

# Ramos honors Women of Distinction

By Community News - March 30, 2021



Assemblymember James C. Ramos (D-Highland) today recognized Dr. Veronica Kelley as the 40<sup>th</sup> Assembly District Woman of the Year and 13 “Women of Distinction” today in a virtual program.

“These women were honored not only for their impressive talents and achievements, but also because of their extraordinary contributions to our community,” Ramos said. “Some of them contribute by fostering community spirit, some by assisting the needy, others for selflessly helping youth develop leadership and job skills or in many other ways. Busy as they are, they still find time to help others. They make our communities stronger, more united and better places in which to live.”

2019 Woman of the Year Kristine Scott served as keynote speaker. The honorees were named last year but the ceremony was not held because of the onset of COVID-19 restrictions.

The honorees are:

**Woman of the Year: Dr. Veronica A. Kelley**, Director of the San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health. She is a passionate advocate for ensuring mental and behavioral health resources for all not only in her home county, but also in the state. Dr. Kelley helped inform the state process that allowed counties to provide more services to county residents, drawing down more federal dollars to assist individuals in their recovery process from addiction, through the Organized Delivery System. During the 2015 terrorist shooting in San Bernardino, she directed the daily crisis operations response for the county at large.

From the City of Highland:

- **Rowena Ramos** is a San Manuel Band of Mission Indians tribal leader and contributor to numerous local charities including Loma Linda Children's Hospital, Boys and Girls Club, SEBA children's charities, The Unforgettable Foundation, YMCA, Santa Clause Inc., and Time for Change Foundation. The Unforgettable Foundation named the Rowena award after her. It is given to grandmothers who have inspired and contributed with a giving heart to the community. Ramos is the mother of the lawmaker.

- **Stephanie Argentine** owns Arrowhead Tang Soo Do and takes pride in teaching special needs children karate skills and representing the United States around the world as a martial arts instructor. Each Christmas her school chooses an organization to assist. For the past four years she has recruited, trained and coordinated volunteers for the annual San Bernardino International Airport Festival.

- **Debra Olguin** serves as Director, Veronica's Home of Mercy, a transitional home for women. The organization offers assistance to women dealing with homelessness, substance abuse, and other issues. Her organization also helps women seeking to regain custody of their children and offers individual case management and crisis intervention.

From the City of Loma Linda:

- **Dr. Purvi Parwani** is a cardiologist and assistant professor of medicine at Loma Linda University Health. She serves as director of the women's heart health clinic at LLUH, the first of its kind in the Inland Empire. Parwani has worked with the American Heart Association's Inland Empire chapter to increase awareness of women's heart health through media appearances, blogs, and other outreach efforts. Parwani has also served as a mentor to numerous people.

• **Synthia Alanis**, a registered oncology nurse, works in the Oncology/Hematology Department at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital. She also has volunteered for the Childhood Cancer Foundation of Southern California. She voluntarily assists with hospital events and fundraisers. She works to let families know they are not alone as they fight for the lives of their loved ones.

From the City of Mentone:

• **Maribeth Lotito** is co-owner of the Mill Creek Mill Creek Cattle Company Smokehouse Saloon and a member of the Mentone Chamber of Commerce. She and her husband, Jim, have donated time, food, clothing and funds to several organizations including the Loma Linda Ronald McDonald House, Crafton Hills College Foundation, Youth Hope, Solera Support Our Troops, and Smiles for Seniors.

• **Angie De La Rosa** is the owner and broker for A Noteworthy Realty. She has served as a coordinator for the yearly Mentone Cook Off, organizing vendors and contestants and assisting in whatever needs to be done to create a successful event. She organized artists to create historic murals and served the community lunch when the murals were dedicated in 2019. De La Rosa also donates her office space for the Adopt-a-Highway program, frequently donates gifts and funds for community events and volunteers to help the homeless through her church. At Christmas, she volunteers her time and singing talent at the Mentone Senior Center.

From the City of Rancho Cucamonga:

• **Dr. Akin Merino** is a business owner, psychologist and lead minister. She is president of Jars Education, a professional training institute whose clients include local government agencies, Verizon, the Black Women's Congress, and Children's Network. She serves on the San Bernardino County Behavioral Health Commission. Merino arrived at age 21 with \$80 in her pocket from Nigeria. Merino mentors several community members interested in education and hosts global conferences on faith and mental wellness. She is the lead minister at Savior's Faith Ministries International and written three books.

• **Superintendent Janet Temkin** has served the Rancho Cucamonga School District for more than 30 years as a teacher, site coordinator, vice-principal, principal, assistant superintendent and now as its educational leader. Temkin also serves on the Rancho Cucamonga Library Board. She has reached out to city and area organizations to work on

projects benefiting the community and students. Collaborative projects include the Founders' Day Parade, cooking classes, safer school routes, school safety training and a pancake breakfast for district staff with the city fire department is a 10-year tradition.

From the City of Redlands:

- **Dawn McCoy** is president and founder of the Red Shoe Project which offers quality mental and emotional health services regardless of resources or ability to pay. She is a dedicated volunteer and tireless advocate for mental health wellness and services. McCoy leads the Healing Strong Hands cancer support group, Down Time grief and loss support group and Cooking with Kindness. Cooking with Kindness is a group for local youth who may be living with – or surviving – abuse, neglect, bullying, and addiction. McCoy is a member of the Redlands Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club.

- **Jennifer Michaels** is a program administrator with the City of Redlands. She works with students on special recreational and community service events while helping them develop job and leadership skills. That work has contributed to their admission at prestigious colleges and universities. In 2018, the City of Redlands recognized her as the Part-time Employee of the Year Award. Michaels is integral in planning events for the community through her collaboration with community leaders, local businesses, and various agencies and non-profits.

From the City of San Bernardino:

- **Vanessa Perez** is director of the Time for Change Foundation. She and her staff focus on providing job training and assistance to the homeless, counseling, and other services to help the disenfranchised achieve self-sufficiency. Perez also provides student mentoring and college preparation. She volunteers to serve her community through her church. Perez has received the Molina Healthcare's Community Champion Award, the Center for Non-Profit Management's Inspirational Leader Award, and League of Women Voters' Citizen of Achievement Award in addition to other civic recognition.
- **Shonie Perry** is a program technician with the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, Homeless Education. Perry contributes personal time and resources to help homeless, foster, and at-risk youth attend grad night, attend prom, purchase year books, or meet other graduation needs. She collaborates with individuals and organizations to ensure that the 200 children who attend the annual Holiday Celebration for homeless youth receive new coats for the cold holiday months. Perry also works to secure and distribute thousands of books each year to children of all ages and coordinates backpack and scholarship donations.