

Kathie Durbin was named director of Montgomery County's Department of Alcohol Beverage Services in May 2021, becoming the first woman to lead the County department and one of the few women to lead a similar department in the country.

As director, Kathie has focused on the four C's—culture, collaboration, communication, and customer service—to foster growth and innovation in traditional areas such as technology and customer service, as well as issues related to racial equity, social justice, and sustainability.

Becoming director during the COVID-19 pandemic, Kathie faced unprecedented challenges as the hospitality industry was hit particularly hard by pandemic-related restrictions. Kathie spearheaded interventions and initiatives to help small businesses thrive during this difficult time, including reduced fees, enhanced outreach, designated "streeteries," contactless services, increased local products on store shelves, managing supply chain issues and improved technology.

These new initiatives enhanced the department's core mission of serving as the alcohol wholesaler of beer, wine, and spirits for Montgomery County and operating 26 retail stores throughout the County. The department also manages alcohol licensing, enforcement, and education for more than 1,000 businesses.

Kathie was recognized in 2016 by the National Alcohol Licensing Professional Association for Innovation and Leadership and again in 2017 by the Center for Alcohol Policy as Alcohol Regulator of the Year.

Kathie is the vice president of the Maryland Alcohol Licensing Association and a board member of the National Alcohol Beverage Control Association Regulatory Committee. She is a longtime board member of the Responsible Hospitality Institute and the Responsible Retailing Forum, national organizations that work to support the safe sale and service of alcohol. She is considered an expert in the field of alcohol regulation, education, and policy and frequently speaks at national and international conferences.

Kathie started her career on the front lines of hospitality, working as a bartender and manager at local restaurants, including the popular Irish pub, Durty Nelly's. As the Executive Director of the Montgomery County Restaurant Association, she worked to craft meaningful alcohol legislation to benefit small business in the community.

Through these early experiences, Kathie recognized an opportunity for people working in hospitality and government policymakers to work together to make changes for the better.

As the mother of three adult daughters, Kathie knows first-hand how prioritizing health and safety affects Montgomery County families and how blazing a trail in a male-dominated industry sets an example for the younger generation of women.