

CHICAGO | MAY 4 | 2023

# ADMIN AWARDS<sup>®</sup>

THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSION'S  
HIGHEST HONOR



NATIONAL PARTNERS

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rh Robert Half

# A LETTER FROM THE ADMIN AWARDS



The 2023 Chicagoland Admin Awards celebrates the amazing spirit, heart, and expertise of the country’s intrepid Administrative Professionals.

As I reflect on the evening, I feel compelled to identify the common denominator, the thread that runs through this honorable endeavor to celebrate the most important group of professionals. It is generosity. The hundreds (thousands) of examples of this are what makes my job such a pleasure to do.

The generosity of the amazing Chicagoland Advisory Board. These passionate Admins, who already shoulder the burden of their intense jobs, family obligations and life’s curveballs, selflessly spend many hours of their own time advancing our mission to ensure that every Admin doing excellent work can be recognized through the Admin Awards program. They are our VIP’s, and we love them dearly.

The generosity of extremely busy Executives and teams positively impacted by their Admins’ magnificent work, who take time out of their busy schedules to write thoughtful nominations and attend the Gala. Their generosity in contribution of time and resources ensures that their Nominees, Finalists and Admins feel their support and admiration.

The generosity of our independent Board of Judges, including the Colleen Barrett Institute, who volunteer many hours to evaluate nominations and determine our Finalists and Winners. They take the judging process very seriously and agonize over their decisions as they evaluate all nominations.

The generosity of our Sponsors, who not only provide critical funding that enables the Admin Awards to thrive, but all the additional things they do “just because” they believe so strongly

in our mission and the value of Administrative Professionals. From helping us raise awareness, and nominating, to providing prizes, they reach well beyond their own business interests in their many contributions. We are so fortunate to have a strong family of long-term Sponsors who demonstrate their passion in so many unique ways.

Most importantly, Administrative Professionals are generosity personified! It shouldn’t surprise us that their very nature inspires generosity in all who are impacted by them. Though it is not written into any job description, Admins are inherently generous with their time, hearts, and actions. Every day, we encounter Admins with amazing credentials, who are prime candidates for being nominated, who are much more focused on having their peers recognized than they are on themselves. It has always amazed us that Admins are as enthusiastic to see one of their peers in the spotlight as they are if the light is being shined on them. This attribute of generosity is no more pronounced than with Administrative Professionals and it inspires and motivates us every day!

From the entire Admin Awards organization, congratulations to this year’s Nominees, Finalists and Award Winners, you deserve your time in the limelight! And thank you to everyone who made this evening possible – the Chicagoland Advisory Board, the Board of Judges, busy Executives and their teams and our wonderful Sponsors. We are forever grateful for the copious amounts of generosity that bring us together and enable us to honor and celebrate Chicagoland’s Administrative Professionals!

**Scott Berlant**  
Vice President of Strategic Partnerships

## 2023 JUDGES

<b>Carmen Martin</b> Serene Solutions	<b>Brenda Carpenter</b> Retired, 7-11	<b>Brenda Avalos</b> Rana Meal Solutions	<b>Seth Baker</b> City Colleges of Chicago - Malcolm X College
<b>Pam Gerber</b> The Fibroid Institute of Dallas	<b>Robert Taliana</b> Winland Foods	<b>Heather Nosko</b> KATZ GOLDSTEIN & WARREN	<b>June Wideman</b>
<b>Sherry Parsons</b> Retired, Cisco	<b>Karen Coakley</b> Kirkland's Home	<b>Blaire Sullivan</b> Arcalea	<b>Casey Hanson</b>
<b>Judy Champion</b> JAH Realty / Trigate Capital	<b>Christine Ziemba</b> Little City	<b>Kathy Cannon</b> Juniper Networks	<b>Vanessa Sosa</b>

## 2023 ADVISORY BOARD

<b>Karen Ward</b> Guardian Angel Community Services	<b>Traci Petrow</b> BMO Harris Bank	<b>Lisa Walker</b> Crate & Barrel	<b>Ashlee Moore</b> Robert Half
<b>Melissa Little</b> Baxter Healthcare Corporation	<b>Michelle Kovacs</b> Grainger	<b>Vicky Kennedy</b> Discover Financial Services	<b>Kristina Pouliot</b> Robert Half
<b>Debra Leonard-Porch</b> Ada S. McKinley Community Services, Inc.	<b>Lori Seamons</b> Grainger	<b>Joyce Zimmerman</b> Rush Street Gaming, LLC	<b>Christina Mendoza</b> UScellular
	<b>Ryan Hayman</b> Taelor	<b>Gloria Williams</b> The Boeing Company	



## COLLEEN BARRETT AWARD FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE

### MICHELLE MOTZ

EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR,  
M2 EXECUTIVE SUPPORT SERVICES



Michelle Motz, is a 20-year career Executive Administrator and is the founder of an Executive Support company, M2 Executive Support Services which she created just under a year ago. Michelle has unarguably raised the bar on what it takes to become a successful Executive Administrator serving as an Assistant to an Executive who served three separate Chicago-based global companies during a span of 11 years. It is Michelle's acumen that is consistently cited as the primary reason for this leader's productivity and efficiency. During the pandemic, Michelle recognized that the role of the EA in large corporations was changing to support multiple managers which is the inspiration behind her company M2. Michelle leveraged her BA in marketing, her diverse background in human resources and office management and administrative experience to create her own business that addresses this growing need. Michelle is lauded for her award-winning attitude, advanced organization and project management skills, and keen intuition.

#### FINALISTS



**Deidre Dixon**  
Blue Cross Blue  
Shield Association



**Pia Fortunato**  
Adlai E Stevenson  
High School



**Chelsea-Ann Sealy**  
Ann & Robert H.  
Lurie Children's  
Hospital of Chicago

## COLLEEN BARRETT: SERVANT LEADER AND SUPERSTAR



When The Admin Awards was launched in 2012, we sat down with Colleen Barrett to ask her for her thoughts and experiences on the administrative profession. Her answers from that September interview, edited for brevity; are below:

#### **What did you like most about being a secretary?**

I like to serve so you have to start there. I loved to solve problems. And I loved to give exemplary or positive customer service delivery on behalf of whomever I was working for. Life is all about relationships... you have an opportunity in the administrative group to form more relationships than probably any other position — even much higher up on that so-called ladder because you are very often that first point of contact with the outside world or the customer... life is just one big grassroots campaign as far as I'm concerned.

#### **What did you like the least?**

I didn't like anything that was routine. I loved to master projects, but, for example, filing was only interesting to me because I loved to be able to find anything that anyone was looking for... I've never liked rote work. (But) there's some that goes in every job no matter what position you're in.

#### **What was the most challenging aspect of serving Herb Kelleher?**

Being a nanny for 45 years for a man who has always thought he was 17 regardless of any year that was added to his

personal calendar! He was a great servant leader. He loved life and you almost couldn't be around him and not catch that love of life and love of people.

#### **And the best aspect?**

It was truly feeling his egalitarian spirit and appreciating the fact that he valued my judgment and thinking as a team member.

#### **Did you ever think you would rise from Secretary to President and COO of Southwest Airlines?**

Quite honestly it wasn't something I wanted, and I never wanted to be COO—and I made that very clear to the Board—that isn't my strength. My strength is customer service and people and everything that touches people, and, honestly, being President and COO wasn't my favorite position at Southwest...my favorite position was Executive Vice President-Customers. Customer to us means employees, passengers, and shareholders, so I could really touch everything. I could touch every department. And as President... I had to do a lot more external things... I did them... I can't say I hated them... (but) I like to get down and dirty and really roll up my sleeves.

#### **What advice do you have for Admins?**

Love. Everybody. Just love. It's a word that corporate America doesn't use very much... always remember where you came from — so that you know how far you've come...I don't think most of us start out thinking we're going to be the President of the United States or the CEO of a company... and I think... be humble and appreciate what you get. To me psychic satisfaction is 10 times more important than pay or title.

**Be authentic. Be real. Remember who you are.**



LOYALTY AWARD

FINALISTS



**DEIDRE DIXON**  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT,  
BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD ASSOCIATION

Deidre Dixon is a 43-year career Executive Assistant and has served Blue Cross Blue Shield Association for 16 years of those years, where she has demonstrated tremendous loyalty, integrity, and a deep commitment to administrative excellence. Deidre’s passion for providing an extraordinary customer experience and positive outlook and can-do attitude make her a model for how work at BCBSA gets done. Deidre Co-Founded the Administrative Professionals Forum at BCBSA, an employee resource group for internal Admins and is a fierce champion and celebrator of the contributions of her administrative professional colleagues which has raised morale and pride across the organization. As part of that, Deidre’s leveraged her artistic gifts in art and poetry to write and design a motivational booklet for her colleagues titled “A Daily Reminder” to lift and inspire those around her. Deidre, BlueCross BlueShield Association is so lucky to have your loyalty indeed!



**Kathie Johnson**  
W.W. Grainger



**Kelley Richardson**  
W.W. Grainger



**CC Sumner**  
CCC Intelligent  
Solutions



**Virginia Velez**  
BIG Construction

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AWARD

FINALISTS



**KRISTIN MURPHY**  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE CEO,  
ADTALEM GLOBAL EDUCATION

Kristin Murphy, Executive Assistant to the CEO at Adtalem Global Education, is the very definition of a business partner. In fact, Kristin’s CEO usually breezes past the EA title and refers to her as a ‘strategic partner’ instead. Kristin has worked as an Administrator for 15 years, eight at Adtalem, where she has become an invaluable partner who has been instrumental in the CEO’s professional success. Kristin entered a world of “firsts” when she joined Adtalem, and possesses an admirable level of professional curiosity, always learning to better support the company’s mission and strategy. Kristin maintains a pulse on the sentiment of a 10,000-plus organization and recently partnered with the chief of staff for the first time in the company’s history, digging deep into the challenge and building a strong partnership so the team “speaks” with one voice about the organization’s priorities.



**Niki Cousino**  
TransUnion



**Laura Gagliano**  
Link Logistics



**Heather Moore**  
W.W. Grainger



**Teresa Munoz**  
Blue Cross  
Blue Shield  
Association



**Debra Rausch**  
Bank of Montreal



**Donna Wiemerslage**  
W.W. Grainger

SPIRIT AWARD

FINALISTS



**ANNETTE RAMOS**  
MARKETING DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ,  
LINK LOGISTICS

The Marketing Department EA at Link Logistics, Annette Ramos, recalls that since she was a child, she wanted to be a superhero in making a difference in the lives of others. This wish served as her guide throughout her 25-year career as an Administrator. Annette is described by her peers as the “perfect Administrative Professional,” largely due to her positive impact at Link Logistics. Her energy and excitement are infectious, and in just one year, she has created a culture of support and teamwork. Her spirited attitude has been the driving force behind team member organization, project management, schedule creation, and events. Annette puts her heart into everything she does. Annette gives 100% of who she is every day and is never satisfied with the status quo, always searching for better, more efficient ways to conduct business. Her spirit and energy are admirable, and her dedication to the company is unwavering.



**Janet Chartraw**  
Blue Cross  
Blue Shield  
Association



**Pam Glover**  
Robert Half



**Kimberly Martin**  
Merchants Fleet



**Magdalena Ramos**  
UScellular



**Delphine Risto**  
StoicLane



**Lori Willis**  
W.W. Grainger



2023 Chicago Admin Awards Nominees

Environmental Systems Design, Inc.

Congratulations and thank you all for your hard work, dedication, and professionalism. The respect and gratitude you receive from colleagues every day is well earned and well deserved. Each of you exemplifies ESD’s core values of respecting everyone, working hard, and playing to win. A simple philosophy that underpins everything we do. Thank you!





ACHIEVER AWARD

FINALISTS

WINNER



**HEATHER GALLINO**  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT,  
W.W. GRAINGER

Heather Gallino is an Executive Assistant at Grainger and embodies a high-achieving “Get it done” and a “How can I support you?” mindset each day. When Heather first joined the team 14 years ago, she immediately discovered opportunities to improve processes and went into full implementation mode including organization of a team channel to store reports and designing a filtering system for quicker access to key information. She’s also been instrumental in developing multi-faceted and effective recruiting programs and was also project lead for an important initiative that sought to improve the customer experience which involved keeping discussions organized, reporting progress, and holding leadership accountable to milestone deadlines. Heather is a passionate champion of continuing education for her fellow Administrators and is committed to professional development of others which has helped several grow into higher-level support roles.



**Nancy Awad**  
Ann & Robert H.  
Lurie Children's  
Hospital of Chicago



**Angela Isbell**  
W.W. Grainger



**Rachel Penn**  
ESD



**Linnette Rivas**  
UScellular



**Renee Simone**  
Blue Cross  
Blue Shield  
Association

ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE  
IN PUBLIC SERVICE

FINALISTS

WINNER



**PIA FORTUNATO**  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT,  
ADLAI E. STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL

Pia Fortunato has worked as an EA for 20 years, applying her decades of experience to Stevenson High School where she has served as the District Office Coordinator & Assistant to the Superintendent and Board of Education for two years, a role that was specifically created for her. One great example of many, is Pia’s impact on the organization’s Special Education transportation program which requires strong communication and compassion. Within one month of taking over the program complaints decreased, and incidents were almost non-existent. There are countless examples of this kind of outcome within the District where Pia’s skills, dedication and exceptional communication has allowed others to focus on curriculum, students and the classroom which in turn leads indirectly to our mission of “success for every student”. Pia’s insatiable curiosity in understanding the ‘why’ has led to exceptional outcomes because in her words “the more I understand, the better I’ll be at my job.”



**Ryan Genson**  
Ann & Robert H.  
Lurie Children's  
Hospital of Chicago



**Rebecca Lahr**  
YMCA of  
Metropolitan  
Chicago



**Chanel  
Wilson-Stewart**  
Ada S. McKinley  
Community  
Services

Three cheers for Annette Ramos and Laura Gagliano, nominated for a 2023 Admin Award!

You make it look effortless, and we’re lucky to have you at Link!

GREATNESS RECOGNIZED

Pam Glover

Lindsey Johnston

Krystal Akons

Ashica Coleman

Charity Gray

Shannon Leetch

Susanne Fawbush

Congratulations to our amazing Robert Half team and all the Chicago Admin Awards nominees!

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LEADERSHIP AWARD

FINALISTS

WINNER



**TOM COOK**  
ADMINISTRATIVE AND OFFICE SERVICES MANAGER,  
LOCKTON COMPANIES

Tom Cook, Administrative and Office Services Manager for Lockton Companies, has dedicated 34 years to the Executive Administration profession. He has worked in the HR Department for Lockton Companies for nine years, offering a strategic partnership and work ethic that executives and team members rave about. He recently took over the entire Midwest Office Services team where he provides leadership and training, while always exhibiting compassion and empathy. He has redefined administrative services by elevating the expectation of the administrative staff to provide strategic partnerships and services. Tom even took the initiative with Lockton’s executives to train them on how to best utilize his Admin team which transformed the traditional dynamics between EA’s and the executives they support. Today, because of Tom’s leadership, EA’s are viewed as partners rather than secretaries and this has created a complete culture shift. Because of Tom’s talent and dedication, EA’s now contribute to Lockton at levels many never thought possible.



**Melissa Bennett**  
Blue Cross  
Blue Shield  
Association



**Naomi Birman**  
UScellular



**Jacqueline Castro**  
Crate & Barrel



**Cheryl Jones**  
Blue Cross  
Blue Shield  
Association



**Sara Nash**  
W.W. Grainger

TEAM ACHIEVER AWARD

WINNERS



**ROBERT HALF**  
MELISSA GARDINER, ANTHINA SAWYER AND KRYSTAL AKONS

You might think that you need more than 3 people to put over 1000 unemployed people to work in the great city of Chicago across three city-wide project but not if you have Melissa Gardiner, Anthina Sawyer and Krystal Akons on your team! These three ladies support one of Robert Half’s top 3 offices in the country and were the dream team at Robert Half in fielding over 100 calls a day, tracking over 2100 documents and serving as the front line for hundreds of employees trying to get to their jobsites, get paid, navigate what can be complicated systems and they did it with tact and patience and an extraordinary level of commitment to providing an exceptional and kind customer experience for a workforce that at times was overwhelmed and frustrated. As their Leader says “Talk about a team effort – they were truly the glue in our office and I could not imagine my life without them!”

2023 CHICAGO ADMIN AWARDS:

Congratulations!  
LURIE CHILDREN’S NOMINEES



- Alejandrina Lopez**  
The Spirit Award
- Anita Mosley**  
The Above the Call Award
- Aran Robles**  
The Above the Call Award
- Nancy Ontiveros**  
The Achiever Award
- Electra Hollister**  
The Above the Call Award
- James Velez**  
The Above the Call Award
- KaSandra Grandberry**  
The Above the Call Award
- Lexie Tripp**  
The Spirit Award
- Oralia Mathew**  
The Achiever Award

- Nivia Jimenez**  
The Above the Call Award  
The Administrative Excellence in Public Service Award
- Ryan Genson**  
The Colleen Barrett Award for Administrative Excellence  
The Spirit Award  
The Administrative Excellence in Public Service Award
- Chelsea-Ann Sealy**  
The Colleen Barrett Award for Administrative Excellence
- Delia Hernandez**  
The Colleen Barrett Award for Administrative Excellence
- Sameerah Miller**  
The Above the Call Award
- Sandra Monarrez**  
The Leadership Award





GOOD AS GOLD

BEST OUTFIT PRIZE DRAWING



WINNER:  
ANNETTE RAMOS  
LINK LOGISTICS

GOOD AS GOLD

TEAM SPIRIT PRIZE



WINNER:  
GRAINGER

CONGRATULATIONS!



Recipient of the

**FOUNDER'S AWARD**

for Creating an Exceptional Work Environment  
for Administrative Professionals

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Career Advancement                           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recognition                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Career Pathing                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Executive Sponsor           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive Leadership Environment              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal Admin Organization |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ownership & Leadership of Important Projects | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professional Development    |





ABOVE THE CALL AWARD

FINALISTS

WINNER



**NIVIA JIMENEZ**  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR IN THE  
DEPARTMENT OF NURSING,  
ANN & ROBERT H. LURIE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL  
OF CHICAGO

Nivia Jimenez has worked for Ann & Robert H. Lurie Childrens Hospital for 30 years and is the Executive Office Administrator in the Department of Nursing where she has a vital role in supporting senior nursing leadership—one-third of the entire employee base. Nivia is described as “our rock and our foundation” because of her efforts throughout the pandemic and beyond. Throughout the pandemic, Nivia supported the team, identified new ways to complete work, pushed through barriers, and was a stable force during a very uncertain time. During high turnover or long gaps of vacancy in EA positions, she stepped in to provide support to multiple nursing leaders, all while carrying her own workload. She is a constant resource for AP’s across the organization who readily credit her for their success. Nivias’ work seems daunting to many, but she executes each task with an above and beyond level of expertise, thoughtfulness, and commitment.



Krystal Akons  
Robert Half  
International



Renee Clark  
Crate and Barrel



Electra Hollister  
Ann & Robert H.  
Lurie Children's  
Hospital of Chicago



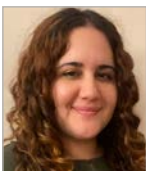
Suzanne Mena  
Brunswick



LaShawn Murray  
Blue Cross  
Blue Shield  
Association



Lisa Petrusha  
Southwest Airlines



Annelise Perez  
Sheraton  
Grand Chicago  
Riverwalk



Christiane  
Shaughnessy  
TransUnion

“NEXT TO

EXCELLENCE

IS THE APPRECIATION

OF IT.”

– William Thackeray

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CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL  
THE 2023 CHICAGO  
ADMIN AWARDS NOMINEES!

Thank you for your endless commitment to excellence.

Congratulations

to all Admin Award Winners!

SPECIAL THANKS TO ANNELISE PEREZ OUR  
“ABOVE THE CALL” AWARD NOMINEE

SHERATON  
GRAND  
Chicago Riverwalk

Thank you for  
everything that you do!  
- The Sheraton Chicago Team



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