, and performance management. He is a knowledgeable and engaging presenter and facilitator that is frequently sought after to help teams navigate through critical and challenging organizational initiatives. His previous roles include senior director of education for one of Massachusetts’s oldest and largest nonprofits and several education-based leadership positions. He holds a Master of Arts in Teaching, a Bachelor of Science in Education, and a Certification of Advanced Graduate Studies in Educational Leadership. Graham has completed numerous training certifications in Educational Leadership and Executive Leadership Training.



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Karen Holmes Ward

Director of Public Affairs & Community Services, WCVB

As the director of public affairs and community services at Needham-based WCVB Channel 5, as well as the host and executive producer of the award-winning weekly magazine program CityLine, Holmes Ward has made a lasting impression through her thought-provoking interviews and community outreach initiatives that address the accomplishments, concerns, and issues facing people of color living in Boston and its suburbs. Throughout her career, Holmes Ward has had the unique opportunity to interview many notable figures, including Oscar winners Lupita Nyong'o, Octavia Spencer, Louis Gossett Jr., and Denzel Washington as well as Oscar nominees Chiwetel Ejiofor, Oprah Winfrey, and Taraji P. Henson. A graduate of Boston University's School of Public Communications, Holmes Ward has received numerous awards for her work in the community including the Boston Jaycees Ten Outstanding Young Leaders Award, NAACP Boston 'Ida B. Wells Barnett' Award, and the Massachusetts Broadcasters Lifetime Achievement Award.



Sheilah Shaw Horton, Ph.D.

Vice President & Dean of Students, Wellesley College

Horton is vice president and dean of students at Wellesley College. At Wellesley, she serves on the senior leadership team and oversees a division spanning such areas as residential life and housing, counseling, health, wellness, public safety, academic advising, intercultural education, services for students with disabilities, and other student support areas. Prior to Wellesley, she served as vice president of student affairs at Loyola University of Maryland and at Boston College where she held several roles, including associate vice president of student affairs and dean of students. Horton knows student life from many vantage points as she has taught undergraduate and graduate students. She is a trustee of her alma mater, Emmanuel College, and holds a master's degree and a Ph.D. in counseling psychology from Boston College.



Charmain Jackman, Ph.D.

Founder & CEO, InnoPsych, Inc.

Jackman is an award-winning licensed psychologist and a global spokesperson on mental health. She has leveraged her 25+ years in the mental health field to start InnoPsych, a Watertown-based mental health tech company on a mission to disrupt racial inequities in mental health and to promote healing and thriving in communities of color. Through the national therapist of color directory, Jackman has made a significant impact in increasing access to and utilization of mental health resources. Jackman has been interviewed and featured in national media outlets including The New York Times, Washington Post, Boston Globe, Essence, and Oprah Daily, and frequently speaks on the topic of mental health. Jackman is a board member of the Massachusetts Psychological Association where she serves as co-chair of the Presidential Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and co-founder of Boston Women of Color in Psychology.



Randy Johnson

Vice President of Client & Customer Success, Tangelo

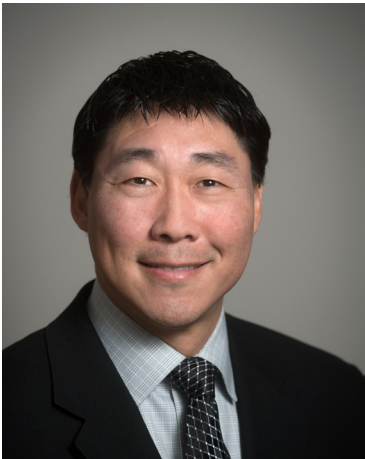
Johnson is a seasoned executive leader who is hailed for his ability to build strong relationships with clients and the development of employees into future leaders. Johnson's leadership has been focused on client management, customer support, and sales. Prior to joining Tangelo, a food benefits platform that works to bring nutritious and affordable food across America, Randy worked in senior management roles at Bank of America, Boston Scientific, Pfizer, Edenred, and Health E-Commerce. He holds a B.S. in business management from Morehouse College. Johnson is a longtime Newton resident, and a graduate of Newton North High School. He is deeply passionate about helping others and serving his community. He served on the Newton Police Reform Task Force, is a member of the Newton Parks and Recreation Commission, an eagle scout and troop leader, and a member of the Newton Coalition of Black Residents.



Paula Johnson

President, Wellesley College

A pioneer in the fields of academic medicine, public health, and higher education, Johnson brings decades of experience to her role as president at Wellesley College. Under her leadership over the last seven years, Johnson has placed the college at the forefront of STEM education for women. Prior to this role, she served as the Grayce A. Young Family Professor of Medicine in Women’s Health at Harvard Medical School and a professor of epidemiology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Health. She founded the Connors Center for Women’s Health and Gender Biology at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. Johnson holds B.A., M.D., and M.P.H. degrees from Harvard University and has received several honorary degrees and numerous awards for her contributions to science, medicine, and public health. Johnson is a member of the National Academy of Medicine and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.



Jay Kim

Executive Director, Foundation for MetroWest

Kim serves as the executive director at the Foundation for MetroWest, a community foundation serving 30+ MetroWest communities. Under Kim’s leadership, the organization continues to expand its role as an important regional philanthropic hub with new impactful initiatives. He leads the team at the foundation to change lives in MetroWest by identifying and responding to needs in the community based on a combination of data and collaboration with partners. He is responsible for the management and strategic direction of the organization. Prior to joining the Foundation for MetroWest, Kim spent time in fundraising and philanthropy for The Boston Foundation, Target, Fannie Mae Foundation, and AmeriCorps. He began his career as a corps member at City Year Boston. Kim serves on the Board of Directors of Philanthropy Massachusetts, Third Sector New England, and was previously a member of the Charles River Regional Chamber’s board of directors.



Archy LaSalle

Director, Where Are All the Black People At

A thought leader and a positive force for inclusive creative placemaking, LaSalle has been inspiring generations of young people through art and activism. He launched the project Where Are All the Black People At in an effort to draw awareness around the lack of representation of Black visual artists within the art world. LaSalle is known for his ability to engage youth through teaching and collaboration which is a special gift to his community. In addition to his activist work, LaSalle is an internationally celebrated photographer who travels frequently to engage new audiences. He sits on the board of directors for the Rose Art Museum in Waltham and serves as vice chair of Watertown’s Public Arts & Culture Committee.



Eric Liriano

Owner, Liriano Wealth Advisory

Liriano is a certified financial planner and Newton business owner with more than 25 years of experience using a unique macroeconomic approach to helping individual clients and companies to preserve and grow their wealth. He founded one of the first Business Network International (BNI) groups in Massachusetts over 20 years ago, a group that supports members with the training, structure, and technology necessary for success. Liriano is a member of the Boston Estate Planning Council, and the National Association of Life Underwriters, as well as a qualifying member of the distinguished Million Dollar Round Table. In addition, he serves on the boards of many nonprofit organizations throughout the Metro Boston area. Liriano is a sought-after speaker and conducts financial planning seminars for employees of corporations, healthcare companies, and educational institutions.



Frederick Lowery

Senior Vice President & President, Customer Channels Group, Thermo Fisher Scientific

Lowery is an accomplished and dynamic corporate leader with a proven track record leading teams to drive profitable growth. Throughout his 25-year career working for Fortune 500 companies like Maytag Corporation, General Motors, and Delphi Automotive Systems, Lowery served in various leadership roles in marketing, business development, procurement, product engineering, and operations. In his current role as senior vice president and president for Waltham-based Thermo Fisher Scientific's Customer Channels Group, Lowery has oversight of the company's industry-leading channel businesses. He is passionate in areas of inclusion and social responsibility as seen by his role in spearheading Thermo Fisher's \$25 million impact investment into Black-led financial institutions focused on supporting Black-owned businesses. He founded the New Commonwealth Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund, The JUST Project, and the Lowery Family Fund, which supports organizations and initiatives focused on community service, philanthropy, and the arts.



Ritah Nakandi

Founder & CEO, Afri-root Collective

Ugandan-born and raised, Nakandi is the founder and CEO of Afri-root Collective, a socially responsible business that sells unique handicrafts made by female African artisans from sustainable materials. Afri-root Collective trains women in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda by teaching them handicraft-making skills using sustainably sourced materials. Afri-root Collective distributes its unique products to international markets. Nakandi is also a co-founder/COO of MeetCaregivers based in Newton, an innovative online marketplace for Senior care that intelligently matches seniors with pre-screened, experienced, and qualified caregivers. MeetCaregivers offers additional services, products, and technology tools for Senior care. Nakandi is also on the board of directors for Women Thriving, Inc., a Brookline-based organization.



Angela Pitter

Founder & CEO, LiveWire Collaborative

A Newton resident and entrepreneur, Pitter is a digital marketing guru, mentor, highly sought-after speaker, master networker/connector, and tireless champion for small businesses. She is the founder and CEO of LiveWire Collaborative, a digital marketing consultancy that helps business owners and executives develop and implement online strategies. She also specializes in social media training, well-known for her signature LinkedIn Influencer framework which she has taught to hundreds of CEOs, business owners, and consultants. An accomplished keynote speaker, Pitter has been featured in Chronicle, WCVB, and at the Massachusetts Conference for Women. Generous with both her time and strategic marketing expertise, she is committed to helping the local community. She is a founding member of the Newton Coalition for Black Residents, a member of the Charles River Regional Chamber's board of directors, and a past three-term member of the Newton School Committee.



Kristen Pope

Founder & CEO, Pope Productions, Inc.

Named the "Queen of Agility", Pope is a multi-hyphenate visionary, founder, speaker, award-winning television journalist, and multi-media strategist. Through her Natick-based digital content media firm, Pope Productions, Pope created and produced two seasons of the variety talk show, "The Positive Controversy with Kristen Pope," to amplify voices not often heard in the media. In 2019, to increase the number of people of color on television, she launched the On-Air Academy, a master course in the training, understanding of unwritten rules, and mentoring needed to secure a job in broadcasting. Pope is the recipient of numerous honors including Black Enterprise Magazine's "9 Women Who Impacted the World of Business" and listed as one of the "25 Most Interesting People in the MetroWest for 2020." In 2023, Pope became the first Black and eighth woman to be elected to the Natick Select Board.



**CONGRATULATIONS,
ERIC TURNER**

on making the Most Influential
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Mark Development congratulates

DAMIEN CHAVIANO

for being recognized as a
2023 Most Influential Business Leader of Color



***Congratulations to all the
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**We are honored to celebrate
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Dr. Gemima St. Louis
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Dr. Catherine Vuky
Assistant Professor and
Director of the Asian Mental
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Brandale Randolph

Founder & CEO, 1854 Cycling

Randolph’s research and analysis indicated that formerly incarcerated people were deeply in need of work opportunities and that the cycling industry was in desperate need of more mechanics. So in 2016, he founded 1854 Cycling, a Framingham-based bike company that seeks to create living-wage jobs for formerly incarcerated people. He is currently developing a new product that would improve community relations by helping to connect police to other professionals as they respond to calls involving citizens going through mental health crises, medical issues, or other emergencies that aren’t directly crime-related. Randolph has written two books on financial literacy, conducted seminars on workforce readiness, worked with underserved youth in Lubbock, Texas, and given a TEDx talk titled “Stop Throwing Breakfast Sandwiches at the Poor.” Randolph is also the co-founder of Project Poverty, a nonprofit focused on implementing strategies to reduce poverty.



Molynda Richards

Executive Director, Waltham Chamber of Commerce

Richards has been an executive director for chambers of commerce for over 7 years. After four successful years at the Lexington Chamber, growing membership by at least 10% per year, she moved on to the Waltham Chamber of Commerce. Her expertise lies in understanding that chambers are not a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather recognizing and catering to the unique needs of each individual member. Richards prides herself in asking the right questions to figure out what and how to provide the benefits to each member. She was recently awarded the honor of one of ACCE’s (Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives) Forty Under 40, which recognizes the top emerging leaders in the chamber of commerce industry. Her work experience includes business and hospitality management, employment consulting, photojournalism, and mentoring.



Arthur Samuels

Construction Project Manager, 2Life Communities

In his role as project manager at Framingham-based 2Life Communities, Samuels oversees every detail, from sink height to fixtures to hallways and community spaces, around the construction and renovation projects that provide affordable housing solutions for senior adults. Samuels is known as someone who constantly goes out of his way to manage each detail with care in an effort to minimize the impact of building renovations on people in the building. His tenure at 2Life began as maintenance supervisor at the Shillman House in Framingham, giving him a deep appreciation of residents’ needs. Samuels is focused on minimizing the environmental impact by earning certifications from the International Passive House Association, IPHA, and Wentworth Institute of Technology.



Darryl Settles

President & Managing Partner, Catalyst Ventures Development

A serial entrepreneur, civic activist, and Newton resident, Settles established Darryl’s Corner Bar & Kitchen in Boston and moved on to real estate development. He is known for his transformative initiatives and partnerships that empower communities of color in the hospitality, real estate, and business development sectors where he promotes minority businesses and recruits minority investors. His residential projects are committed to creating vibrant, attractive, and sustainable neighborhoods and his music projects have enhanced the local cultural scene. He has been active in the community as chair of the Newton Economic Development Commission and founder/board member of the Black Economic Council. Settles has served and continues to serve, on multiple non-profit and public boards that advocate economic and social equality for under-served communities. He was recently named one of Boston’s Most Influential Men of Color for 2023 by Get Konekcted!



Jay Spencer

Owner, French Press Bakery & Cafe

Spencer's decades of experience in the corporate sector has catapulted him as a leader and mentor in the industry contributing to the economic vitality of downtown Needham for more than a dozen years. Spencer's French Press Bakery & Cafe, which he opened in 2015, raised the bar on cafe offerings in Needham pushing it to become one of the town's first locations to offer outdoor seating. Through his work as chair of the Charles River Chamber's Dining Collaborative throughout the pandemic, Spencer created and facilitated a positive space for local restaurateurs to share insights, education, best practices, and more in order to navigate the tough situations that face the industry. Spencer is currently first vice chair of the board of the Charles River Regional Chamber and a tireless advocate for creating new economic opportunities for small and diverse businesses.



Gemima St. Louis, Ph.D.

*Vice President for Workforce Initiatives & Specialty Training,
William James College*

As a clinical psychologist and the first-appointed vice president for workforce initiatives at William James College in Newton, St. Louis has dedicated her career to training, mentoring, and educating behavioral health providers to address persistent mental health disparities that disproportionately affect individuals, families, and groups from historically excluded backgrounds. An advocate for equitable access to higher education, St. Louis has provided leadership in the design and implementation of the college's career ladder programs for undergraduate and graduate students who are underrepresented in the fields of psychology and counseling. An immigrant of Haitian descent, St. Louis has been recognized by the City of Boston mayor's office for her leadership and dedicated services to the Haitian community. She is a member of the American Psychological Association's Leadership Institute for Women in Psychology, and the Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race.



Sharon Stout

Trustee, Newton Free Library

For the past 20 years, Stout has served on over 14 boards and has been an advocate for social causes or political events in Newton. An experienced fundraiser and events professional she runs Mahogany Enterprises, Inc. a full service event planning company. Stout is currently serving as chair of the Newton Democratic Party; one of the Deputy Treasurers of The Massachusetts State Democratic Party; a trustee of Newton Free Library, Chair of the board of EmergeMA, and also serves on the advisory board of JALSA. She has also supported such causes as Second Step, CAN-DO, Newton Community Service Center, the Senior Center & YMCA. Under the last 3 Newton mayors, she has touched, organized, and fundraised for many of the signature citywide events, such as "Newton Serves" for 15 years, Harvest Fair, 4th July, and in recent years, Newtonville Day. Stout started her career working in the District Attorney's office, Congressman Kennedy's office and elevated to managing events at 3 National Democratic conventions.



Shalini Tendulkar

President, Newton Neighbors

A pillar of compassion and kindness in our community, Tendulkar's leadership was instrumental in creating a connection between valuable aid and resources and those who needed it the most. In the early days of the pandemic, Tendulkar, along with three co-founders, launched Newton Neighbors Helping Neighbors, a mutual aid network Facebook group, that would later join efforts with Welcoming Newton to form the nonprofit, Newton Neighbors, Inc. Tendulkar's values of service and collaboration her parents instilled in her along with her own beliefs that access to food, housing, and health are fundamental human rights, motivate her in her role as president of Newton Neighbors. Tendulkar is also a senior lecturer in the department of community health at Tufts University.



Seema Thakore Meloni, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Founding Member & Co-Chair, PR & Communications Committee, Indian Community of Needham (ICON)

As a trained epidemiologist and infectious disease scientist, Meloni spent a significant portion of her professional career working at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. She is an active community member and has utilized her leadership skills in helping to found the Indian Community of Needham (ICON), a secular, nonprofit organization aimed at celebrating and preserving the culture and heritage of India and surrounding South Asian countries. Meloni also served on the board of the Needham Education Foundation (NEF), served as co-president of the Friends of Needham High School Soccer and co-chairs the Parent Talk semi-annual consignment sale. Her current passion project has been around her work with the Needham school district on behalf of the NEF to collaboratively partner on initiatives to drive forward conversations and training on diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Kosha Thakore, M.D.

Sullivan Family Chief of Palliative Care, Division of Palliative Care, Chief Diversity Officer, Newton-Wellesley Hospital

Thakore is a trailblazing leader in the field of palliative care and diversity, equity, and inclusion in healthcare. She currently holds the distinguished positions of the inaugural Sullivan Family chief of palliative care and chief diversity officer at Newton-Wellesley Hospital. With 13 years of experience practicing hospital medicine and palliative care at Newton-Wellesley, Thakore has made significant contributions to program development, medical education, and patient care. She has been a driving force behind the establishment and launch of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council, Upstander Training Program, and, her most notable achievement, the development of a Serious Illness Conversation Training program at Newton-Wellesley, which has trained over 300 providers and 100 nurses in effective communication skills with patients facing advancing illness. She earned the prestigious George L. White Award from the NWH Board of Trustees for her outstanding contributions to the industry.



Eric Turner

President, Lasell University

Turner was elected the 10th president of Lasell University in spring of 2023 and is the first African American to hold the title in the institution's 172-year history. Turner's extensive background in leadership roles includes prominent establishments like State Street, Mass State Lottery, and New England CEO Network as well as provost and chief academic officer at Lasell. Throughout his time at Lasell, Turner also served as vice president for graduate and professional studies, starting six new degree programs and serving as both the Chair of the University's Board of Trustees and as a Lasell Village Trustee. In 2013, Lasell conferred upon him the honorary title of Doctor of Humane Letters, and, in recognition of his leadership of the faculty as Provost, he was granted the honorary title of Professor of Business in 2020. Turner's commitment to public service extends to his involvement in various boards and organizations. He attended Harvard University where he earned a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's degree in general management.



Sonal Ullman, M.D.

Gastroenterologist, Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital - Needham

Ullman is a board-certified gastroenterologist practicing in Needham since 2009. Her recent focus is on post-pandemic workforce development at the hospital including the creation of an employee coaching program. She holds a leadership role at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital Needham as the president of the medical staff, currently serving on the Medical Staff Executive Committee. Ullman formerly served as the chairperson of BID Needham's Department of Medicine and is also an ex-officio member of the board of trustees. Her work with employees and leadership to strengthen and improve the workplace has been relentless even during the most challenging days of the pandemic. She received a B.A. from Dartmouth College, graduating Magna Cum Laude, and later received her Doctor of Medicine from Tufts University School of Medicine, where she was a member of the Alpha Omega Society. Ullman completed her residency at the University of Virginia and her fellowship at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

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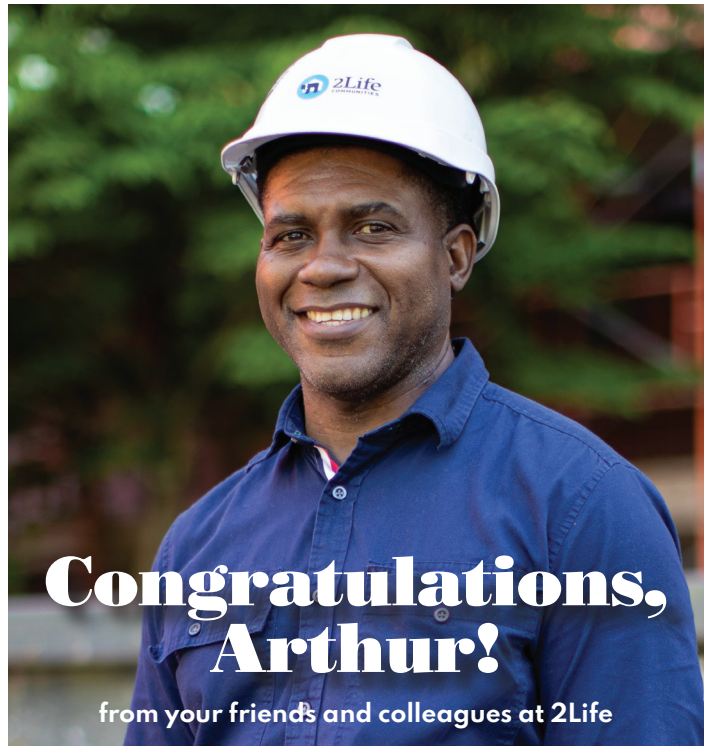
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Catherine Vuky, Ph.D.

Director, Asian Mental Health Program & Assistant Professor, Clinical Psychology Department, William James College

With 20+ years of experience in working with immigrant and refugee children and families, Vuky is dedicated to breaking down barriers for members of the Asian community in accessing mental health resources. Through her passions, she established the first national graduate program focusing on the mental health needs of the Asian community, the Asian Mental Health Concentration at Newton-based William James College. The groundbreaking work is allowing the stigmatized topic of mental health to be more accessible to the community. She established the Asian Providers' Network, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for support by young professionals to provide mentorship and networking. Vuky is an active community member working as a consultant for the Asian Community Fund at The Boston Foundation - Mental Health Collaborative. She has served on many community advisory boards including Children's Hospital, Boston Refugee Youth Enrichment Program, and Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center's Pao Arts Center.



Louvere Walker-Hannon

Senior Application Engineering Team Lead, MathWorks

Managing a team of application engineers, Walker-Hannon provides technical guidance and strategic direction on the implementation of AI and data science workflows for various applications. She has worked in three different engineering roles throughout her 20+ year career at Natick-headquartered MathWorks. She is a passionate and active STEM advocate, presenting at several STEM-related conferences on various topics. A vigilant volunteer in our community, Walker-Hannon frequently volunteers with Black Girls CODE, the Society of Women Engineers and the National Society of Black Engineers. She has a B.S. in Biomedical Engineering and a M.S. in Geographic Information Technology with a specialization in remote sensing.



Lawrence P. Ward, Ed.D

Vice President & Dean of Campus Life, Babson College

In his role at Babson College, Ward provides strategic direction and executive oversight for a comprehensive student and campus experience. He serves as principal advisor to the president and other senior leaders on decisions that impact successful student outcomes and influence student satisfaction. Ward previously was associate dean of American University's Kogod School of Business in Washington, DC, and served as managing director at PRS, Inc. He holds degrees from the University of Connecticut, the University of Michigan, and the University of Pennsylvania, where he has a faculty appointment in the Graduate School of Education. A popular and engaging invited speaker and panelist, Ward is a member of the board of advisors for BID Hospital-Needham with leadership positions in higher education including a member of the NCAA Division III Management Council and trustee at Albertus Magnus College in New Haven.



Oneeka Williams, M.D., M.P.H.

President & CEO, Dr. Dee Dee Dynamo, LLC

A pioneer, trailblazer, and positivity catalyst, Williams helps girls, especially girls of color, transform their lives through access to STEM and literacy programs. Newton resident Williams has worked tirelessly through her books, speaking, podcast, workshops, and clinical practice to inspire and empower girls and children of color to reach their full potential. She leverages the insights she gained from a male-dominated career as a surgeon to build an educational and empowerment platform. Williams is also an award-winning author with books that are currently used in schools throughout the country, in the Caribbean, and Africa. She graduated from Harvard Medical School with a urologic surgery degree. Williams has been featured on Chronicle, Cityline, NBC10 Boston, and countless other media outlets. She is currently on the boards of the Museum of Science and William James College.



Douglass Williams

Chef, Owner, MIDA

Highly acclaimed and recognized by some of the culinary industry’s most prestigious establishments, Williams has received a medley of accolades throughout his career including being named as a semi-finalist for the James Beard Foundation’s Best Chef NorthEast (2023, 2022, 2020), awarded Best Chef, General Excellence by Boston Magazine (2021) and recognized as one of the top 10 Best New Chefs in America by Food & Wine (2020). His diverse and innovative approach to food was influenced by his global experience working in restaurants in Thailand, Paris, and New York City coupled with his passion to learn how to heal through food, something he became committed to after being diagnosed with Crohn’s disease. Prior to opening his MIDA restaurant, with locations in Boston’s South End and Newton along with Boston-based APizza, Williams ran Culinary Breakdown, a private chef and cooking class company.



Regina Wu, M.D.

President, Newton Food Pantry

Wu’s role as a primary care physician, treating patients with diabetes, congestive heart failure, and high blood pressure, fueled her mission to help our community live a healthy lifestyle by providing access to healthy, delicious, nutritious and culturally-relevant foods. Prior to joining the Newton Food Pantry in 2012, Wu was a volunteer at the Greater Boston Food Bank’s mobile market in Jamaica Plain. After attending a mayor’s citywide food drive, she shifted focus to support her own community. Over the last 12 years, Wu has served as a Wednesday afternoon volunteer, the pantry’s vice president, before assuming the role as president in 2020, and led the development and execution of community-changing initiatives like the freedge, a 24/7 refrigerator & pantry, Newton’s Community Table Event, and the teen ambassador program.

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Devin Alexander

CEO, Rolling Releaf

Instrumental in crafting the regulations for the Marijuana Delivery Operator License, a license set aside exclusively for social equity applicants, Alexander started his career in the cannabis industry in 2017 working as a budtender at a medical marijuana dispensary in his hometown of Quincy. He is a graduate of the first cohort of the Massachusetts Social Equity Program, the co-founder, CEO, and majority owner of Rolling Releaf, a Newton-based marijuana delivery operator. The business received its notice to commence operations in February 2023 from the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission and became the first Black-owned cannabis business and the first Social Equity Certified cannabis business in the City of Newton.



Leo Baez

Owner, Cacao Nuts and Chocolates

Since immigrating to the United States, Baez has longed for a meaningful way to share his childhood experiences of walking through groves of cashew trees in his native country of the Dominican Republic with the Greater Boston community and beyond. Opening his shop Cacao, a chocolate café specializing in chocolate confections and drinks, located in Newton Highlands with his fiancé, Perla Rosario, did exactly that. In addition to their extensive menu of chocolates, nuts, and seeds, Baez and Rosario will soon introduce events for the community like nut roasting demos every Saturday afternoon.



Cleantha Campbell

Owner & Director of Communications, The Green Lady Dispensary Newton

Campbell is the owner and director of communications at The Green Lady Dispensary, located on both Nantucket Island and opening in the summer of 2023 in Newton Centre. Campbell has led communications for the company since 2018, developing innovative advertising and marketing campaigns for the brand. She was the entrepreneurial force in forming the company's Newton location, where she will act as general manager, leading wholesale logistics, operating procedures, and brand development in preparation for its opening. Campbell has designed a corporate diversity plan and positive impact plan focusing on inclusive hiring goals and giving back to the community through charitable donations.



Tiffany (Zi Hua) Chen

Senior Account Manager, MORE Advertising

As a senior account manager at Watertown-based MORE Advertising, Chen champions the causes of organizations like the MA Department of Health, the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center, the MA Bureau of Infectious Diseases and Laboratory Sciences, and the Boys and Girls Club of Newton through marketing and communications programs. Before MORE, Tiffany worked for the Charles River Regional Chamber as the director of member engagement and for Amazon as an area manager. She holds a B.S. in Marketing from the University of Connecticut School of Business and sits on the advisory committee of its Boston Alumni Network. Through roles like planning committee member for the Boston Children's Hospital Kidding Around event, mentor big sister with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern MA, and champion volunteer leader for Cradles to Crayons, Chen strives to make a measurable difference in her communities.



José Cortez

Board Member, UMass Foundation

A University of Massachusetts Amherst alum, Cortez serves as a vice president of Buy-Side Sales at FlexTrade in Boston where he leads new business sales efforts for FlexTrade's multi-asset order/execution management system (FlexONE), serving as both a subject matter expert and advisor to the C-suite at hedge funds and asset managers. Cortez is a mentor and board member of the Newton-headquartered UMass Foundation, which manages the university's \$1.1 billion endowment. Cortez is also on the board at The UMass Club, a private social club in Boston for alumni and affiliates of the university.



Denise Daniels

Food Pantry Manager, Newton Food Pantry

Daniels is the first full-time employee with the Newton Food Pantry, previously an all-volunteer-led nonprofit organization serving individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. In her role as pantry manager, she is the organization’s operational leader, managing the complex day-to-day logistics required to serve the growing number of clients. A graduate of the University of North Texas with a B.A. in social work, later followed by a diploma in culinary arts, she has merged her talents in food and hospitality by bridging the gap for communities to access affordable and fresh foods. Before her current role, she served as the culinary director with the Edgerley Family South Boston Boys and Girls Club for six years. During her leadership, the South Boston club established its first in-house meal program serving hundreds of youths daily.



Julia Gould

Director of Account Services, MORE Advertising

Gould is the director of account services at MORE Advertising in Watertown, a top agency specializing in cause-based marketing, where she leads the strategy, development, and execution of marketing plans and large-scale communications campaigns for government, non-profit and corporate clients. Her experiences include launching award-winning projects such as the Massachusetts COVID-19 Vaccine Initiative and RESPECTfully, a youth-led campaign to promote healthy relationships in MA teens. With a passion for effecting change through advertising, Gould and her team are committed to leveraging the voices of local leaders from underrepresented populations. She is an active member of the Needham Council for Arts and Culture, where she volunteers her time to promote the arts, sciences, and humanities in the community.



Jessica Huggins

Producer, Another Age Productions

Huggins is a Boston native and an acclaimed filmmaker, currently serving as producer of original content at Another Age Productions in Newton. Huggins has served as a production, distribution, and impact strategist for many documentary organizations including Brave New Films, ITVS, Documentary Educational Resources, The Redford Center, and Picture Motion. Various films that she has produced have been accepted into dozens of film festivals around the country and have received awards including *Memoirs of A Black Girl*, *Black Women Shine* (podcast), *Chi~Voices: A Poetic Film Series*, *Perfect Day*, and many more. Huggins continues to develop multifaceted characters while honing in on stories about Black Americans in her film work.



Kateen Kumar

Juvenile Court-Appointed Attorney, Board Member, One Can Help

Kumar is known for his tireless efforts as a front-line child advocate, working with underserved children who are involved with juvenile courts and Department of Children and Families offices in Waltham and Framingham. He is an active board member of Newton-based One Can Help, further demonstrating his dedication to making a positive impact on the lives of children in need. Kumar holds a B.S. in Medical Sciences from the Medical University of the Americas, and a Doctorate of Jurisprudence from the Massachusetts School of Law. Prior to becoming an attorney, Kumar developed and managed various successful businesses.



Gabriela Lagreca

Founder, Clinician, & Educator, The International Dentist Podcast, Tufts Dental School

American board-certified prosthodontist, clinician, and educator, Lagreca has more than 10 years of clinical experience and expertise in educational research, mentorship, and teaching. Originally from Caracas, Venezuela, she is the first Hispanic female of the 35-board certified practicing prosthodontists in Massachusetts. She obtained her first dental degree at the Central University of Venezuela in 2009 and went on to complete both an Implant Fellowship and Graduate Education Program in Prosthodontics at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine. In 2015, she became diplomate of the American Board of Prosthodontics, and a fellow of the American College of Prosthodontists. Lagreca serves on a multitude of industry-esteemed boards and has garnered awards for her tireless work in the dental profession. In 2020, she celebrated her 10th anniversary in the U.S. by funding The International Dentist® Podcast and Bootcamp to mentor and support internationally trained dentists across the country.



Lucas Machado

Owner & CEO, Curbs Studio

A Massachusetts native with Brazilian and Jewish roots, Machado is the owner and CEO of Curbs Studio, a landscape design-build firm in Wellesley. The Gen-Z entrepreneur founded the company with his father before graduating from Babson College in 2021 as a first-generation college graduate. Machado transformed the company into a reputable design-build firm that competes with larger more well-known landscape companies across Wellesley and the Greater Boston area. Machado leads a diverse team of professionals who work with families across Greater Boston’s inner-western suburbs to fulfill generational legacies through the development of sustainable residential landscapes.



Myriam Michel

Executive Director, Healthy Waltham

Michel serves as executive director of Healthy Waltham, a nonprofit that works to alleviate health disparities and improve the health outcomes of the city’s most vulnerable residents. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Healthy Waltham became Waltham’s first line of defense against hunger for the city’s high population of working poor, low-income seniors, and recent immigrants. Weekly food pantries were quickly established that often served 1,000 families per event. In addition to being a nonprofit executive director, Michel is also an entrepreneur and business owner, founding M&M Elite Events, a boutique event planning company that serves a diverse range of clients, from Planned Parenthood of Massachusetts and CommonWealth Kitchen to high-end corporations.



Monica Midha, M.D., M.B.S.

Medical Director, Hospitalist, Beth Israel Deaconess

Midha is a physician who works at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Beth Israel Deaconess in Needham as well as holding positions at Harvard Medical School and Boston University School of Medicine in the field of hospital medicine. After attending a conference that sparked her interest in workplace bias, she founded the Diversity and Inclusion Committee at Beth Israel Deaconess - Needham. Midha is a passionate clinician-educator with a focus on social justice, diversity, and inclusion presenting on bystander and upstander training, implicit bias, and facilitated anti-racism sessions, among other projects, to educate others about diversity, equity, and inclusion. She received a B.S. in Biology and a B.A. in Spanish from Boston University, a M.S. in Biomedical Science at UMDNJ, and a medical degree from St. George’s University School of Medicine.



Patience Noah

Owner, Patience Noah Insurance

After years of working in the insurance industry in various roles and capacities, Noah, an immigrant from Liberia, saw a need for more insurance owners that looked like her. So, in 2019, under the driving principles of building strong relationships and offering quality customer service, Noah started Patience Noah Insurance LLC in Framingham. She soon became an independent agent providing auto, home, business, life, and group benefits that offer her customers valuable insights into multiple carrier options. Throughout her career, Noah has been proud to be able to mentor young adults looking to create their paths in life and make an impact in their communities. She currently serves as a board member for ACE (African Community Education) program, a nonprofit in Worcester that helps African immigrants assimilate into society when they arrive in the U.S.



Arpit Patel

Owner, Baramor Newton

Patel had always dreamed of leaving his desk job at an asset management firm to own and run a local bar. He made his move by opening Baramor in Newton Centre in 2019, and aligned the core principle of his new business with his own beliefs around giving back and creating positive change in the community. Patel created a permanent charity fundraiser, a draught line called Pull for Charity, a monthly campaign that donates \$3 for every pint sold to partnered charities. The neighborhood restaurant is a gathering place for countless community events and fundraisers. While navigating a new business during the COVID pandemic, Patel advocated for the needs of the restaurant community as a whole, organizing and supporting operators, championing outdoor dining and more. He currently serves as chair of the Charles River Chamber’s Dining Collaborative.



Christina Pierre-Jacques

Associate Vice President of Board Relations & Engagement, UMass Foundation

Pierre-Jacques was recently appointed Associate Vice President of Board Relations and Engagement for the UMass Foundation. A native of Boston, she is committed to the mission and vision of public higher education, specifically, quality, access, and affordability for underrepresented students, and spent most of her career in higher education administration. Pierre-Jacques launched her career at the University of Massachusetts Boston in the Center for Collaborative Leadership before serving the Commonwealth as Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees for the University of Massachusetts System. She previously held the role of Assistant Campus Director for the Mount Ida Campus of UMass Amherst. She holds a B.S. in Business Management from the University of New Haven and a M.S. in Business Administration from the University of Massachusetts Boston.



Clarence Richardson

Executive Director, MassNAELA

As the first executive director of the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (MassNAELA), Richardson leads the organization in serving its members and providing them with the necessary tools and resources to assist families. Influenced by the health struggles in his own family, Richardson is passionate about serving the members of MassNAELA, so that they can assist families like his, and educate the residents of the Commonwealth about the programs and resources available for individuals who are aging, have special needs, or are dealing with other health issues. Prior to MassNAELA, Richardson practiced elder law at the Law Offices of Timothy R. Loff. He currently serves as president of the board of directors for the Waltham Partnership for Youth and on the Disciplinary and Ethics Commission of the national nonprofit Certified Financial Planner governing organization.



Tevin Wooten

Meteorologist, Anchor, NBC10 Boston

Wooten is an Emmy® Award-winning weather reporter and meteorologist with NBC10 Boston in Needham. He holds the Certified Broadcast Meteorologist seal of approval from the American Meteorological Society (AMS). Prior to NBC10, Wooten was an on-camera meteorologist at The Weather Channel. As a member of the American Meteorological Society and the National Association of Black Journalists and the Culture & Inclusion Cabinet with the AMS, Wooten is a vigilant advocate for bringing diversity to the STEM discipline. He holds a B.A. in Journalism from the University of Arkansas and a B.S. in Meteorology from Florida State University.



Judith Young

Board Member, Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Boston

A graduate of Northeastern University School of Law, Young is a licensed attorney, currently working as an associate general counsel for the Massachusetts Gaming Commission and serving as a board member at the Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters in Waltham, which provides mentoring opportunities for youth of all backgrounds. Prior to her work at the Commission, Young served as counsel for the Domestic Violence Institute at Northeastern University School of Law where she provided legal services to survivors of domestic violence, assault, dating violence, and harassment. She was the executive director of a Boston-based nonprofit that provided paid internships for young leaders in state and local government and secured over \$100k in funds for 49 young leaders during her tenure. Young is also an alumni and board member of the Boston chapter of the New Leaders Council, a national organization founded to train and provide opportunities to progressive leaders.



Matt Zappa

Drummer, Live Streamer & Educator, Plugged In Band Program

Zappa is a leader and innovator in music education, live music performance and live streaming. The accomplished musician, composer, and Berklee College of Music alumni has toured internationally with various bands and performed on video game soundtracks. As a music teacher for Needham-based Plugged In Band Program, Zappa has guided and mentored students, helping them develop their musical skills. Zappa's experience as a guest lecturer at MIT and his involvement in Berklee College of Music summer programs showcase his dedication to sharing his knowledge and expertise with aspiring musicians. He has received numerous awards and critical acclaim for his projects and has been recognized by publications such as The Boston Globe, Village Voice, Metal Injection, and Nefarious Realm.

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