



For more information, contact:

Laurel Baer  
The Village Chicago  
[info@thevillagechicago.org](mailto:info@thevillagechicago.org)  
773.248.8700

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## **The Village Chicago Announces 2020 Trailblazer Awards**

August 24, 2020—Chicago, IL—The Village Chicago will recognize outstanding contributions and extraordinary leadership in changing the narrative on aging with its annual Trailblazer Awards, to be presented Sept. 22 at The Village Chicago’s virtual 2020 benefit: *Zooming Ahead—No Stopping Us Now!*

The awards celebrate the work of individuals and organizations that are reframing how we think and talk about the decades of life after age 50—a period that can be vital, engaged, productive and healthy, in contrast to the stereotype of aging. With more than 11,000 Americans turning 50 each day, it is vital to understand and leverage the potential of a fully age-integrated, inclusive society where everyone's strengths are appreciated, respected, and utilized.

The 2020 Village Chicago Trailblazer Award winners are physician and author **Louise Aronson**, community leader **Ruth Ann Watkins**, and **Next Avenue**, public media’s national journalism service focused on older adults.

In announcing the winners, Village Board President Karen Terry said, “We owe a debt of gratitude to these leaders who are shattering the “silver ceiling” and empowering people of all ages to keep living and contributing fully.”

Village CEO Darcy Evon says, “It is a great honor to recognize these Trailblazers for their extraordinary contributions to inclusion, age-integration and the well-being of older people. They inspire, inform and support everything the Village represents.”

**Louise Aronson**, MD MFA, is a leading geriatrician, writer, medical humanist, and professor of medicine at UCSF. A graduate of Harvard Medical School, Dr. Aronson has received the Gold Professorship in Humanism in Medicine, the

California Homecare Physician of the Year award, and is the author of the Pulitzer Prize finalist *Elderhood: Redefining Aging, Transforming Medicine, and Reimagining Life*. In her book, Dr. Aronson argues for a well-defined, nuanced focus on elderhood, just as we have for childhood and adulthood. Recognizing elderhood as a significant life stage that is often longer than childhood will help improve quality of life and health outcomes and create an "elderhood" that we are eager to embrace.

**Ruth Ann Watkins** is Board Chair of the RRF Foundation for Aging, Founding Member, Board Member and past President of the Village Chicago, and Chair of the Village Chicago Health and Wellness and Brain Health/Memory Loss Committees. She has worked tirelessly to improve the health and well-being of others through her work at the RRF. Armed with a BS in Occupational Therapy from the University of Illinois and an MBA from the University of Chicago, she previously had a long and distinguished career at the Shirley Ryan Ability Lab (formerly Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago). She is a lifelong advocate for vibrant, age-integrated communities and the wellbeing of older adults. Her advocacy includes writing, teaching, and service to many organizations, and she was a founding member of The Village Chicago.

**Next Avenue** is PBS's highly successful Internet journalism service for America's booming older population. Every issue is rich with vital news, ideas, and perspectives on issues that matter most as we age. A major contribution is their annual recognition of 50 "Influencers in Aging." Through it, Next Avenue has led the way in transforming the public's views about aging by elevating the profiles of important advocates, researchers, thought leaders, innovators, writers and experts - people like Marc Freedman, Ashton Applewhite and Louise Aronson - who continue to push beyond traditional boundaries and change the understanding of what it means to grow older. The Trailblazer Award will be accepted by Managing Editor and Senior Editor of the Money & Policy and Work & Purpose Channels **Richard Eisenberg**. Mr. Eisenberg has helped people manage their finances and careers as a writer, editor, and book author.

The Village Chicago is a member-to-member network of friendship, engagement and services for people over 50. We support all aspects of well-being through social engagement, an extensive services and referral network, health and fitness, intergenerational relationships, work and purpose. Visit us at [www.thevillagechicago.org](http://www.thevillagechicago.org) Attend the free virtual benefit and awards event, *Zooming Ahead—No Stopping Us Now!* by visiting <https://www.thevillagechicago.org/annual-benefit/>