

IT'S AN HONOR

Six women reach for heights to earn a YWCA Tribute

The Grand Rapids Press

They include a business owner, an arts advocate, a lawyer, a community volunteer, an educator and a student. Their accomplishments are varied, but each has reached beyond the ordinary to earn a Tribute.

The six women next week will receive the YWCA's prestigious Tribute Awards, presented annually to recognize the exceptional contributions of local women.

This year's awards luncheon is the ninth since the program began in 1977. For the first decade, the awards were presented every other year, but became an annual event beginning in 1989.

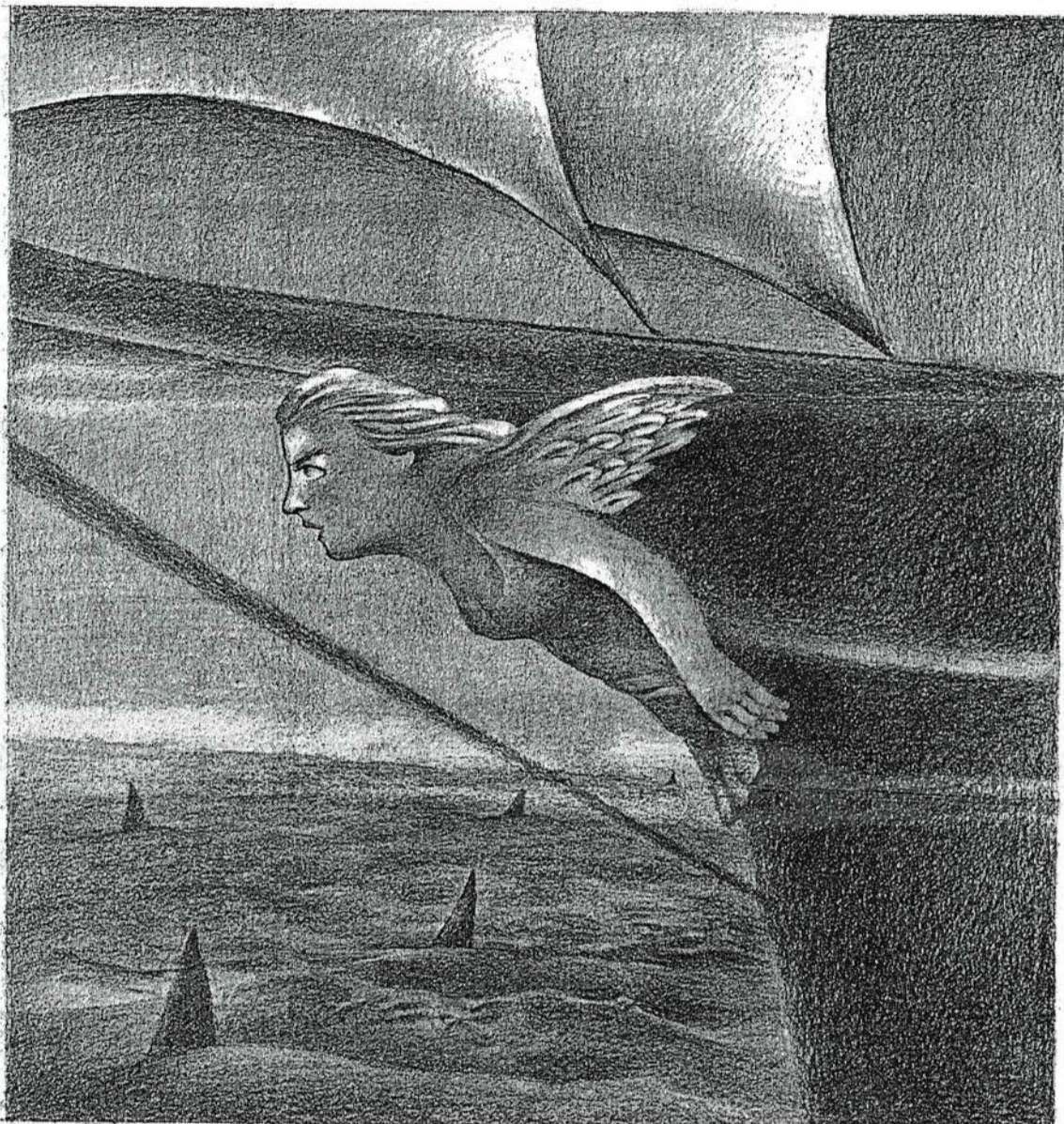
■ Profiles of the winners are on B3.

Each year, awards have been presented in five categories: advocacy, arts and communication, business, management and industry, community service and professions. This year, a student category was added to encourage young women to follow the examples of the other award winners, said Diane Martin, YWCA public relations coordinator.

"I think those of us who attended the luncheons saw an opportunity for role modeling, for young people to see the accomplishments of others," Martin said. "Plus, there are a lot of students who have accomplished a lot on their own."

In addition, 30 women who work for the companies sponsoring this year's luncheon will be recognized by their employers for their leadership and commitment, Martin said.

The awards will be presented at a luncheon from noon to 1:30 p.m. Nov. 18, in the Ambassador Ballroom of the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. Cost is \$35 per person. Advance reservations are required by Saturday. Call 459-4681.



PRESS ILLUSTRATION/DIANN BARTNICK



“It's easy to write your views or lecture about them. It's harder to live them.”

JAN LUNQUIST
ADVOCACY WINNER



“I don't think of myself as crazy, but then I never thought to ask for money.”

MATTIE MAE HOLLIMAN
COMMUNITY SERVICE WINNER



“Music has always been a comfort to me . . . If I can facilitate love of the arts now, I will.”

STELLA ROYCE
ARTS WINNER



“I believe people should have the right to control their own lives.”

MARILYN LANKFER
PROFESSIONS WINNER



“You have to have a positive attitude to weather the storm of opposition.”

BIRTHALE LAMBERT
BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT AND INDUSTRY



“I had to grow up real fast, but . . . I'll be ready for anything else that comes my way.”

CRISSA HEARD
STUDENT WINNER

Adult responsibilities came early to an outstanding teen

Stories by Terri Finch Hamilton
The Grand Rapids Press

High school senior Crissa Heard works at a McDonald's restaurant, is a football and basketball cheerleader, played softball last spring and hopes to run track this season.

She also lives on her own and supports herself by working 45 hours a week.

Crissa, 18, a senior at East Kentwood High School, is the first winner of the new Tribute student award. She's being honored for what Tribute organizers call "accomplishments under extraordinary circumstances."

Her mother left home when Crissa was 5, and when she was 16 Crissa felt she



Crissa Heard

had to move away from an intolerable home situation. She sought help at the Advisory Center for Teens, which referred her to Homeless Youth Services. They helped her find an apartment and gave her money for the security deposit and first month's rent.

She still takes independent living classes at Homeless Youth Services, when she isn't working 45-hour weeks at McDonald's and Chi-Chi's, studying, at cheerleading practice,

STUDENT

or doing all the other things a person on her own needs to do.

"At first I was scared. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know if I could take on the responsibilities of an adult," Crissa said.

"But now I'm used to it — it just seems normal."

Other teens would hardly consider it normal, she admitted.

"All the money I have goes to rent," she said. "Other kids can go to their parents if they need gas money or car insurance money, but I have to watch everything I have. I can't just decide to go somewhere or do something like my friends can."

She's looking forward to attending the Tribute awards luncheon, she said, to see women who are successful and independent.

"So many kids don't have anybody to look up to, to push them," she said. "I haven't really had anybody like that, but I'd like to."

Crissa plans to attend Ferris State University and major in criminal justice. Her high school counselor is helping her arrange financial aid.

Her independent lifestyle has been tough, but it has helped her, too, she said. "I feel I'm a lot more mature than other kids," Crissa said. "I had to grow up real fast, but that means I'll be ready for anything else that comes my way."

COMMUNITY SERVICE

'Do it well or not at all'

For 50 years Mattie Mae Holliman has been virtually a one-woman volunteer agency, providing essentials to people in need, or putting them in touch with the officials and programs to help.

Working out of her Southeast Side home, "Mother Holliman" has helped countless individuals find food, transportation, clothing and shelter.

"To make someone in need happy makes me feel good," she said.

Holliman is founder and executive director of the Community Volunteer project, offering information, referral and counseling. Through her Community Volunteer Gardens Project, she has improved community involvement and increased food production.

"People have said to me 'You must either be very well-paid or crazy,'" Holliman said with a chuckle. "I tell them neither. I don't think of myself as crazy, but then I never thought to ask for money."

Holliman is down-to-earth, quick to laugh and follows a simple philosophy: "If a task is begun, never leave it 'til it's done. Be it great or be it small, do it well or not at all," recited Holliman, a widowed mother of two grown daughters.

"Doing what I do takes some effort, patience and know-how, and you have to know where to find the expertise, the legal advice. I've had wonderful cooperation from businesses and agencies."

She's a past winner of the W.W. Plummer Humanitarian Award given at the Giants award banquet and won 1987 United Way Volunteer of the Year.

Still, Holliman doesn't dwell on what she has done — only on what's left to accomplish. "There are still so many needs — more job training for people, better housing . . .

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Sharing facts on sexuality is a demanding mission

The Grand Rapids Press

If you're a dinner guest at Jan Lunquist's house, you can pass the pepper or ask for the rolls, but please hold the blonde jokes. Or any other joke that offers "humor" at the expense of someone else.

She finds those jokes "hurtful and offensive." So no matter who the guest is, Lunquist speaks up. "It's guaranteed to stop the dinner conversation," she said.

Lunquist, education director of Planned Parenthood Centers of West Michigan, wins the advocacy award. For her, advocacy is more than a way to earn a paycheck.

"I try to live and behave my values, beliefs, philosophies," said Lunquist, 46. "I try not to be silent about things that are important to me — whether I'm at work or in a social situation. It's easy to write your views or lecture about them. It's harder to live them. That's what advocacy is to me. It's the daily life stuff."

Her mission is to provide education about reproductive health. Co-author of a peer

education manual, she has focused much of her energy on providing training and education for adolescents.

Since 1979 Lunquist has designed and implemented Planned Parenthood education programs. She's sought out by school districts to present lectures and training on sexuality education for teachers and counselors throughout Michigan. She has authored sexuality curriculum for churches and continuously writes and is awarded grants to provide training and education for adolescents.

Lunquist has been a member of the Kent County Community AIDS Council since its inception several years ago and for the past two years has served as chair. She is past chairperson of the Kent County Council for the



Jan Lunquist

Belief in self-determination drives this lawyer

The Grand Rapids Press

Hospital patients on life support and pregnant teen-agers struggling with a decision have a common link that fascinates Marilyn Lankfer.

"I like looking at things from a self-determination viewpoint. I believe people should have the right to control their own lives," said Lankfer, winner of the professions award.

A partner in the law firm of Varnum, Riddering, Schmidt & Howlett, Lankfer, 44, has been in the forefront of the effort to establish the rights of hospital patients, and is a leader in the development of living wills.

"In the last 10 to 20 years we've been able to prolong people's lives, and a lot of money has been spent at the end of their lives," she said. "That money could be put to better use at the beginning of their lives, in prevention. Things are a little out of whack in our society."

Her mission is to help get it back in whack. "I like to cause change for the better," she said.

In many ways she has carried her legal

expertise into her volunteer work as a community advocate. Lankfer is a member of the ethics committees of Butterworth and Metropolitan Hospitals, a member of the Hospice Board of

Directors, the Butterworth Foundation, the Recuperation Center, Inc. and the Heartside Ministry Board of Directors.

As past president of the Planned Parenthood Board of Directors, she worked to preserve the medical and educational programs in the face of reduced federal support. She also worked to bring together a volunteer group of lawyers who advised and supported young women in their right to make their own decisions regarding pregnancy.

"I wish I knew where it came from," she laughed. "I think it's part of my personality."



Marilyn Lankfer

PROFESSIONS

She was hired in 1978 as the firm's second female attorney, later hired as the first woman partner, and recently became the first woman in the firm's 100-plus-year-history elected by her peers to the six-attorney management committee that runs the firm.

"It's a real honor," she said. "But as usual, I'm trying to figure out ways to change the firm. Attorneys tend to work too hard, and I'm working on a way to offer alternative work schedules that will benefit the employees and the firm."

All of this "gives me a real chance to be a role model, but the most questions I get have to do with how I balance a career and family," said the mother of four.

Her husband, Jeff, also an attorney at the firm, "is what keeps it all together," she said. "You feel pulled in 101 directions." And that's one of the things she tells other women who ask.

"Whatever you do, don't try to be a superwoman — you'll just get burned out," Lankfer said. "You have to learn not to worry about the things you can't do."

Arts booster knows how music goes to the soul

The Grand Rapids Press

Stella Royce's musical roots go back to an often lonely, disadvantaged childhood. Orphaned when she was 5, she thought of the radio as a soothing, constant friend.

"One of my earliest recollections is sitting with my ear to the radio, singing along," said Royce, 65, winner of the arts award. "Music has always been a comfort to me."

Arts organizations in Grand Rapids have long benefited from Royce's hard work and dedication. She has served as a board member of Opera Grand Rapids, St. Cecilia Music Society and the President's Club of Interlochen Arts Academy. She is founder of the Summerfest School program, and serves on the board of directors of the Grand Rapids Symphony and the Grand Rapids Ballet. She has also co-chaired fund-raisers for scholarships to Grand Valley State University's music department.

"I came from a background that didn't

ARTS

make it easy for me to hear music as a child," Royce said. "If I can facilitate love of the arts now, I will."

She never made arts her business. Royce has worked in the American embassies in the Dominican Republic and Mexico City and with husband Charles, co-owns the Royce Rolls Ringer Company in Grand Rapids, which manufactures and sells rolling carts and dollies for hospitals and nursing homes.

Royce moved to Grand Rapids in 1953 when she married, and joined St. Cecilia Music Society soon after, singing in their programs. "I wasn't spectacular or anything," Royce said with a chuckle, "but I enjoyed it a great deal."

She still sings to the radio, "but I have to confess I don't sing to what's in vogue now," she laughed.

Royce and her husband received the Festival '86 Arts Award. That same year, the Royce Auditorium at St. Cecilia Music

Society was dedicated to them for their tireless efforts on behalf of the organization.

Royce also volunteers as a tutor for Spanish-speaking students and is a volunteer coordinator for "Special

People," a festival for handicapped children and adults. Through Wyoming Community Education, she tutors students who neither write nor speak English.

But mostly, she tries to spread her love of music, and admits dismay that it isn't always a priority for others.

"Arts is always the first thing they cut," said the mother of four. "It seems so short-sighted to cut it from schools. It's such an important part of life. It's what makes your soul work."



Stella Royce

ADVOCACY

Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect and is a board member of the Butterworth Center for Women and Children.

Plenty of statistics are available about teen sexuality, Lunquist prefers other methods of gauging her success.

"I trust the anecdotal stuff," Lunquist said. "I get phone calls, sometimes years later, and they almost always start out 'You probably don't remember me, but . . .'" Lunquist taught them how to talk to their kids about sex or how to cope with their own sexuality.

She recalls a high school teacher who was vehemently opposed to attending a mandatory sex education in-service she taught.

"After he taught it in his class for six weeks, he was a convert," she said happily. "He said 'You were right — these kids need to hear this. I will fight now to teach this subject.'"

Lunquist paused, still moved by it. "I can go for two years on a phone call like that," she said.

BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT

Business as usual means helping others

The Grand Rapids Press

When Birthale Lambert started her company in 1985 she had \$25. Enough, she says, "to get some pencils and paper and write my business plan."

Since then, her company, Professional Nursing Force, has grown from a staff of two to 100 full and part-time employees.

"The first thing is knowing you can do it," Lambert said. "The second thing is being willing to do the hard work necessary, I think the drive is in-born to a degree, but it's a seed that's watered over the years."

And don't discount her mother's influence, through faith in her daughter and a lot of homespun wisdom.

"She'd say things like, 'The sky's the limit' and 'There are a thousand ways to skin a cat' — a lot of cliches," Lambert said. "But if one wouldn't work, another would."

Professional Nursing Force is a home health care agency that provides private duty nursing care for individuals and general staffing for institutions, industries and organizations.

It isn't easy being an African-American woman business owner, said Lambert, the single mother of a son in his early 20s.

"You have to have a positive attitude to weather the storm of

opposition you'll get," she said. "There's still an ingrained philosophy about women: She'll get married, she'll get pregnant, she won't stick with this project for very long."

Beyond her own success, Lambert spends countless hours mentoring other women interested in pursuing higher educational goals and starting their own businesses. For 15 years she has been a volunteer tutor for nursing students.

Sometimes she's dog-tired before a tutoring session with a Grand Valley State University student, but driven by enthusiasm and supported by her deep religious beliefs, Lambert somehow finds time and energy to give to work, family, home and the community.

"You spread your knowledge and your talents around," she said firmly. "When you're selfish, you lose."

Lambert modifies her employees' work schedules to allow them to return to school, and encourages them to do so. In return, she expects them all to volunteer some time to the community.

"I was always taught to be a good, honest person, to do the right thing," she said.

"I'm not a ruthless, dog-eat-dog business person. You don't have to be. Those faces you pass on the way up are the same faces you'll see on the way down if you fall."



Birthale Lambert