

Activities of women will be honored

By Ann Sharkelford

Swedish-born actress Viveca Lindfors will star at a celebration Feb. 25 in Fountain Street Church.

But she won't be the only star there.

Planned to recognize accomplishments of women, the event will honor several women from the greater Grand Rapids area. They will be "the real stars of the evening," said recognition committee member Jerry Hazzard.

The event will include an 8 p.m. program in the church, 24 Fountain St. NE, followed by a champagne reception in the Central YWCA, 25 Sheldon Ave. SE. Buses will shuttle guests between the church and YWCA.

Miss Lindfors will present her one-woman show, "I Am a Woman," with which she's been touring since 1972. It draws from the experiences of Anne Frank, a POW wife Anais Nin, Charles Manson's mother and many other women, and combines works from Shakespeare, Jean Giraudoux and Tennessee Williams.

Miss Lindfors, 56, calls her show "a journey of one woman — and of many women." She credits the women's movement with "teaching me to take responsibility for my own thoughts and wishes."

Tickets for the program and reception

The Grand Rapids Press, Wednesday, February 2, 1977

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Actress Viveca Lindfors will highlight event

are \$10 per person, available at the YWCA. Nominations for women to be honored during the evening may be made by an individual, group or business, and nomination blanks also are available at the YWCA.

The blanks must be returned to Elberta Rhodes at the YWCA by Feb. 7. The number and nature of the awards given will be based upon nominations received, and judging will be done by members of the recognition committee.

Margaret Elliott, committee member, said "We aren't looking just for the obvious community leaders, but for women, any women, who have effected change for the better in their community, their neighborhoods, their circles of friends."

The celebration, being chaired by Anne Mulder and Marie Neill, is being sponsored "by virtually all women's organizations in town, by their representatives," said Ms. Elliott. "And there are other things happening around the time of the celebration, to tie in with it."

An ERA workshop will be held Feb. 19 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the YWCA. A film, "A Very Curious Girl," will be shown at 4 and 8 p.m. Feb. 23 in room 132 of Lake Huron Hall at Grand Valley State College. Alida Walsh, artist and film maker from New York City, will discuss "Women and Art and Film" at 3 p.m. Feb. 25 in Grand Valley's Fine Arts Center and at 10 a.m. Feb. 26 in Fountain Street Church.

4-F The Grand Rapids Press, Friday, February 18, 1977

Women's recognition party Feb. 25

Women's recognition celebration to honor women of Grand Rapids will be held Friday, Feb. 25, at 8 p.m. in Fountain Street Church.

The celebration is being coordinated by Ann Mulder and Marie Neil.

Viveca Lindfors, stage and screen actress, will present "I Am a Woman" followed by presentation of awards to women in the community who have made significant contributions.

Following the program guests

will be transported by bus to the YWCA for a champagne reception.

The evening is open to men and women and tickets, \$10 per person, are available at the YWCA, 25 Sheldon Ave. SE. For further information contact the YWCA.

WOMEN'S RECOGNITION CELEBRATION

"WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE"

on stage

Viveca Lindfors in "WOMAN"

FRIDAY, FEB. 25 at 8:00 p.m.
FOUNTAIN STREET CHURCH

CHAMPAGNE RECEPTION follows at the Y.W.C.A. (Shuttle bus service from church to YWCA)

Ticket \$10.00 available at YWCA or by mail please make check payable to YWCA 25 Sheldon SE

Parking: Junior College Ramp
(across from church)



What's a nice girl like you doing...

... In a place like Grand Rapids,
many women make a difference

1977 may be a year of reappraisal for the women's movement. Last year produced little headway.

The Equal Rights Amendment still lacks approval of three states for passage. U.S. Labor Department rulings weakened affirmative action hiring policies.

And denial of paid maternity leave was declared nondiscriminatory by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Closer to home, it was a mixed bag politically. Two women became the first females on the Kent County Board of Commissioners. But Kent County courts

remained an all-male club. Jan McKee lost an election bid for the Probate Court bench.

Now, with moderation in the air, while the country is trying to make do with less, feminists still are hoping for much more. An improved economy certainly would help.

Still, many feminist face this year with guarded optimism. The women's movement no longer is considered a joke, but a reality. Perhaps its greatest victory last year was added public awareness and growing acceptance.

Recognition remains in short supply to slow progress, and few women, particularly here, are given the chance to emerge from behind the scenes to achieve it. The local YWCA reduced some of the disparity by paying tribute to women who've "made a difference" here. Some 136 women were nominated.

Wonderland profiles the 11 award winners.



Phyllis Gifford: Migrant's prayer

Phyllis Gifford's "rude awakening" 10 years ago ended some nightmare conditions for Michigan migrant workers. "It blew my mind when I realized we were offering Kool-Aid and cookies to people who need fair wages, decent housing and child care centers," she recalls.

Gifford, 53, translated concern into action in 1968 when she joined Church Women United and gave new direction to its Farm Workers Ministry. She was appointed to the Governor's Council on Migrant Affairs in 1970 and today is Kent County's coordinator for migrant programs.

"We've made gains in health, housing and child care, but the struggle for a just wage continues," she explains. One cause the Michigan Farm Ministry supports is the United Farm Workers movement, and Phyllis considers its leader, Caesar Chavez, a special friend.

Her frustrating experience as a teen-age apple picker convinced Gifford that crop harvesting requires particular skills. "Farm workers are important people with specialized talents. They deserve respect and admiration — not second-class status."

Sour community attitudes plus educational and health deficiencies constantly plague migrants, according to Gifford: "Service agencies and relief programs

aren't enough; communities must accept, understand and value their migrant laborers."

A dramatic, near-fatal experience 18 years ago converted her to community service. "I had the profound sensation of being removed from my body and felt the power and presence of God," she remembers. "At that moment, I lost my fear of death and rededicated myself to Christian principles of love and justice."

Besides her work with migrants and the CWU, Gifford is an advocate of Christian Rural Overseas Projects (CROP), an organization that provides money and services to needy areas. She is a member of the YWCA and Sunset Park Church of God in Wyoming.

Women's rights and ecumenical movements are other involvements, and she regularly attends workshops at the Women's Resource Center. "I'm an interested supporter of the Wife-Abuse Center planned for this area, even though there's little wife abuse among migrants," she says. "The 'macho' image of Mexican men is real, but families are closely bound and work as a team; they love and need one another."

James Gifford, her "extremely supportive" husband, is a long-time Scout master and committeeman, and their four children are married. Her future plans focus on further community service, but she hopes the day will come when migrants no longer need her. "Then I'll have the satisfaction of knowing that our programs were successful," Gifford concludes.

Joan Wolfe: Land lover

When Joan Wolfe accepted her YWCA award, she delivered the typical humble-while-being-recognized speech. What's interesting about Joan Wolfe is that she meant it. "One doesn't do things by oneself," she says. "One does things with the help of lots of people." She says that not once, but always. It's her battle cry.

For the recognized founder of the West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC), her most honored accomplishment was to coordinate the landmark Environmental Protection Act which gave citizens the right to take government agencies to court. The law was unprecedented in the nation, and has been used extensively — most dramatically in Black Creek where Mason County farmers stopped state efforts to turn the fragile bog area into a drain.

Wolfe's volunteer efforts through WMEAC made lawmakers sit up and take notice. When Gov. Milliken appointed her to the state Natural Resources Commission, it appeared she'd been compromised. But Wolfe howls an emphatic "No!" to those who accuse her of desertion. "I haven't changed my principles any."

She's now exposed to both sides, and has sometimes disappointed friends on groups of which she once was a member. Her commission vote supporting oil drilling in the Pigeon River Forest is a good example, a

baptism of sorts, of the pressure of her post. "My good friends were opposed to drilling," she says. "I felt it necessary to vote for it. That was the bitterest experience of my life. I was a sore lesson in being a judge."

Her work with the Department of Natural Resources gives her far-reaching influence, and she now heads the Natural Resources Commission — the DNR's policy-making and appeal board. Husband Willard has given up his memberships in hunting, fishing and environmental groups so she can avoid conflicts-of-interest charges. She has quit similar organizations as well.

Wolfe started out as a volunteer, and recognizes the influence and power volunteers can gather and wield. She's writing a book about it. Her feelings about the women's movement and voluntarism echo the sentiments of poet-philosopher Archibald MacLeish:

"Because women have not had to be breadwinners, they have been free to concern themselves with noneconomic questions like consumer protection, child brutality and environment. This may change as men's role in the family changes. But women, because they are the bearers of children, are more involved with the passing on of race and are more concerned with future generations."



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Mary Ferrere

Late in 1972, Mary Ferrere made a decision that completely recharted her life. At age 31, with five children to support after her marriage had soured, she decided to return to school.

A full Ottawa Indian born in Michigan's Peshabestown, whose family moved here when she was five, she had dropped out of school in the 11th grade. Soon after, she married and had five children before her sixth wedding anniversary. Between pregnancies and meeting the demands of a young family, she held several part-time jobs to help make ends meet.

As the years passed, she found herself trapped in a rather dreary grind. She had no time for herself, her marriage had deteriorated beyond repair and she increasingly felt life had slipped her by. "When I look back," she says, "I realize I used to do nothing but stay home, take care of kids and work."

The turning point came when she received counseling at Catholic Social Services. She had admitted that her Catholic background had prevented her from seeking a divorce, and she always wanted to return to

school for her diploma. "The two seemed incompatible," she remembers of the dilemma. "The counselor helped me make the decision to get a divorce which gave me the freedom to return to school."

An intelligent woman with a quiet, unassuming manner, Ferrere started adult high school classes in January, 1973, and went on to graduate summa cum laude from Western Michigan University last August. She's now working toward a master degree, and expects to finish in April, 1978.

Although she's specializing in Mental Health, her chief aim is to work with Native Americans. She recently organized the Native American Student Association at Western, and is active with the Grand Rapids Inter-Tribal Council, having served both as a volunteer and a board member.

"Indian organizations have a real need for qualified people," she says. "I would like to help Indians get back the self-respect they've lost. For so many years, we've been told to assimilate and forget our Indian background. But this is wrong. We have to re-establish our cultural pride."



Ella Sims: More hats than Hedda

Ella Sims of Aquinas College wears several hats away from home — counselor, writer and board member. Communication is her prime shrine, and it serves her well under any brim.

Her column, "It Seems To Me" appears regularly in The Sunday Press, and she's had articles published in the Detroit News Sunday Magazine, Catholic Digest and by Cook Publishing Co. (religious).

"I love to write," she understates. "It's an expres-

sion of what life means to me. As a writer for the last 10 to 15 years, I've wanted to write even if it isn't read. I just want it to come out."

Sims spends most of her time as a counselor at Aquinas where she's also head of minority affairs. "I help students with whatever problems they have — financial, personal. But I don't recruit."

Before joining Aquinas, she was communications director for Kent-CAP eight years, and now is co-chairman of the board. She was appointed to the Aquinas Board of Directors in 1974.

She was a young widow with one child when she came here from Arkansas in 1946. She remarried in 1948. As she became involved in community affairs, she resumed her education. "As you grow, you see a need for it," she says.

At home on the Northeast Side, Ella and husband Clyde, who's been with Diesel Equipment 29 years, reared nine children (five are still at home) and have 14 grandchildren. She spends her free time reading and piecing quilts.

A member of True Light Baptist Church, Sims hopes to visit the Holy Land some day. And, of course, she wants to write more, and "spend more time with my grandchildren."



Marge Koster: Blueprint for pain

The world of artist Marjory Koster is a collage of sights, sounds and childlike discoveries that sets her fertile mind flowing in endless directions. At 51, she's already forged a reputation as a top printmaker in the country. She's listed in the British "Who's Who in Art" and her works have hung in such prestigious galleries as the Chicago Art Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Brooklyn Museum of Art. She's a sought-after lecturer, teacher and speaker.

But these honors seem irrelevant to the short, gray-haired woman who prefers the quiet pace of Midwestern life to the bustle of the East. For her, the act of creation is the reason for her art, if not the reason for her very existence. "People tell me how lucky I am to be so gifted," she says, "but I wonder: Is it a gift or the proverbial monkey on the back? I don't know how it is that I create what I do. It's something outside me, but it's something I have to do."

At art conferences, she has talked of the pain of being an artist, and sometimes has bared her soul graphically with her "peel" — removing her clothes one layer at a time to communicate her devotion to art and the raw expression of her true talent.

The Irish mother of three daughters, who have given her six grandchildren, she's a Grand Rapids native. As a child during the Depression, she couldn't afford paper, and used to sketch figures in sand and on frosted window panes.

She began her formal career as a realist working in watercolors, oils and floral prints, but eventually found realism confining. Influenced somewhat by pop art and a summer study course at the Pratt Institute in New York, she began developing her own method of preparing wood blocks for printmaking, and pioneered a method which now bears her name.

"Nobody makes it alone," she says, hastening to add that she's indebted to printmakers Shirley Anderson and Wilma Weston for their influence.

At heart, she's a perfectionist. "A print has to be perfect, every bit as good as the human hand can make it," she says.

She's also a complex woman filled with boundless enthusiasm and an almost quixotic vision of the world around her. "When I'm in New York, people ask me how I can work in the Midwest," she says. "Grand Rapids is a mecca for me, a haven that gives me the freedom to see a blade of grass, an insect crawling along a twig, and the beauty in the world around us."



Jean McKee: Best is yet to come

Gerald R. Ford's closest 5th District race was against Jean McKee in 1970. While it was far from a photo finish, what if she had won? "Well, at least Jerry Ford wouldn't be a former President," jokes the 51-year-old attorney.

A veteran Democrat of local and state politics, McKee lost twice to Ford for Congress, and even blames him partly for her defeat last fall for Kent County Probate Court judge. "I was very upset about that election," she says. "I really thought I had it. Had Jerry Ford not come home to vote . . . who knows? There was such a tremendous outpouring of support here for Ford."

Her defeats, however, have never gotten her down. She used her underdog battles against Ford "to focus on the issues." For the judge post, she focused on winning. "You know the risks when you run," she says. "If you can't stand to lose, you don't run. The campaigns are always worthwhile." After three losses, she adds: "It makes you more cautious and look more carefully at your chances."

An associate with the law firm of Rhoades, McKee & Boer (husband Bill's a partner), Jean McKee rates her

election to the Wayne State Board of Governors in 1959 as her "most significant experience."

"Here I was rearing very young children one day, and suddenly I'm meeting university presidents, the UAW president and, well, you can remain awed only so long. It was a tremendous growing experience."

The Detroit native met her husband in law school at the University of Michigan. They married in 1956.

McKee has stumped for other Democrat office-seekers, and served with many local organizations: Advisory Center for Teens, Project Rehab and the local American Civil Liberties Union, among others.

The mother of three boys says she can tackle many different activities because "I have my priorities in order. Interpersonal relationships and my family come first. I married very well."

She's skied "virtually every weekend you could in Michigan for the last 11 years," goes backpacking occasionally and spends much of the summer with the family at their lake cottage.

Of the future, McKee is interested in one of the new federal judge posts for West Michigan. "But the choice isn't mine," she says. "A lot of very talented attorneys in town also are interested."

Rosemary Murphy: Reformist

"I realize some mothers have sons that wouldn't get the same treatment as my blond, blue-eyed son in the criminal justice system we have in this country," says Rosemary Murphy. "It has to change."

Toward that, Murphy, 44, has organized committees and seminars on criminal justice, and heads the Citizens Advisory Committee to the Kent County Jail. "We spend billions in this country each year to support a system that isn't working," she says. "People who enter a correctional facility come out worse than when they went in."

Murphy's volunteer spirit began as a child in Massachusetts where her family participated in town meetings and functions. She attended Regis College in Weston, Mass., then married an Air Force pilot from Grand Rapids stationed at Cape Cod, Richard Murphy, now vice president of Corduroy Rubber Co. here. They moved to Grand Rapids in 1956.

Eventually she began to "leave the house in the afternoons while my kids were in school," launching her career which she terms "a community volunteer" — hospital guild worker, fighter for a hot lunch



program in schools. She's also been involved in United Way, Catholic Social Services and the county committee that recommended a new facility for neglected children.

"We've got to become much more aggressive about the rights of children," she says. "We've been

concerned with the rights of parents, but child rights have to progress."

The mother of seven ("from college to kindergarten") believes, "Meeting my own personal needs through volunteer work makes me a better wife and mother."

Peggy Rhodes: Incurable servant

Five years ago, Peggy Rhodes learned that an incurable blood disease would end her 18-year teaching career, and that marked the turning point of her life. "After the initial fear and horror, I decided to live, to give what talent and time I had to projects that would outlast me."

While hospitalized, Rhodes, 41, recorded her thoughts in handbooks — "Prayers for Busy People," "Let's Be for Real" and "Try It, You Might Like It." She redirected her energy toward community service and it's hard telling where her influence will end.

In 1972, Rhodes organized Black Women Moving, a group of 100 women "united in support of our black men — to help them achieve an active role in the community and city."

A plan to bring financial help and cultural involvement to young black women culminated in her brainchild — the Debutante Cotillion, an annual formal. The rest of the year, "we visit black businesses in Chicago, tour Southern colleges and bring families together for traditional events. Although we've grown more in spirit than size, the benefits are real," she says of the project.

Rhodes serves on the advisory board of Upward Bound, a program providing special services to motivate slow high school students who have college potential. She also is a member of the University of Michigan's Project for Fair Administration of Student Rights and Discipline.

Last year, Rhodes and husband Alfred formed Du'Rho Associates, a consulting firm. They set up workshops for companies, professional associations and school boards statewide, tapping her rich supply of topics, speakers and facilities. The Rhodes have two teen-agers and operate their business at home on College Ave. SE.

She also uses her experience as a special education teacher in her work with the Kent County Association for Retarded Citizens. "This is the project I most enjoy," she says. "I have a real affection for the retarded. They're also members of a minority group."

Community change is a slow and stubborn process, and Rhodes predicts more work and workshops in her future. With her illness in remission, she's thankful for her commitments: "They're my salvation. Too many people are so busy doing nothing . . . going nowhere. How I pity such empty lives."



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Kay Dodge: Wonder woman

For Kay Dodge, teacher and ecologist, the problems of air and water pollution are not so mind-boggling that they cannot be tackled by high school upperclassmen. "Kids can and do make a difference," says Dodge.

At a time when government apparently condones cancer-producing drugs and industrial smoke so common to some urban dwellers they keep gas masks handy, Kay Dodge has taken up the banner of individual responsibility. "It's so easy to become discouraged with the environment because the problems are so complex," she says. "But if individuals don't work on them, the results — the future — will be devastating."

Dodge has developed environmental and urban studies programs for Grand Rapids Public Schools. Her 11th and 12th-level students have produced textbooks for grade school children, cleaned up parts of the Grand River, organized an Ecology Day in Grand Rapids, worked for passage of the nonreturnable bottle ban and testified at state Senate hearings on air pollution.

"If students are aware and know about the environment, it's going to touch their lives," she says. "Years

ago, people asked why schools should include ecology in the curriculum. Now I ask how we can afford not to."

Her classroom in Grand Rapids Junior College, where she teaches in the high school Educational Park program, has also become a drop-in center for former students. It's here that Dodge can soap-box on her belief in the social responsibility of personal choice. "If you choose between a washing machine and a dishwasher, one may be a necessity and the other a frill," she says. "Students will be making choices like that. And when they do, those choices should be made with knowledge of how they affect the entire society."

Dodge's educational philosophy could be summed up in one word: Wonder. "Teaching is sharing with others a sense of wonder about nature and the environment. I want to turn on all kids to the environment and develop in them a sense of wonder."

She, too, enjoys learning, and feels her classes reflect her enthusiasm. She didn't attend college full-time till she was 24 and the mother of two. Then she kept right on, earning a bachelor degree from Western Michigan University and a master degree from the University of Michigan.

She was regional director for the Michigan Environmental Education Association and now is on the Plainfield Township Parks and Recreation Committee.

Maurilia Armijo: Only just begun

Maurilia Armijo's background reads like the case histories in which she deals. Born 48 years ago in Beeville, Tex., she was reared in an orphanage. Maurilia married at 16, didn't finish school, had five children and was divorced in 1965.

"When people say they can't cope, I understand," she says. "I've lived through some hard times." Armijo is secretary at the Latin American Council and "an inspiration to many people and her family," says Arturo Alvarado, the council's assistant director.

She does "a little bit of everything" at the council, but is most interested in its alternative school for Latin youngsters. Many of the 105 pupils are public school dropouts whom Maurilia encourages to complete their education. "If I can do it, so can you," she tells discouraged ones.

Two years ago, with the support of her children, she enrolled in a social studies program at Grand Valley State College and expects to become a bilingual social worker. "Too many Latinos can't adjust or even get help because they can't communicate," she laments.

As a sponsor of the annual Mexican Day Fiesta, Armijo actively promotes community appreciation of Mexican traditions. "It's a part of our culture we don't want to lose," she explains.

"Women's place in Latino society is restricted by a male 'machismo' that prevents them from seeking jobs or leadership roles in the community," she declares. "As a result, women are afraid . . . unsure of themselves, yet they have much to offer. We must get together and help one another become involved."

Adult counseling, particularly helping migrants "settle out" in society, is part of her job. "It's a difficult adjustment for many who can't speak English, and lack education and skills necessary for employment."

Armijo gives an example that sums up her work and philosophy: "Two years ago, a 16-year-old boy at the school threatened me with a knife. His miserable environment left him emotionally sick, so we referred him to treatment centers. This year he enrolled again and wrote me a note. 'Maurilia, I didn't like anyone; now I am getting better and want to be your friend. The End.' I erased the last two words and told him, 'This is not the end — it's just the beginning!'"



Dorothy Newman: Dues payer

Twenty years ago, Dorothy Newman rolled up her sleeves and jumped into her first political battle. A war bride from England who came here in 1946, she joined forces with her neighbors in suburban Wyoming to get a street paved. She's been battling ever since.

A tall, stately woman with a whisper of a British accent, she has devoted nearly half her life to organized labor on both the local and international levels. In addition, she's championed such causes as women's rights, relief for migrant workers and the poor of Appalachia. A staunch Democrat who serves on more than a dozen civic, union and political committees, she sums up her philosophy with a poignant: "Man is his brother's keeper — and his sister's keeper, too."

Born 51 years ago, she's one of 11 children. She was 18 when she met husband Henry (Tex), a GI stationed in Cheshire County, England. Two years later, they came to Grand Rapids where he took a job at the old W. B. Jarvis Co. After giving birth to sons Mike and Steve, she joined GM's Diesel Equipment Division as a production worker, a job she still holds.

In 1959, she was elected to a minor union post, and the following year was a delegate to a national AFL convention in Washington, D. C.

"That's where it all started," she says of her activities. "John Kennedy came and talked at the convention about the poor of Appalachia. I really got involved in what he was saying, and began campaigning actively for both the Appalachian poor and Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign."

Since, Newman has distinguished herself as a natural organizer able to get things done. Says one associate: "She's a mover, a doer who can see a task through to completion. Sometimes it's not accomplished pleasantly, but it always gets completed." She's frequently compared to TV's Maude for her complexity and high energy level.

She's on the boards of the local YWCA, Michigan United Way, UAW, Kent-CAP and the Kent County Democratic Women's Club. Last summer she was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. She recently was presented United Way's Kenneth W. Robinson Award, which exemplifies true community spirit in helping others.