

2024 City Spirit Award Nominee Biographies

Dr. Paulette Brown-Hinds

Nominated by Mayor Lock Dawson

Dr. Paulette Brown-Hinds is founder of Voice Media Ventures, publisher of Black Voice News, a two-time JSK Journalism Fellow at Stanford University, and founder of the IE Journalism Innovation Hub + Fund. As second-generation publisher of Black Voice News (BVN), Paulette is transforming the half century old weekly print outlet into a solutions-oriented data journalism and justice-focused community news organization. As past president of the California News Publishers Association and current board member of the California Press Foundation, she works to strengthen the state's information ecosystem as an essential part of its civic and community infrastructure.

In 2023, she produced the first community philanthropy summit in California dedicated to local journalism and published a guidebook for California-based community foundations, community media, and philanthropy to financially support local journalism. Since 2000 she has led Footsteps to Freedom, summer cultural tours retracing the steps of freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad. Paulette has been awarded Google News Initiative Innovation Challenge funding, was a Knight Digital Media Fellow, Salzburg Seminar in American Studies Fellow, a 2022 JSK Community Impact Fellow, and a 2023 JSK Sr. Fellow at Stanford University. She is also a member of the Rebuild Local News, American Press Institute, and the James Irvine Foundation boards of directors. In 2023, she was selected the Athena of Riverside awardee for her civic and business accomplishments.

Senator Richard Roth (ret)

Nominated by Councilmember Falcone

Richard Roth was born on November 6, 1950, in Columbus Ohio. Richard graduated from Ada (Ohio) High School (1969); Miami University (Ohio) (1972); and Emory University School of Law (1974). After law school, Richard began a decorated career in the U.S. Air Force, serving 32 years where he retired as Major General.

In 2012, Richard ran for political office and was elected to serve the 31st State Senate District as a U.S. Senator in the State of California. From 2012 to 2024, Richard proudly represented the 31st State Senate District in Western Riverside County for twelve years. While in office, Richard worked with both political parties to accomplish many great achievements. Whether it was advocating for fully funding the UC Riverside School of Medicine to train local doctors to address our physician shortage, creating hundreds of new jobs by bringing a state research and development facility to Riverside County, advocating and securing millions in funding for the City of Riverside, or protecting and expanding our investment in higher education, he was very proud of the important victories that were achieved by collectively working together. Richard continues his volunteer community work which has included serving on local boards. He and his wife Cindy live in Riverside where they raised their daughter Nikki and now are proud grandparents to Page and Parker.

Carmen Roberts

Nominated by Councilmember Cervantes

Carmen was born in New Orleans, LA to James and Louise Hardy. The family moved to Los Angeles, California in pursuit of a better life. Carmen attended school in Los Angeles and graduated from Manual Arts High School. She attended Riverside City College and transferred to UC Riverside where she graduated in 1976 with a BA in Sociology and Black Studies.

Carmen started state service with the California Youth Authority in October 1987 where she was employed as a Youth Counselor. In June 2000, Carmen Roberts was hired by the Department of Transportation, Los Angeles, District 7 in the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity. Carmen retired from State Service in September 2017 after 30 years.

Carmen gives back to the Riverside community as she chairs the Adrian Dell and Carmen Roberts Foundation which provides cultural programs for the residents of Riverside County. The Black History parade is in its 45th year. One of the programs that she is most passionate about is the Empowering Young Women's Conference held at Riverside City College Digital Library each year. This conference was established in 2001 by Dell Roberts. The conference's intention is to educate young women, help them discover their interests, find their strengths, and develop their purpose. The conference is a free event for young women ages 12 – 21 where they are given tools that will empower them and their female parents through interactive awareness workshops, inspiring messages and advice from female role models and community leaders. Now in its 24th year, the Empowering Young Women Conference is a transformative event designed to equip young women throughout the Inland Empire, specifically targeting Riverside, with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to navigate their personal and professional journeys. The conference provides workshops on self-empowerment, career exploration, mental wellness, leadership development, self-defense and human trafficking awareness, all led by accomplished women from diverse fields.

Carmen and Dell have been married for 33 years. They are members of Park Avenue Baptist Church in Riverside where she is the lead church musician and a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

Sue Johnson

Nominated by Councilmember Robillard

S. Sue Johnson is a distinguished public servant, community leader, and philanthropist, with significant contributions to education, civic service, and charitable causes. A graduate of the University of California, Riverside (UCR), she served as a member and Chair of the University of California Board of Regents, where she played a key role in the growth of the UC Riverside campus. Appointed by Governor George Deukmejian in 1990, Sue's leadership extended beyond education to include advocacy for children's charities, STEM disciplines, and the arts. She has received numerous awards, including the Chancellor's Medal from UCR, Citizen of the Year from the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce, and Woman of the Year from the California State Legislature.

Sue's community service has impacted organizations like Riverside Community Hospital Foundation, the Mission Inn Foundation, and the Riverside Art Museum. She also helped preserve the historic Mission Inn during a critical time. A passionate advocate for California Baptist University, she spearheaded projects such as the establishment of the S.E. Boyd Smith courtyard. Known for her generosity and leadership, Sue has left an indelible mark on her community. In recognition of her efforts, she was awarded the 2005 Frank Miller Civic Achievement Award, cementing her legacy as a tireless advocate for education and civic engagement.

Lorna Jenkins

Nominated by Councilmember Conder

A resident of Riverside for over 22 years, a leading member of our Riverside business community, and the founder of My Learning Studio. This studio offers private 1-on-1 tutoring for Riverside County students of all academic subjects, K-12, including adult learners, at-risk youth, court appointed and ESL students. This nominee is beloved by her community and has earned the title "Kid Whisperer" due to her passion for helping children with academic challenges.

Dr. Ronald L. Ellis

Nominated by Councilmember Mill

Dr. Ronald L. Ellis has served as president of California Baptist University, for 30 years. Dr. Ellis has increased the region's professional workforce, having awarded more than 43,000 degrees during his tenure as president, which represents 93 percent of all degrees awarded in the institution's history. Dr. Ellis worked collaboratively to address the region's healthcare shortage by developing the practitioner pipeline through educational programs and launching a mobile health clinic that brings primary and specialized healthcare access to underserved communities.

Dr. Ellis contributes to the long-term trajectory of Riverside through past and current service on leadership boards including the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce, Riverside Community Health Foundation Executive Exchange, Riverside Opportunities Center, and Magnolia Church. Dr. Ellis's efforts contribute to Riverside's national recognition for excellence through CBU's No. 1 Wall Street Journal ranking for career preparation, numerous Division I Lancer athletics championship wins, and acclaimed A CBU Christmas performance, which draws more than 15,000 people to campus each year.