

Nichele is Corporation Council for the City of Mount Vernon but it is her work with our young people and their families as a counselor and mentor that led to her being honored tonight by the Henry Allen Educational & Learning Foundation. Her husband, Brother Arthur Muhammad can usually be found on streets where troubled youth congregate, there and in the classrooms of Mount Vernon High School where he engages with some of our city's most troubled youth.

Nichele was raised to embrace her multicultural heritage, to appreciate the power of prayer, and to contribute to society. This manifests itself through her counseling, her giving our food at soup kitchens, to gathering clothing for the needy.

Brother Arthur combines a soft-spoken demeanor with, when necessary, the firmness of one who knows what he is talking about. The respect he has earned often leads to his being called on as a mediator for all age groups.

The Henry Allen Educational & Learning Foundation is honoring Nichele and Brother Arthur who have worked to help all in need, no matter what the need. I am proud to join with the Foundation in praising the work of Nichele Johnson and Brother Arthur Muhammad for what they have done so much to make Mount Vernon a better place to live.

HONORING JUNE BURKART

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 7, 2012

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in memory of a dedicated wife, proud supporter of our military and veterans, and most importantly, a great Alaskan. On April 26, 2012, Alaska lost one of its hardest working and most dedicated daughters, Mrs. June Burkart.

Mrs. Burkhart was a loving wife and mother whose life was defined by service to her family and community. For decades she served on the boards of countless organizations that supported Alaskans, most recently raising significant funds for the Wounded Warriors Program. As an avid outdoor lover, she worked to ensure that any wounded warrior who wished to hunt or fish had the opportunity to do so through the Safari Club International Alaska Chapter.

For days, I can continue praising her many accomplishments and the many ways that she improved my life and the lives of anyone who knew her. Her memory will continue to live on in our hearts and souls. I hope that June's family, and especially her husband Roy, can take comfort in the bond they had with June as it will be with them always. I hope the precious memories the family has of her will bring them comfort, and that they will come to find, in the lovely words of Hugh Robert Orr:

"They are not dead who live in lives they leave behind. In those whom they have blessed, they live a life again, and shall live through the years eternal life, and shall grow each day more beautiful, as time declares their good, forgets the rest, and proves their immortality."

IN HONOR OF CANTOR ERIK
CONTZIUS

HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 7, 2012

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, the Cantor fills a special role within the Jewish community; leading worship, officiating at lifecycle events, teaching adults and children, conducting synagogue music programs, and offering pastoral care.

Ten years ago Cantor Erik Contzius brought his talent, his commitment to Reform Judaism and unique personality to Temple Israel of New Rochelle. All the congregants have been touched by him, from the training of children to become B'nai Mitzvahs, to making the High Holidays alive with sound, to entertaining us with song. He holds a special place at Temple Israel of New Rochelle.

Cantor Contzius founded Kol Simkha, the Temple's youth choir, as soon as he arrived in New Rochelle. A decade and hundreds of students later, Kol Simkha is going strong, singing the beloved prayers at Family Services. Cantor Contzius has cultivated many young voices in the congregation, giving them a chance to be heard during special services and on his own album, Teach My Lips a Blessing.

Cantor Contzius has given many distinguished solo presentations, most recently with the Westchester Chorale, singing the Darius Milhaud Service Sacré. Within the synagogue, he performed with its own jazz band, Yidlock, as part of the annual Follies show, and with the Chordsmen, a barbershop quartet.

In November of 2010, the Cantor's original composition, "Ma Ashiv Ladonai," was premiered at the Vatican—a true honor.

He was raised in Parsippany, N.J., received his B.A. in Psychology from Rutgers College and went on to study abroad at the University of York, England. He received his Master of Sacred Music degree from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, School of Sacred Music, studying in Israel and New York.

Before becoming a part of the Temple Israel family, along with his wife Monica and son Jacob, he served as Cantor at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel of Elkins Park, PA, and Temple Israel of Omaha.

I enthusiastically join with Temple Israel of New Rochelle in honoring Cantor Erik Contzius for the joy, guidance and leadership he has provided over the past decade and wish him many more years among us.

RECOGNIZING MAY AS NATIONAL
FOSTER CARE MONTH

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 7, 2012

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, as a cosponsor of H. Res. 242, Recognizing May As National Foster Care Month, I rise to recognize this month dedicated to celebrating selfless foster families who open their hearts and their homes for children in need as well as rededicate myself to ensuring that every child has an opportunity for a brighter future.

I am honored to be a charter member of the Congressional Caucus for Foster Youth, a caucus that allows Members to gain a better understanding of the current state of foster care throughout the nation and identify potential federal policy modifications that could improve outcomes for the children in our country's foster care systems. On February 24, 2012, in an effort to address many of the ongoing issues foster youth face, members of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth launched a national listening tour which began in my district.

Mr. Speaker, currently there are over 463,000 children living in foster care. These children have been placed in homes on the account of the physical, sexual and emotional abuse they have endured with their biological caretaker. My state of California currently has the largest foster care population with the number of youths in foster care tripling since 1981.

Sixty-five percent of children who are not placed in a permanent home emancipate themselves from the system often left unemployed, without a place to live and resorting to homeless shelters. Less than 3 percent go on to college and emancipated females end up four times more likely to receive public assistance compared to the overall population of the United States.

Almost 30,000 children who are victims of abuse and neglect are entrusted to the care of the Los Angeles County Juvenile Dependency Court system. The court's primary mission is to ensure that these youth are safe, happy and secure. As a result, Los Angeles established the country's first courthouse especially designed for children and families.

Mr. Speaker, it is vital that we provide more programs, events, activities, and funding that will educate Americans about the success of children placed in permanent homes, debunk myths about the process and acknowledge the thousands of children who could potentially become a part of these statistics. Through these efforts we can increase the rate of adoption, decrease the rate of homelessness among the youths in this group and help develop future leaders and innovative thinkers of tomorrow.

I would like to take a moment to recognize the families who have opened their hearts and homes to foster children. Foster parents play a critical role in the lives of some of the most vulnerable youth in California and across the country. They help hold our nation's social fabric together by ensuring that thousands of young people in this country stay on track towards successful futures.

In addition, I would like to commend SHIELDS for Families, an internationally recognized organization in my district that transforms the lives of parents by providing them with resources to prevent children from going into the foster care system. This month, we celebrate these unsung heroes and their efforts to change the lives of these children.

Mr. Speaker, I am a proud cosponsor H.R. 2012, Foster Care Mentoring Act, focused on connecting foster youth with responsible and caring adults and I look forward to working with my colleagues to enact legislation that addresses the very real and persisting needs of young people in our foster care system.