

*Suburban Life Magazine presents*

# WOMEN of distinction

2014

In 2013, Shaw Media and Suburban Life Magazine (formerly Lake County Magazine) began a tradition of honoring those who have given their time and talents to create nonprofit organizations, head local advisory boards, volunteer at activities and businesses outside of their own workplace and, most of all, lead by example.

Soliciting nominations from community leaders, local business professionals and our own readership, we would find our communities full of inspiring women; teachers and nurses, entrepreneurs and advisors, artists and volunteers.

This month we will continue the tradition, and honor 10 of the county's most remarkable women, for their contributions to community, career and cause, at the 2014 Women of Distinction Awards event. We introduce our honorees here, and in each month that follows, tell the complete story of one of these outstanding local residents.



Pictured are Suburban Life Magazine's Women of Distinction for 2014. They are, from left, Eleanor Anne Sweet, Patricia Menoni, Amy Serafin, Catherine Vincus, Alicia Dodd, Mary Ross Cunningham, Elaine Sambo-Reyther, Mary Seminara-Schostok, Melissa Haak and Jan Leahy.



## *Eleanor Anne Sweet*

**Corporate Success Partners, Division of Remington Group, LLC**  
*North Barrington Resident*

Known since 2002 as the “Mistress of WOW,” Eleanor Sweet’s commitment level to business and corporate donations in honor of the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life campaign, is unmatched. In 2012, she, together with Diane Ahrens from Piece of Cake Bakery, created the 2012 Relay for Life Barrington Cake Decorating Contest, raising a total of \$370,000 in donations, matching the total in donations set from that record breaking number of cupcakes in one area event she planned the year before.

Because of her explosive fundraising skills,

she was charged with sustaining and further growing the community support in what she termed were “pocket areas”, demographics that had gone untapped. This goal resulted in the successful implementation of Relay for Life support in various schools, and minority groups that had never before shown supportive interest.

Now, as she steps down from her position as Event Chair for Barrington’s Relay for life, in favor of expanding her Corporate Success Partner’s business, she leaves behind a legacy to friends and volunteers. According to her nominator, “She is such an inspiration for all those that come in contact with her. With her passion for life, her desire to help those that are in need and her will to make things better for generations to come. Eleanor is truly an amazing lady!”

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With her passion for life, her desire to help those that are in need and her will to make things better for generations to come, **Eleanor** is truly an amazing lady.



## *Alicia Dodd*

**Village Homesteading Mundelein**  
*Mundelein Resident*

Alicia Dodd is one of five leaders at Village Homesteading, whose mission it is to inspire and encourage sustainability and self-sufficiency in the local community.

“We teach classes and workshops, organize local events, and manage a massive organic food pantry garden.”

The Fremont Township Community Garden is unique, as all of the produce is given to those in need by way of the Fremont Food pantry. Seeing its potential,

Dodd brought in innovative ideas to make the garden truly sustainable, wholly organic, and continuously fruitful. Taking charge, she took the time for demonstrations and teach gardening techniques with the volunteers.

“I have been a dedicated volunteer on many projects throughout my life, but never have I felt so motivated to volunteer, had as much fun, or learned as much as I have at the garden — thanks to Alicia’s brilliant vision,” says her nominator. “She ensures that everyone who participates always feels appreciated, and sends us home feeling like we are part of a great community, that we’ve made a difference.”

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## Catherine Vincus

**Preserving Human Dignity (PHD)**  
*Inverness Resident*

In her role as Director of PHD, Catherine Vincus oversees all aspects of the agency including programs and services, development, educational outreach and much more! PHD helps women by providing professional counseling and support services to address an array of complex parenting and pregnancy related issues including postpartum depression, grief and loss of a child, post abortion and post adoption.

Vincus first became involved with PHD as a volunteer intake coordinator, in 1994. She soon worked her way up to project manager for Independence Highway, an interactive, fact-based program for adolescents delivered as part of the health curriculum during sophomore year. She then became the agency's Marketing/PR Director before becoming Executive Director in 1997. She now leads a staff of 18 and supports the operation of more than 200 volunteers.

"Her belief in PHD's mission and her passion for women and children have been key factors in every decision she has made for PHD," says her nominator.

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**Cathy's** belief in Preserving Human Dignity's mission and her passion for women and children have been key factors in every decision she has made for PHD.



## Patricia A Menoni, RN, BSN, CMC

**Partners in Senior Care, Inc**  
*Round Lake Park Resident*

Eleven years ago, Patricia Menoni opened the doors at Partners in Senior Care, and since then, she and her staff of caregivers have served thousands of seniors through home care and she personally has assisted countless families with geriatric care management.

The Navigator Program for Successful Aging was developed by Menoni to specifically address how independent and assisted living

facilities approach individual wellness. Due to its success, the program has received a National Case in Point Platinum award, beating out bigger programs like United Healthcare, as well as various other national quality awards.

Due to her compassion and the loyalty of her employees, Partners in Senior Care has been nationally recognized as a leader in excellence by Home Care Pulse, the leading firm in quality assurance for private duty home care. As one of the few agencies recognized, she will now set the standard for quality as a top performer in the home care industry.

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The Navigator Program for Successful Aging, developed by **Patricia**, received a National Case in Point Platinum award.

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## Mary Seminara-Schostok

**Second District Appellate Court**

*Libertyville Resident*

Justice Mary Seminara-Schostok currently sits on the Second District Appellate Court. She is the immediate past president of the Illinois Judge Association, and serves on numerous legal committees and boards.

Schostok's husband was diagnosed with glioblastoma, characterized by tumors which arise in the supportive tissue of the brain. After he passed away in 2012, she began the Michael Matters Foundation to honor her husband, acting as both founder and board member. The foundation financially assists individuals suffering with these brain tumors.

"Our mission is to raise funds to assist the medical professionals in research of glioblastoma, as well as to support those who need financial assistance with their treatment, she says. "The foundation hopes to understand what causes glioblastomas, and more importantly, how to effectively treat them."

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**Mary started the Michael Matters Foundation to assist people suffering with brain tumors.**



## Elaine Sambo-Reyther

**BMO Private Banking**

*Barrington Resident*

Elaine Sambo-Reyther is a financial executive, community volunteer, and a dedicated business leader.

In her position as Vice President and Director of Trust and Estate Services at BMO Harris Private banking, she works with clients and their families in ensuring that their estate plans contribute to the success of their financial goals and accomplish their long-term wishes.

In the community, she is an impassioned, charitable advocate, serving on the Board of Directors of WINGS (Women In Need Growing Stronger) since 2008, an organization focused on providing integrated services to homeless and abused women and children, as well as serving on the board for Wellness Place, an organization focused on cancer education and support.

In recognition of her efforts, she was named 2014 winner of the Barrington ATHENA Leadership Award, from the city's Chamber of Commerce.

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**Elaine serves on the Board of Directors for Women In Need Growing Stronger, an organization focused on providing services to homeless and abused women and children.**



## Jan Cline Leahy

**Career Resource Center, Inc.**

*Glenview Resident*

Jan Cline Leahy is the executive director of Career Resource Center, Inc, a confidence-building, employment resource offering individualized attention and coaching by industry professionals.

Under Leahy's leadership, CRC moved from a religiously-affiliated, outreach mission with limited hours, to an incorporated, nonprofit organization offering comprehensive re-employment services. Today, she continues to mold CRC to respond to the ever-changing economy, technical advances and the needs of job candidates.

"I know that every day I am making a difference in someone's life," she says. "At CRC, we are changing not only the lives of our candidates but their family's as well, giving them a better chance to be successful, stay motivated, and maintain high self-esteem."

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**Jan believes that every day CRC is changing not only the lives of its candidates, but their family's as well by giving them a better chance to be successful.**



## *Melissa Haak*

**Little Lake County  
Grayslake Resident**

What started as a little blog, designed to vent about the “sticky side of motherhood” in the face of various physical and emotional obstacles, has grown in to a website and popular Facebook community, becoming a hot resource for local parents. Moms and Dads regularly turn to Melissa Haak’s resource for where to go and what to do, and answers to common parenting questions.

Little Lake County, while a mainly a place to seek help, also is on a mission to encourage the promotion and endless support of local businesses in the county. In the last year, Haak has created intimate experiences and opportunities that highlight what the communities in Lake County have to offer.

“From play-dates, to mom’s night out, Melissa is connecting businesses and parents in new and engaging ways. She is an invaluable resource and champion in all that is Lake County,” says her nominator.

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From play-dates, to mom’s night out, **Melissa** is connecting businesses and parents in new and engaging ways, with her blog, Little Lake County.



## *Amy M. Serafin*

**Village of Fox Lake  
Spring Grove Resident**

In her role as the Village of Fox Lake Parks and Recreation Coordinator, Amy Serafin is responsible for the promotion and planning of an array of community events, from egg hunts and boat races to theme nights and holiday celebrations. She also is in charge of maintaining and updating the community website and is responsible for seeking grants to help construction or additions to the park and its buildings.

In partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, she promotes and builds relationships with local businesses earning their trust and loyalty. She has also served on the board of various committees and foundations.

According to her nominator, “Amy is a fantastic person, seen in her compassion, in her work with seniors, children, and various groups within the community. How she balances both a demanding career and active family, I just don’t know how she manages so well!”

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**Amy** is a fantastic person, seen in her compassion, in her work with seniors, children and various groups within the community.



## *Mary Ross Cunningham*

**Lake County Board District 9  
Waukegan Resident**

Commissioner Mary Ross Cunningham has served as a county board leader for the past 12 years. In her tenure, she has been applauded for her commitment to serving District 9, having been crowned one of the county’s Most Influential African American Women.

Cunningham currently serves on the Law and Judicial, Health, Community Service, and Rules Committee as well as the Lake County Forest Preserve Advisory and Committee, boards. She was appointed to these positions by U.S. Senator Mark Kirk, a member of the advisory board himself.

Her exceptional role as county board member, and as a single working mother, has led to her support of the lower income single families and mothers in the area, providing numerous resources to assist them with the barriers preventing them from becoming acknowledgeable families in the community.

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**Mary** has been applauded for her service and was crowned one of the county’s Most Influential African American Women.