



New York State Assembly Member

Rebecca A. Seawright

Presents

**12th Annual
WOMEN OF DISTINCTION
AWARDS CEREMONY**

in the 76th Assembly District

JUNE 9, 2026



***Upper East Side, Yorkville, and
Roosevelt Island***

From Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for joining us at our Twelfth Annual Women of Distinction Celebration. It is a privilege to recognize and honor these extraordinary women for their dedication, leadership, and contributions to our communities and to New York State.

Our 2026 Women of Distinction honorees reflect a remarkable breadth of achievement across professional, civic, and community life. Their stories are inspiring and their impact profound.

From physicians and educators to small business owners, nonprofit leaders, and community advocates, each honoree has made an enduring difference through service, compassion, and leadership.

As the lead sponsor of the Equal Rights Amendment in the Assembly, I am deeply grateful for its inclusion in the New York State Constitution. This historic achievement strengthens protections against discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, ethnicity, age, disability, pregnancy, and pregnancy outcomes, affirming New York's commitment to equality and dignity for all.

Together, we will continue moving forward in the pursuit of equality and the advancement of women across every sector of society.

Congratulations and heartfelt thanks to our 2026 Women of Distinction honorees for your outstanding contributions to our community and to the State of New York.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca A. Seawright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Rebecca A. Seawright

Tuesday, June 9, 2026

*Rockefeller Research Laboratories
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center
430 East 67 Street*

Assembly Member
Rebecca Seawright

WELCOME

Tracy Gosselin, PhD, RN, FAAN
*Senior Vice President, Chief Nurse
Executive, and Chair of Nursing at
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center*

PRESENTATION OF THE COLORS AND THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

**Girl Scout Troops 3233, 3147 and
3148
Knickerbocker Greys**

KEYNOTE

Monica Morales
*Eight-time Emmy Award-winning PIX11
News TV host, content creator, and
founder of the Monica Makes It Happen
franchise*

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

*Monica Morales
Corinna Andiel
Julianna Belelieu
Arlene Bessenoff
Zora Boyadzhieva
Dianna Campbell
María Cancio, MD
Carmen Castillo, RN, MSN
Debyani Chakravarty, PhD
Anita Chang
Vanessa Cordova-Corwin
Elizabeth Rose Daly*

*Mary Brewer Darling, LMSW
Judy Famigletti
Melanie Roth Gorelick
Emanuella Grinberg
Deborah Hasin, PhD
Alexandra S. Heerdt, MD, MPH, FACS
Karissa Denae Johnson
Diane LaRue
Nina E. Lublin
Laura Ashley Makuch
Dr. Michal L. Melamed
Sherry Miller
Carol D. Morris, MD, MS
Bridget A. O'Reilly
Kristen Oberlander
Colette N. Owens, MD
Dana Rathkopf, MD
Felicia D. Ruff
Julie Russak, MD, FAAD
Louise S. Sherby
Kristi Towey
Suzanne Vlamis
Anastasia von Raison
Melissa A. Wade
Robyn S. Walsh
Ilana Yagudayev
Ruth Zealand, PhD
Sharon Zeisel*

New York State Assembly Member
Rebecca A. Seawright
76th Assembly District



Rebecca A. Seawright represents the Upper East Side, Yorkville, and Roosevelt Island in New York's 76th Assembly District. Since her 2014 election, and as the first woman to serve the district, she has been a strong voice for over 140,000 constituents, securing hundreds of millions of dollars in state funding for public schools, senior centers, parks, and non-profits.

She holds the leadership position of Chair of the Aging Committee, appointed by the Speaker in 2025. Previously, she served as the Chair of

the People with Disabilities Committee, Chair of the Majority Steering Committee, Secretary of the Majority Conference, and Chair of the Task Force on Women's Issues. Nominated by her colleagues, she serves as a Director of the Legislative Women's Caucus and collaborates in the Bipartisan Pro-Choice, Jewish, Environmental, and Gun Reform Legislative Caucuses. As a member of the Ways and Means, Codes, Higher Education, and Judiciary committees, Seawright is motivated to protect her constituents' interests in our great State of New York.

Inspired to renew the movement for the federal Equal Rights Amendment to constitutionally anchor our rights, she was the Assembly lead sponsor of the ERA to our New York State Constitution. Voters ratified the amendment as a ballot referendum in the 2024 general election.

A champion for high-quality public education, Seawright strengthens our schools and has obtained more than \$1 billion in new state support. She sponsors the Teach LGBT curriculum bill to ensure the NYS Education Department develops curriculum on the historical treatment and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in America.

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A fighter for people with disabilities, she advocates for direct support professionals and is the lead sponsor of legislation to establish a direct support wage enhancement. Her legislation for people with disabilities has been signed into law to increase representation of I/DD individuals on our state's planning council and update outdated and harmful language in state statutes. Leading the 44th Annual Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day with hundreds of advocates at the Capitol, Rebecca passed a package of bills to improve the lives of people with disabilities statewide. This includes legislation for which she is the lead sponsor to establish a Blue-Ribbon Commission to improve the service delivery system for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Rebecca fights for our community through major environmental and sustainability initiatives. She is a leading advocate for affordable housing and landmark housing reform laws to abolish vacancy decontrol and restrict rent hikes. A proponent of strong democratic values, Rebecca strongly supports reforms to run elections efficiently, accurately, and with integrity to protect our voting rights. Notably, for the 2020 General Election and the 2021 New York City Primary, Rebecca made national headlines by successfully securing additional early voting and Election Day poll sites.

Her bills have been signed into law, requiring those convicted of hate crimes to undergo tolerance training as a condition of their sentence and rehabilitation; reinstating the Clean Waterways Fund; capping annual fees from lenders; implementing a study on consumer financial literacy; streamlining boards of election; requiring health insurance policies to include 3-D mammography at no cost to the consumer; encouraging greater representation of women on corporate boards; and identifying how many policy-making positions are held by women in the state government.

She formerly served for 8 years as Chair of the Board of the Feminist Press at the City University of New York, the oldest nonprofit literary publisher of feminist literature. Currently, she chairs the CUNY Law School Board of Visitors. In 2023, Speaker Heastie appointed her to the City University of New York Construction Fund Board of Trustees.



Tracy Gosselin

PhD, RN, FAAN



Tracy Gosselin, PhD, RN, FAAN is the Senior Vice President, Chief Nurse Executive, and Chair of Nursing at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK). Dr. Gosselin leads the Magnet®-recognized Department of Nursing, which includes 5,000 highly skilled nurses and nursing support staff across MSK's care locations in New York and New Jersey.

Dr. Gosselin helps shape MSK's overall strategic priorities and works to uphold MSK's tradition of nursing excellence. She is also responsible for improving quality, safety, and the overall experience for patients and ensures that nurses at MSK continue to influence decisions involving their work.

A highly experienced and accomplished nurse executive, Dr. Gosselin has more than two decades of nursing leadership experience. She started her career as an oncology nurse at Duke University Hospital in 1993. After holding a variety of clinical and administrative roles, she was appointed Chief Nursing and Patient Care Services Officer in 2016, helping transform the hospital's clinical and caregiver support programs and quality and safety initiatives. She also assisted with leading the hospital's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Gosselin earned her bachelor's in nursing degree from Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts; her master's in nursing degree from Duke University in Durham, North Carolina; and her PhD degree from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, Utah. She is a member of many professional organizations, including the American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing, the American Organization for Nursing Leadership, the American Society of Clinical Oncology, Sigma Theta Tau, the Oncology Nursing Society, the American Nurses Association, and the North Carolina Nurses Association. She is a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing.



Monica Morales



Monica Morales is an eight-time Emmy Award-winning PIX11 News TV host, content creator, and founder of the Monica Makes It Happen franchise, a multi-platform brand built on turning storytelling into real action. She also creates partnerships that deliver real results, bringing resources directly to the communities she serves.

You can watch her weekly television show, “Monica Makes It Happen,” on PIX11 every Monday at 11 a.m., and her daily digital shows every day at 11 a.m. on PIX11+ and [PIX11.com/Monica](https://www.pix11.com/Monica), where she connects viewers to jobs, housing, funding, and life-changing resources.

Since 2016, Morales has focused on the issues that matter most to families and especially moms, from financial empowerment and career access to food insecurity, affordable housing, and community support. Her work is rooted in action, building powerful public-private partnerships that deliver impact for viewers.

Launched in 2024, her TV show features standout initiatives, including Monica’s Money Matters, which provides financial empowerment and resources, a Giving Wheel highlighting food insecurity and community impact, and a Community Champions series, which uplifts everyday heroes.

“Monica Makes It Happen” earned back-to-back Community Service Emmy Awards in 2024 and 2025, a rare distinction that underscores both its excellence and measurable impact. Morales has also received a National Emmy Award for Breaking News, multiple local Emmy Awards, and an Edward R. Murrow Award for investigative reporting. She also earned a Continuing Coverage Emmy for “Monica Makes It Happen” and has been recognized by the City Council and the Mayor’s Office for her reporting on New York City’s housing crisis.

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She is deeply engaged in the Hispanic community. In 2024, Morales was elected to the Board of Governors of the New York Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. She is a recipient of the 100 Hispanic Women Community Service Award, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, and was named a Latina of Distinction by El Diario Nueva York. She also serves on the board of Casa de las Américas at LaGuardia Community College and on the Advisory Council of the Ellis Island Honors Society.

Morales has personally visited more than 250 New York City housing developments, helping secure critical repairs, safe housing transfers, and life-changing support for families. Her investigations into housing conditions and a SNAP benefits skimming scheme led to reimbursements for impacted New Yorkers. Her reporting also helped secure \$1 million to restore deteriorating playgrounds in the Bronx and saved a Bronx food pantry that was at risk of closing.

Her most meaningful work centers on helping local moms access critical resources, often staying with their stories for years. She helped Jessica Middleton, a 7-month pregnant homeless woman sleeping on a park bench, move into safe housing by connecting her with Good Counsel. Middleton now has a home for her daughter and a new career. Morales also helped Brooklyn single parent Kameka Marsh complete her college education by connecting her to a scholarship at LaGuardia Community College, which has since supported other single parents.

On her show, Morales honors everyday heroes and high-profile changemakers who uplift communities. Her guests have included DMC, Ja Rule, Kool & the Gang, Vin Rock of Naughty by Nature, Fivio Foreign, Styles P, the founder of Pharmacy for Life, Latin pop star Lisa Lisa, Ralph McDaniels, David Belafonte, and Jim Jones. She has conducted several exclusive one-on-one interviews at JPMorgan Chase with CEO Jamie Dimon, discussing wealth creation in underserved communities.

Morales works closely with organizations, including Goya Gives, the First Responders Children's Foundation, Wondergirls USA, The Public Housing Community Fund, Con Edison, Union Settlement, New York Foundation for Senior Citizens, and the Ford Foundation to connect viewers with resources and opportunities.

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In 2018 and 2024, Morales was invited to the White House. She was inducted into Bottomless Closet's Hall of Fame in 2024 and received the Distinguished Woman of the Year Award from the Zonta Club of New York in 2023.

Morales was profiled by the Columbia Journalism Review for her pioneering work in advocacy journalism and is considered one of the only reporters in the nation who was dedicated to daily coverage of public housing issues. Her TED Talk, "Moms Make It Happen," highlights the power of women as drivers of change in their communities.

She credits her late mother, Maria Teresa Morales, a Bolivian immigrant who worked three jobs to support her family, as her inspiration every day.

Morales has reported across the country, including WNBC New York, WFXT Boston, WTVJ Miami, and WDJT Milwaukee, bringing a national perspective to her local, community-first work.



Corinna Andiel



Corinna Andiel is the Associate Director in the Division of Quality and Safety at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC). She obtained her PhD in Rehabilitation Science at the University of Alberta with a dissertation on models of care for people with dementia. She has worked at MSKCC since 2007. One of her key roles has been to serve as a liaison with other high-quality cancer centers around the country. She has served as the MSKCC representative for the Alliance of Dedicated Cancer Centers (ADCC) Quality Working Group since 2016 and

was the Quality Workgroup Chair from 2018 to 2020. Together with her ADCC colleagues, she worked with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to identify meaningful quality metrics for assessing quality of care provided by cancer hospitals. Currently, she supports efforts to reduce unplanned readmissions and enhance the quality of care provided toward the end of life for cancer patients.

In her spare time, she serves as president of her co-op, as well as president of the Hawthorne Court Council, which represents 14 co-operative buildings in Jackson Heights, Queens. She also enjoys roller-skating, an activity she picked up during the COVID pandemic after a 40-year hiatus.



Julianna Belelieu



Julie Belelieu serves as Director, Federal Policy and State Government Relations at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK). She is responsible for outreach to government agencies on regulatory policies and handles legislative advocacy on behalf of MSK in New York State. Some accomplishments in her time at MSK include successfully advocating for passage of a law to expand access to National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated cancer centers for patients on Medicaid managed care and Affordable Care Act plans, as well as passage of state coverage mandates

for key cancer services, including biomarker testing and scalp cooling. Prior to coming to MSK, Julie worked in health care policy and government relations capacities for both provider and patient advocacy groups, including the American Heart Association, the TeenScreen National Center at Columbia University, and the American Medical Association. Julie is a graduate of Kenyon College and holds a master's degree from the London School of Economics. She lives in Pelham, NY, with her husband, Andre; two children, Matheo and Carolina, and their two rescue dogs.



Arlene Bessenoff



Arlene Bessenoff began her career as a reading teacher at a New York City junior high school. She then moved to academic and business publishing, where she spent over 30 years developing college textbooks, managing financial industry publications and leading editorial groups.

After retiring in 2012, Arlene joined the board of trustees of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society. In that role, she prepares grant applications and processes reimbursement requests for awarded funds. She also spent many years on the board of the Roosevelt Island Jewish Congregation. In 2013, Arlene began volunteering at Bottomless Closet, an organization that helps empower New York City women in need to enter the workforce and achieve success. As a career coach, Arlene helps clients select appropriate attire and works with them to hone their resumes and interview skills. In 2024, Arlene received Bottomless Closet's Louise Kleinberg Award as Volunteer of the Year. For over 15 years, Arlene has participated in the Central Park Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk in memory of her sister and sister-in-law. She has raised over \$64,000. Currently, Arlene is Recording Secretary for the Gotham chapter of the Brandeis National Committee.



Zora Boyadzhieva



Zora Boyadzhieva is a registered architect as well as design and community leader. She is the Design Principal at ZB Architecture, a women-owned architectural studio based in Manhattan and the co-founder of the Roosevelt Island Architectural Community Alliance (ArchRI), a nonprofit organization dedicated to studying, documenting, preserving, and promoting the unique urban design and architectural legacy of Roosevelt Island.

Through ArchRI, Zora champions Roosevelt Island as a model for sustainable and affordable urban living, emphasizing human-scaled design, diverse public spaces, pedestrian-friendly circulation, an interconnected green system, and mixed-use affordable and inclusive development. Her work underscores how thoughtful planning can foster a resilient and equitable community.

Central to her advocacy is a call to halt demolition plans for the Steam Plant and pursue a transparent, community-driven alternative. Zora is actively mobilizing residents, stakeholders, and policymakers to protect the site from irreversible loss, advocating instead for adaptive reuse that prioritizes environmental responsibility, public benefit, and long-term affordability.

Under her leadership, ArchRI continues to expand its impact through research, public programming, and grassroots advocacy—positioning Roosevelt Island as a model for community-led, sustainable urban development in New York City and beyond.



Dianna Campbell



Dianna Campbell is a dedicated Rare Diseases Legislative Patient Advocate whose life reflects extraordinary resilience, compassion, and service. Diagnosed in 2004 with Stage IV Leiomyosarcoma of the pelvic bone at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, she faced an inoperable and incurable cancer with a limited prognosis. After seven years of intensive chemotherapy, radiation, and immense physical challenges, Dianna survived, regained mobility, and transformed her journey into a mission of advocacy and hope.

For more than 15 years, she has been a trusted voice for individuals and families affected by rare diseases, working with organizations such as National Organization for Rare Disorders, the Sarcoma Foundation of America, EveryLife Foundation for Rare Diseases, Global Genes, and the American Cancer Society. Through legislative advocacy and participation in Rare Disease Week on Capitol Hill, she has helped advance research funding, treatment access, and patient support programs.

Honored by the Women of Distinction Awards, Dianna continues to champion health equity, patient dignity, and the belief that one woman's courage can create lasting change nationwide!



María Cancio

MD



Dr. María Cancio is a board-certified Pediatric Hematologist-Oncologist specializing in stem cell transplantation and cellular therapies at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) in New York.

She completed medical school at the National University of Ireland (UCD) with honors, followed by a Pediatric Residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital, a Hematology-Oncology Fellowship at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and a Stem Cell Transplant & Cellular Therapies Fellowship at MSKCC.

Dr. Cancio is an Associate Professor at MSKCC and NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell. She also serves as Director of Clinical Operations for the Pediatric Transplant Program at MSKCC. She is an internationally recognized clinician, researcher, and educator focused on improving outcomes in pediatric and young adult patients undergoing cellular therapy and stem cell transplantation.

Her clinical expertise includes the treatment of children and young adults with life-threatening hematologic conditions, including malignancies, myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS), bone marrow failure syndromes (inherited and acquired), hemoglobinopathies, primary immunodeficiencies, and inherited metabolic disorders.



Carmen Castillo

RN, MSN



Carmen Castillo is an accomplished nurse leader with more than 25 years of experience and 18 years of service at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. As Associate Clinical Director in Patient Financial Services, she leads Nurse Case Managers who help patients secure insurance authorization and access critical cancer care. A bilingual leader born in the Dominican Republic, Carmen has dedicated her career to advocating for Spanish-speaking and underserved patients as they navigate the complexities of healthcare, insurance, and treatment access.

Her work reflects both leadership at MSK and deep community commitment. At MSK, she has co-led Salud Sin Barrera, supported the MSK Spanish Campaign promoting access to Latinos, partnered with psychiatric centers to advocate for patients with mental health needs, and participated in the Foscarnet home infusion project, which helped patients receive treatment at home and remain close to loved ones. In the community, she has worked with the Latina Share Organization and has educated Latino and English-speaking communities through conferences, schools, churches, health fairs, and LGBTQ community events on cancer prevention, screening, insurance navigation, and access to care. Carmen demonstrates MSK's Core Values through compassion, inclusion, innovation, integrity, and service.



Debyani Chakravarty

PhD



Dr. Debyani Chakravarty is a Molecular Geneticist and Associate Member in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK). She is also the co-founder of OncoKB, MSK's FDA-recognized precision oncology knowledge base that provides automated clinical decision support to molecular pathologists and oncologists globally, enabling the unique genetics of each patient's cancer to directly inform their treatment. Dr. Chakravarty has published extensively as an authoritative voice in precision oncology and clinical cancer genomics.

Dr. Chakravarty's current research focuses on the landscape of cancer genomics in diverse and underserved patient communities, and on ensuring that the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence in medicine does not exacerbate existing disparities in precision oncology. She is a passionate advocate for making AI-driven tools serve all patients equitably, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background. She has also mentored the next generation of scientists from underrepresented communities through MSK's Student Enrichment Program.

Dr. Chakravarty received her B.A. cum laude in Chemistry and Economics from Boston University and her Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from Georgetown University, followed by two translational cancer biology research fellowships at MSK. Having grown up in Hong Kong, attending British schools, she brings a distinctive multicultural lens to her work, one that shapes her conviction that the most transformative advances in precision medicine must be designed, from the ground up, to reach everyone.



Anita Chang



Anita Chang was born in Hong Kong and immigrated to the United States at the age of eight. She began her career in the fashion industry, studying design and working as a designer before discovering her passion for community-centered work. Over time, she transitioned into recruiting and ultimately found her calling in human services. She now serves as a Program Associate at the Stanley Isaacs Senior Center.

A lifelong caretaker for her parents and grandparents, Anita is driven by compassion and a deep commitment to supporting vulnerable populations. She believes that seniors, children, and animals are among those most in need of advocacy and care. Her fluency in three Chinese dialects has been instrumental in serving Chinese seniors who often face isolation due to language barriers.

Beyond her professional role, Anita is an active volunteer with Animal Care and Control, assisting at free clinics and coordinating donations. She also contributes to local Community Fridge efforts by collecting and distributing food from neighborhood businesses. Additionally, she supports migrant families through grassroots volunteer networks and participates in the New York Emergency Animal Rescue Network, helping rescue local wildlife. With her extensive rescue experience, community members frequently seek her guidance in rehoming pets or providing temporary animal care.



Vanessa Cordova-Corwin



Vanessa Cordova-Corwin, based on NYC's Upper East Side, is an award-winning filmmaker, producer, and podcaster. She specializes in production management, documentary and narrative shorts, and podcasting, with a focus on community, equality, and building a better future. She co-hosts and is executive producer, alongside Kathleen Kaan, of "Now, Let's Talk! The Podcast," which covers global and local issues (nowletstalkthepodcast.com). She is stage manager and production manager for VISIONS Contemporary Ballet, a diverse company

celebrating African American heritage and multicultural influences. Vanessa produced "HerFLiX" (2011-2012), a television show featuring movie reviews from a woman's viewpoint on Manhattan Neighborhood Network. As a filmmaker, she produced the documentary "Save the Putnam Nature Trail" (2013) and narrative shorts including "Saint Nick" (2008), "Five Flights" (2023), and "Teddy's Doll House" (2026), providing opportunities for cast and crew. She directed "Lost & Found" in 2022 for Virtual Arts' New Play Festival and the horror short "Knock, Knock, Guess Who's Here?" for the Virtual Arts 48 Hour Film Festival (2025). Vanessa is a leader in WomenHeart, a national organization that helps women with heart disease. An active member and former board member of NYWIFT and a member of HOLA, Vanessa advocates for diversity in the media.



Elizabeth Rose Daly

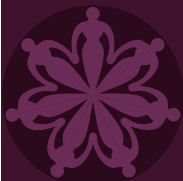


At the end of March 2026, after over eight years of service, **Elizabeth Rose Daly** retired from the Frick Collection. In her most recent role as Head of Visitor Services and Government Affairs, she played a pivotal role in the reopening of the expanded museum, which welcomed over half a million visitors in the past year. In 2025, she was named a Trailblazer in Arts & Culture by *City and State New York*.

Throughout her tenure Liz was a crucial link to the community, neighborhood organizations, and government officials, especially regarding the Frick's building project. Before joining the Frick in 2017, her career centered on international business and government relations, including twelve years as Director, International Business in the NYC Mayor's Office.

Liz also has a long record of civic engagement, having served on Brooklyn Community Board 2, as well as the Boerum Hill Association.

Liz has a B.A. in French from Fordham University, and a Master in Public Administration from the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University.



Mary Brewer Darling

LMSW



Mary Brewer Darling, LMSW, is a New York City–based psychotherapist and lifelong runner whose work bridges mental health, resilience, and endurance sport. She specializes in supporting individuals, couples, and families navigating anxiety, life transitions, and relational challenges, drawing on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Motivational Interviewing, and trauma-informed care.

Mary has extensive experience in community mental health, foster care, and adolescent services, including work with HeartShare St. Vincent’s Services. She earned her Master of Social Work from New York University and is committed to integrating psychological resilience and wellness into both clinical practice and community leadership.

A dedicated endurance athlete, Mary has completed 11 marathons and over 90 New York Road Runners races. She is a member of the Armory, serves on the executive board of the Bronx Burners, and leads structured training sessions that emphasize discipline, connection, and longevity in sport.

She is also the co-founder of Orithyia Omada, a women’s running team focused on strength, community, and empowerment.

Mary lives in New York City with her husband, Michael, and is the proud mother of Annabel and James.



Judy Famigletti



Judy Famigletti is the founder and creator of Let's Dress Up, a fairy tale themed play and birthday party space for young kids on the Upper East Side. Judy moved to New York City at age 60 after raising two hockey playing sons and managed to turn her favorite childhood pastime of dressing up into a successful business. With a Master's Degree in early childhood education and the help of her grandchildren, she developed the structure and timeless themes that feed children's imaginations.

Add to that a lifelong interest in interior design and you get a totally unique New York experience with a nostalgic feel. Let's Dress Up has been a fixture on East 85th Street for 20 years! The longevity and reputation of the business are a testament to her love of the concept and her joy in bringing a bit of magic to local families.



Melanie Roth Gorelick



Melanie Roth Gorelick is the CEO of Elluminate which empowers Jewish women leaders and philanthropists advancing gender equity and social change in the US, Israel and around the world. Previously she led the community relations field as the Senior Vice President of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs from 2016-2023. She has dedicated her life's work to women's rights, community relations, and social justice causes in roles at the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest, the UN Development Fund for Women, American Association of University Women,

among others. Melanie founded the NJ Coalition on Human Trafficking and she has received a number of recognitions including a Human Rights Award from Kean University, and a Government Affairs Award from Jewish Federation of North America. In 2022, Melanie produced and wrote a short documentary "A Feminist Lens: Art & Activism of Photographer Joan Roth."



Emanuella Grinberg



Emanuella Grinberg is an award-winning journalist, communicator, and content strategist who thrives at the intersection of storytelling and civic engagement. A veteran newsroom leader whose work has appeared on CNN and Court TV, she earned two Peabody Awards, an Edward R. Murrow Award, and spots on Chartbeat's Most Engaging Stories for her contributions to national news coverage. Whether she is digging into public records, creating social media content, or sending incessant follow-up emails, she has been driven by a commitment to the truth and the public interest.

That drive is deeply personal. Growing up on the Upper East Side, she was raised in a tradition of grassroots activism. As a P.S. 183 student in the 1980s, she successfully lobbied for doors on bathroom stalls. She watched her mother serve on Community School Board 2 and steer the coalition that led to the creation of Baruch College Campus High School.

Following in the footsteps of the civic-minded parents who shaped her upbringing, Emanuella has dedicated herself to her community on Roosevelt Island.

As a lead advocate in the campaign to halt the demolition of the Roosevelt Island Steam Plant, she has worked tirelessly to bring transparency to the project and promote the building's adaptive reuse. From organizing outreach campaigns to agitating for a town hall, Emanuella believes redevelopment should serve and involve the community. She is proud to continue a lifelong legacy of ensuring that community voices are heard and that the government works for the people.



Deborah Hasin, PhD



Dr. Deborah Hasin is Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at Columbia University in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Department of Psychiatry, with a joint appointment in Epidemiology at the Mailman School of Public Health. She received her Ph.D. in epidemiology from Columbia University in 1986. Dr. Hasin's research focuses on drug use and drug use disorders in the general population and in patient groups, including veterans, and is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

(NIAAA) and other organizations. She investigates large-scale influences on rates of cannabis use and cannabis-related harms, and on concepts and measures of addiction across psychoactive substances. Dr. Hasin has published over 600 papers. She played a key role in definitions of substance use disorders (addiction) in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders (fifth edition; DSM-5). Her studies show substantial increases in national rates of adult cannabis use and Cannabis Use Disorder since states began legalizing cannabis use. Dr. Hasin is also founding director of the Columbia University Substance Abuse Epidemiology Training Program (SAETP), which has trained many pre- and post-doctoral fellows to launch successful research careers of their own.



Alexandra S. Heerdt

MD, MPH, FACS



Alexandra S. Heerdt, MD, MPH, FACS, is a board-certified breast surgeon at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and serves as the Founder's Chair within the Department of Surgery. She specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer as well as benign and pre-cancerous breast conditions. Dr. Heerdt earned her medical degree from Jefferson Medical College, completed her general surgery residency at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, and pursued fellowship training at the Sloan Kettering Institute. In addition to her

clinical practice, she has contributed extensively to surgical education and breast cancer research. Her research interests include issues of quality of life in breast cancer patients, focusing on the role of exercise in reducing chemotherapy-associated weight gain, and preventing lymphedema in women undergoing breast cancer treatment. She is also deeply involved in mentoring and training physicians in effective and empathetic communication with patients and families. Over the course of her career, she has been repeatedly named among Castle Connolly's "Top Doctors" and "Exceptional Women in Medicine," reflecting both her clinical expertise and reputation within the medical community.



Karissa Denaë Johnson



Karissa Denaë Johnson is a global educator, artist, and community development leader. Following a devastating stroke at age 21, she reclaimed her ability to speak, walk, and write, and embarked on a journey that took her to all seven continents before the age of 30. As an author and speaker, she shares her story of resilience across corporate, collegiate, and community platforms.

Karissa's work as an educator and humanitarian has reached communities worldwide. She taught English in China and in Saudi Arabia at the largest women's university in the world. In Ethiopia, she taught English, cared for infants at Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, supported girls affected by HIV and AIDS, and used crowdfunding to purchase sewing machines that helped women begin entrepreneurial journeys. In Malawi, she taught art and helped establish a pig farm to support lasting food security and community empowerment.

A native of Nebraska, Karissa served as Director of Community Engagement for Our Gathering Place in Omaha, where she empowered families with special needs through inclusive events and resources. Now rooted on Roosevelt Island, she builds community through Apartment Life by fostering connection, cultivating belonging, and creating cultural experiences for one of New York's most diverse neighborhoods. Since moving to New York in 2023, she has hosted 100 events and supported thousands of neighbors through important moments of joy, challenge, and transition. She continues to pursue storytelling through music and performance, notably making her theatrical debut as Deena Jones in *Dreamgirls* and appearing on national television, including Tamron Hall.



Diane LaRue



Diane LaRue moved to Manhattan from her home in Central New York in 2009 with her husband, Scott. In Central New York, she was the Marketing Director for a suburban mall, and was an active volunteer at her sons' Catholic school and in her church.

For several years, Diane operated the Book Bonanza, an annual used book sale, taking it from a small local event to a larger regional event, and making it the largest annual fundraiser for St. Joseph School.

It was that experience that led her to volunteer at the Book Cellar in Webster Library in 2014, where she rose to become President of the Friends of Webster Library and manager of the Book Cellar in 2021.

Diane instituted book donation programs to worthy community organizations such as Brooklyn Book Bodega, Operation Paperback, Project Cicero, and created a library for an adult PACE Center in Harlem. Proceeds from the Book Cellar benefit Eastside Branch Libraries of the New York Public Library, who received \$140,000 last year.

Diane and Scott are proud parents of two adult sons, and when she is not volunteering at the Book Cellar she can be found visiting with her two-year-old granddaughter Martina. She is proud to lead “the best team in bookselling” at the Book Cellar.



Nina E. Lublin



Nina E. Lublin is a life-long NY-City “girl,” having grown up in Bayside/Oakland Gardens, Queens in the 1950’s & early 1960’s. Leaving NY for a little while, she attended and graduated from Emerson College in Boston (1974) and earned an M.Ed in Special Education/Early Childhood from the University of Illinois/Champaign-Urbana (1975).

Nina worked summers from 1970 through 1972 at Camp Oakhurst (now Rising Treetops), near Asbury Park, NJ, a special sleep-away camp for children, teens and adults with various physical disabilities, both as a counselor and as a teen job trainer.

Nina’s services, both paid and voluntary, from 1975 through 2015, to various early childhood communities in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey and eventually arriving in NYC on Roosevelt Island in 1983, were in both the private and public sectors. She was especially committed to working with and advocating for young children, birth to five with disabilities and special needs and their families, always coordinating with local, state, and national agencies and organizations that serve them. Current affiliations include Zero-to-Three New York Network and the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children.

While retired from paid professional work, Nina has led the Roosevelt Island Jewish Congregation as its president, since 2012, a strong advocate for Jewish life and presence on the island, and working diligently with its spiritual leaders, members and friends to maintain its home and Sanctuary.

As a long-time resident, she is also a frequent commentator, speaker, presence advocating for improved Island Tram and bus transit, as well as public safety and full accessibility for individuals of all ages and abilities.

Approaching age 75 and now in RI year 43 and still counting, this “Woman of Distinction” feels just like a regular person but with lots more to do.



Laura Makuch



Laura Makuch is one of the Patient Representatives at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, who works primarily with patients diagnosed with breast cancer. She is committed to ensuring patients feel heard, supported, and empowered throughout their journey. She works closely with patients and care teams to foster clear communication, address concerns, and enhance the overall care experience.



Dr. Michal Melamed



Dr. Michal Melamed is a nationally recognized nephrologist, epidemiologist, and physician-scientist who serves as Director of the Kidney Disease Center at NYU Langone Health. Raised on Roosevelt Island, she attended PS/IS 217 and graduated summa cum laude from NYU College of Arts and Sciences before earning her medical degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

In 2006, she returned to Roosevelt Island to raise her children, Ethan and Aliza, while building a distinguished academic career. Dr. Melamed has authored over 150 peer-reviewed publications and has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health since 2007.

Her research focuses on improving outcomes and advancing care for patients with kidney disease, and she is widely recognized for mentoring the next generation of medical researchers, from students to junior faculty.

Deeply committed to her community, she has volunteered with PS/IS 217, Girl Scouts, Main Street Theatre & Dance and the Roosevelt Island Jewish Congregation. In 2012, she started a small Hebrew school on Roosevelt Island, which she still directs. Since joining the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation in 2023, she has been a leading advocate for restoring accessible healthcare services to Roosevelt Island.



Sherry Miller



Sherry Miller Gifts for All Occasions transforms carefully curated objects into meaningful personalized gifts. Sherry is also known as the gifted wrapper.

Sherry has devoted her entire professional life to creating beauty in every special gift and theme party favor. Her imaginative decorations and gift-wrapping skills are both magnificent and exciting. With hands and heart, Sherry elevates each wrapping, ribbon and bow into a thoughtful presentation that makes the recipient feel incredibly special. Love, care, and joy are the hallmarks of a gift from Sherry Miller.

Sherry has also generously devoted her time to teach patients at Lenox Hill Hospital and enjoys seeing how happy her lessons make the patients feel. All in all, Sherry's gift business and skills are a masterclass that everyone will enjoy and cherish.



Carol D. Morris

MD, MS



Dr. Carol Morris is Chief of the Orthopaedic Surgery Service and the Jack Byrne Chair for Adolescent and Young Adult Cancers at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC). She completed her undergraduate and graduate studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where her thesis concentration was on bone tissue engineering. She received her MD degree from Boston University and continued at Boston University for Orthopaedic Surgery residency training. She completed a fellowship in Musculoskeletal Oncology at the

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and subsequently joined the faculty at MSKCC and Cornell University School of Medicine. During her tenure there, she served as the Musculoskeletal Oncology fellowship director. In 2014, she moved to Johns Hopkins Medicine where she served as Chief of Orthopaedic Oncology and Vice Chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery prior to returning to MSKCC in 2022 to lead the Orthopedic Surgery Service. She maintains a busy clinical practice treating adult and pediatric patients with bone and soft tissue tumors of the extremities and pelvis.

Dr. Morris' scholarly contributions include over 190 peer-reviewed publications and several chapters primarily on bone and soft tissue sarcomas, skeletal metastases, and complex limb salvage. Her research interests include studying the late effects of cancer treatment on the musculoskeletal system. She is deeply committed to training the next generation of orthopedic surgeons and has received several teaching awards for her educational efforts. Dr. Morris holds leadership positions in several national and international professional societies, including Past President of the Musculoskeletal Tumor Society.



Bridget A. O'Reilly



Bridie O'Reilly has been a dedicated member of the New York City Police Department's Auxiliary Program for approximately 40 years and has served on the board of the 19th Precinct's Community Council for almost 10 years. She has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the mission of the 19th Precinct and the people of 76th Assembly District. After retiring and moving out of NYC, she continues to commute a long distance from her home upstate to generously volunteer her time to attend area events and actively engage with the community residing within the 19th Precinct.

Bridie was born in Glann Culleens, County Sligo, Ireland. After completing high school, she emigrated to New York in 1960 and worked in the banking/ insurance businesses for almost fifty years. In keeping the "Irish spirit" alive in New York, she has been a long-time member of the "County Sligo Association of NY" and had the unique distinction of being the first 'Woman President'.

Her parents were Martin and Barbara Beglin and she was one of eleven children. She has a son and daughter, five grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter.



Kristen Oberlander



Born and raised in Toledo, Ohio, **Kristen Oberlander** dreamed from a young age of one day living in New York City. At 22, she made the leap with no plan but a willingness to figure things out along the way.

Her career began in cable news sales, followed by many successful years in sales and sales training. Along the way, she met her husband, and together they raised two amazing young men who have been her greatest joy and best teachers.

Later, she returned to school and earned an art degree from Marymount Manhattan College, proving it is never too late to follow a passion. Deeply committed to the community, she has long been involved with families and organizations on the Upper East Side.

Beyond her role as a parent, her most meaningful work has been serving as Parent Coordinator at Wagner Middle School. Supporting students and families has been the most fulfilling part of her journey. Though she recently moved to the Upper West Side, she still feels lucky to work on the UES where she still feels at home.



Colette N. Owens

MD



Colette N. Owens, MD is a Medical oncologist and Hematologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, where she serves as an Assistant Attending Physician at MSK Monmouth in Middletown, New Jersey. She specializes in the treatment of lymphomas, chronic lymphocytic leukemia, and genitourinary cancers, including bladder, kidney, prostate, and testicular cancers, as part of teams consistently ranked among the best in the nation.

Dr. Owens earned her medical degree from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (now Rutgers Medical School), completed her residency in Internal Medicine at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center, and her fellowship in Hematology and Oncology at Memorial Sloan Kettering. She is board-certified in internal medicine, hematology, and medical oncology.

Beyond direct patient care, Dr. Owens is actively involved in clinical research aimed at improving treatment outcomes while reducing toxicity and complications, with a particular focus on older adults with cancer. She takes pride in providing compassionate, personalized cancer care to patients closer to home in the New Jersey community.

Dr. Owens resides in New Jersey with her family.



Dana Rathkopf

MD



Dr. Dana Rathkopf is a medical oncologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and a Clinical Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College. She is an internationally recognized leader in prostate cancer research whose work has significantly advanced next-generation androgen receptor-targeted therapies, helping transform treatment options for patients with advanced disease and contributing to multiple FDA approvals.

Her research focuses on understanding disease progression and overcoming treatment resistance through innovative clinical trial design and the integration of biomarkers to better guide therapy and predict patient outcomes. As Principal Investigator at Memorial Sloan Kettering for the Prostate Cancer Clinical Trials Consortium, she leads efforts within a national collaboration supported by the Prostate Cancer Foundation and the U.S. Department of Defense to expand access to cutting-edge clinical research.

In addition to her scientific leadership, Dr. Rathkopf serves in key institutional roles as Associate Deputy Director of Clinical Research and Chair of the Research Council at Memorial Sloan Kettering, where she helps oversee clinical trial review and guides institutional research priorities. She is widely respected for her strategic vision, mentorship, and enduring contributions to advancing cancer research and improving patient care.



Felicia D. Ruff



Felicia Ruff is a dedicated community leader on Roosevelt Island, serving as the Vice-President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association and Head of the Island Services Committee. As a survivor of domestic violence, she founded the Hear Me Out Domestic Violence Safespace to support others in similar situations. She is also the CEO and Founder of Seniors' Lives Matter Too Homecare. Her slogan, "Increase your care, and decrease your care costs! We're here to give back, not take away! Because, seniors' lives matter too!"

Known for her commitment to service, Ms. Ruff provides free clothing, non-perishable food, and essential resources to those in need, out of pocket. Her impactful journey was recently featured in a three-page spread in *Fantabulous Beauty* magazine. A fearless advocate for her community, she has challenged corporate executives by organizing protests against price gouging to ensure fair market prices and quality groceries for her neighbors. Her determination and perseverance continue to strengthen and inspire the Roosevelt Island community.



Julie Russak

MD, FAAD



Julie Russak, MD, FAAD is a board-certified dermatologist and the founder of Russak Dermatology Clinic and Russak+ Aesthetic Center in New York City. She is redefining what dermatology can be by building her practice around the conviction that skin health is inseparable from whole-body longevity and that medicine should be designed around biological function, not appearance alone.

Her Regenerative Aesthetics Program established a new clinical framework for longevity-focused dermatology, translating emerging science into personalized, data-driven care strategies that extend skin health at the cellular level. As a key investigator in a longevity research collaboration with L'Oréal Research & Innovation and a member of the Longevity Advisory Board for Lancôme, she is shaping the next generation of skin aging science. Named Teacher of the Year at Mount Sinai Health System for multiple consecutive years, she has made physician mentorship a cornerstone of her practice. The Melanoma Research Foundation honored her with its Compassionate Care Award for her extraordinary dedication to patient welfare and advocacy in the fight against melanoma.

Dr. Russak is not following where dermatology is going. She is deciding where it leads.



Louise S. Sherby



Louise S. Sherby grew up in South Jersey but has always been drawn to New York City and has lived here off and on since 1979. She has a BA from Hofstra University, MALS from the University of Denver, and DLS from Columbia University. In 1996, she returned to New York City as Associate Dean & Chief Librarian for the Hunter College Libraries. She spent the last few years prior to her retirement as Acting Head, Archives & Special Collections.

Louise is a member of the American Library Association (ALA), Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), and the Reference & User Services Association (RUSA). She has held both elected and appointed positions in each of these Associations. She also served on and chaired many committees and task forces within Hunter College and the wider City University of New York Community. She also taught in the Graduate Library School programs at the University of Rhode Island and the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She is a co-editor for *P.G. Wodehouse: A Comprehensive Bibliography and Checklist* (1990) and editor for *Who's Who of Nobel Prize Winners, 1901-2000* (2002).

Her greatest joy as an academic librarian was working with students and faculty and teaching them life-long research skills and learning how to navigate the changing digital world. Every day was different and she was never bored.



Kristi Towey



Kristi Towey, Executive Director of Main Street Theatre & Dance (MSTDA) on Roosevelt Island, is dedicated to serving her community through the arts. A former parent, volunteer, and board member, Kristi became Executive Director in 2015, continuing to expand opportunities for community engagement through performance, education, and outreach. Kristi's commitment is rooted not only in her background in dance and education, but also in her belief that the arts are a powerful tool for building confidence, strengthening relationships and creating a sense of belonging. Through her work, she continues to champion initiatives that uplift the community, support artists, and ensure that the performing arts remain vibrant and accessible for all.



Suzanne Vlamis



Suzanne Vlamis is a New York City–born photojournalist of Greek and Slovak heritage. She earned a B.A. from Long Island University and studied filmmaking at NYU, with training at The School of Visual Arts and The New School under noted photojournalists including Ken Heyman.

Vlamis spent over three decades (1973–2009) with The Associated Press, where she made history as its first full-time female staff photographer. Later as Supervising Photo Editor for AP News features and as Special Projects Editor for the AP Photo Archive, she helped modernize one of the world’s largest historic image collections.

She’s been published worldwide, covering U.S. presidential campaigns from Richard Nixon through Ronald Reagan, the Olympics, Super Bowls, and major cultural events. In 1984, she received the Associated Press Managing Editors Award for Top Feature Photography for work documenting the restoration of the Statue of Liberty.

Vlamis presented a solo exhibition of her New York architectural photography, *Welfare Island – A Spirit of Place Past*, celebrating the 40th anniversary of Roosevelt Island (Roosevelt Island Historical Society, ©2009).

Since retiring, Vlamis has focused on environmental and conservation photography. Authoring *Africa Endangered* (©2017), *Antarctica Endangered* (©2019), and *Australia Endangered* (©2023), these works reflect her commitment to preserving the natural world.



Anastasia von Raison



Anastasia von Raison is a civil servant and tenant organizer, with a background in international politics, diplomacy, and communications. She started her career at the United Nations, with a Master's in Asian Politics from SOAS University of London. Her work focused on several key global issues: non-proliferation and disarmament, sustainable development, security, and more.

She then transitioned her career to digital communications, first in book publishing and now for the City of New York. She joined the Department of Design and Construction in 2017, where she led the overhaul of the agency's social media platforms and website, partnering with the NYC Mayor's Office and other City agencies on various digital campaigns and projects.

Tenant organizing became a natural extension of her professional career. She joined the 460 Main Street Residents Committee in 2022, with a mission of bringing meaningful change to the building. Since then, under her leadership, the building has undergone a transformation that could only be possible through active partnerships and effective communication with elected officials, the building's management and developer teams, residents, and the Roosevelt Island community.

She hopes to inspire others to speak out and become more involved in their communities.



Melissa Wade



Melissa Wade is a dedicated public servant and community leader with over 16 years of residency on Roosevelt Island. A founding member of Mosaic Roosevelt Island Covenant Church, she is deeply engaged in civic and community life, serving on the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) Board of Directors, the Alumni Board of Directors for California Lutheran University, volunteering with Haki Compost Collective, and formerly as a member of the 460 Main St. Resident Committee, advocating for quality affordable housing.

Professionally, Melissa is a Project Manager in the Strategic Communications division of the New York State Unified Court System. She has spent the last 20 years contributing to judicial education initiatives at the state and national levels. Her work has focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, systems change, and advancing best practices at the intersection of the legal system and foster care.

Prior to relocating to NYC in 2010, she worked across all three branches of government in Oregon, and co-owned Oregon Campaign Finance Solutions, specializing in fundraising and early innovation in PAC electronic filing.

Melissa will complete a Master of Science in Organizational Leadership at Lehman College this August. She is passionate about civic engagement, environmental sustainability, leadership, and communication. She enjoys travel, food, nature, and exploring New York.



Robyn S. Walsh



Robyn Walsh has been at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center for nearly 30 years. After spending 16 years in Hospital Operations, she moved to Finance in 2012. She is Vice President of Finance, Patient Financial Services, where she helps patients stay connected to care when finances feel overwhelming.

Robyn leads teams that secure insurance approvals, connect families to charity care, and reduce medication costs through copay assistance and other support programs. She believes patients should be able to focus more on their care and less on finances. Her work centers on protecting what patients deserve most: time, clarity, and dignity.

She is known for stepping in when a patient is stuck, when a bill creates fear, or when a technical barrier threatens access. She treats each concern as personal, recognizing that for patients in treatment, nothing feels small.

In 2025, Robyn's teams helped thousands of patients overcome financial barriers, enrolling more than 2,100 patients in charity care and connecting many others to critical resources that kept care moving forward. Colleagues describe her as a steady, compassionate partner who models MSK's values every day.

Robyn earned her bachelor's degree from Penn State University and her MBA from Wagner College.



Ilana Yagudayev



Ilana Yagudayev is a dedicated pharmacist, healthcare leader, and owner of Drug Mart Pharmacy on Manhattan's Upper East Side. With over 25 years of experience, she is known for delivering personalized, patient-centered care, especially for homebound individuals and those transitioning from hospitals or rehabilitation facilities.

She specializes in deprescribing and medication optimization, working closely with healthcare providers to improve outcomes and reduce unnecessary medications. Ilana is also the founder of "Age Gracefully at Home," supporting older adults with high-quality in-home care.

A passionate community advocate and a board member of the New York City Pharmacists Society, Ilana is committed to helping individuals achieve better health and live fuller lives.



Ruth Zealand

PhD



Dr. Ruth Zealand is a seasoned educator with extensive experience as a teacher, supervisor, principal, and faculty member. She currently serves as Professor and Director of Graduate Special Education at Manhattan University. She has trained educators worldwide, including in Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America, and has led immersive programs in Mexico and Puerto Rico.

Dr. Zealand is involved in a consortium of New York private colleges focused on teacher preparation and serves on the boards of the NYS Association of Teacher Education (NYSATE) and the Maxine Greene Institute (MGI). Her work spans special education advocacy, conflict resolution, and aesthetic education, with a focus on supporting families and researching anti-bullying strategies. She co-hosts conferences on Maxine Greene's philosophy and co-authored "Starting Your Career in Art Education."

She received the Art of Accessible Teaching Award from Teachers College, Columbia University for her contributions to educational equity.



Sharon Zeisel



Sharon Zeisel has been working with older adults in several capacities since high school when she volunteered teaching art at the local Senior Center during her lunch break.

Inspired by her close relationships with her grandparents, Sharon devotes her professional life to honoring the elders who raised her, caring for older adults in New York City in different capacities over the span of her career, beginning as an Art and Beading Instructor at CityWide Creative Aging programs, then as a Case Worker for Carter Burden Network. Finally she reached her sweet spot 4 years ago when she became the Director of the Carter Burden Luncheon Club where she oversees a dedicated staff who cares for hundreds of active Seniors on a daily basis.

Sharon believes every individual deserves to be treated with kindness, compassion, and dignity, and that belief fosters a deep sense of trust with the clients she is privileged to care for. For Sharon, this is far more than a job—it is both a true passion and the most meaningful work of her life.

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the community office of*

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