

**Media Contact: Jay Kim**  
Foundation for MetroWest  
[jkim@foundationformetrowest.org](mailto:jkim@foundationformetrowest.org)  
Phone: (508) 647-2260

3 Eliot Street  
Natick, MA 01760  
[www.foundationformetrowest.org](http://www.foundationformetrowest.org)



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Foundation for MetroWest Graduates Inaugural Cohort of Emerging Leaders Academy

**May 22, 2018 (Natick, MA)** — The Foundation for MetroWest congratulates today the inaugural cohort of the selective Emerging Leaders Academy. These 16 individuals represent a talented group of nonprofit and social sector professionals who are committed to strengthening the MetroWest region.

“Supporting a new generation of leaders is vitally important to the nonprofit sector. Knowledgeable and skilled leadership is crucial for the effectiveness of organizations,” said Judy Salerno, Executive Director of the Foundation for MetroWest. “We appreciate their willingness to engage and learn through this program, and are thrilled to welcome these talented leaders into the Foundation for MetroWest community.”

The Emerging Leaders Academy is a cohort-based program that provides a substantial yet accessible introduction to leadership development. The program is specifically tailored for manager- and director-level leaders who are new to or aspiring towards senior management positions, and touches upon the following learning themes throughout the program: Identifying one’s unique development journey; self-awareness and mindfulness; diversity and inclusion; effective workplace communication; and melding reflection with action.

“Being part of Emerging Leaders Academy was a terrific experience. Through the Academy I was better able to understand both my strengths and weaknesses in order to be an effective leader. I also gained confidence in the skills I already possessed. It was also a tremendous experience to meet and network with other individuals who are also hoping to become leaders in MetroWest. I hope the connections we have made will help us all as we move forward in our careers,” shared Sonia Shah, Development Director of MetroWest Legal Services.

Joshua Walther, Assistant Director of the Dedham Community Association said: “I was honored and proud to even be considered as a member of the first cohort of the Emerging Leaders Academy. For me the program was not about being taught how to be a leader but more about allowing me to figure out the leader I already was and how I can grow. Over the last 10 weeks the program has helped me recognize the type of leader that I am, the skills I already possess and to pinpoint the areas I need to grow in so I can continue to be successful in the future. Being able to learn from and network with a group of people from diverse backgrounds and organizations was just icing on the cake!”

The 2018 Foundation for MetroWest Emerging Leaders Academy cohort includes:

- **Sawyer Bethel**, Executive Director, OUT MetroWest
- **Linda Clifford**, Assistant Director of Senior Services, Wellesley Council on Aging
- **Alyssa Freda**, Site Director – Fiske Elementary, Lextended Day
- **Jennifer LaBollita**, Assistant Director – Bilingual Education Department, Framingham Public Schools
- **Pallavi Mande**, Director of Blue Cities, Charles River Watershed Association
- **Denise Reid**, Communications & Development Coordinator, Hudson Public Schools
- **Whitney Retallic**, Director of Education, Walden Woods Project
- **Raquel Riberti-Bill**, Program Director, ProGente Connections
- **Aneise Ruggles**, Program Manager, Metalwerx
- **Sonia Shah**, Development Director, MetroWest Legal Services
- **Angela Stokes**, Director of Community Mentoring Programs, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass/MetroWest
- **Lucy Sweeney**, Associate Director of Development, The Food Project

- **Melanie Torres**, Director of Programs and Operations, Project Citizenship
- **Joshua Walther**, Assistant Director, Dedham Community Association, Inc.
- **Joshua Weidenhamer**, Director of Day Habilitation, Minute Man Arc for Human Services, Inc.
- **Julie Wood**, Director of Projects, Charles River Watershed Association



Figure 1 – The 2018 cohort of the Foundation for MetroWest Emerging Leaders Academy.

To learn more about the Emerging Leaders Academy, please visit [www.foundationformetrowest.org/cpe](http://www.foundationformetrowest.org/cpe)

About Foundation for MetroWest

Established in 1995, the Foundation for MetroWest is the only community foundation serving the 33 cities and towns in the region. We promote philanthropy in the region, help donors maximize the impact of their local giving, serve as a resource for local nonprofits and enhance the quality of life for all our residents. Since inception, the Foundation has granted \$15 million to charitable organizations and currently stewards more than \$22 million in charitable assets for current needs and future impact. To learn more, please visit [www.foundationformetrowest.org](http://www.foundationformetrowest.org) or call 508-647-2260.

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