

News Release

Three Oakland County residents awarded first Board of Commissioners Black Excellence Award

February 24, 2022, OAKLAND COUNTY, MI. – Three Oakland County residents received the Oakland County Board of Commissioners Black Excellence Award at this morning's full Board meeting. Richard Bell, Kristi Plain and Ber-henda Williams were all honored for their notable achievements and the strides they have taken to improve the community. The awardees were nominated by the public, and the inaugural program was just one of the ways commissioners commemorated Black History Month.

"This month was the perfect time to specifically honor those who have contributed to our county's success," Commissioner **Angela Powell** (D-Pontiac) said. "These three awardees demonstrate both the visible and lesser-known ways our residents are changing life for the better in Oakland County. They are the great nominees for this inaugural program."

Richard Bell has held several roles in the Oakland County community. He has led the Kids First Initiative in Pontiac for the past 16 years, which provides youth from underserved communities with vital resources –food, skills and information– to ensure a successful life. For him, the most rewarding aspect of this work is seeing the growth of the youth he works with as they become productive citizens. He has received an Image Award from the Northern Oakland County branch of the NAACP for his extensive work in the community, and he has served as a Democratic National Convention Precinct Delegate from Michigan's 9th Congressional District. In addition, Bell was a guest teacher and football coach for the Pontiac School District for 12 years, and he is a reserve officer for the Detroit Police Department. He also spent a year living abroad in Jena, Germany, where he played professional football. He lives in Pontiac.

"This year's honorees cover so many aspects of community and creative involvement in Oakland County," Commissioner **Janet Jackson** (D-Southfield) said. "Their professional accomplishments, charity work and the entrepreneurial spirit they all exemplify bring such value and diversity to our region."

Kristi Plain is the vice president for global talent for Brasscraft, a business unit of the Masco Corporation, where she leads human resources. Beginning her career in journalism, Plain was an award-winning editor before choosing to apply her talents to human resources. Through her work, she focuses on recruiting, training and advancing opportunities for women and minorities. Outside of her work, Plain

aims to help others as vice president for Spaulding for Children's Board of Directors, an adoption and foster care services agency. Plain is also a trustee for the McGregor Fund, and she has been recognized as a 2020 Women of Excellence Honoree by *The Michigan Chronicle* and 2021 Diversity Business Leader by *Corp! Magazine*. She lives in Commerce Township.

"Black History Month provides a great opportunity for us to lift up those in the community who may not always get the recognition they deserve," Commissioner **Yolanda Charles** (D-Southfield) said. "It was great to honor these awardees, and I look forward to bringing more attention to the work of Black leaders in our communities."

Ber-Henda Williams is a Visionary+Empath Coach, and she runs a girl's leadership program for those 8-18 years old called The Power of Girlhood. A bilingual poet, she is the founder of the Poetry, Pages, and Scribes poetry series at the Southfield Public Library and has served as a poet in residence for InsideOut Literary Arts. Williams has been a featured presenter at SXSW 2016, Listen to Your Mother and Toyota Motor Company. In addition, she has been a panelist for Build Institute and Bamboo Detroit, and she has curated panels for WSU Latin and Latino Studies Department's Academia Del Pueblo covering the intersections of race, gender, age and orientation. She lives in Southfield.

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