

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Honorees for 2021 Public Schools Hall of Fame Announced by Nashville Public Education Foundation

17th Annual Hall of Fame event celebrates extraordinary public officials, Nashville business leaders, area nonprofits, and local educators who model impactful practices and innovative solutions to creating thriving public schools

NASHVILLE, TENN. – June 10, 2021– Following one of the most challenging academic years in recent history, a state senator, along with local public school teachers, leaders in the business and medical fields, and nonprofit organizations will be honored at the [Nashville Public Education Foundation’s Public Schools Hall of Fame](#). The honorees will be celebrated at the 17th annual event through a virtual celebration on September 29, 2021, presented by [First Horizon Foundation](#).

Each year, the [Nashville Public Education Foundation \(NPEF\)](#) honors individuals and organizations demonstrating exceptional dedication and commitment to the city’s public schools and students. This year’s event is co-chaired by Kate Chinn, Vice President and Head of Community and Civic Engagement for AllianceBernstein, and Alfred Degrafinreid II, Associate Vice Chancellor of Local Government Relations and Community Partnerships for Vanderbilt University. The event raises critical funds to support NPEF’s work to build schools where all students thrive.

“It remains a top priority of the Nashville Public Education Foundation to identify and celebrate the incredible work of teachers and leaders and all who support them daily across our city,” said **Katie Cour, Nashville Public Education Foundation President & CEO**. “We are committed not only to recognizing and rewarding excellence, but also to spotlighting successful strategies that help ensure all students thrive in Nashville’s public schools.”

The prestigious Nelson C. Andrews Distinguished Service Award, presented by Vanderbilt University, will honor Senator Brenda Gilmore, who currently represents District 19 in the Tennessee General Assembly. Senator Gilmore has an esteemed history of advocating for youth and education in Nashville. Outside her career in public service, her numerous community involvements have included the John F. Kennedy Susan Gray School for Children, the Margaret Cunningham Women’s Center, and the Northwest Nashville YMCA.

Additionally, three Nashvillians will be honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award, presented by Belmont University:

- Lisa Ferrelli, graduate of Bellevue High School, serves as the Senior Vice President with the Mid South Global Commercial Banking team at Bank of America, as well as on the boards of several community organizations such as the YWCA and the Nashville Rotary.

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- Don Hardin, graduate of Maplewood High School, co-owns and manages the Don Hardin Group, a Nashville-based construction management firm playing a major role in projects such as Music City Center, First Tennessee Baseball Park, and the National Museum of African American Music.
- Dr. Alex Jahangir, graduate of Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet High School, is an orthopaedic trauma surgeon and director of the division of orthopaedic trauma at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, and was instrumental in the city's response to the COVID-19 pandemic after being named by Mayor Cooper as chair of the Metropolitan Nashville Coronavirus Taskforce in March of 2020.

"It's an honor to co-chair such an important event that continuously celebrates outstanding individuals who demonstrate their commitment to Nashville and its residents time and again," said **event co-chair Alfred Degrafinreid**. "By inducting these city and business leaders into the NPEF Public Schools Hall of Fame, we are thanking them for their service to our city, but also holding them up as examples to inspire more contributions from others to our public schools."

The Thomas J. Sherrard Inspiring Innovation Award, presented by Nissan, will recognize two outstanding organizations making a difference for Nashville's students. Each Inspiring Innovation honoree will be awarded a \$5,000 grant to further their mission.

- [FUTURO](#) is an inclusive college success and professional development nonprofit primarily serving Latinx students between the ages of 18 and 27. The organization, led by Executive Director Jennifer Novo, creates opportunities for leadership, career growth, and civic engagement for students to attain both degrees and employment.
- [BeWell in School](#) is a nonprofit founded by Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) teacher Riki Rattner that teaches mindfulness and movement as a proactive behavior management system to empower students, teachers, and communities with tools to self-regulate. BeWell in School's programs have helped reduce disciplinary issues in school while boosting teacher morale, increasing student engagement, and improving academic test scores.

The Annette Eskind Inspiring Educator Award, presented by UBS, will honor two [MNPS](#) teachers who have demonstrated an incredible dedication to students through the unpredictable changes and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each Inspiring Educator receives \$2,500 along with an additional \$2,500 for their schools to support their work.

- Jan Esterline started his career in the music industry, including working as an elementary school music teacher. After working in the hospitality industry in Nashville, he discovered both a need and a passion for teaching English to Nashville's growing immigrant community and returned to the public school classroom. After teaching SIFE (Students with Interrupted Formal Education) at Overton High School for several years, he will be teaching math in the 2021-22 school year primarily to English Learner students recently exiting SIFE or newly arriving in the U.S.
- Daven Oglesby began his career in Metro Nashville Public Schools as a substitute teacher before becoming a paraprofessional and ultimately earning his teaching license through Lipscomb University's inaugural Educational Assistant Teaching Fellowship. Coming from a family of educators, he has found his calling working with students with disabilities and is currently a special education teacher at Lakeview Elementary Design Center.

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“The pandemic emphasized the need for our community to work together to identify and remove barriers and inequities in public schools,” said **event co-chair Kate Chinn**. “While we will not be gathering in-person, NPEF has created a virtual celebration that the entire city can join, and we hope to set record participation in 2021.”

In 2020, the program was changed from an in-person event to a virtual celebration in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year’s event will remain virtual as the city begins to return to moderate in-person gatherings. All are welcome to join NPEF to celebrate the Public Schools Hall of Fame online later this year on September 29.

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About the Nashville Public Education Foundation

The Nashville Public Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization that works to remove the barriers to educational experiences by highlighting success, serving as a critical friend to Metro Nashville Public Schools, convening stakeholders, and advocating for change so all students can thrive in school. More information is available at nashvillepef.org.

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