

Darlene Kamine: AFP Cincinnati 2023 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN FUNDRAISING

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**Fundraising, support and leadership for many causes**

To those who have worked with her, the choice of **Darlene Kamine** as the 2023 recipient of the **Lifetime Achievement Award** **in Fundraising** was obvious.

Over her career, Kamine has raised tens of millions of dollars to strengthen numerous Greater Cincinnati nonprofits, especially those focused on children and education.

*Darlene Kamine*(Photo by Wendell Gibbs III, Eleven27 Media Group)

Kamine spent years supporting Adopt A Class in various roles. She’s also the founder of ProKids, a guardian ad litem program for children in the foster care system.

From 2000 to 2010, Kamine led the Cincinnati Public Schools’ Community Learning Center initiative. In 2009, she created the Community Learning Center Institute to further promote this approach to academic reform and community revitalization.



CLCI is a national leader in leveraging public school facilities as hubs of educational, recreational, cultural, health and civic partnerships.

“Darlene started with a few schools, knocked on potential partner doors and got the first ‘yes’ responses to what is now known as a national model for school and district engagement,” said Shauna Murphy, CPS’s chief of student, family and community engagement. “This Lifetime Achievement Award is more than an accolade, it’s a testament to the profound impact she has had on countless students.”

When asked about the award from the Cincinnati chapter of the **Association of Fundraising Professionals**, Kamine voiced appreciation – but also surprise. It’s not that the University of Denver-trained lawyer isn’t thankful for the recognition. She just never considered raising money the most important part of her job.

“Whenever you receive an award, you’re hopefully surprised and honored. But this one was particularly surprising because I don’t actually think of myself as a fundraiser,” said Kamine, the executive director of CLCI and a member of numerous boards.

“I’m here to do the work and support great causes,” she continued. “The fundraising is a tool to allow me to actually do the work.”

**Learning to give as a child**

Kamine’s philanthropic efforts date back to childhood. She spent her elementary school summers in Roselawn hosting bake sales and performing in talent shows to raise money for the American Cancer Society or the American Red Cross.

At the end of each summer, Kamine and her friends raced to WSAI radio station in Price Hill to deliver their donations.

“It was just part of the community culture back then,” Kamine said. “You didn’t ask your parents for a check, you figured out how to raise the money and get it done.”

Kamine secured her first grant in 1981 while working as a juvenile court magistrate. That $75,000 from the Junior League helped establish the organization that became ProKids.

“It was a lot of money 40-some years ago,” Kamine said with a chuckle.

Today, ProKids is considered a gold-star organization, preventing thousands of Hamilton County foster kids from falling through cracks.

**Laine McDonnell**, communications manager for ProKids, describes Kamine as a “force multiplier.”

“Without Darlene’s efforts to help many understand the need for advocacy on behalf of children who have been abused and neglected, ProKids might not exist,” McDonnell added.

Kamine also played a key role in Adopt A Class roughly 20 years ago. Working with its founder, Bill Burwinkel, Kamine helped transform it from an under-resourced program in one school to an organization mentoring more than 6,000 students across 32 local schools annually.

Kamine doesn’t view herself as a “fundraising professional.” Her secret is relationship building or “leveraging support,” as she called it.

“As you continue to talk about your dream and passion, groundswell grows,” Kamine said. “The collaboration of dreamers can move the dream to reality.”

**Sonya Fultz** met Kamine shortly before she became CEO of Adopt A Class in 2020. It was during the COVID-19 pandemic, a challenging time for the organization. But Kamine became the “calm in the storm” that allowed Fultz to “see the possible over the impossible.” she said.

Kamine continues to serve on the advisory board for Adopt A Class, and she remains the primary contact with its largest family foundation donor, Fultz said.

“Her ability to serve as a connector is unparalleled,” Fultz said. “She has the power to bring together people with a shared vision, follows through on levels of support to see the vision come to fruition, and celebrates the accomplishments of the work. Yet when it is time to give recognition, Darlene quietly steps back and lets others shine.

“This is the sign of a true leader,” Fultz said.

**A family that helps families**

Kamine admits she couldn’t have done this alone. She credits her husband, attorney Charles “Chuck” Kamine, and their daughter, Elida.

The first fundraiser Kamine and her husband hosted was a magic show at the Emery Theater in Over-the-Rhine. Chuck, an amateur magician, recruited former Cincinnati Bengals coach Sam Wyche, himself a magician, to serve as emcee. It raised the first $10,000 toward the creation of the Children’s Museum.

Elida, an attorney and community volunteer, started her fundraising career with a penny drive in elementary school to raise money to start the Children’s Museum, which her mother co-founded.

“My mom’s drive has always been based on justice. Whether it was visiting her courtroom in juvenile court or helping her collate meeting agenda packets for the many organizations she was involved with, I had a front row seat to a person who has always given 100% to fight to make our community better, especially for children,” Elida said.

Kamine voiced excitement about seeing friends and colleagues at the NPD luncheon at Music Hall in November. Receiving the award? She’s come to accept it. But her focus is on CLCI and her life’s work of uplifting children.

“This is wonderful, but it’s just not a ‘me’ award,” she continued. “This is a recognition of all the hard work of so many people. It’s so important to uplift the important work that people are doing every day to support our communities. For that, I’m truly grateful.”

**2023 National Philanthropy Day luncheon**

**Thursday, Nov. 16, Music Hall Ballroom**

Presented by AFP Cincinnati, the luncheon recognizes individuals and organizations for their contributions to Greater Cincinnati nonprofits. Networking: 11 a.m. Program and luncheon: 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Tickets: $100 (nonprofit) and $150 (corporate).

Tickets: [afpcincinnati.org](https://www.afpcincinnati.org/2023-national-philanthropy-day/)

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