

Deadline nears for YWCA Tribute Awards luncheon

The Grand Rapids Press

Reservations are due Monday for the YWCA Tribute Awards luncheon and celebration, honoring seven area women for outstanding accomplishments.

The luncheon is from noon to 1:30 Nov. 10 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel's Ambassador Ballroom. Seating starts at 11:45 a.m.

Tickets are \$40 per person. Call the YWCA at 459-4681 for reservations.

This year's winners are: Kate

Pew Wolters, advocacy; June Hamersma, arts and communication; Faye Richardson, business, management and industry; Alecia Woodrick, community service; Judge Janet Haynes, professions; Doris Zuidema, sports and fitness; and Antonia Henry, student winner.

Profiles of the honored women will be featured Nov. 9 in The Press' Flair section.

The YWCA started the Tribute Awards in 1987 to recognize local women for their many accomplishments.

FLAIR

THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

STANDING TALL

YWCA Tribute Awards get bigger as women's accomplishments keep growing

Stories by Pat Shellenbarger and Terri Finch Hamilton
The Grand Rapids Press

When nearly 800 people pack an Amway Grand Plaza Hotel ballroom Monday for the annual YWCA Tribute Awards luncheon, they'll notice for the first time there's no keynote speaker.

There's no room. The annual celebration honoring women for outstanding contributions to the community has gotten bigger and bigger since it debuted in 1987. The sold-out event has added categories and offered more creative introductions of the winners.

Tribute has become one of the area's hottest tickets. Here and on page L3, meet the seven women honored this year. They are recognized for their work in advocacy, arts and communication, business, management and industry, community service, professions, sports and fitness. In addition, a student is recognized each year for being on the right track, and to inspire her to continue to strive for excellence.

Woman's push for diversity helps society and Steelcase

Prejudice is not only morally wrong, it's bad for business. That's why Faye Richardson functions as a diversity advocate for Steelcase Inc.

"When people think of diversity, they think, 'Oh, we have to be more sensitive to people of different races or gender,'" she said. "For us, it's more than that. As a company we are looking at all the ways people are different and how we might use those differences, as well as similarities, to get the most out of employees at different levels."



Faye Richardson,
Business Management & Industry Award

Richardson developed an extensive training program to teach Steelcase's North American employees the importance of diversity. She also examines corporate policies that might inadvertently exclude certain employees, suppliers and dealers, and she is a member of Steelcase's executive management team.

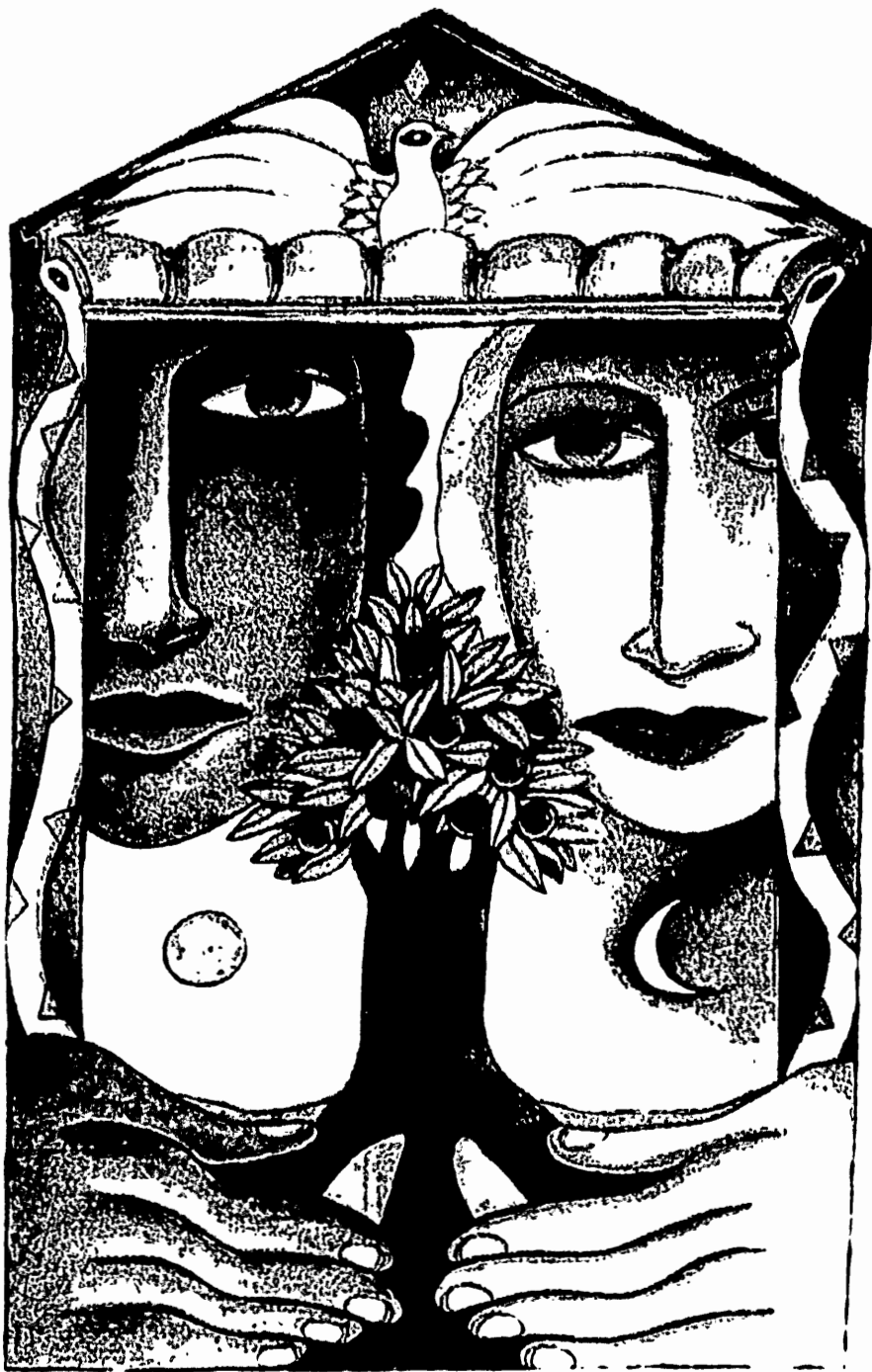
A graduate of Oakland University, Richardson joined Steelcase 16 years ago, held various positions and four years ago was promoted to a newly created job, director of corporate diversity and inclusion strategies.

"We wanted a much more explicit statement of our commitment to improving our diversity," said James P. Hackett, Steelcase president and chief executive officer. Richardson was chosen to articulate that. She takes a positive approach, not criticizing the company for its failures but looking for ways to increase the number of minority employees, suppliers and dealers, Hackett said.

Giving all people an equal chance makes good business sense, Richardson said, because "our market is diverse." By improving the company's diversity, "you can save money; you can increase profits," she said.

Her commitment to equal opportunity goes beyond her job. She serves on numerous community boards in all her pursuits. Richardson is an advocate for including people of all backgrounds. "It's part of my passion," she said, "because what it means is we are effectively helping people to be the best that they can."

— Pat Shellenbarger



PRESS ILLUSTRATION: DAMIAN BARTSCH

For a closer look at the other YWCA Tribute winners, below, see Page L3



Janet Hoynes,
Professions Award



Jane Namersma,
Arts & Communication Award



Berie J. Zaldama,
Sport & Fitness Award



Kate Pore Walters,
Advocacy Award



Abiola Woodrick,
Community Service Award



Antonio Henry,
Student Award

Tribute winners stand tall among peers

The Grand Rapids Press

Here are profiles of six of the seven winners of this year's YWCA Tribute Awards. A profile of the seventh winner, Faye Richardson, who will receive the Business, Management & Industry Award, appears on Page L1.

Calvin College official brings world of ideas to Grand Rapids area

June Hamersma would be a great "Jeopardy" contestant. World affairs for 200, Alex. Or pop culture. Or arts. Or religion. "There's not any area of life that I'm not terribly interested in," Hamersma said.

She reads four or five newspapers a day. She prides herself on knowing all the latest trends, all the cutting-edge ideas.

Then she brings them to Grand Rapids.

"We live in an incredible world," said Hamersma, 68, director of The January Series of Calvin College, a monthlong program of speakers that has twice been named best campus lecture series in the nation. "I want to bring in scholars, authors, culture buffs — people who are the best in their field."

"It doesn't matter if you agree with them or not," Hamersma said. "You have to hear what they say — then hold that up to the light of what you hold to be true and beautiful."

"A lot of what's out there is not true or beautiful, but whether you agree or not, it's important — incredibly important — to know."

Every year, there's at least one speaker who's controversial, she said. "I get it from the left and the right." She grinned. "That's when I'm sure we're doing something right."

The controversy last year was over the series booking Charles Murray, author of "The Bell Curve." At the time, Hamersma's husband, John, put his hand on her shoulder and said "June, where do you think you'll be in a month?"

"I said, 'Honey, I'll be right here, in the same place but I will have suffered,'" Hamersma said. "We took plenty of heat, but it was always from people who hadn't read the book. If you know something is right, you go with it. You don't hang back."

The series averages 1,400 people a lecture in the middle of the day, in the middle of January in Michigan. When Hamersma took over as director of the series in 1986, the lectures were attended by about 50 Calvin students and professors.

"Every year people say, 'You should charge for this,'" Hamersma said. "It's critically important to me that it remain free. I call it a free liberal arts education for the community."

While concerned about matters of the mind, Hamersma also deals with matters of the heart. She is involved with Hospice of West Michigan, Hope Network, Butterworth Hospital and Pine Rest Christian Hospital.

"I'm a person of great enthusiasm," Hamersma said. She has two grown children and a 3-year-old grandson who some might assume helps keep her young. But Hamersma does that herself. She gets up at 4:30 a.m. five days a week and hits the gym at 5:30.

It doesn't assure a good night's sleep. "I'm going to do the January series," she said, "until it doesn't keep me up at night."



June Hamersma, Arts & Communication Award

intentions, but some of them just don't know what to do. Sometimes it's ignorance, substance abuse, sexual abuse.

"What I hear from so many kids is that they love and adore their parents. What they want is for the problem to be fixed, not to be ripped out of their families. Sometimes parents can be turned around. They can get off drugs or alcohol. Sometimes that's doable."

When it isn't, Haynes is proud that Kent County kids "don't languish in foster care." Kent County Probate Court has received national recognition for its 90 percent adoption rate.

"You see really sad and depressing situations," Haynes said, "but you also see so many instances of enriched human spirit — people calmly and confidently triumphing over circumstances they're put into."

"Spouses taking care of disabled partners for years, cheerfully. Families who adopt multiply impaired kids. That more than makes up for the greed and stupidity out there."

— Terri Finch Hamilton

Retired athletic director elevated women's sports programs at Calvin

Back in 1963, when Doris Zuidema joined the Calvin College faculty, the women's athletic program offered only three sports.

Zuidema, who became Calvin's first women's athletic director in 1965, recalls chalking lines for badminton classes and teaching athletics in a building without heat or showers.

"At that time, you did everything," she said. "You didn't have equipment managers who put up your nets for you. You were it."

Over the next three decades, she brought the women's program up to a par with men's sports. Today the Calvin women's athletic program includes nine sports and has earned a national reputation for excellence. Zuidema, who retired in 1996, similarly influenced the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association to expand opportunities for women athletes.

"Doris has a real quiet style of leadership," said Connie Bellows, Calvin's human resources director, who nominated Zuidema for the award. "She just brought a lot of opportunities to young women that women who are in their mid-40s and above didn't have."

Zuidema suggested that Mary Schutten, a Calvin student in the early 1970s and member of the women's basketball team, consider a career in physical education.

"She kind of persuaded me it would be a good way to go," said Schutten, now chair of Calvin's physical education and recreation department. "At that time, it was not a popular thing for women to do."

Zuidema, however, was an excellent coach, teacher and role model. "I think that her greatest quality is she is a master teacher," Schutten said. "And that is what coaching is: teaching."

Over the years, Zuidema coached or taught volleyball, swimming, archery, badminton, track and field, gymnastics, basketball, tennis, racquetball, square dance, cross-country skiing, golf, field hockey, soccer, physical conditioning and bowling.

"Most coaches today have specialty areas and stick to them," said Nancy Van Noord, a former student of Zuidema's and now an associate physical education professor at Calvin. "To be able to teach all of these classes is remarkable."

Zuidema, 57, said she never considered herself a pioneer in women's athletics. "I felt like it was just part of my job," she said.

— Pat Shellenbarger



Doris J. Zuidema, Sports & Fitness Award

the Americans with Disabilities Act, to give people with disabilities an equal chance. Changing people's attitudes is more difficult, she said, though she never stops trying.

"I'm lucky enough to have had some very visible positions in this community and to come from a very visible family," she said. "For me not to use my position would be irresponsible."

Wolters will receive the Tribute Advocacy Award because of her support for the rights of people with disabilities. In the year since she resigned, she has received other awards for her philanthropic and community activities, but this one has special meaning.

"I have always secretly wanted to win a Tribute Award," she said. "All of those other awards I got because I was doing my job. This I got because of who I am. And that feels different, and it's probably more meaningful."

— Pat Shellenbarger

Community service is a hands-on activity for Grand Rapids woman

Ask Alecia Woodrick to sit on your board of directors, but don't expect her to sit still for very long.

"I'm a hands-on person," she said. "Boards are OK — we have to have them." But she really loves her tool belt. She uses it to work on Habitat for Humanity houses, including one built by women for a woman.

"Look around the site and you see gals from all over — teachers, clerks, attorneys," said Woodrick, 65. "When you volunteer, you meet people you never would have met otherwise."

The Grand Rapids native has a passion for this place. "We need a strong, healthy community, and the only way we can get that is through volunteering, whether it's giving time, talent or financial help."

She's done all three, helping Special Olympics, The Grand Rapids Art Museum, The Grand Rapids Children's Museum, Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women, Downtown Management Board and the Downtown Development Authority in Cascade.

But not always all at once. "I like to zero in on one thing, do it well, then move on to something else," Woodrick said. "If you spread yourself too thin, you're sitting, not serving."

The woman who isn't crazy about boards got involved in Special Olympics by serving on its board. She soon wanted more.

"I said, 'What I'd really like is to work with the kids,'" said Woodrick, mother of two grown children. "That's more my thing."

She developed friendships with athletes that grew beyond the Special Olympics arena. Woodrick convinced D&W Food Centers to hire people with special needs. She was instrumental in bringing the Grand Rapids Children's Museum to life. She and her husband, Bob Woodrick, with friends Shirley and Jim Balk, bought and donated the building. She visited other kids museums to create a vision for the one here.

It was her idea to make the museum strictly hands-on. "Standing in the balcony of the children's museum, looking down on the kids all dressing up in funny costumes and laughing, that never stops bringing a tear to my eye," she said. "Miracles like that come after a lot of hard work."

— Terri Finch Hamilton



Alecia Woodrick, Community Service

Judge displays firm but understanding touch in helping kids, families

Call her the listening judge. And Janet Haynes, Kent County Probate Court judge, hears a lot, handling juvenile delinquent and child abuse cases, mental commitments, wills and estates.

"Most of it has to do with patience," she said. "And treating people in a decent fashion I could be taking somebody's kids away from them and I see them nodding as I talk. I tell them I know they love their kids, and they do."

"People who have been lousy parents think people assume they don't love their kids and that's not true," added Haynes, 52, mother of two daughters. "If loving them were enough, we all wouldn't be there in court. I can't always fix the problem, but I can listen."

Haynes was a nurse before she was a lawyer. There are similarities, she said — short-term emergencies, long-term problems. Helping people. She knew she would keep that close to her heart when she put on the judge's black robe.

"I need lots of people contact," Haynes said. "I'm not the type who can just sit around and write opinions."

Haynes just completed her term as president of the Grand Rapids Bar Association, the second woman in the history of the association to be elected to the post. She serves on the Grand Rapids Foundation and a multitude of committees affecting children.

As an attorney, she specialized in family and juvenile law. Because Kent County has many programs designed to help struggling parents by the time they reach her courtroom "they're usually hard-core cases," she said.

Haynes does the best she can. "We give an all-out effort to fix the problem so that kids can stay with their birth families," she said. "People have babies with all the best



Janet Haynes, Professions Award

Local woman has blazed the way for people who have disabilities

After directing the Steelcase Foundation for a decade, watching its assets grow and helping dispense millions of dollars for worthy causes, Kate Pew Wolters was ready for a change.

But she worried some would see her resignation as proof that people with disabilities can't make it in the working world.

"To a certain degree, I felt like I was letting the disability community down," she said. "I felt to a certain degree not that I was a role model, but a trailblazer, being a woman and a person with a disability."

Wolters' misgivings were based on years of seeing discrimination directed at people with disabilities. She was born with dystrophic dwarfism and deformed hands, feet and legs.

Despite her reservations, Wolters, 40, retired from day-to-day management of the Steelcase Foundation, though she chairs its board of directors. The move freed more of her time and energy for numerous causes: education, the arts and advocacy for people who have disabilities.

She serves on numerous boards, including the Aquinas College Board of Trustees, the Grand Valley State University Foundation board and the Irving S. Gilmore International Keyboard Festival board. She also is outgoing chair of the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council and vice-chair of the National Council on Disability, to which President Clinton appointed her in 1994.

For years, she has advocated laws, such as



Kate Pew Wolters, Advocacy Award

Student seeks solutions for schools, eyes a career in medicine

As the student representative on the Grand Rapids Board of Education, Antonia Henry doesn't hesitate to speak her mind.

"Most recently I've been concerned with class size," said Henry, 17, a City High senior. "I think it puts the students and the teachers at a disadvantage."

The students aren't getting adequate teacher time, so their grades are lower, their test grades are lower.

When she voices such concerns, the school board members "nod their heads 'yes,' but I'm not sure they're the ones who have the power to do something about it," Henry said. "Actually, I think they're beginning to take us seriously and take our suggestions to heart."

It would be a mistake to ignore her. "She is so goal oriented and strives for perfection in everything," City High Principal Fred Slade said. "Her personality, intelligence, attitude and maturity — all of those are above and beyond where you expect most students are. She just wants to be a part of everything, and when she's in it, she is very, very active."

Her mom and dad (Joyce and Anthony Henry) instill in her a drive to do better.

In addition to being a nonvoting school board member, Henry is on the citywide student council, was a Congressional page last year, spoke at the 1997 Children's Summit and volunteers at Butterworth Hospital.

With a 4.0 grade point average, she plans to attend one of the nation's premier colleges, possibly Harvard, Stanford, Johns Hopkins or the University of Michigan. She spent the last two summers assisting with medical research projects and plans to become a pathologist.

"It was always paramount to do our best, especially in school," she said. "It's the only way to get ahead."

— Pat Shellenbarger



Antonia Henry, Student Award



PRESS PHOTO/ANNA MOORE BUTZNER

A congratulatory hug YWCA Tribute Award winner Kate Pew Wolters gets a hug from Mary Alice Williams after an award presentation Monday night at the Amway Grand Plaza's Ambassador Ballroom. Also honored at the 20th annual YWCA Tribute Awards were Alecia Woodrck for community service; June Hamersma for arts and communication; Janet Haynes for professions; Faye Richardson for business, management and industry; Doris J. Zuidema for sports and fitness and Antonia Henry in the student category. This year's banquet raised \$46,000 for YWCA programs dealing with domestic violence, sex assault and child sex abuse.