

Biography of Betty Van Uum

Betty Flynn Van Uum was born September 3, 1943. She is the widow of Richard Van Uum, Jr. She married Stanley Schechter, local attorney, September 23, 1990. They have a blended family of four children - Richard Van Uum and Katherine Van Uum; Deborah Chiaramonte (Marc Levine) and Elizabeth Fox (Pat), four grandchildren - Raphaella Chairmonte, Michel Chairmonte (Allison), Jack Fox and Amelia Van Uum and three great-grandchildren, Max, Wes and Georgie Chiaramonte.

After the death of her first husband in 1969 Ms. Van Uum began what would become a 50 plus year career of public advocacy.

In 1969, working with the Congress of Racial Equality, she helped organized and strategize a civil rights campaign that resulted in the integration of the work force of the brewing industry nationally. It was here she learned how the levers of power could be activated for change.

In 1971, with the emergence of the women's movement she joined several other local women to form the National Women's Political Caucus in Missouri. The group believed that for a country to realize its potential it needed the brains and participation of all its citizens, regardless of sex. They dedicated themselves to electing women to all levels of government. It was in this period that she "found her voice and made lifelong friendships" that sustained her throughout her career.

In 1972 and 1973, she joined the Women's Political Caucus' first candidate, Sue Shear, in Jefferson City to fight for the Equal Rights Amendment. Ms. Van Uum was the first Executive Director of the Equal Rights Amendment Coalition in Missouri and the first woman in Missouri to serve as a professional lobbyist.

In 1974, Ms. Van Uum was the first woman elected to the St. Louis County Council, representing an area of approximately 160,000 people. She served two terms from 1975 to 1983. She served as Chair of the Council's Justice, Health and Welfare committee. Her term was marked by emphasis on land use policy, health care, and juvenile court reform among other issues.

Ms. Van Uum joined the administration of Chancellor Arnold Grobman at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in 1983. As the campus' senior officer for public affairs and economic development, she has served in the administration of seven Chancellors, including the current Chancellor, Kristin Sobolik. During Ms. Van Uum's tenure, the university more than doubled its acreage and added many new facilities including the Touhill Center for Performing Arts, the Clay Center for Molecular Electronics, Computer Center Building and the Science Research Building. In addition to campus facilities, Ms. Van Uum was instrumental in securing the funding for reconstruction of Natural Bridge Great Street, I-70 and the placement of three MetroLink stations at the university.

Ms. Van Uum was active nationally with the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC), now APLU, where she was as a founding member of the Council of Government Affairs and a member of the Committee on the Urban Agenda. Ms. Van Uum was one of three invited experts in urban university issues to testify before the United States Congress concerning the re-authorization of the Higher Education Act.

In 1994 and again in 1999, Ms. Van Uum was appointed by Governor Mel Carnahan to serve as a Commissioner for the Bi-State Development Agency of the Missouri-Illinois metropolitan area also known as METRO, St. Louis' public transportation system including MetroLink, the bus system, St. Louis Downtown Airport, the St. Louis Gateway Cruise Boats and the tram to the top of the St. Louis Arch. She was elected Chairman of the Board in 1998 and 1999 and also served as the interim director of the agency.

In 2001, Ms. Van Uum's University responsibilities increased to include economic development, reflecting the University of Missouri's newly adopted mission of teaching, research, service and economic development. She conceived and managed the development of the business technology and research park along I-70 at the northern boundary of the UMSL campus that would create partnerships between the university and businesses for their mutual benefit. During 2007, the new corporate headquarters of Express Scripts International, a Fortune 500 company, opened and became the first tenant with commitments to that partnership. The partnership and co-

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location of ESI and the University of Missouri – St. Louis is unique in the country. It is estimated that 6500 new jobs were created as a result of the public investment.

Ms. Van Uum led a consortium of the University of Missouri – St. Louis, the City of Normandy, and North County Inc., in cooperation with East-West Gateway Council of Governments, St. Louis County, and MoDOT in the Natural Bridge Great Street initiative. It was one of four pilot projects selected to create a new paradigm designed to help communities expand the way they think of their streets. The goal is to spark economic and social benefits for communities by centering them in interesting, lively and attractive streets that serve all modes of transportation. The first phase of the project, from Hanley Road to Natural Bridge Road, was completed during the summer of 2016. To build on the significant public investment of \$20 million, the university created a community development corporation, University Square, which is charged with stimulating economic development in the area. Ms. Van Uum serves as the chair of the organization. Currently she is working with several developers and local municipal officials to encourage positive private investment in the area.

Ms. Van Uum has provided political analysis for local and national media and political organizations and regularly speaks to various groups about public affairs.

Ms. Van Uum served on many community boards, including the St. Louis Forest Park Master Plan Committee, the Board of Legal Services Corporation of Eastern Missouri, Inc., and in 1999, she served as the chair of St. Louis' First Night Celebration, an alcohol free performing arts New Year's Eve celebration. In 2008, Governor-elect Jay Nixon appointed her to his Transition Team.

During her 50 years of public service, Ms. Van Uum received many awards including the Thomas Jefferson Award, the University of Missouri – St. Louis Trailblazer Award, the Women of Worth Award from the St. Louis OWLs, the 1997 YWCA Women of Achievement for Public Affairs, Elijah Lovejoy Award and the Women's Political Caucus Leadership Award. She was the 2004 recipient of the Women's Justice Award presented by the St. Louis Women's Bar Association. In 2005, she received the NAACP award for Community Service. In 2006, she was honored by the St. Louis FORUM with their Trailblazer Award. In 2008, she received the Henry Sutton Governmental Affairs Award from the St. Louis County Historical Society and also received the Soroptimist Internal Women Making a Difference Award. In 2009, she was honored by the Women's Legislators of Missouri in their annual DeVerne Calloway awards ceremony. In 2011, she received the Regional Economic Development Award from Winning Women, an organization advancing women's participation in the region. In 2016, she received North County Inc.'s Excellence in Partnership Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions to North County for her work with the Great Streets Natural Bridge Corridor Partnership. She was honored in 2017 by the Salvation Army, Midland Division, for Doing the Most Good in the Community Development category. Most recently, in 2019, she was honored by the St. Andrews Society at their annual dinner as a Remarkable Ageless St. Louisian

Throughout her career, Ms. Van Uum has been tireless in her support for the advancement of women and people of color in all phases of public sector activities. She has actively supported and served as a mentor for women running for office, and women seeking appointments to public boards and commissions and the judiciary.