



ELGIN



2025



IMAGE



AWARDS



Tuesday, October 28, 2025

Centre of Elgin
100 Symphony Way, Elgin, IL

ELGIN IMAGE AWARDS

The Enhancing Elgin Committee of the Elgin Area Chamber's Elgin Development Group is pleased to recognize people and organizations as they present the valuable 2025 Elgin Image Awards. These awards recognize outstanding individuals, businesses and organizations who are making a powerful difference in the City of Elgin by promoting the positives of why Elgin is a great place to live, work, learn, do business, get involved, visit and enjoy!



www.elginchamber.com
www.elgindevelopment.com



CREATING A DIFFERENCE GROUPS

Organizations or businesses that have helped significantly improve Elgin's image.



Glenna Godinsky and some of the Life Enrichment team.

Gail Borden Public Library Life Enrichment Team

Glenna Godinsky, Manager of Life Enrichment Services

Mission: *The library where imagination and transformation flourish, fueled by the power of community.*

The Gail Borden Library's Life Enrichment Team connects with over 25 senior and developmental care communities monthly, bringing engaging presentations, stories, crafts and music directly to residents. Driven by passion and selflessness, this dedicated team — under the leadership of Life Enrichment

Manager, Glenna Godinsky — thoughtfully plans and executes programs that ensure these often-overlooked community members feel seen and valued. By "meeting people where they're at," this team serves as a powerful model of community care, inspiring others to embrace the spirit of service.

EXCELLENCE IN D.E.I. OR BUILDING EQUITY

Individuals, projects, or organizations that have shown outstanding dedication to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Open Door Health Center

Open Door Health Center of IL (ODHCIL)

Mission: *To provide comprehensive, patient-centered healthcare to the community, with a focus on sexual health and wellness for those at risk for or living with STIs and HIV/AIDS, while also serving the greater LGBTQ+ community.*

Open Door is a regional, patient-centered healthcare organization dedicated to improving community health by offering a comprehensive "medical home" approach

to primary care. Specializing in sexual health and wellness, they provide free, confidential testing, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment for STIs, including HIV/AIDS, with a focus on serving marginalized and disproportionately affected communities. By removing barriers like ID requirements and actively engaging communities through trained Community Health Navigators, Open Door is building a powerful legacy defined by client-focused empowerment and the unwavering commitment to a world without HIV and sexual health stigma.



Elgin Symphony Orchestra

Marc Thayer and the Elgin Symphony Orchestra (ESO)

Mission: *To build community through music via performance and education.*

Executive Director Marc Thayer is recognized for his extraordinary leadership in revitalizing the ESO and transforming it into a beacon for Excellence in DEI and Building

Equity. Taking the helm in 2021 amid pandemic shutdowns, financial trouble, and a lack of a music director, Thayer not only steered the organization back from the brink of disaster—eliminating the deficit and increasing attendance by 80%—but also broadened its community relevance. A fluent Spanish speaker, his efforts have prioritized deep engagement with previously underserved populations, particularly the Hispanic community, through targeted outreach, a diverse board, and a dedicated Community Engagement Committee. Under his tenure, the ESO has reaffirmed its status as a world-class regional orchestra, collaborating with non-profits, performing at civic observances, and ensuring the power of music is accessible to all in Elgin.

GAMECHANGER PROJECTS

Specific community projects that have positively influenced Elgin's image, showcasing innovation, creativity, and positive change.



(ECC - Game of Life)

Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society at Elgin Community College

Mission: *To recognize and encourage academic achievement and provide opportunities for students to grow as scholars and leaders.*

Recognizing that many students struggle with housing and basic needs, the PTK officer team partnered with KCT Credit Union to establish a sustainable, campus-wide financial literacy program. This student-led effort included organizing workshops, co-hosting the impactful "Game of Life" event, and designing an innovative keychain resource hub, earning the chapter a prestigious College Project Award. Their legacy is the creation of the ECC/KCT Credit Union Student Advisory Board, which provides scholarships and empowers new students to continue this vital service, fostering financial confidence and strengthening the entire Elgin community.



Art Sculpture Trail

Art Sculpture Trail Habitat for Humanity of Northern Fox Valley (NFV)

Mission: *To put God's love into action by building homes, communities, and hope. Its local vision is for a world where everyone has a decent place to live, which it works to achieve by building and improving homes in partnership with individuals and families in need of affordable housing.*

The Art Sculpture Trail, which was displayed across several communities throughout the summer of 2025, innovatively blended public art, environmental stewardship and community fundraising. This massive initiative launched 33 unique, environmentally-themed sculptures placed throughout the Elgin area, each painted by a local artist and sponsored by area businesses. The trail captivated the community, drove traffic to local businesses, and successfully highlighted Habitat NFV's groundbreaking net-zero housing developments. Culminating in a public auction, the project raised significant funds for Habitat's mission, proving that creative partnerships can build not just homes and hope, but also momentum for sustainable change and civic pride throughout the city.

PROFESSIONAL ROCKSTAR

Individuals who have significantly improved Elgin's image through their professional achievements...



Dr. Suzanne Johnson **Superintendent, School District U-46**

Suzanne is a proud Elgin High School graduate, second-generation and 25-year U-46 educator.

Dr. Johnson's impact on the Elgin community is both deeply personal and systemic. Her legacy is being cemented by the Unite U-46 initiative, which secured an \$180 million bond and is now transforming learning environments for future generations. This monumental plan includes building Elgin's first new

middle school since 1959, expanding preschool options, and ensuring all students have equitable access to academic and extracurricular programs.

Beyond capital improvements, her leadership is defined by radical inclusivity, setting the district's guiding principle: "All means all." She actively fosters community trust through transparency and genuine connection, highlighted by her "Johnson on the Job" video series where she publicly celebrates the vital work of nearly 7,000 employees in various roles. By consistently modeling empathy and a hands-on work ethic, she ensures that U-46 is not only a great place to learn but a welcoming, supportive environment that empowers students for successful futures.



Bill Angelo **Head Baseball Coach, Elgin Community College**

In his nearly three-decade career, Coach Angelo – also an ECC alumna – has amassed over 850 career wins.

Coach Angelo has transformed the Spartans' baseball program into a program of national distinction while serving as a profound mentorship pipeline for young men. Throughout his career, he has helped produce 20 NJCAA All-Americans, and led the team to five World Series appearances, making ECC baseball a source of immense community pride.

His true legacy is built on his philosophy of developing "quality humans" through a strong work ethic and unwavering accountability. He instills values that transcend the field, providing every player with the resources to succeed academically and personally. This commitment has led to over 170 players transferring to four-year colleges and has fostered a deep, lifelong loyalty, with several alumni returning to serve as his assistant coaches. His mentorship ensures that players graduate as responsible, community-minded leaders who carry his positive influence into their families and neighborhoods throughout Elgin.

VOLUNTEER EXTRAORDINAIRE

Exceptional individuals whose volunteer efforts have had a profound impact on Elgin's image.



Michael McKay

Michael McKay

Over the last 25 years, Mike has served in strategic board and committee roles for more than a dozen key organizations, including the Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce, the Gail Borden Public Library Foundation and local Rotary Clubs.

Mike's quarter-century of dedicated leadership has profoundly impacted the vitality of Elgin across numerous sectors. His legacy is the enduring strength and success of the institutions he has supported. Serving in leadership positions,

including Board President for several groups, McKay provided

essential guidance that enhanced the organizational stability and mission delivery of each, from driving business retention and supporting literacy to funding vocational scholarships. By consistently dedicating his professional skills and time to service while raising a family and building a successful career in Elgin, McKay sets a powerful example that inspires fellow citizens to view their community responsibility as greater than simple compliance, actively building a better future for all.

Karen Fox

Governing Board Member and Community Leader Alignment Collaborative for Education

Karen began her commitment to the community as a teacher and educator serving over 35 years in various roles within the region ensuring students have the preparation for a successful future.

Karen's decades-long dedication to service has made her one of Elgin's most impactful and celebrated community leaders. She embodies the spirit of giving back, having served across a vast spectrum of local causes, including education, social services, and the arts, and has been recognized with numerous honors, such as the United Way's Jack Shales Spirit of Community Award and ECC Foundation's Lasting Impact Award.

Even in retirement, Fox continues to lead critical initiatives,

serving as President of the Gail Borden Public Library Foundation and as

a Governing Board Member for the Alignment Collaborative for Education. Her influence is consistently felt in city-wide efforts, from being a part of the leadership team on the successful Census 2020 campaign to championing access to vital youth mental health resources. Karen Fox's legacy is defined by her contagious spirit of service—she quietly attracts others to causes, ensuring that when she is "at the table, great things happen," creating a deep and lasting positive effect on the lives of countless Elgin families.



Karen Fox Volunteering as Mrs. Claus

2024

Excellence in DEI or Building Equity

Diana Palacios, Oak Street Health

Creating a Difference Groups

Finishing Well - Suzann Jonson

Elgin Community College Center for Civic Engagement

Professional Rockstar

Ursula (Ula) Borodzinska - Martini Room

Paul Bednar - Real People Realty

Gamechanger Projects

Dementia Friendly Elgin Area

YouthBuild Elgin

Volunteer Extraordinaires

Christine (Chris) Awe

Scott Savel

Clare Ollayos, Ph.D.

Jeanette Mihalec

2023

Creating a Difference Groups/ Excellence in DEI or Building Equity

African American Coalition of Kane County (AACKC)

Elgin Hispanic Network

The Haight

Creating a Difference Groups/Youth Service Project (for people 21 and under)

Organization of Latin American Students at Elgin Community College - OLAS

Professional Rockstar

Dianha Ortega-Ehreth

Gamechanger Projects

Elgin History Museum Nancy Kimball

Cobblestone House

Go With the Flow

Firefighter's Memorial Plaza

Well Child Center "Food for Families" Pantry

Violins of Hope

ELGBTQ Pride Parade and Festival

Green Initiative/Sustainable Business of the Year

Elgin Math and Science Academy - Outdoor Environmental Education

2022

Professional Rockstars

Sharry Blazier

Mike and Laurel Warren, Brittain's Car Wash

Cherie Aschenbrenner

Krisilee Murphy

Green Initiative/Sustainable Business of the Year

Greater Kane County Wild Ones

Youth Service Project (for people 21 and younger)

Lincoln Avenue Barbershop

Volunteer Extraordinaires

Jennifer Colby

Larry Henderson

Gamechanger Project

2020 Census Team

Excellence in DEI or Building Equity

Elgin Community College

Elgin Area Pandemic Team

Enhancing Elgin Committee Members include -

Co-Chairs -- Denise Raleigh, Gail Borden Public Library and
Karla Jiménez, Elgin Community College

Krisilee Murphy, Elgin Area Convention & Visitors Bureau;

Terry Gajewski and Carol Gieske, Elgin Area Chamber;

Jeff Knox, City of Elgin

Elizabeth Marston, Elgin History Museum;

Jennifer Fukala, Downtown Neighborhood Association;

Kristine Rogowski, School District U-46;

and Natalie Kiburg, Gail Borden Public Library.



www.elginchamber.com

www.elgindevelopment.com



DINOSAUR EXPLORER

Exhibit at the Main Library
September 20 – January 4
gailborden.info/dino2025

Gail Borden Public Library District
GAIL BORDEN PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT FOUNDATION

produced by
imagine

The poster features a large, detailed illustration of a blue and red dinosaur in a jungle setting. A young girl is shown holding a magnifying glass over the dinosaur's head. The background is filled with various tropical plants and leaves. The text 'DINOSAUR EXPLORER' is prominently displayed in the center. Below the illustration, the exhibit details are provided, including the location (Main Library), dates (September 20 – January 4), and the website (gailborden.info/dino2025). Logos for the Gail Borden Public Library District, Gail Borden Public Library District Foundation, and Imagine are also included.