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Jr. Advancing Diversity Awards.

Isaac M. O'Bannon • Jun. 08, 2023



**ILLINOIS CPA SOCIETY®**

The Illinois CPA Society, one of the largest state associations in the nation serving the certified public accountant community, has announced the recipients of its 2023 Lester H. McKeever Jr. Advancing Diversity Awards.

Each year, these awards, which are named in honor of McKeever—a passionate civic leader and advocate for increasing diversity in the accounting profession; partner at Mitchell & Titus LLP; managing principal of Washington, Pittman & McKeever LLC; and a founding member of the CPA Endowment Fund of Illinois—are presented to an Outstanding Leader and an Emerging Leader in recognition of their commitments to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the accounting profession.

“Advancing DEI initiatives is critical to ensuring we attract and retain talent that

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- **Kimi L. Ellen, CPA**, is a co-founding partner of Benford Brown & Associates LLC in Chicago, which is one of the largest African American women-owned accounting firms in the country. Ellen has worked tirelessly throughout her nearly 30-year career to create opportunities for Black and other racially and ethnically underrepresented individuals in accounting to find success and advance in the profession. Ellen is an active member in the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants; Diverse Organization of Firms, a membership organization for minority-owned CPA firms in the U.S., where she serves as chairperson; ICPAS, where she serves as a director on the board; and National Society of Black Certified Public Accountants, where she serves as the chartering parliamentarian. Further, Ellen serves as president of the Southeast Chicago Chamber of Commerce. She's also the board treasurer at Access Community Health Network, which is the largest federally qualified health care center in Chicago. Ellen also volunteers as chairperson of the Associates Group of the Windy City Chapter of Jack and Jill of America Inc., treasurer of the Chi Omega Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., and parliamentarian of the Lake Shore Chapter of the Links Inc. Ellen earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she also served as president of the Minority Commerce Association.

### *Emerging Leader*

- **LaToya C. McKinney, CPA, MSAA**, is a senior business process and control analyst in Abbott's Rapid Diagnostics Division. McKinney is a passionate advocate for diverse students interested in accounting and is committed to leveraging her experiences and connections to support others. She serves on Abbott's finance diversity and inclusion team, which focuses primarily on recruiting minority students for internships and finance professional development program opportunities. Additionally, McKinney serves on the Communications Committee

of Abbott's Black Business Network Chicagoland Chapter. Further, McKinney is a

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