Alternatives For Girls

ROLE MODELS.

In honor of International Women's Day, we celebrate the accomplishments of extraordinary women in our community and the accomplishments of the girls and women we serve.

2026

RITA BROWN is President and CEO of Brown Constructive Collective and a trailblazing leader in Michigan's public and civic Sectors. She currently serves as a Michigan Transportation Commissioner, making history as the first woman of color to hold this role. Deeply committed to equity, opportunity, and women's leadership, Rita also serves as President of the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) and President of Michigan NOW. Through her professional excellence and advocacy, she continues to open doors and set powerful examples for future generations of young women.

JENIFER DIONNE's journey reflects resilience and belief that circumstances don't define one's future. As a teenager facing homelessness and hunger, she found stability and direction at AFG, reshaping her life. With support and determination, she pursued education, became a nurse, and ultimately a Family Nurse Practitioner dedicated to caring for women and families with compassion and dignity. Inspired to help women feel confident through life's stages, she founded BATCH Modern Skin Science, a skincare company for women 40+, and is committed to supporting AFG through its profits. Jenifer hopes her story encourages young women to believe in their own possibilities.

DENISE J. LEWIS has played a pivotal role in Detroit's revitalization through her 37-year legal career at Honigman LLP, leading major projects such as downtown retail developments, initiatives for GM and Bedrock, the Detroit Pistons' headquarters, and Detroit Riverfront Conservancy parks. A champion for diversity, she has mentored lawyers of color and women, expanding opportunities for developers and contractors of color and earning recognition as one of the Most Influential Black Lawyers in the U.S. Now retired, she continues her leadership on several philanthropic, civic, and cultural boards, chairing the trust managing health benefit assets for UAW retirees. She has established several diversity-focused endowments.

2025

CINDY EGGLETON is the Co-Founder and CEO of Brilliant Detroit, where she leads efforts to ensure children and families have what they need to succeed. Under her leadership, Brilliant Detroit has grown to serve over 22,000 children and caregivers across 24 neighborhoods, partnering with more than 200 organizations. Cindy's tireless work has garnered her numerous recognitions, including Crain's 2018 Notable Women in Nonprofits and AARP's 2020 Purpose Prize. Passionate about driving population-level change, Cindy considers this her life's work and remains dedicated to transforming Detroit's future.

TELVA MCGRUDER leads the transformation of General Motors' manufacturing toward automation and digitalization as Executive Director of Global Body Manufacturing Engineering. She has held key leadership roles within GM. Telva is a passionate supporter of STEM education for girls and women, and is deeply committed to empowering future leaders.

GENEVIEVE VANG is a testament to resilience and generosity through her life experience from a refugee in Laos to becoming a celebrated chef and entrepreneur in Detroit . After arriving in the U.S. in 1989, she co-founded Bangkok 96, Wayne County's first Thai restaurant, and later opened Bangkok 96 Street Food in Detroit. A passionate community advocate, Genevieve launched initiatives like Too Many Cooks in the Kitchen for Good during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing meals to those in need. She also founded Clean Planet Cuisine, offering healthy, ready-to-eat meals, and Thai Feast, a vegan, gluten-free sauce line. Recognized for her culinary expertise, she has gained national attention as a trailblazer in Detroit's food scene, dedicated to expanding her businesses while uplifting her community and inspiring others through her work.

2024

DUC NGUYEN ABRAHAMSON is the Executive Director of the Asian Pacific American Chamber of Commerce (APACC) providing specialized consultation on Asian hate crimes, DEI, strategic planning, fundraising, and other topics. She is also a member of several local and national committees and boards that are focused on being a visible and vocal advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the global level.

VIOLET GINTSIS is a first-generation immigrant who moved from Greece to Flint, Michigan when she was 10 years old. After spending nearly 40 years in the banking industry as one of the few female executives at her company, she became a Beyond Juicery + Eatery franchisee at the age of 60. Today, Violet is a partner with AFG's Workforce Development program, where she employs AFG participants to work in her stores.

DR. MARLO RENCHER is an entrepreneur, anthropologist, and educator with over two decades of experience in startup and small business development. Currently, she is the president of Detroit Means Business in addition to being a founding member of three tech startups. Dr. Rencher is also deeply invested in researching the funding gap for Black women tech founders.

2023

TERRY BARCLAY is the CEO of Inforum and advises top management on how to build gender-balanced businesses and capitalize on the world's fastest-growing market – women. She enjoys building alliances, steering change, and consistently delivering mission-critical results with local businesses and their leaders throughout Michigan. Terry also serves on a number of non-profit boards in our community.

LISA FRANKLIN is the Founder and CEO of Warriors on Wheels of Metropolitan Detroit, whose vision is that individuals with disabilities will be able to thrive in an inclusive community that is sensitive to the needs and issues that individuals with various disabilities face. For decades, Lisa has demonstrated extraordinary leadership, which has led to numerous significant steps forward for disabled people and all people in Detroit.

BRANDY MASON is a wife, mother, clinical therapist, and Founder of Your Heart Matters Counseling and Consulting. She is dedicated to providing mental health services to individuals, especially young people throughout Metro Detroit. As a teen, Brandy was in foster care and made a real effort not to let her past trauma overtake her future. Prior to starting her own business, she also worked in child welfare for eight years.

2022

ALMA CROSSLEY has been with General Motors for over 35 years where she sits as the Director for Corporate Diversity positioning the company as the choice for diverse communities by promoting, supporting, and leveraging diversity, equity, and inclusion within and outside of GM.

SABRINA GALLOWAY is the Director of Business and Brand Development for Galloway Group, LLC, where she manages the daily operations along with the brand strategy of NBA athlete and former Detroit Piston, Langston Galloway.

DR. GWENDOLYN PARKER is a board-certified radiation oncologist and has been with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan for 29 years.

KIM RAY has been working with Ford Credit for the past twenty years and currently services as one of their attorneys.

2021

RACHEAL ALLEN has notably served as the founding chief operations officer for the Marygrove Conservatory in addition to various roles in other nonprofit and entrepreneurial spaces.

LISA LUDWINSKI broke into the food industry with her New York-based cooking show, "Funny Side Up," before launching her bakery Sister Pie in Detroit's West Village in 2015.

MARIFER CALLEJA has leaned her expertise in change leadership and communications from multiple positions across the governmental and corporate sectors. As program manager in Public Affairs at DTE Energy, her focus is outreach efforts in the Hispanic population of metro Detroit.

AGNES HAGERTY specialized as a healthcare law attorney at the Trinity Health organization from 1985 until 2016, when she retired as deputy general counsel. Ms. Hagerty was also involved with AFG for over 30 years serving on the board, board committees, and as board chair.

2020

LAURA CHAVEZ-WAZEERUD-DIN has dedicated over 15 years to providing resources about health, financial literacy, and education to Detroit communities through her roles at various groups, including most recently as the Assistant Vice President of Sales for Flagstar Bank in Downtown Detroit.

DENISE ILITCH, ESQ. has been an integral part of Detroit's business and philanthropic communities for over 40 years as a business leader, community servant, supporter of many charitable causes, and advocate for women and children. Ms. Ilitch is an owner of Ilitch Family Companies and is also president of Ilitch Enterprises, LLC.

PALENCIA MOBLEY, P.E. remarkably became one of the youngest minority women to attain licensure as a professional engineer in the State of Michigan in 2006. Since then, Ms. Mobley was chosen as the Deputy Director and Chief Engineer of the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department in 2016 and appointed to the Michigan Infrastructure Council in 2018.

2019

DR. ALTHEA SIMPSON is a licensed attorney and minister, who has been involved in teaching and training youth and adults for more than 30 years. Dr. Simpson has worked closely with Franklin Community Church serving as the Director of Discipleship.

LASHINDA STAIR is a veteran of the Detroit Police Department having held the rank of police officer, sergeant, lieutenant, inspector, and deputy chief.

LINDA TALIAFERRO founded The TEE (The Extra Effort) based off her more than 30 years of statistical data and quality management experience to be an advisor for women seeking senior leadership positions in corporate America.

2018

ALICIA BOLER DAVIS is the first African American to manage a GM vehicle manufacturing plant. Most recently, Ms. Davis has served as the Senior Vice President of Global Customer Fulfillment at Amazon.

DEBORAH LABELLE is an attorney, professor, writer, and advocate who has focused on the application of human rights for marginalized communities. She is the first American recognized by Human Rights Watch as a Human Rights Monitor.

The late **MONICA L. MARTINEZ** served as the liaison for Comerica Bank within the Hispanic community, directing Hispanic business and community outreach in primary markets as the bank's Senior Vice President of National Community Relations.

2017

CINDY ESTRADA is a longtime union organizer and is the first Latina elected to serve as an International Officer in the UAW. Ms. Estrada served as the International Union and UAW Vice President heading the Stellantis' Organizing and Women's Departments.

CAROL GOSS has served numerous philanthropic organizations, including The Skillman Foundation as president and CEO, the Advanced Leadership Initiative program at Harvard University, and Warrior Women Against Poverty.

The late **DR. ROSEMARY SARRI** was a leading expert in child and family welfare policy and juvenile and criminal justice systems serving as a faculty associate and senior research professor emerita at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research.

2016

DENISE BROOKS-WILLIAMS has served the healthcare industry in a variety of roles including as the Senior Vice President and CEO of North Market at Henry Ford Health Services, the President and CEO of Henry Ford Wyandotte Hospital, and as president of the National Association of Health Services Executives (NAHSE).

RAQUEL CASTAÑEDA–LÓPEZ is the first Latina elected to Detroit City Council where she has helped strengthened ties between local government, business, and community.

JANET MCAULIFFE began volunteering at AFG in 2010, eventually assisting with and expanding summer gardening workshops. In 2014, Ms. McAuliffe also collaborated with staff and volunteers to launch Sew Great Detroit, an AFG social enterprise program.

2015

SUSAN KELLY is an internationally recognized expert on child welfare issues serving programs including the Casey Family Programs Systems Improvement Division, the Center for the Study of Social Policy in Washington, D.C., and the Michigan Department of Human Services.

KRISTA MCCLURE started with AFG as a shelter resident and has since become the Director and Founder of the Detroit Parent Collective.

VIVIAN PICKARD has served as an expert in strategy development and giving efforts for organizations including the Pickard Group and the General Motors Foundation.

2014

AMYRE MAKUPSON is known as one of television's most respected and active anchors and broadcast executives. In addition to being a Public Affairs Manager for UPN50 and CBS62, Ms. Makupson has served on the board of directors for several community organizations and has volunteered as a teacher's aide at McDowell Elementary School in Detroit.

ANDRA RUSH, who is of Native American heritage, is the Founder, Chairperson, and CEO of the Rush Group family of companies, which is one of the largest Native American-owned businesses in the USA.
2013

MARY ELLEN GUREWITZ has been a lawyer for more than 40 years representing a variety of unions in both the public and private sectors and has been a leader in voter protection effort.

PATRICIA MARYLAND, Dr. Maryland has spent more than 30 years at the executive level in the healthcare space with companies including Ascension Healthcare and St. John Providence Health System.

TRINA R. SHANKS, PH.D. is the founding Director of the Center for Family & Community Well-Being University of Louisville and currently serves as the Harold R. Johnson Collegiate Professor and Director of Community Engagement at the University of Michigan School of Social Work.

REGINA SHARMA has been a force in the fund development space for organizations such as the Detroit Justice Center, Henry Ford Health System, and Wayne State University College of Nursing.

2012

CAROLYN LETT has served Roeper School as the Diversity and Community Programs Coordinator for over 18 years along with being involved in local and national diversity work.
KRISTINA MARSHALL was a student in the inaugural Winning Futures high school mentoring class in 1994, eventually joining the team in 1998 after graduating from college. Ms. Marshall speaks nationally and inspires audiences about the future of work, developing the next workforce, non-profit networking and sales, and empowering youth through life skills programs.

FAYE NELSON has served as Michigan Director of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Vice President of DTE Energy along with spending time as the 2018 Sojourner Truth Fellow at the University of Michigan.

2011

VALERIE NEWMAN, JD was an attorney with the State Appellate Defender Office for over 20 years and has been involved with local and national diversity work. She currently serves as the Director, Conviction Integrity Unit at Wayne County Prosecutor's Office.

ANN NICHOLSON has been active in programs supporting educational activities including tutoring programs and hosting exchange students. Ann has served as a Trustee for Oakland University and as a member of the Alternatives For Girls' Board of Directors.

2010

JOCELYN K. ALLEN is the Co-founder and CEO of the Allen Lewis Agency. Ms. Allen has also served as the CEO of Wing Divas and the Director of Cross-brand Communications at General Motors.

CHRISTIANNE SIMS founded Urbanize(D), a communications and talent engagement consultancy and has served as the Director of Fusion, the Young Professional Organization of the Detroit Regional Chamber.

SUSAN P. STEIGERWALT, MD has practiced medicine in metro-Detroit her entire career, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to women, African Americans, and the health of the City of Detroit.

2009

KAREN LOVE has worked for numerous print publications, including two decades with the Michigan Chronicle and a career in community connections focused on the elderly in Midtown Detroit. In 2013, Ms. Love founded her firm KarYzma Media Consulting, Inc. specializing in black media.

MARLA TAPPER YOUNG is co-owner and Director of Tapper's Diamonds and Fine Jewelry.

2008

LINDA FORTE retired from Comerica Bank after 42 years developing the company's corporate-wide diversity, philanthropy, and community involvement strategy and programming.

MINNIE PEARCE became a Title I Consultant at Detroit Public Schools in 2011. Previously, Ms. Pearce served as a parliamentarian and national trainer for the Parent Institute of the National Coalition of ESEA Title I Parents, Inc. that provides for supplementary academic assistance to economically and educationally disadvantaged children.

RHONDA WALKER is an award-winning journalist spending time at WDIV-Local 4 News and is the Founder and President of the Rhonda Walker Foundation.

2007

CARMEN HARLAN retired from her position as a senior news anchor at WDIV Local 4 after a career that spanned 38 years.

FRANCINE PARKER spent nearly three decades at the Health Alliance Plan (HAP) of Michigan and is known nationally for the role she played developing and leading the United Auto Workers (UAW) Retiree Medical Benefits Trust after her HAP career.

ALICE G. THOMPSON served as the CEO of Black Family Development expanding its programs and services to encompass a comprehensive family and youth services continuum.

2006

NETTIE SEABROOKS has served numerous leadership roles during her Detroit-based career, including becoming the first African American woman executive at General Motors and as the first woman Deputy Mayor for Detroit, serving alongside Mayor Dennis.

DENISE STARR has served as the City of Detroit's Human Resources Director and was earlier in her career a Chief Administrative Officer for Compuware Corporation.

KIM TRENT has worked in many roles including the Deputy Director for Prosperity for the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunities, Regional Manager for U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, and Communications Director for U.S. Congresswoman Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick.

2005

JUDITH ELLIS started as a volunteer with the First Step Western Wayne County Project on Domestic Violence more than 20 years ago, eventually earning her a position as the Executive Director.

MAHA FREIJ is a leading visionary in the Arab American community serving as the President and CEO at ACCESS. Ms. Freij is credited as the first Arab/Palestinian woman to earn a CPA license in Israel in 1989 – the same year she immigrated to the United States.
ROCHELLE RILEY has worked as an advocate for improved race relations, literacy, community building, and children through her roles as the Director of Arts and Culture for the City of Detroit and as a columnist for the Detroit Free Press.

2004

GLENDA D. PRICE, PH.D. was Marygrove College's first African American president. In retirement, she serves as a volunteer on several boards focused on education, the arts, and health care.

SHIRLEY R. STANCATO recently retired as President and CEO of the New Detroit, Inc., which serves as an essential forum for discussion, advocacy, and identifying issues, and providing solutions to promote racial equity in the region. She is currently serving as a member of the WSU Board of Governors.

2003

CLAIRE J. ROBERTS, SIOR VP at Collier's International.

BRENDA ROSENBERG serves as an advisor to the FBI's Multi-Cultural Advisory Committee (MCAC), Advocates Leaders to build Police and Community Trust (ALPACT), appears on Sheriff Bouchard's Special Advisory Council (SAC) for Oakland County, and is the Jewish liaison to Interfaith Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan.

2002

THE HON. JUNE BLACKWELL-HATCHER became the first woman in history to sit in the Estates Division of the Wayne County Probate Court and one of only two African American female judges in Michigan to preside over an Estate docket.

The late **MARILYN MALIN** strived to develop ways to help workers connect with jobs. Ms. Malin co-owned Staff Solutions, Inc., a temporary employment firm with a system of delivering employees to job sites in the tri-county area via bus and van.

2001

NANETTE LEE REYNOLDS, ED.D. has worked with three governors to further the course of civil rights in Michigan. Dr. Reynolds was appointed director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights in 1993.

JOANNE START is Managing Director-Michigan Market, BPI group, a global human resource consulting and executive coaching firm.

2000

The late **MAUREEN A. FAY, O.P., PH.D.** worked to improve education as President of the University of Detroit Mercy and as a member of the Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Michigan. She was the first female president of a Jesuit university.

PAMELA RODGERS started her career with Ford Motor Company as a financial analyst eventually building her business Rodgers Chevrolet, Inc. in Woodhaven, Michigan. She has served on AFG's Board.

1999

JULIE FISHER CUMMINGS is a strong advocate for responsible policies on health, education, and philanthropy on behalf of underserved and marginalized children and families. She founded the Lovelight Foundation and serves on multiple non-profit boards.

THE HON. DENISE PAGE HOOD, JD was nominated by President Bill Clinton and confirmed by the Senate in 1994, becoming the first African-American in 13 years to join the Eastern District of Michigan bench.

GAIL PERRY-MASON has climbed the corporate ladder from receptionist to Senior Director of Investments of Oppenheimer & Co., Inc. Ms. Perry-Mason has mentored many young women who are now leaders in the financial industry.

1998

MARILYN FRENCH HUBBARD, PH.D. is the Founder of the National Association of Black Women Entrepreneurs, Inc. and is the founding Vice President of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), Michigan Chapter.

ANN H. HOAG is a retired Senior Director of Leadership Programs for the Detroit Regional Chamber. Ms. Hoag led Leadership Detroit, the Leadership Policy Conference, the chamber's diversity initiatives, and headed the Mackinac Conference.

1997

ALEXA CANADY, M.D. retired as Chief Neurosurgeon of Children's Hospital of Michigan and Vice Chair of Neurosurgery at Wayne State University. In 1981, Dr. Canady was the first female and the first African American neurosurgeon.

ROBERTA SANDERS managed a $9.5-million budget and directed the treatment of thousands of mentally ill clients through her leadership as the CEO of New Center Community Health System.

1996

VERNICE D. ANTHONY developed and worked with collaborative models to improve health care access, quality and cost in her roles at St. John Health System and director of the Michigan Department of Health. She also served as the interim CEO of Focus: HOPE.

MARY KRAMER is a seasoned expert with nearly 30 years of reporting and management experience. In 2012, she was named Group Publisher at Crain Communications, supervising Crain's Cleveland business along with Detroit. Throughout her career, Ms. Kramer has served on various non-profit boards.

1995

The late **GUADALUPE G. LARA, LMSW** dedicated 27 years to advocating for families at Children's Hospital of Michigan until she retired in 2006. Five different Michigan governors named Ms. Lara to lead boards and commissions based on her advocacy on behalf of the underserved and Hispanic issues.

ANGELA B. WILSON has spent time with various organizations including Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance, Communities in Schools Detroit, Young Detroit Builders, and in Mayor Archer's administration. She served on the Michigan Metropolitan Girl Scouts Council and the American Friends Service Committee.

1994

NANCY J. DIEHL retired from the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office where she dedicated 28 years of service. She was Founder and Director of the Child Abuse Unit and the expanded Child and Family Abuse Bureau. At the time of her retirement, she was Chief of the Trial Division.

REV. JOANN WATSON, Associate Pastor of West Side Unity Church, radio personality and activist, Rev. Watson has served on the Detroit City Council and is devoted to combatting racism and sexism. She is a strong advocate for peace, justice, and freedom.

1993

HELEN B. LOVE committed to building the health, wellness, and long-term care literacy of Detroit residents, Ms. Love produced the Detroit Area Agency on Aging's weekly radio show. Ms. Love retired from Ford Motor Company as Community Relations Director and has served on a number of non-profit boards.

1992

THE HON. VESTA SVENSON is a former judge of the 36th District Court and was rated best judge in the tri-county area by a group of her peers in 1991.

1991

The late **MILDRED JEFFREY** was a lifelong campaigner for social justice and civil rights joining the NAACP in the 1940s. She embraced the labor movement, organizing textile workers and serving as UAW staff for many years. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by Bill Clinton in 2000.