

## PROCLAMATION 2024 Women's History Month

WHEREAS, from the first settlers who came to our shores and those Native Communities who befriended them, men and women have worked together to build this nation. Too often, the women were unsung, and their contributions went unnoticed. But the leadership, courage, and strength of the women who built America were as vital as that of the men whose names we know so well; and

WHEREAS, The National Women's History Month's theme for 2024 celebrates "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion." The theme recognizes women throughout the country who understand that, for a positive future, we need to eliminate bias and discrimination entirely from our lives and institutions; and

WHEREAS, during 2024, we recognize the example of Maplewood & South Orange women who are committed to embracing everyone and excluding no one in our common quest for freedom and opportunity. They know that our kids need to learn the value of hearing from different voices with different points of view as they grow up; and

WHEREAS, American women of every race, class, ethnic background and sexual identity have made historic contributions to the growth and strength of our Nation in so many ways; and women from diverse backgrounds have been at the forefront of efforts to address systemic inequities and promote a more inclusive society; and

WHEREAS, American women were particularly important in the establishment of early charitable, philanthropic, and cultural institutions in our Nation. And American women of every race, class, and ethnic background served as early leaders of the social change movement and also served our country courageously in the military; and

WHEREAS, for the first time in the history of our towns, the Mayors of Maplewood and South Orange are both female and the governing bodies of both towns are majority female, each of these women's stories will shape what will be the history of Maplewood and South Orange as they bring a woman's

perspective to governing and bring their histories together to craft the kind of world where equality is not a rare occurrence but it is the norm; and

WHEREAS, American women have played a unique role throughout the history by providing the majority of the volunteer labor force; American women have played and continue to play critical economic, cultural, and social roles in every sphere of the life of the Nation by constituting a significant portion of the labor force working inside and outside of the home; and

WHEREAS, Women's History Month or, rather, Women's HERstory Month is a time to remember those who fought (and many who fought and died) to make freedom as real for our daughters as for our sons. They were driven by a faith that our Union could extend true equality to every citizen willing to claim it; and

WHEREAS, year after year, visionary women met and marched and mobilized to prove what should have been self-evident. They created a movement that touched every community and took on our highest institutions. And after decades of slow, steady progress, women have written equal opportunity into the law again and again, giving generations of girls a future worthy of their potential; and

WHEREAS, American women have been leaders, not only in securing their own rights of equal opportunity, but also in the abolitionist movement, the emancipation movement, the industrial labor movement, the civil rights movement, and more, to create a more fair and just society for all. Their long-fought movement finally succeeded in 1920 with the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution finally giving women the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, just like the Nation, the women's suffragist movement was fraught with racism and discrimination toward Black suffragists particularly when White suffragist leaders were trying to appeal to leaders in the Jim Crow south for women's national voting rights; Black suffragists persevered as they fought not only for the rights of women to vote but of Black women and men, we recognize and honor their unparalleled commitment in fighting for rights for ALL women; and

WHEREAS, that legacy of the change is all around us. Women are more than half of our population and our Nation's workforce, and more than half of our college graduates. But even now, women still face a pay gap at work, or

discrepancies in health insurance, or inadequate options for family leave. These issues affect all of us, and failing to address them holds our country back; and

WHEREAS, medical research while showing some improvement, has for decades focused on men, ignoring women and particularly women of color. In fact, medical research in many areas including cardiovascular disease, which kills more women than men, often excludes women subjects. This disparity in research by gender has resulted in misdiagnoses and incorrect treatment of women causing more women fatalities; and

WHEREAS, too often women continue to experience sexual discrimination and harassment in the workforce, holding them prisoners to male power, being stepped over for promotions and positions of authority, and limiting their ability to advance and thrive in their careers. When women do speak up or are strong of opinion, they are not given the same respect or validity as their male counterparts, and

WHEREAS, as we celebrate and recognize Women's History Month, we include the contributions of women and allies in the LGBTQ+ community who came before us and who have fought for equality like New Jersey trailblazer Marsha P. Johnson and those who are making history now. We also pause to remember the victims lost to fatal anti-transgender violence who are mostly Black and Brown transgender women.

WHEREAS, we recognize that Women's History Month inclusively extends to individuals whose experiences exist beyond the binary norms of womanhood. We need to amplify the identities and experiences of transgender women, and individuals who are non-binary/gender non-conforming and recognize the burdens placed upon them in our society and pledge to fight those prejudices and inequities as we continue to fight for equality and opportunity for all, and

WHEREAS, even having finally reached the White House in our Vice President Kamala Harris, women are still not fully or adequately represented at the top tables of organizations, corporations, and local, state and national houses of government, and are therefore not being heard leaving a woman's important perspective unrepresented when laws and policies are decided on in local, state, and federal levels; and

WHEREAS, our history shows that we can stay true to our founding creed that in America, all things should be possible for all people. That spirit is what called

our mothers and grandmothers to fight for a world where no wall or ceiling could keep their daughters from their dreams. Although we still have much to do to make our opportunities brighter, we recognize the accomplishments of women who fought for our rights now and in the past and pledge to them to keep advocating for equality; and

WHEREAS, we encourage our communities, schools, and organizations to celebrate the achievements of women and especially those who have championed equity, diversity, and inclusion, and reaffirm our commitment to advancing these principles in our society. Let's teach our children about women's accomplishments and honor those who have sacrificed for the rights of all people; and

WHEREAS, South Orange and Maplewood community leaders are working together to annually shine the spotlight on Women's History Month with events and promotion of local women-owned businesses, and to celebrate women's empowerment, and to focus on women in history who fought for our rights and whose lives changed the course of history;

NOW THEREFORE, on behalf of the rest of the Maplewood Township Committee and South Orange Village President Sheena Collum and the South Orange Board of Trustees, I, Nancy Adams, Mayor of the Township of Maplewood do hereby proclaim March 2024 as Women's History Month in the Townships of Maplewood and South Orange.

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Elizabeth J. Fritzen  
Township Clerk

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Nancy J. Adams  
Mayor