



NEWS RELEASE

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FHLBank Indianapolis announces 2023 Community Spirit Award winners

INDIANAPOLIS — The Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis (FHLBank Indianapolis or Bank) has awarded the 2023 Community Spirit Award to Susan Ruch, Small Business Banker at [The Farmers Bank](#) in Frankfort, Ind., and Michelle LaClair-Ziembo, Human Resources Manager at [United Bay Community Credit Union](#) in Bay City, Mich.

Since 2007, the annual award has honored individuals at one of FHLBank Indianapolis' member institutions in Indiana and Michigan who show an outstanding dedication to affordable housing and community economic development. This year, the ways in which the Bank recognizes Community Spirit was expanded to include a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion category. This new category applies to an individual who shows exceptional dedication to advancing the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion within their financial institution or community.

“It is a great pleasure to present this year’s Community Spirit Award to these two individuals who are so dedicated to their organizations and communities,” said MaryBeth Wott, SVP Community Investment & Strategic Planning Officer. “Both exemplify excellence in more than one category for the Community Spirit Award and are great assets and champions for the communities in which they serve.”

About Susan Ruch, 2023 Indiana Community Spirit Award Winner

Over the years, Ruch has been a leader for The Farmers Bank’s use of FHLBank Indianapolis’ Affordable Housing Program. Since 2017, she has helped secure more than \$1.5 million in FHLBank Indianapolis funding to the Frankfort, Ind., community. As a small business lender, Ruch is dedicated to helping new and existing small businesses succeed and is an advocate for the Elevate Small Business grant program for small businesses that qualify.

As an emerging leader, Ruch leads the Mentorship Program at The Farmers Bank, which promotes growth, leadership and development throughout the organization. She also recently completed the internal Leadership Challenge program at The Farmers Bank, a program based on the Kouzes and Posner leadership model and best-selling book, “The Leadership Challenge.”

“When she sees a need in the community, she harnesses resources both internally and outside the bank to help the family, organization or effort,” said Karen Gregerson, President and CEO of The Farmers Bank.

“Community Development is her passion, and she shares that joyfully with others.”

About Michelle LaClair-Ziembo, 2023 Michigan Community Spirit Award Winner

LaClair-Ziembo led United Bay Community Credit Union through a 12-month program to obtain a Certified Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, Belonging and Accessibility (DEIBA) designation. The program included a policy review, intense social discussions, interviews and ongoing education, with metrics tied to a viable DEIBA plan. United Bay Community Credit Union is the only credit union in Michigan with this designation.

In addition, LaClair-Ziembo created the credit union’s Employee Resource Group program and headed up community partnerships with minority owned businesses within the community. “Michelle is relentless in her efforts to add programs that impact our members and employees. She has launched wellness programs, new benefits programs, community events and inspired numerous volunteer activities,” said Leslie Webb, Vice President People & Strategy at United Bay Community Credit Union.

Webb added: “She was instrumental in a forward-thinking, positive message for staff that resulted in being named a Top Places to Work in 2022 (by the Detroit Free Press), and (Kudos) Best Culture awards in 2021 and 2022. Without her leadership, our culture would not have transformed to one that is truly invested in the communities we serve.”

In addition to the award, FHLBank Indianapolis will donate \$2,500 to the nonprofit organization of choice for both Ruch and LaClair-Ziembo. Ruch has chosen the [Humane Society of Clinton County](#), and LaClair-Ziembo selected the [Great Lakes Bay Pride](#).

More information about the Community Spirit Award is available on the Bank’s [awards landing page](#).

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