

SPORTS, FITNESS AND WELLNESS: MARY KAY KEMPKER-VANDRIEL

Taking it to the streets

BY TERRI FINCH HAMILTON
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

Mary Kay Kempker-Vandriel wears beautiful suits and has an office with a view, but the clue to how she really works is the Nike Air tennis shoes often on her feet. She has files full of health statistics, but to really figure out the health care concerns of folks in Grand Rapids, she goes out into neighborhoods and asks them.

Kempker-Vandriel, 49, is director of Spectrum Health's Healthier Communities. It's her job to spend \$6 million annually of Spectrum Health money to provide health care for people who struggle to get it.

Innovative health programs flow from her office on Michigan Street.

Among them:

- Urban Health, a program that puts nurses and trained community health workers in places of trust in urban neighborhoods — churches, neighborhood centers, stores — to

“You have to be creative about reaching people and building trust. Health care is so complex, you can get lost in it.”

— Mary Kay Kempker-Vandriel

reach people who need health care.

- Sisters in Action. A program for overweight, low-income African-American women in Grand Rapids' inner city. Two nights a week, women take a bus from their neighborhood churches to the David D. Hunting YMCA for exercise and nutrition classes.

- An innovative, award-winning “food prescription” program in which people with health problems such as dia-

betes or heart disease get a written prescription for healthy food at a food pantry.

“The thing I like the most is bringing people together in creative ways that, bottom line, help people,” Kempker-Vandriel says. “You have to be creative about reaching people and building trust. Health care is so complex, you can get lost in it.”

Recently, she visited two Latina moms to talk about their health care struggles.

“There's so much stress anyway, coming to a new country, navigating language, getting your kids settled, and add to that health concerns,” she says. “When I walk away after talking to people, I think, ‘This is why we do what we do.’ We have all the data, but that data comes alive for me when I'm talking to somebody. Then I can connect all the dots.”

She's a nurse, at heart. Kempker-Vandriel got her start at Saint Mary's Health Care, worked her way up to head of nursing at DeVos Children's Hospital and was one of 20 nurses nationwide

selected as a 2005 Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellow, a prestigious three-year advanced leadership program for nurses in executive roles with an eye on shaping the future of health care.

She has five degrees — including two master's and a doctorate — from five colleges and universities. Her resume is stuffed with impressive accomplishments, all about innovation and millions of dollars.

“It can be kind of depressing,” she says of the mission to improve health care. “It can be overwhelming. But when people used to ask my mom how she could do it with seven kids, she'd say, ‘If you get yourself organized, you can do just about anything.’”

“Overall,” she says, “I'm a glass-half-full kind of gal.” While her office keeps churning out programs to help, “the biggest thing is personal responsibility,” Kempker-Vandriel says.

“We're so used to saying, ‘We can operate on that’ or ‘We can give you medica-



PRESS PHOTO/LORI NIEDENFUER COOL

Street smarts: Mary Kay Kempker-Vandriel laces up her Nikes and takes to the streets on her mission of providing health care for those who struggle to get it. It's a daunting task, but the best weapon in the fight for health is “personal responsibility,” says the director of Spectrum Health's Healthier Communities

tion: ‘You have to take care of your body,’ she says. “Exercise, don't smoke. Basic stuff that's very hard to do, to be honest. Everybody has bad habits.”

She walks her talk. Literally. A pedometer always is clipped to her waistband. Her goal is to get in 15,000 steps a day and eat fewer than 1,500

calories a day. She loves her latest workout video: “Hip Hop Abs with Shaun T.”

“It's 23 minutes — I can do it,” Kempker-Vandriel says. “The other day, my 17-year-old son, Alex, walked in and said, ‘What are you doing?’”

She grins. “I was rockin' out.”

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PRESS PHOTO/DAVE RACZKOWSKI

Success by the numbers: As a numbers whiz who recognizes the benefits of that skill for nonprofit organizations in need, Peggy Bishop decided on her calling early: At 14, she decided to become an accountant. Today, as head of accounting firm Beene Garter LLP's nonprofit industry team, her volunteer work ranges from the Girl Scouts to the YWCA. “What a fabulous world this would be if everybody volunteered their time,” she says

COMMUNITY SERVICE: PEGGY BISHOP

Giving back is part of her nature

BY MORGAN JAREMA
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

Peggy Bishop doesn't think one's career and choice of community service need to be mutually exclusive.

In her case, the head of accounting firm Beene Garter LLP's nonprofit industry team has seen the benefits being a whiz with numbers can have on organizations in need.

Giving back was part of growing up for the 49-year-old Plymouth native.

Her parents often volunteered at their church and often included their children in their efforts.

Bishop made the decision to become an accountant at age 14, something she said is typical of her hyper-focused personality. She's a driven goal-setter who landed her job at Beene Garter 27 years ago after graduating from the University of Michigan Business School.

Through her employer, Bishop became involved with Quota International of Grand

“I was very supported growing up, and that's helped me be successful in my career.”

— Peggy Bishop

Rapids, a service organization that aids the deaf and hard of hearing.

In addition, she served as a board member and treasurer of the Student Advancement Foundation during the group's \$1.7 million literacy campaign that helped restock every library in the Grand Rapids Public Schools system.

The former Girl Scout and former council president of Girl Scout Michigan Trails also helped lead a \$1.8 million capital campaign that helped double the size of Camp Anna Behrens, near Greenville. But that's not surprising for the

Scout that sold more cookies than anybody else in her troop as a youngster.

The “devastating” memory of being chosen last during sports in grade school means she knows what it feels like to be considered “less than.” And she understands the necessity of helping to foster empowered women.

“Anything that involves women and girls and giving them opportunities they might not have been exposed to is probably the global issue I'm most passionate about,” she said. “I was very supported growing up, but there's a lot of people out there who don't have that.”

She relished her service on various YWCA boards and committees, and has spoken about the death of her best friend, Linda Poll, at the hands of Poll's husband in Grandville in 1993. “I don't think there's anything more vulnerable than a woman who is in an abusive situation, who doesn't have the inner strength to leave,” she said. “I never thought (that) could happen to one of my friends.”

The experience was heart-breaking, she said.

What breaks her heart today is seeing the financial challenges many nonprofits are facing as part of the overall economic downturn.

“When the economy is down, from an individual standpoint when people are struggling to keep their homes and food on the table, one of the first things that is going to go is charitable contributions,” she said.

“The need is up for just about every one of the services nonprofits provide.”

On the flip side, hard times also are a good time to give back, Bishop said.

“It doesn't take much to get a perspective on, ‘You know what, I don't have it that bad,’” she said. “There are so many people out there who we have absolutely no idea what it is like for them from day to day.”

“What a fabulous, fabulous world this would be if everybody volunteered their time. It does make a difference.”

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ARTS: PEARL SHANGKUAN

Directing a transformation

BY JEFFREY KACZMARCZYK
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

When musicians and musical organizations make recordings, they usually choose material that best shows off the group.

When the Calvin College Alumni Choir and its music director, Pearl Shangkuan, recorded its compact disc, “A New Heaven and A New Earth,” they set out to create a worship service with choral anthems, hymn arrangements and scriptural readings that would bring comfort to people at the ends of their lives.

The CD released in 2006 has made its way to funeral homes and hospice organizations across the country.

“I've gotten a lot of letters about people who were listening to it as they passed away,” Shangkuan said.

The greater purpose of music beyond mere entertainment inspires Shangkuan.

“When you lead a group, it's never just about music,” Shangkuan said. “The music is just the medium.”

A professor of music at

“When you lead a group, it's never just about music. The music is just the medium.”

— Pearl Shangkuan

Calvin College, Shangkuan is chorus master of the Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus, which she has “single-handedly transformed” in just three years, said symphony president Melia Tourangeau.

“I have never seen a more talented group of singers working to help us create such a wonderful artistic product,” Tourangeau said.

Shangkuan was born in Manila, Philippines, to parents of Chinese descent, the last in a family of seven girls and two boys. She began piano lessons as a child. At age 12, she began accompanying choirs and found her life's passion in choral music.

Shangkuan studied music at Westminster Choir College in New Jersey, where she sang with the Westminster Symphonic Choir, which performed frequently with the New York Philharmonic under famous conductors from Daniel Barenboim to Zubin Mehta.

In fall 1998, she came to Calvin College as the first female director of the venerable Calvin Oratorio Society, which she led until 2003, and of the Calvin Alumni Choir, which she took in March to the prestigious national convention of the American Choral Director's Association, an invitation-only event.

“Pearl embodies the joy, power and pleasure of beautiful singing,” said Ruth Vis, a Calvin Alumni Choir member.

At Calvin College, Shangkuan founded the Calvin Women's Chorale, affectionately known as “Pearl's Girls.”

“We've had to carve out a character and identity for ourselves,” she said.

This past summer, the group spent 19 days touring from South Korea and China to Los Angeles.

Just two of the 27 singers



Voice from the heart: The greater purpose of music beyond entertainment inspires Pearl Shangkuan. As a professor of music at Calvin College and chorus master of The Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus, she embodies what one singer calls the joy, power and pleasure of beautiful singing.

PRESS PHOTO/ JON M. BROUWER

had ever been to Asia. “It wasn't just a concert tour,” she said. “It was a mountaintop experience.”

During her term as president of the Michigan chapter of the ACDA, she re-established statewide conventions and brought them to

Grand Rapids.

Now, as president of the ACDA's Central Division, she'll bring 700 to 800 choral directors and thousands of singers from across the Midwest to Grand Rapids in February for a regional convention, a process that will have

taken four years to plan.

Shangkuan said her work is far from finished.

“If I ever feel that I've arrived,” she said. “Then I'm done, and I shouldn't be in this business anymore.”

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PROFESSIONS: LAURA KNAPP

She blazes trails for women

BY JOHN HOGAN
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

Laura Knapp always has been a pioneer for women, even if that hasn't been her intention.

As an eighth-grade student, she joined the boys' basketball team. Four years later, she eclipsed the 1,000-point mark playing on the Grant High School girls' basketball team her senior year.

Five years later, she hit another milestone as one of the first three women hired into the Grand Rapids Fire Department.

"I came in in that first class when they recruited women," Knapp recalled. "Three of us made it through the recruit class in 1984."

In 1999, she became the youngest person — and first woman — to be named battalion chief.

Twenty-three years after joining the city Fire Department, Knapp holds the No. 2 position as deputy fire chief, and is one of 13 women firefighters.

"When I started, and there weren't any women in the fire department, it was a chal-

“Women have proven that they have a fit in fire service.”

— Laura Knapp

lenge," Knapp said. "We were stepping into a world that was all guys. Women have proven that they have a fit in fire service."

Knapp, 45, a soft-spoken, mild-mannered woman, has climbed the department ladder through merit and accomplishments, not gender.

She was promoted to lieutenant and then captain during more than a decade of work at the city's fire station on Chester Street SE — one of the most active in the city.

She's been involved in some of the city's most spectacular — and tragic fires — including a May 1999 fire at Standard Supply & Lumber Co., 1535 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, which forced evacuations of dozens of homes and was battled by more than 50 Grand Rapids and subur-

ban firefighters.

A house fire on the city's Northwest Side that killed five people in December 1998 also stays with her. "The whole family perished," she said. "You try to forget about those."

Knapp has respect from her peers because she has experienced every aspect of the job, from grunt work to bureaucracy.

"I like to consider myself very approachable and easy to work with," Knapp said. "That's important to me to have the respect of the department. I don't ask anyone to do something if it is something I wouldn't do myself."

Outside of work, Knapp loves to hike. Pictures from a trip to the Canadian Rockies in a frame hang on the wall of her office overlooking LaGrave Avenue SE.

She's also quite handy with home construction, having bought fixer-uppers to rehab and resell.

Knapp, who is single, built her own home in Walker and did all the landscaping. "It's a stress reliever for me," she said.

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PRESS PHOTO/LORI NIENEN/GR PRESS

"We were stepping into a world that was all guys": As deputy fire chief for the Grand Rapids Fire Department, Laura Knapp's drive into new territory began in grade school. As one of the first women hired in the Fire Department, and now second in command, she believes in earning respect through experience.



PRESS PHOTO/EMILY ZOLADZ

Up, up and away: Don't be too concerned about which rung of the corporate ladder you start on. Imagine, instead, where it will take you, advises Nancy Hickey, Steelcase Inc. senior vice president and chief administrative officer

BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT, INDUSTRY AND LABOR: NANCY HICKEY

She helps others achieve success

BY PAUL R. KOPENKOSKEY
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

Nancy Hickey has done her share of chipping away at the glass ceiling to enable her and other women to move into management positions.

But talent and a shrewd business sense aren't all that are needed to make the openings grow wider, said Hickey, Steelcase Inc.'s senior vice president and chief administrative officer.

Tenacity and can-do moxie are twin allies that also help lower the barricade to promotion, she said.

"I think I have a realistic perspective on business," said Hickey, 56. "Business is about relationships, about serving customers' needs. I think a lot about business is very much about people who come to

“Business is about relationships, about serving customers' needs.”

— Nancy Hickey

work to do good, basically." Don't be overly concerned which rung of the corporate ladder you start on, Hickey said. Imagine, instead, where it can take you. Personal experience taught her that.

After teaching English at Morris Knolls High School in Denville, N.J., from 1973-77, Hickey decided she wanted to do more than instruct students how to conjugate verbs and diagram sentences.

She resigned her teaching job in 1977 and used her communication and social networking skills to help land an industrial sales position in New York.

From 1978 to 1982, Hickey worked a variety of sales and marketing positions for Exxon Office Systems in New York, California and Texas, and later for Phillips Information Systems in Dallas and Boston.

She joined Steelcase's sales force in Boston in 1986. These days, her bailiwick includes corporate communications, global human resources, corporate and community relations, aviation, global facilities and corporate technology.

Despite a demanding workload that requires regular business travel to Europe, Asia and within the United States, Hickey is engrossed in helping others achieve their career objectives, said Deb

Bailey, Steelcase director of corporate communications. She nominated Hickey.

"She is very curious about people, always wanting to learn more about what motivates them, how she can help them," Bailey said of Hickey's management style.

Hickey's philanthropic heart beats beyond Steelcase's boundaries, Bailey said.

Hickey led the launch of the Friends InDeed outreach program, which allows Steelcase employees to take paid time off from their jobs to volunteer for community service. She also is a founding committee member of the Grand Rapids chapter of Inforum, a support group that helps West Michigan women cultivate effective business skills and tap into their leadership potential.

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ADVOCACY: DEDE ESQUE

Helping makes her heart beat

BY TERRI FINCH HAMILTON
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

DeDe Esque's mom used to tell her she should laugh more quietly — more like a girl. But she didn't listen.

Esque's vibrant, boisterous laugh is one of her trademarks — along with her persistent, passionate voice that long has spoken out to boost others.

After working as manager of operations and grant making at the Nokomis Foundation, Esque last summer was named president and CEO of the foundation that supports women and girls.

It meant Ms. Behind the Scenes had to, in her words, "put on her big girl pants and step out front."

All the better to hear her. Because she says things like this:

"You help a woman, and you help the world. They are the ones who have the children, who take care of families. Globally, if we take care of the women and the children, we help the world. It might not always be this huge wave of change that you see. But we can do it, one by one."

“Globally, if we take care of the women and the children, we help the world.”

— DeDe Esque

Nokomis has funded a staggering array of projects, from the pioneering nurse examiner program for sexual assault victims at the Grand Rapids YWCA to a program that helps local women in jail turn their lives around.

They've funded female wheelchair athletes, women recovering from domestic violence and an 18-month study of prostitution in Grand Rapids that helped the community see prostitutes as real women with faces and families to support.

Esque, 47, is an adventurer who kayaks, beat drums inside the Great Pyramid in Egypt and lived with Bedouin women in the Sinai desert for two weeks.

While she gets paid to be



PRESS PHOTO/EMILY ZOLADZ

Her advocacy is driven by sense of justice, says DeDe Esque, president and CEO of the Nokomis Foundation, which supports programs for women and girls. Her community service always has had that focus, from the Michigan Women's Foundation and Girl Scouts to Planned Parenthood.

an advocate for women and girls, Esque has done it for years for free. Her community service always has focused on girls and women, she says, from Girl Scouts to the Michigan Women's Foundation.

Armed with a clipboard and her huge smile, she's registered hundreds of new voters at farmers markets, bus stations and area festivals. She's been working to reenergize the Grand Rapids chapter of the League of Women Voters.

She has supported the health care rights of women through a longtime commitment to Planned Parenthood as a board member, donor and volunteer.

A certified master gardener, she is active in Mixed Greens, a nonprofit organization that brings vegetable gardens to urban schools. She's been a facilitator for the Institute for Healing Racism and the annual Summit on Racism. As a little girl, kids teased her about being half

Japanese and half white. She hates name calling.

How does she choose where to help?

"I'd like to say it's a well-thought-out process, but it really hasn't been," Esque says. "It's a heart thing. It's what makes my heart beat."

"Or, I'm really ADD," she adds with a laugh.

"Personally, as a woman, there are times I could have used somebody to help me navigate through the darkness," Esque says. Her advo-

cacy, she says, "is driven by justice. Ever since I was a kid, I thought things should be fair for everybody. That's what moves me. And I think voice has a lot to do with it — speaking for folks who haven't had a chance to give voice to their issues."

"I'd like to think most of us are doing work that's not about us," Esque says. "It's about the cause. It's about the people."

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STUDENT: AQUEELAH SEIFULLAH

Resolved to succeed

BY MORGAN JAREMA
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

Aqueelah Seifullah is the youngest of five children, but the 17-year-old is hardly one to allow the path to success to be cleared by others.

Her community service includes or has included sitting on a committee that decides on grants to nonprofit programs benefiting youth, tutoring elementary and middle school students and working with Grand Rapids Public Schools Superintendent Bernard Taylor to draw attention to the need for a culturally diverse mix of teachers to match the diversity of the district's students.

All this while pulling in top grades as a senior at City High-Middle School.

"There's never enough time in the day anyway, so why not do it?" she said of volunteering. "You get the feeling you've done something positive, and not necessarily have to get something back. I like that."

"I think I have power in terms of my own life, control of where I want to go and what I want to accomplish," Seifullah said. "In order to get change, you have to do something. You can't sit on the sidelines. If you want it, you've got to go get it. Get out there. Get involved. Help your community. Help yourself. Help your family."

She is passionate about anything that gets in the way of teens achieving their goals:

"I think I have power in terms of my own life, control of where I want to go and what I want to accomplish."

— Aqueelah Seifullah

pregnancy, substance abuse, any of the myriad trappings of peer pressure.

"I want the youth to be educated, I want them to aspire to be something," she said. "I look at my future, and if it's something that's going to stop me on my path to success, I think twice about it."

Seifullah credits her parents with being the primary inspiration for her unwavering determination to set and reach personal goals and to make a mark on her community.

Her father is Noah Seifullah, a community activist and Imam. Her mother, Edie Rucker, is a producer at WZZM-TV 13.

She said her parents exposed her from a young age to the arts and culture, and she remembers tagging along on news assignments and press conferences with her mother, as well as to meetings and speaking engagements with her dad.

"I know how to carry my-

self in a business meeting, and I know how to argue a point," she said, with not a trace of an "I am all that" attitude.

She insists she has plenty of time to just be a teenager by pointing out that a lot of her extracurricular activities are with other youths.

She also is a member of the Delta Gems Greek step team and needs only minor pleading to get to her feet for an impromptu demonstration of the clap-step-stomp-swish-kick of the rhythmic, intricate college fraternity-sorority performance art.

Seifullah said she is intimidated only when she worries about being unprepared or underinformed, especially when speaking to large groups — something she admits to being less than fond of.

Her life has not necessarily been charmed — success has come out of a lot of hard work. But "for the most part, things have fallen into place."

Seifullah smiles when she is asked about her career goals. She hopes to open her own pharmacy one day, she said. That came out of an internship last school year at Spectrum Health where she shadowed professionals in several departments. One day, it was a pharmacist.

"He was so lively, so interesting, and pharmacists check what doctors give their patients, so in many ways they're saving lives," she said.

"I need to call him and say, 'Thank you.'"

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PRESS PHOTO/CHRIS POTTER

High achiever: She's helped decide grants to nonprofit programs benefiting youth, tutored younger students and worked to draw attention to the need for a culturally diverse mix of teachers to match the diversity of students in Grand Rapids Public Schools — all while being a student herself. Aqueelah Seifullah is passionate about doing what she can to do away with anything that gets in the way of teens achieving their goals.

2007 TRIBUTE AWARD

WINNERS

ADVOCACY
DeDe Esque
Nokomis Foundation

ARTS
Pearl Shangkuan
Calvin College

BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT, INDUSTRY & LABOR
Nancy Hickey
Steelcase, Inc.

COMMUNITY SERVICE
Peggy Bishop
Beene Garter

PROFESSIONS
Laura Knapp
Grand Rapids Fire Department

SPORTS, FITNESS & WELLNESS
Mary Kay Kempker-VanDriel
Spectrum Health • Healthy Family

STUDENT HONOREE
Aqueelah Seifullah
City High School

The Grand Rapids Press joins the YWCA of West Central Michigan in saluting Tribute Award recipients and their commitment to our community.

This year's winners join more than 150 leaders and trailblazers the YWCA has recognized with Tribute Awards since 1977.

We thank each of you for what you've inspired others to become.



Tribute luncheon raises \$80,000

SEVEN HONOREES HELP CELEBRATE 30TH YEAR

THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

GRAND RAPIDS — Almost \$80,000 was raised for YWCA programs for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child sexual abuse at Wednesday's 30th anniversary luncheon of the YWCA's Tribute awards program.

The downtown luncheon also celebrated the 30th year of YWCA's domestic crisis center.

Six women and one student were honored at the luncheon in DeVos Place, which drew about 800 guests.

Those who joined more than 150 women honored over the years included:

- Peggy Bishop, accounting firm Beene Garter LLP's non-profit industry team director, Community Service.

- Pearl Shangkuan, Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus, chorus master and music professor, Arts.

- DeDe Esque, Nokomis Foundation CEO, Advocacy.

- Laura Knapp, Grand Rapids Fire Department deputy fire chief, Professions.

- Mary Kay Kempker-Vandriel, director of Spectrum Health's Healthier Communities, Sports, Fitness and



PRESS PHOTO/PAUL L. NEWBY II

Proud mother: Aqueelah Seifullah, a student at City High-Middle School, is hugged by her mother, Eddie Rucker, after receiving the Judy Lloyd Leadership Award during the 2007 YWCA Tribute Awards at DeVos Place

Wellness.

- Nancy Hickey, Steelcase senior vice president and chief administrative officer, Business, Management, Industry and Labor.

- Aqueelah Seifullah, City

High-Middle School senior, winner of the student award and the Judy Lloyd Leadership Award.

"We're delighted that so many join us in celebrating the achievements of women

in our community and supporting our programs, this year especially, when funding is so unpredictable," said Carla Blinkhorn, president and CEO of the YWCA West Central Michigan.