



For Immediate Release
Contact: Blair Lesser Sullivan,
Executive Director
BSullivan@newtoncommunitypride.org
617-431-3944

Newton Community Pride Board Elects New Leadership Team

September 12, 2023/Newton, MA [Newton Community Pride](#) (NCP)—the Newton nonprofit dedicated to building community through free arts and culture programming, public art, and beautification and service projects—proudly announces the election of a new Board leadership team and three new Board members.

NCP's new Board leadership includes:

Meryl Kessler, Co-Chair: Meryl Kessler has been an NCP Board Member since 2020 and has served as Treasurer, Clerk, and Chair of the Public Art Committee. Kessler is a lawyer and nonprofit professional who, from 2013-19, served as executive director of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts. She is a long-time public art advocate who co-founded the Newton Halloween Window Painting Contest (1999) and organized the 28 Austin Street Mural Competition (2019) as well as several NCP public art initiatives, including Newton Out-Doors (2021), Sit & Let Your Spirit Soar (2022), and the Celebrate Newton Banners (2023). She also sits on Newton's Sustainable Materials Management Commission.

Gloria Gavris, Co-Chair: Gloria Gavris has served as Chair of the NCP Board since 2020 and was the past chair of the City of Newton *Community Design for Arts and Culture Committee*, which published the CREATE Newton Arts & Culture Strategic Plan in December 2019. She is a City of Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture Commissioner, and current Board member of the West Suburban YMCA.

Kessler will replace Gavris as Chair of the Board effective January 1, 2024.

"The Board is grateful for Gloria's leadership since 2020 and for her critical role in the growth of NCP since that time. During her tenure, NCP has expanded its offerings of free citywide festivals, spearheaded public art initiatives, and founded the Nancy Quint Schön Arts Scholarship and Community Micro Grant program," stated Kessler.

Gavris added, "I look forward to continuing to serve on the Board and partnering with Meryl and the new leadership team to strengthen the mission of NCP in the years to come."

Randall Yee, Vice Chair: Randall Yee is a Senior Executive Legal Recruiter for LHH where he uses his knowledge as a former lawyer to recruit and place attorneys with legal employers throughout the region. In addition to being an NCP Board member, Randall also serves as a senior instructor and Board member of the Uechi Ryu Kids' Karate program in Newton and as a volunteer on the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center's Board program committee. Randall, along with his wife, Allison, are lifelong residents of Newton and can often be seen with their three young children around the city.

Dinny Starr, Treasurer: Dinny Starr has served on the NCP Board for five years. She is a glass artist and craftsperson, working in various media including acrylics and textiles. Dinny's artwork has been featured at the Rhode Island School of Design's annual auction and at various galleries and craft markets. Along with her work at NCP, she has worked at the Women's Foundation of Boston in various management and leadership positions, as well as serving as a coach, travel, and intramural chair for Newton Girls Soccer. Dinny is an advocate of public art, festivals, and programming that brings the community together.

Howard Sholkin, Clerk: Howard Sholkin, a lifelong Newton resident, is a serial volunteer in his latest career. In addition to being an NCP Board member, he also serves on the Boards of three other non-profits: The Boston Entrepreneurs Network, The Newton Beacon, and Temple Shalom of Newton. Howard also previously served as president of NCP. During his almost 50-year career, he was a news producer at WCVB and served as a marketing communications leader at eight tech companies including Computervision, Digital Equipment Corporation, and International Data Group. Howard was also a part-time faculty member at Boston University and Lasell University.

New Board Members:

Amy Dain: Amy Dain is an independent consultant in public policy research and writing. The recent focus of her work has been on housing and zoning policy. She is currently a member of Newton's Planning Board. In her spare time, she has been visiting all of the cities and towns of Greater Boston.

Janet Porcaro: Janet is a Newton Realtor®, an adoring grandmother, and a community leader connecting people, businesses, and organizations. Janet is also the Curator of Content for OurNewton.org, a community network that promotes Newton events and news. Her passions are her family, her community, and her real estate practice.

Jim Simons: Jim is a longtime Newton resident, a product of Newton schools, and is keen to preserve and improve our city. He has been active as a Newton Serves volunteer, soccer coach, math tutor, and recently served as co-chair of the committee recommending pay levels for the city council and mayor. Jim is a total rewards consultant.

Dain, Porcaro, and Simons join fellow Board members Damien Chaviano, Barbara Darnell, Phil Dawes, John De Vito, Regina Farnese, Emily O'Neal, John Rice, and Krysia Villon.

About Newton Community Pride

Newton Community Pride, formed in 1989, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization building community for all to enjoy through free arts and culture programming, public art, and beautification and service projects. For more information, please go to www.newtoncommunnitypride.org,