Welcome to the 2015 Know Your Chicago Symposium!

Founded in 1948 by Mary Ward Wolkonsky, Know Your Chicago strives to encourage civic participation and to foster understanding of, and appreciation for, the diverse forces and institutions shaping our city. As the official beginning to our 67th annual tour season, the Symposium brings together five distinguished speakers who address important issues related to our tour topics. Our 2015 tours focus on the Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park and Governors State University; women who have transformed Chicago; the International Baccalaureate K-12 education method; the positive forces of hip-hop in Chicago communities; and manufacturing and skilled-workforce development in Chicago.

We trust you will find today’s speakers interesting and thought-provoking, and look forward to learning with you this season.

Learn more at knowyourchicago.org
Meet the 2015 Symposium Speakers

Dr. Elaine P. Maimon is the fifth President of Governors State University (GSU). Under her leadership, GSU was awarded the American Council for Education/Fidelity Investment Award for Institutional Transformation in 2015. Her previous positions include Chancellor of the University of Alaska Anchorage and Vice President of Arizona State University.

She is a member of The Chicago Network, and has served on the boards of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the American Association of Colleges and Universities, and the National Association of Teachers of English. Her numerous awards include the Donna Shavlak Award for Women’s Leadership in Higher Education (2014) and the Chicagoland ATHENA Leadership Award (2014).

Dr. Maimon earned her BA, MA and PhD in English at the University of Pennsylvania.

Marilou von Ferstel was the first woman elected to the Chicago City Council, in 1971.

A ten-year member of the Democratic National Committee, she was a member of the Chicago Zoning Board of Appeals and numerous other city and civic committees and commissions.

Ms. von Ferstel retired as executive Vice President of Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide, a managing director of Hill and Knowlton, Chicago, and a reporter and feature writer for the Chicago Tribune.

She is a trustee of Rush University Medical Center, and has served as a director for numerous corporations and civic organizations. A graduate of Barat College, she holds an MA in public policy from the University of Chicago.

Geoffrey Jones is an experienced educator and innovative leader with expertise in K-12 curriculum development. He is Head of School at GEMS World Academy-Chicago, which opened in September 2014. In his early career he was Principal of the Upper School at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools.

Mr. Jones was Head of School at The Potomac School, in Washington, D.C., and Founding Principal of Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, in Alexandria, Virginia. Under his 12-year leadership the school was nationally recognized for its excellence in STEM programs and consistently ranked as the best high school in the USA. He works with the U.S. Department of State Office of Overseas Schools to create and host annual professional development programs for educators from around the world.

Kyle Westbrook has worked in and around Chicago Public Schools (CPS) for nearly 20 years as a teacher, teacher leader, leadership coach, and central office leader. From 2008-2011, he served as Director of Secondary School Support at the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute.

In his current role as Executive Director of Magnet, Gifted, and International Baccalaureate Programs (IB), Mr. Westbrook leads district-wide efforts to create and sustain high-quality options to accelerate student learning. Since 2011, he has led CPS efforts to increase student access to IB programs by leading the incubation and start-up of 26 new programs in 21 schools.

Melissa Harris joined the Chicago Tribune as a business columnist in 2009 after nearly five years as an award-winning metro reporter at the Baltimore Sun. Prior to joining the Sun, she was a metro reporter at the Orlando Sentinel.

Harris is a graduate of Northwestern and Johns Hopkins universities (BS in Journalism and MA in Government), and a two-time finalist for the Livingston Award, honoring outstanding reporting by journalists younger than 35. She is working towards a Master of Business Administration at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

Meet Our Partner

The University of Chicago Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies has partnered with Know Your Chicago since 1949 as part of its mission to provide diverse educational programs for all ages. Founded in 1893, the Graham School celebrates its 125th anniversary this year. We look forward to the next 125 years of lifelong learning and continuing education programming.

Learn more at grahamschool.uchicago.edu.
Mary Ward Wolkonsky (1907-2002) was an extraordinary woman who made a significant and lasting contribution to the educational and philanthropic world of Chicago. Throughout her long life, she offered her talents in a multitude of ways, focusing particularly on issues and organizations that advanced the role of woman.

Mrs. Wolkonsky loved Chicago. In 1948, she founded Know Your Chicago, not only as a way to share her excitement about our city, but also to educate women for civic participation. Over its long history, Know Your Chicago has enabled thousands to experience the unique, the serious, the humorous, the beautiful and, often, the little-known aspects of this wonderful city.

Born in Michigan, Mrs. Wolkonsky moved to Chicago in 1939 and quickly became involved in the life of the city. Her remarkable intelligence, charm, and leadership abilities made her an asset to many of the area’s leading institutions including the University of Chicago. This affiliation was a source of particular pride to her. She founded the Women’s Board of the University, served as its chairman for eight years, and was named a University trustee in 1975.

Music was one of Mrs. Wolkonsky’s great interests. She was an excellent pianist, both classical and jazz; knew the lyrics of an amazing number of cabaret songs; and, even in her 90s, was always ready to put on her dancing shoes. She followed the careers of many of the great jazz ensembles of Chicago, often visiting the clubs where they played. This love of music led to her long involvement with the University of Chicago’s music program where she served as chairman of the Visiting Committee to the Department of Music and founded the Jazz Archive.

Mrs. Wolkonsky also founded Bright New City, a series of lectures and seminars on the physical and cultural aspects of Chicago. She was a member of the Board of Directors of the Lyric Opera and was instrumental in creating its Women’s Board. She served on the boards of the Chicago Public Library Foundation, the Chicago Symphony, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Field Museum, the Chicago Art Institute, and Planned Parenthood. Her numerous awards and honors are a testament to her vision and character.

Know Your Chicago Committee

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Iris Willowsky
Linda Woloshin
Bobbi Zabel

*Former Chair

2015 Tour Season

TOUR 1
Big Ideas on the Prairie: The Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park and Governors State University
Tuesday, September 15 or $85
Wednesday, September 16
Rain or shine
and lunch included

TOUR 2
There is Nothing Like a Dame: Women Who Changed Chicago
Monday, September 21 or $85
Tuesday, September 22
Rain or shine and lunch included

TOUR 3
International Baccalaureate: Increase your IB IQ!
Tuesday, September 29 or $85
Wednesday, September 30
Rain or shine and lunch included

TOUR 4
Hip Hop in Chicago: What It Is and Why It Matters
Tuesday, October 6 or $85
Wednesday, October 7
Rain or shine and lunch included

TOUR 5
Made in Chicago: A Manufacturing Renaissance
Tuesday, October 20 or $85
Wednesday, October 21
Rain or shine and lunch included

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