

# LOCAL BEAT

THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

## PRAISE of GREAT WORKS



PRESS PHOTOS/ANNA MOORE BUTZNER



**Honorable efforts** Helen Claytor, YWCA activist and volunteer, was honored with a Centennial Lifetime Achievement Award for her work with the YWCA and other community organizations in their struggle against racism as well as her efforts toward diversity. Above, a well wisher congratulates her. Pictured left, God's Kitchen volunteer coordinator Mary K. Hoodhood, on the right, was honored in the professions category with a Tribute Award and is congratulated by 2000 Tribute chairwoman Toni Turner. The YWCA celebrated women and achievements Wednesday with its annual Tribute luncheon at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. The YWCA honors women for their achievements in the arts, advocacy, business, community service, professions, sports and fitness and a student award. Other 2000 winners are: for advocacy, Marsha DeHollander, director of ACCESS (All County Congregations Emergency Support Services); for arts, Norma VanKuiken, who has worked with the Arts Council of Greater Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Ballet; for business, Terri A. Weekley, president of Weekley & Associates; for community service, Jean Enright, executive assistant to the president of Grand Valley State University; for sports & fitness, Joan M. Garety, amateur golf champion; and student Alexis Smith of Kelloggsville High School.

# FLAIR

THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS



Mary K. Hoodhood, director of Grand Rapids Meals on Wheels, gets a kiss from Ada Richardson of the God's Kitchen staff.

PRESS PHOTO/CHRIS CLARK

## A Fitting Tribute

*They have different interests, different backgrounds, these seven women, but each has been successful in her field. That's why they are being honored with this year's annual YWCA Tribute! Awards.*

In the dining room of God's Kitchen, Mary K. Hoodhood was awaiting one last volunteer to deliver Meals on Wheels to shut-ins. Workers at the nonprofit agency on South Division Avenue had finished packaging hot meals of chicken, mashed potatoes and corn, and volunteer drivers — all but one — were out delivering them.

"I'll give him five more minutes," Hoodhood said, "then I'll go do it myself."

The fact that she's used a wheelchair for 20 years in no way would deter her from seeing that every meal was delivered.

"We all have our challenges in life," Hoodhood said.

Hers is the result of a 1980 auto accident that left her a quadriplegic.

Before her recovery was complete, Hoodhood, who before her accident was an administrative assistant for the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Michigan, volunteered to coordinate delivery of

### MARY K. HOODHOOD PROFESSIONS AWARD

the meals for the then-nascent Meals on Wheels program. Back then, it

provided meals to about 100 people five days a week.

Today, 320 elderly and ill people rely on the program to provide their hot meals five days a week. In addition, God's Kitchen, through its Capitol Lunch soup kitchen, provides free meals to an average of 280 people every day.

see HOODHOOD, J2

### WEDNESDAY

**YWCA TRIBUTE! AWARDS LUNCHEON**, noon to 1:30 p.m. at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel's Ambassador Ballroom. Tickets are \$50 each. Reservations are required and may be made by calling 459-4681. Proceeds go toward the YWCA's programs, including the Domestic Crisis Center, sexual assault programs, child sexual abuse treatment services and adult and youth fitness programs.

For stories on the Tribute winners pictured below, see pages J2 and J3.



Joan Garety



Alexis Smith



Marsha DeHollander



Jean Enright



Terri Weekley



Norma VanLuiken

## YWCA TRIBUTE! AWARDS

Back in 1970, after Terri Weekley graduated from college with a business degree, she applied for jobs at several Grand Rapids stock brokerages.

"Not one of them would hire me, not even as a secretary," she recalled. "It was always, 'We don't have any openings.'"

Yet she saw the announcements in the newspaper when those same firms hired white men. So it was sweet irony some 20 years later when one of those firms came calling on Weekley, trying to recruit her. She turned it down and, instead, recommended a friend.

By then, Weekley had found her calling; helping the careers of women and minorities who in the past had found doors closed. Over the past couple of decades, Weekley & Associates has placed countless employees with companies, such as General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Amway, Steelcase, Spartan Stores, Meijer and Old Kent.

That's why Weekley is this year's recipient of the YWCA Tribute! Award for Business, Management, Industry and Labor.

It's been a busy month for Weekley, with two other awards coming her way. A few weeks ago, she received the Greater Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce's minority business person of the year award, and on Oct. 27, the local NAACP chapter gave Weekley, who was NAACP president from 1979 to 1982, its Floyd Skinner Award for her efforts to bring justice to the black community.

### TERRI WEEKLEY BUSINESS AWARD

In the past, she's turned down awards.

"There are so many worthy people out there," she explained. "I've followed in many footsteps. I appreciate all the accolades and all the support."

Weekley described her consulting business not as an employment agency, but "strictly a headhunting firm," offering a variety of services, most aimed at improving employment opportunities for minorities and women.

She got into the business almost by accident. Employers, knowing she had contacts throughout the community, would approach Weekley, asking her to recommend potential employees.

When one company again approached her for a recommendation, "I said, OK, but this time it's going to cost you," she said. "I decided I really wanted to go into the people business."

In 1972, she founded Weekley & Associates. Initially, most of her placements were with companies outside the Grand Rapids area.

"At that time, I do not believe Grand Rapids had gotten the message that inclusion made good business sense," she said.

"The recruiting was an outgrowth of my own experience, watching doors not be open for minorities."

Her business rapidly grew, Weekley said, because some company executives recognized that hiring minorities and women was good for their bottom line.

"It's strictly a business case," she said. "It's not a social case. It's not a political case. It's a

business case."

Today, Weekley has 10 recruiters around the country in regular contact with large, national corporations.

But, in recent years, her focus has shifted back to Grand Rapids. She pointed to Ron Snead, a long-time friend, who 20 years ago left Grand Rapids to find work in the automotive industry. Over the years, he's held several positions in sales, marketing and project management with Detroit-area manufacturers.

"He's interested in bringing all those skills back to West Michigan," Weekley said. "We're looking for a company that values those skills."

Snead, she said, is typical of many minorities who left Grand Rapids to find work, but now want to come home.

"Greater Grand Rapids is losing a lot of talent," she said.

"We were getting calls from people who'd say, 'I grew up in Grand Rapids. I want to come back home.' My focus right now is on bringing the best talent to the community where I live and pay my taxes. I want to bring them back home."

Five years ago, she started what she calls her "come back home program." The attitudes of



Grand Rapids employers have changed in the years since she started her business, Weekley said.

"We've come a long way," she said, "but we've a long way to go. I would say not everyone has gotten the message."

If Weekley is to succeed in placing women and minorities

with Grand Rapids employers — her firm's motto is "Where your success is our business" — she knows she must have contacts among the people of influence and power. That's why she and Snead had just attended the monthly Rotary Club meeting at the University Club downtown.

"You have to build a

relationship of trust," said Weekley, who described her age as "49 and holding."

"I absolutely love what I do," she said.

"I believe this is my God-given calling, my mission. It's a builder of lives, a builder of families, a builder of community."

— Pat Shellenbarger

### JOAN GARETY SPORTS AWARD

Champion golfer Joan Garety didn't hang black crepe paper or book a flight to Hilton Head when the clocks switched back to Eastern Standard Time a week ago.

It's just not her way. She didn't get to be a Grand Rapids City Champion seven times over, or win lifetime achievement awards like the Rolex Watch USA & College Golf Association 200 Achievement Award, or get named Golf Association Woman Player of the Year by making it a fulltime job. She already has one: as the vice president of finance and treasurer for Meijer, Inc.

When the clocks determine it's too dark too soon to play after work, she simply stops and waits for another spring. It apparently isn't in this quiet and hard-working woman's nature to grasp at victory through constant practice.

While a lot of amateur golfers do just that — they're young, they don't hold down fulltime jobs and they travel the country to play all winter — Garety "plays golf on the side" and she still competes at the highest level of amateur golf.

said James Bruinsma, a law partner with Miller, Johnson, Snell & Cumiskey. Bruinsma, who has golfed with her as well as worked with her, nominated her for her Tribute! Award.

"It's important for young female athletes to have role models," he said. "She is such a true sportswoman and a quality person."

"I saw her as a person very

deserving of recognition in her own community," he said.

Actually, Grand Rapids is her adopted community. She was raised in Caro, where she took up golf at age 6. "I remember being small, I remember playing and I remember the cut off clubs I had," said Garety, 44.

Soon she was riding her bike to the public courses.

"Golf is a great game for kids who get bitten by the bug," she said.

She played all through her years at Michigan State (which honored her with a lifetime achievement award in April) and as a young professional woman conducting business on the golf course.

Becoming good at golf is advice she would give to young women who hope to work in the business arena. "It's a whole lot easier to beat the people you're playing with rather than worrying about whether you're going to hit the ball," she deadpanned.

The advice she'd give to teen-age girls: "Enjoy it because it's a wonderful game. To the extent that you can, get as good as you can, because it will help you enjoy the game. Learn the etiquette of the game because that will translate into a work setting or a social setting."

Being gracious is what makes her a favorite person on the job and at Egypt Valley Country Club, where she enjoys celebrity status. She's been called "a true ambassador of the game of golf."

She takes her status at face value.

"One of the ways you demonstrate leadership, whether it's golf or whatever, it's all about the role modeling you do. It's the commitment you have, it's the effort you make, it's the way you handle yourself in winning situations and losing situations. Because you're going to lose. You're going to have a lot more opportunities to lose gracefully rather than win with class."

This summer, while she was collecting lifetime awards, she was competing but not winning. Her clubs were stolen mid-tournament this summer, forcing her to scrounge some clubs to finish her game and parting her from things like a sand wedge she's had since college.

"Tough summer," she concluded. "Now I've got to get back to winning golf tournaments," she said. With the sort of humility based on knowing exactly one's own assets, she said, "My game's still good enough to compete. There's a lot I like about this. It's the tournaments. It's the competition. No matter what

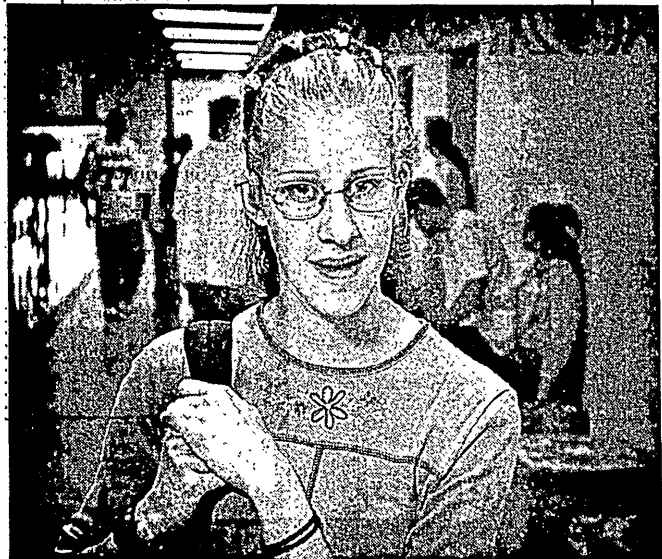
anybody tells you, it's a lot more fun to win than not to win."

So picking up this award is terrific, she said. "I was pleased. The YWCA Tribute! Awards are pretty special. I've been to them several years, and they're always well done."

But it's also another audience to spread her golf-for-life attitude.

"One of the things I'm proudest of is being able to show you can be successful in your career and you can play golf well, and be able to do both the rest of your life."

— Juanita Westaby



### ALEXIS SMITH STUDENT AWARD

It wasn't until she was 18 months old that Alexis Smith's parents realized their little girl had a hearing problem.

The family had gone to watch the Fourth of July fireworks and Alexis — now a senior at Kelloggsville High School — couldn't hear the pyrotechnics.

Shortly after, Alexis Smith was diagnosed with a congenital moderate to severe hearing loss; the cause was never determined.

But that didn't stop her from mainstreaming from a special education program into a regular curriculum in the Kelloggsville School District during her second-grade school year.

"She was doing very well, and she adapted well to wearing hearing aids and did well with being mainstreamed," said her father, Kim Smith of Kentwood.

"She was never bothered by the extra effort," he said.

Communication of any kind is a challenge for Smith, but reading textbooks; understanding test questions and following classroom lectures are especially difficult. Understanding complex language forms and subtle differences among verbs requires much more repetition and additional study, explained Smith's school counselor Nora Wade.

To help overcome these obstacles, Smith works with hearing consultant Kathy Routa, who checks her hearing aid and her grades; but does not provide any academic tutoring. "She's a very sweet girl, a real willing worker," said Wade, who nominated Smith for the

YWCA award.

Not only has Smith transitioned into regular schooling, she has excelled.

Out of 123 Kelloggsville High School seniors, she is ranked fourth with a 4.013 grade point average (she received additional points for honors classes).

"I am very pleased, she is an exceptional student — every one of her teachers have told us that — she's a model for her fellow students. . . . It sends tingles down your spine when you hear things like that," her father said.

Smith is a member of the varsity track team, the treasurer of the National Honor Society, a part-time employee at Arby's and active in her church youth group. For the past four years, she has served as a member of the high school's Student Congress and was elected to serve as its president this year.

That's no small feat, said assistant principal Greg Warsen.

As president of the Student Congress, Smith was responsible for single-handedly organizing all aspects of this year's homecoming, including the parade, assembly and Spirit Week events.

"It's a huge coordination effort, a lot of work," Warsen said. "She's great to work with — she's dependable, reliable — a real asset to the school and the Congress."

Once she graduates from Kelloggsville, Smith plans to attend an in-state college or university and is looking at Spring Arbor near Jackson and Calvin College. She hopes to have a career in the medical field, possibly as a physician's assistant.

— Sharon M. Covio

### NORMA VANKUIKEN ARTS AWARD

Norma VanKuiken insists she doesn't have a "savior complex" that urges her to come to the rescue of failing arts organizations.

In the last decade she helped raise funds for, and generally stabilize, the Arts Council of Greater Grand Rapids, Civic Theatre, St. Cecilia Music Society and the Grand Rapids Ballet.

"I enjoy doing that. I realize not a lot of people enjoy that, but I stay enthusiastic about asking people for money because I know the end result is a stronger, better community. And I just love this community," she said. "I want these things to be here for future generations."

She's not a board-joiner, per se. She chooses carefully what organization gets her time and energy, because she tends to give it complete focus.

Grand Rapids Ballet President, Kim Hughes, who was one of three people who nominated her for the YWCA Tribute! Award in the arts, said the ballet has asked VanKuiken often if she wants to be a board member. VanKuiken, a ballet fan whose daughter performed with the ballet, always graciously declines.

"She's really like a ghost board member," said Hughes, who owns State Farm Insurance in Gaslight Village, "because she's always there."

"In the last two or three years we knew we needed a new facility," Hughes said, "and that's where she put her focus."

And how.

The ballet was struggling to find a new space by September of



this year. Until 18 months ago, there were failed attempts at both securing a building and raising funds. In the fall of 1999, VanKuiken stepped in as co-chair of the Capital Campaign and things began to immediately change.

That the ballet is in a new facility, on Ellsworth Avenue SW, just south of downtown, is a tribute not only to her efforts, she pointed out, but the efforts of David and Katie Eberhard, Chuck and Stella Royce, and Amy Hubbard, VanKuiken said. The capital campaign isn't over, either. Hughes and board members were trained by VanKuiken in the how-to's of asking for money.

"She taught us in training if you make a phone call and you don't get a response, keep calling and calling and don't give up until you get a yes or a no," Hughes said. "Preferably a yes."

It's that steady reserve beneath a ladylike exterior that enabled

VanKuiken to help run capital campaigns for St. Cecilia's Business Division (\$3.2 million) and the Civic Theatre (\$750,000) almost simultaneously.

VanKuiken calls her husband, Lewis "Buzz" VanKuiken, owner of Progressive Technologies, her "sounding board."

"I would talk to him about situations that would come up," she said. "He was very encouraging that I was doing things in the community, and he was always good about being generous about supporting the things that mattered to me."

VanKuiken, a former Grand Rapids Public School teacher, worked on church and school committees while raising her children.

It was a family friend, portrait photographer David LeClaire, who first got VanKuiken to help the Arts Council of Greater Grand Rapids. "He told me about it and said it was a wonderful

organization and I'd be a good addition to the board," she said, recalling that at that time she begged off, saying the time wasn't right.

"No, Norma, the time is now," LeClaire told her. Something in the way he said that urged her to give it a try.

It could be argued she could not have started in a tougher place. The Arts Council in the late 1980s and early 1990s was in the midst of a "painful struggle," VanKuiken said.

The board was in transition, a new director was being sought and the council was "plagued with serious budget problems," she said. "There was actual talk of closing its doors."

Instead, VanKuiken watched as Patricia Duthler, the auto dealership owner who would become a mentor and friend, shaped things up.

"She was so smart and so able and she provided the leadership we needed," VanKuiken said. "She made the difficult unpopular decisions" that eventually turned the organization around.

Those were lessons she never forgot.

"It was fun in terms of camaraderie. The board had such potential and such merit and when we saw the benefits to the arts community in general, and with special organizations we were able to help," said VanKuiken. There was never any looking back for her. She would move on to help the next arts organization.

She admitted being "blown away" by the Tribute! Award. "You go into these things as part of a group," she said, "and you don't expect to be singled out."

— Juanita Westaby



## YWCA TRIBUTE! AWARDS



Jean Enright exudes the gentility of a Southern belle. She grew up in a small town in Arkansas that fed her giving nature.

"Community service wasn't a term anybody used," she says. "That's just what people did. The whole community worked together for the community."

Maybe she misunderstood. It appears Enright is taking on the community herself. This woman is everywhere.

"There are just so many things in which I'm interested," she says.

At Grand Valley State University, where Enright works as executive assistant to the president, she has developed, chaired and co-chaired the United Way campaign for more than a decade.

Those who know her call Enright a quiet leader, a woman who has a rare and wonderful ability to see the good in people and let them know she sees it.

She started mentoring before mentoring was a buzzword, taking minority GVSU students under her wing, providing support and friendship.

"Some of them have become my dearest friends," she says. "There's such a value in letting other people know you care about them."

Enright, 60, has a passion for working with young people, from her work developing the Metropolitan YMCA child-care program to working on young women's issues for the Michigan Women's Foundation.

"All issues that involve women and young women are very important to me," Enright says. "I wish we

could get all young women, from middle school age through college, to have more confidence in their ability to do and accomplish. Young women become less confident as they get older. One way to combat that is to spend time with them, and give them opportunities to achieve. There are doable things we can focus on."

Some mentors speak of the responsibility successful people have to foster success in others. Enright doesn't see her commitments as an obligation.

"I do it because it's so much fun for me," she says with a laugh.

Her work on women's issues has included chairing Legacy, the massive local celebration of Women's History Month. The arts are dear to her, too, and there's a wealth of proof. A longtime member of the Arts Council of Greater Grand Rapids, Enright heads the council's education committee, working to get more arts organizations into the schools. She's on the board of the Wealthy Street Theater and on the sculpture committee at Frederik Meijer Gardens.

Like many giving volunteers, Enright often is approached by yet another organization wanting her on board. She knows when to say no.

"If a board is mainly a fund-raising board, then I don't do it," Enright says. "That's not what I have to give. I need to know that the organization is one I can really give something to. Something of myself."

— Terri Finch Hamilton

### JEAN ENRIGHT COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD



As Marsha DeHollander drove through the streets of Grand Rapids last month and saw porch after porch brimming with donated food for the hungry, she got all choked up.

"It left me almost speechless," she says, "and that doesn't happen very often."

She's right. Start talking to DeHollander about the plight of the poor in Grand Rapids, and this passionate, caring and spiritual woman becomes effusive.

DeHollander, 47, is director of ACCESS, the All County Churches Emergency Support System, which coordinates support services for 100 area food pantries.

"Our role is to pull people together," she says. "That's part of the joy of my work — no one person can do this."

But one person is clearly at the forefront.

DeHollander started out at ACCESS in 1985 as a caseworker. She had a card table and two volunteers. Under her leadership, the organization has grown into a nonprofit organization with staff, caseworkers and hundreds of volunteers. ACCESS provides food, clothing and other services to more than 77,000 children and 76,000 adults each year.

She has had a passion for helping as long as she can remember. Her first real report in elementary school was about the Peace Corps. She dreamed of being a teacher or a social worker. But single motherhood derailed college plans.

Suddenly, at age 20, she was a person who needed help, struggling to support herself and her young child on grocery store cashier wages.

"God used that experience to give me a practical idea of what it was like to struggle, to be poor," she says. "It gave me a sensitivity to this issue I wouldn't have otherwise."

ACCESS is best known for distributing food. But DeHollander's mission is to go beyond the "Band-Aid approach" of feeding the hungry. She has developed programs that match mentoring church families with poor, struggling families. Those who show up at ACCESS food pantries find health department nurses, job counselors, nutritionists, skills classes.

"If people are hungry, it's real hard to minister to their other needs," DeHollander says, "so

that comes first. The food opens the door to follow up with a relationship."

Her goal is to raise awareness of hunger as much as it is to quell it.

"Hunger is not a hot topic like it was in the '80s," DeHollander says. "There was a recession, cuts in government services, the famine in Ethiopia. Hunger was on our TV screens every night. Then it almost seemed like it went away."

It didn't. "In good times, people assume it's good for everybody," she says. "These are prosperous times, but a lot of people got left behind."

The ACCESS City Wide Food drive last month collected 83 tons of food. The massive effort left DeHollander exhausted, but thrilled.

"It was more than collecting food," she says. "It was about keeping the issue of hunger before us."

She barely has time to catch her breath before gearing up for the annual Holiday Basket Clearinghouse, which will provide 5,000 to 6,000 food baskets for needy families.

"It doesn't have to be overwhelming to address hunger," DeHollander says. "It's a bag at a time, a volunteer giving a couple hours a week, filling a holiday basket for a family. It's doing what you can."

— Terri Finch Hamilton

### MARSHA DEHOLLANDER ADVOCACY AWARD

## HOODHOOD

*She's made a difference in many lives*

CONTINUED FROM J1

Four years ago, Carol Greenburg, God's Kitchen program director, hired Hoodhood fulltime.

"This is a woman who for years was giving this place her heart and her energy and 50 or 60 hours a week of her life," said Greenburg, who nominated Hoodhood for the YWCA Tribute Professions Award. "Every time I think there's something I can't do, I think of Mary K. I can't even put into words the difference she makes in people's lives."

Hoodhood, 48, shrugs off the praise.

"On a day-to-day basis, it's nice to be recognized," she said, "but it isn't what motivates me. Some of it's purely selfish. I don't want to sit around all day. I would have the perfect situation to say to people, 'I don't want to work because of my disability.'"

"The way that I look at it, the skills I have are God given, and if I don't use those skills, that would be a shame. If I can inspire anybody, if I can make someone feel they can do something, if they look at me and say, 'If she can do it, I can do it,' then I think that's a wonderful thing."

A survey three years ago found

that a third of the Meals on Wheels clients were stretching that one daily meal to cover their entire diet.

"I mean, they had no food in the cupboard," Hoodhood said.

Greenburg asked her to develop another program to help fill that gap. The result was Special Delivery, which uses volunteers to deliver three bags of groceries to 160 needy people every two weeks.

Hoodhood also coordinates the Total Life Care program, which arranges for medical, nursing, social work and occupational therapy students to visit Meals on Wheels clients in their homes.

As it happens, the last Meals on Wheels volunteer did show up this particular morning, freeing Hoodhood to turn her attention to other matters. Often when Greenburg needs someone to organize another program, such as the annual Soup's On For All fundraiser, she turns to Hoodhood.

"The reward is the fact that we're feeding people," Hoodhood said. "It's such a basic thing. I know every day when I go to bed that I made a difference in someone's life."

— Pat Shellenbarger