

# Washington State Leadership Board (WSLB) announces the 48th Annual Washington Leadership Award Honorees

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The Washington State Leadership Board (WSLB), in partnership with Lt. Governor Denny Heck's office, have announced this year's recipients of the Washingtonian of the Year, Organization of the Year, Justice for All, and Legacy of Service awards. These awards are

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*Lieutenant Governor Denny Heck*

given every year on behalf of the State of Washington in recognition of outstanding service and leadership.

“Congratulations to all the honorees,” said Lt. Governor Heck. “This year's recipients have demonstrated dedication to improving lives and bridging divides through their legacies and innovations. These awards appreciate their achievements for all Washingtonians.”

Jan Yoshiwara, former Executive Director of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has been named the 2023 Washingtonian of the Year. After a 44-year career in higher education, including 38 years at SBCTC, Yoshiwara retired in July 2022.

She spearheaded high-impact initiatives to equip students with career-ready skills and transformed Washington's community and technical college system. Her successor, Paul Francis, praised her innovation and unwavering commitment to student success --

“Throughout her distinguished career, Jan Yoshiwara led with integrity, professionalism, an innovative spirit, and an unwavering belief in the power of community and technical colleges to transform lives – regardless of who you are or where you come from. There is no one more deserving of this special recognition than Jan. Congratulations!”

As Executive Director, Yoshiwara oversaw Washington's college system, developed partnerships with state legislators, and approved educational programs. Yoshiwara led Washington as it became one of the first states to offer bachelor's degrees at community colleges; an innovative strategy that allows students to use their degree/s as a building block to a bachelor's degree. This opportunity creates a stair-step approach to meeting state goals of increasing the overall

number of bachelor's degrees awarded to over 42,000 per year.

While Yoshiwara is proud of this accomplishment, it is only one of several accomplishments during her tenure. She also led the college system through a national reform movement known as Guided Pathways, which streamlined support and class structure for students, supported the state through its adoption of a milestone completion program, and launched programs to advance online learning. Yoshiwara's leadership has transformed Washington's college system.

Yoshiwara expressed her gratitude for receiving this recognition –



"I am honored to receive this recognition, to join such an esteemed group of Washingtonians who have received this award. I am especially honored to have worked with a Board, colleagues, faculty, staff, and trustees at the colleges who have been so dedicated to equity, social justice and academic and career success for all college students, no matter where they have been or where they start. Washington community and technical colleges have been at the forefront of progressive efforts in social and economic mobility for those who need it the most. It is what gives me hope for our future as a state."

This year's recipient for Washington Organization of the Year, [WELD Seattle](#), is a non-profit committed to transforming the lives of legal system-impacted individuals through connection, healing, and opportunity. Founded in 2017, WELD provides sober transitional housing, life skills training, and employment services to help people reenter, engage and ultimately thrive in community. The WELD team, sharing similar life experiences, rapidly establishes trust and a sense of belonging among its members, laying the foundation for robust personal and community accountability.

This year WELD Seattle achieved the major milestone of delivering 100,000 nights of shelter without owning any property. WELD sources homes from developers who are awaiting permits and turns them into sober living communities. Since its founding, WELD has served over a thousand adults reentering the community after incarceration who have often struggled with homelessness and addiction. WELD Seattle replaces barriers with opportunities by empowering its members to successfully reintegrate into society. The organization firmly believes in the

transformative power of peer support, coupled with scalable solutions addressing housing, employment, and connection, as the key to bringing redemption and healing to our communities.

WELD's Executive Director, Patrick Arney, said, "We share a profound connection with the experiences of those we serve—much like many of our members, we have navigated through challenges that once felt insurmountable. Today, I am reminded of the transformative power of hope and healing as I witness individuals forging new paths forward in their lives. Thank you for honoring their work and recognizing our organization with this award."

This year's recipient of the Justice for All award is [Washington Building Leaders of Change \(WA-BLOC\)](#), a Seattle-based community organization that partners with educators, schools, and families to advance educational equity for Black and brown students in the Seattle Public Schools.

Founded in 2016 through student activism and community leadership, WA-BLOC designs programming to address inequities within traditional school and classroom environments, with the goal of driving significant policy change. Their programs provide high-quality educational opportunities for Black and brown youth and families, including the Freedom Schools, Restorative Justice, and BLOC Organizing initiatives. Rooted in critical literacy, intergenerational leadership development, and social action, WA-BLOC empowers students and communities through transformative education.

This year marks a major achievement as WA-BLOC now provides site-based restorative practice support at five Seattle elementary schools. By implementing Restorative Practices, an incremental process that fosters safety and belonging, WA-BLOC is shifting school cultures to be more inclusive and restorative. Through their tireless efforts, WA-BLOC is truly transforming education.

"Thank you to the Washington State Leadership Board for this recognition – it is a humbling honor and wouldn't be possible without the shoulders we stand on and the folks with whom we do this work alongside. This work is not new, and neither is the fight. We are inspired by the guiding principles of Septima Clark, Ella Baker, and Marian Wright Edelman who fiercely believed that literacy is liberation and schools are powerful agents of social change", said the WA-BLOC team.

The recipient for the Legacy of Service award is Dr. Marsha Linehan, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Washington, who developed Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), originally to treat suicidal behaviors. DBT has since expanded to treat Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and other complex mental health issues involving emotion dysregulation. DBT is now considered the gold-standard treatment for BPD, which involves significant emotion regulation challenges. Linehan has received numerous prestigious awards for her groundbreaking research and clinical work on suicide.

Dr. Linehan's leadership has been acknowledged with the Outstanding Mental Health Educator Award, the Distinguished Scientific Contributions to Clinical Psychology Award and the Distinguished Contributions to the Practice of Psychology; as well as the Career Achievement Award, the highest honor one can be bestowed by the American Psychological Association. Her work has led to life-changing improvements in patients throughout Washington state and beyond. Geraldine Rodriguez, Dr. Linehan's daughter and delegate, acknowledged her mother's profound impact --

"Thank you, Washington State Leadership Board, for this incredible recognition of my mother, Dr. Marsha Linehan, for her work in the mental health field. At one point in her life, my mother found herself in hell; she was able to get out and then vowed to go back to get others out. Through her scientific research at the University of Washington, her compassion, determination, and life of service, she was able to develop Dialectical Behavior Therapy; a ground-breaking-life-changing treatment that has proven to be effective in treating many mental disorders. DBT is her best attempt at fulfilling that vow. Our hope is that with this award, we continue to work together to provide the care and treatment that affect so many humans in our state, our county, and the world. DBT changes lives and it has become our mission to make it available far and wide to all those who need it."

Since 1975, the WSLB has hosted the annual Washington Leadership Awards ceremony, recognizing exemplary community leaders and philanthropists. Recently designated as a trustee agency of Washington state, the Leadership Board continues its mission of honoring leaders and administering equity-based youth leadership programs across the state.

WSLB Executive Director, Audrey Baker, praised this year's awardees --

"Through the Washington Leadership Awards, we honor the visionaries and changemakers who have set a standard of excellence that inspires us all. Their dedication to service, innovation, and inclusivity is not just a beacon for today's leaders but a powerful legacy for the leaders of tomorrow. The Leadership Board proudly celebrates these outstanding individuals and organizations in partnership with the Lt. Governor's Office."

The Washington Leadership Awards ceremony will take place in Olympia on the evening of February 22, 2024. Learn more about the work of the WSLB at [WashingtonLeaders.org](https://WashingtonLeaders.org).

Audrey Baker

Washington State Leadership Board

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