

2019 Laureates Announced



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

BRUCE RAUNER

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Gov. Rauner announces Laureates of 2019 Order of Lincoln award

SPRINGFIELD – Gov. Bruce Rauner today announced the 2019 recipients of the Order of Lincoln, which is the state’s highest honor for professional achievement and public service.

“These distinguished individuals make us proud to be Illinoisans,” Rauner said. “They have honored us with their achievements in medicine, business, the arts, the law and sports, so it is only fitting and proper to bestow upon them the state’s highest honor.”

On Saturday, May 18, 2019, The Lincoln Academy of Illinois will host its 55th annual Convocation on the campus of the University of Illinois Springfield. Susan Koch, chancellor, University of Illinois Springfield and Arthur ‘Hy’ Bunn, CEO, Bunn-O-Matic are the co-chairs of the 2019 Convocation Civic Committee.

At the convocation, members of the Academy will honor six outstanding Illinoisans with the Order of Lincoln at a formal ceremony and gala reception. These Laureates will join a cohort of 348 distinguished Illinois citizens so honored over the past 55 years.

“While the recipients’ work spans many fields, all have the traits of Abraham Lincoln in common,” Rauner said. “They possess tremendous talent. They are great leaders, great community servants and great lovers of Illinois.”

This year’s Lincoln Laureates are *Jerry Colangelo, Edgar J. Curtis, Sheila Crump Johnson, Benjamin K. Miller, Olufunmilayo Olopade, and George F. Will.*



Jerry Colangelo

Jerry Colangelo is a Chicago Heights native who had a stellar basketball career at the University of Illinois, played professional basketball for the Chicago Bulls, and in 1968 at age 29 became

the first general manager of the Phoenix Suns, the youngest general manager in professional sports. Colangelo was a driving force in bringing professional sports to Arizona and is the former owner of the Arizona Diamondbacks baseball team, the Phoenix Mercury women's NBA team, Arizona Rattlers indoor football, and Arizona Sandsharks indoor soccer. Colangelo was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and the University of Illinois Sports Hall of Fame.



Edgar J. Curtis, FACHE

Edgar J. Curtis, FACHE, is the president and chief executive officer of Memorial Health System (MHS) in Springfield. Having started his career at MHS in 1975, he has served in a variety of administrative positions devoting his career to serving others.

His devotion to the medical field is reflected in the numerous leadership positions he has occupied within professional associations. He is the immediate past chairman of the Illinois Health and Hospital Association's Board of Directors. He currently serves as a founding board member for the BJC Collaborative, the Midwest Healthcare Quality Alliance and the Lincoln Land Health Information Exchange. He also is a delegate on the AHA's Regional Policy Board, as well as the Sangamon County Economic Development Commission. In addition, he served the Springfield community in a variety of roles including chairman of the board for the Central Illinois Foodbank (CIFB), the Springfield Urban League (SUL) and the United Way of Central Illinois. He has received several civic awards including the Good Samaritan Award by the CIFB, SUL's Community Leadership Award, the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce President's Award and recently was named the Illinois recipient of the Grassroots Champions Award from the American Hospital Association.

His commitment to professional excellence has been recognized by his alma maters (Springfield Lanphier High School and the School of Nursing at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville), where he was inducted into their respective Halls of Fame. After receiving his bachelor of science in nursing from SIU-E, he obtained his MBA from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In addition, he received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from UIUC for his outstanding and innovative leadership in health care administration as well as his exceptional community service.



Sheila Crump Johnson

Sheila Crump Johnson is a film producer and the co-founder of Black Entertainment Television (BET), the CEO of Salamander Hotels and Resorts, and the first African American woman to attain a net worth of at least \$1 billion. Johnson is the first African American woman to be an owner or partner in three professional sports franchises: the Washington Capitals (NHL), the Washington Wizards (NBA), and the Washington Mystics (WNBA). An accomplished violinist, Johnson actively supports numerous music, arts and education organizations. She graduated from Proviso East High School in Maywood and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she serves on the university's foundation board.



Benjamin K. Miller

Benjamin K. Miller was an Illinois Supreme Court Justice from 1984 through 2001, serving as Chief Justice from 1991 to 1994. While leading the state's highest court, Miller initiated programs that helped combat domestic violence, expand judicial performance evaluations, clarify restrictions on political activity for judges, and improve the state's juvenile justice system. Before joining the Supreme Court, Miller was a judge on both the 7th Judicial Circuit and 4th District Appellate Court. Miller has been an adjunct professor at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, teaching the medical-legal curriculum, and has taken an active leadership role in organizations focused on historic preservation and the study of Abraham Lincoln.



Olufunmilayo Olopade, M.D.

Olufunmilayo Olopade, M.D. is an expert in cancer risk assessment and individualized treatment for the most aggressive forms of breast cancer. Olopade has excelled at integrating research into patient care at the University of Chicago Medicine since 1987, with a focus on risk reduction, early detection and prevention in high-risk populations. She helped develop treatments for young women including women of African ancestry that are significantly more effective with less side effects. A recipient early in her career of a MacArthur Fellowship, she has been honored by the National Academy of Medicine, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society. She served on the board of directors for the American Board of Internal Medicine, the National Cancer Advisory Board, and Susan G. Komen for the Cure. She currently

serves on the boards of Lyric Opera, the MacArthur Foundation, and two Chicago-based companies in health care, CancerIQ and Tempus.



George F. Will

George F. Will is a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the *Washington Post* who is also a regular contributor to NBC News and MSNBC. Will is also a prolific writer of books about national and international relations, politics, government, and the sport of baseball, including *The Pursuit of Happiness and Other Sobering Thoughts*; *Statecraft as Soulcraft*, and *One Man's America: The Pleasures and Provocations of Our Singular Nation*. Will was named Best Writer

by the *Washington Journalism Review* in 1985 and one of the 25 most influential Washington journalists by the *National Journal* in 1997. He grew up in Champaign.

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois, its Laureates and the Bicentennial Commission

“The Lincoln Academy is honored to award the Order of Lincoln to these six remarkable individuals whose achievements and contributions have helped shape the vibrancy of Illinois,” said Stephanie Pace Marshall, Ph.D., chancellor of the Academy. “Their inspiring leadership, in the ‘spirit of Abraham Lincoln,’ will enable us to continue to chart a dynamic and innovative course for our state’s future.”

For attendance and further information, contact Julie Kellner, Executive Director, at 217-785-5030 and the website at www.thelincolnacademyofillinois.org. Also, you may visit us on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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