



GALLERY OF DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS INDUCTEES 2017

GWENDOLYN B. GUSTER WELCH has a passion for public service, civic engagement, and cultivating community partnerships, which is why she has spent most of her life working to make a difference in her hometown of Birmingham, Alabama.

An avid supporter of Birmingham's 19 libraries, Welch has served on the Birmingham Public Library Board since 2002. She has served as board president four times. In 2012, she received the American Library Association Trustee Citation Award, the highest honor that the Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations awards its members. Also in 2012, the Birmingham City Council presented her its Outstanding Citizens Medal. On two separate occasions in 2017, the Birmingham City Council recognized Welch for her commitment to the community, first naming her as one of Birmingham's "Hidden Figures," and later selecting her as an honoree for its Gallery of Distinguished Citizens.

Welch is retired from the Birmingham Board of Education after 35 years of service. She has worked as a school media specialist, attendance/hearing officer and executive assistant to the superintendent. While on loan from the school system, Welch served as the Education Liaison in the Office of the Mayor. This assignment gave Welch an inside view of the needs of the city's schools, libraries, museums, and other city partners. She successfully advocated for increased city funding and services for various educational programs during her tenure. While working for the school system and serving as a supportive parent, Welch was active in the PTA, the Cub Scouts, and the Literacy Council of Central Alabama. When there were no males available to lead her son's Cub Scouts in the 1970s, Welch served as the Cub Scout Den Leader. When the Literacy Council of Central Alabama needed volunteers, Welch stepped up to read weekly in the council's Partners in Reading Program. Her volunteerism led her to represent the Literacy Council at children's conferences across the state and to receive the Council's "You Make the Difference Award."

Welch has also served as a Jefferson County Department of Human Resources foster parent; a charter member and past president of the Brenda's Brown Bosom Buddies, which is a breast cancer support organization; president of the Birmingham Arts and Cultural Commission; secretary of the Helping Hands Community Housing Project; and several other community committees.

Welch is a graduate of Birmingham's Western-Olin High School. She has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Miles College, a master's degree in Education and a certificate of Advanced Study in Education (AA) from UAB, and a certification in Educational Administration from Alabama State University.

She is married to Arthur L. Welch, and she is the mother of Eric L. Welch Guster.