

Tribute!

eliminating racism
empowering women **ywca**

2016 AWARDS CELEBRATION

Wednesday, November 9, 2016

#ywtribute

With Title Sponsor

FIFTH THIRD BANK

AGENDA

YWCA Tribute Awards

November 9, 2016

Noon to 1:30 p.m.

DeVos Place

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Welcome

Jacqueline Schafer

Immediate Past President, YWCA Board of Directors

Co-chair, Tribute Awards Planning Committee

Michelle VanTorre-Tellier

Member, YWCA Board of Directors

Co-chair, Tribute Awards Planning Committee

Susan Vogel-Vanderson

SVP and Chief Fiduciary Officer, Fifth Third Bank Western Michigan

Debra Bailey

Director of Global Corporate Relations, Steelcase, Inc.

Co-chair, YWCA Transformation Campaign

Luncheon

Awards Presentation

Jacqueline Schafer

Michelle VanTorre-Tellier

ADVOCACY



Dr. Nkechy Ekere Ezeh

Founder/CEO, Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative;
Associate Professor of Education,
Aquinas College

*Nominated by Sharon Killebrew
and Annemarie Valdez*

The first years of a child's life determines so much of their future — a fact known by Nkechy Ekere Ezeh's parents, and one that has been the foundation of Nkechy's career and impact on the world.

When Nkechy was a young girl in Nigeria, her parents instilled in her a sense of possibility and self-confidence. In a culture geared more toward the success of males than females, this was a rarity, and set the tone for who Nkechy would become.

As an adult in the United States, she has been a tireless advocate on behalf of vulnerable children and their families, seeking to provide them the same opportunity and sense of self that she was given. The cornerstone of this effort lies in early childhood education.

In 2010, commissioned by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Nkechy conducted research focused on children living in the core city of Grand Rapids. This research led her to plan and design an intentional preschool service system — the Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative (ELNC), aimed at providing expanding, and sustaining the capacity of high quality early care and education programs in Grand Rapids' vulnerable neighborhoods. Pleased with Nkechy's

research and recommendations, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded ELNC \$6.5 million in 2012. Under her leadership, ELNC has created 400 quality preschool slots in the core city of Grand Rapids. All ELNC preschool sites have earned top ratings from the State of Michigan. As evidence that the ELNC model is working, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation again awarded the organization with a grant, presented in 2016 for \$5.5 million.

Nkechy is a tenured Associate Professor of Education and Director of Early Childhood Education Program at Aquinas College, preparing new teachers to help young children reach their potential. Beyond Aquinas, she has also conducted professional development and parent education workshops throughout not just the U.S., but the world, including Australia, Dubai, Hong Kong, India, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Nigeria, and Zambia. She completed her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in education at Grand Valley State University, and her Doctorate in Education in Child and Youth Studies with specialization in Curriculum Development and Systemic Change from Nova Southeastern University.

Nkechy and her husband, Pius, have continued the legacy of education with their own five children, but her love for and belief in *all* children has no doubt changed our world. Thanks to her efforts in the critical first years, those she serves are not just ready to learn, but ready for life.



Kimberly Van Driel

Special Events Manager,
Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.

Nominated by Kayem Dunn

The creation of art is rarely straight or direct. The beauty often lies in the deviations, taking the uncharted road.

For Kimberly Van Driel, the path of her career has not always been direct, either. But, the art that has been created has helped our community flourish.

As Special Events Manager for Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc., a position she took in 2013, Kimberly enhances the downtown area, builds community, and inspires others through coordination of widely varying expressions of art. Her bold leadership has helped develop the arts as a vibrant sector of the city's downtown culture and expand our view of what community art can be.

She has launched a number of beloved community events, including the Movies in the Park series for large-scale community movie viewings at Ah-Nab-Awen Park; the Relax at Rosa series drawing bands, food trucks, and other entertainment for a weekly lunch event at Rosa Parks Circle; and winter events such as the Window Wonderland window display contest and the Valence-ICE ice sculpture competition.

Her goal with each event is not just to pull it off, but to make it enjoyable and accessible for all. With Movies in the Park, transportation has been provided from organizations such as Grandville Avenue Center for the Arts, as well as LINC, while also selecting films that

can appeal to different backgrounds and cultures. This vision has been rewarded with great success: Over \$150,000 in consumer spending during the event, more than 88,000 attendees, and a community model now being emulated in cities throughout the country.

Kimberly's work on Movies in the Park and her other initiatives helped Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. be recognized in 2014 with a nomination for Newsmaker of the Year Award in Arts and Entertainment from The Grand Rapids Business Journal.

With an Associate's degree in Graphic Design from The Art Institute of Colorado and a Bachelor's degree in Advertising from The Art Institute of Tampa, Kimberly's journey from West Michigan to elsewhere and back again has been one about finding personal passion. She is a quarterly guest speaker at Kendall College of Art and Design for their KCAD Talks program, where she shares about her journey and how students can get involved in the community through art. She regularly speaks in panel discussions for places such as the American Red Cross and Grand Valley State University on leadership through civic engagement. She also volunteers with Grand Rapids Young Professionals, Grand Rapids YMCA Healthy-U, Eastown Community Association, and the Susan G. Komen Foundation.

With more events up her sleeve, Kimberly's love of art and community will continue to benefit Grand Rapids, no matter how winding the path.

BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT, INDUSTRY, AND LABOR



Kerri Miller, P.E., LEED AP

Principal,
Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber
Nominated by Jenny Waugh

Being a Principal in a premier professional consulting firm — one with 400 staff and \$60 million in revenue, offering services in engineering, environmental science, architecture, and construction management — is an influential position. It's the highest management and leadership honor one can have at Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber.

Kerri Miller's influence, however, is increasingly significant as the first female Principal in the firm's history and also one of its youngest. The civil engineer is a role model in the male-dominated field. Her rise to the top has been an inspiration to women in the industry, and she seeks to empower more to join her through mentoring colleagues and students, speaking at career fairs, providing development opportunities for interns, and chairing the firm's Diversity Committee.

In her 14 years at FTCH, Kerri has helped municipalities, commercial companies, and developers with programming, site analysis, and civil design. Her knowledge of sustainable practices and products has made her an ambassador of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and has helped FTCH build a reputation as one of the most sustainably minded architecture and engineering firms

in town. Clients depend on her as a LEED Accredited Professional to find solutions to reduce energy consumption, limit negative impact on environmental media, and be good stewards of natural resources throughout a project.

Honored as one of the 50 Most Influential Women in West Michigan this year, Kerri has a B.S. in Civil Engineering from Michigan State University and became a licensed professional engineer in 2004. Many times, she was the only female in her classes — which she notes, "wasn't that long ago."

She is passionate about encouraging women and minorities to pursue careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). She works with local colleges and high schools, including Grand Rapids Public Schools' Innovation Central High School, to mentor students and demonstrate the opportunities that exist for all in engineering careers. This effort is a reflection of her steadfast belief that in order for our country to thrive, we need more talent in STEM professions — talent that includes women and minorities.

As Kerri changes the culture within her organization and in the field of engineering, she does so humbly with a shyness when in the spotlight. It's clear that no matter what adulation comes her way, Kerri will continue her work as a successful engineer and advocate within the field.

COMMUNITY SERVICE



Dr. Wendy VerHage Falb

Executive Director,
Literacy Center of West Michigan
*Nominated by Libby Crabb and
Diedre Deering*

When Wendy VerHage Falb first learned about the Literacy Center of West Michigan, she was shocked. To find that community volunteers with no formal teaching experience were teaching adults the literacy skills they needed to fully participate in our community was indeed a surprise for the former college professor.

Yet if one looks at what Wendy has accomplished, it is clear that the impact of a volunteer can be monumental. Wendy has devoted her life to serving the community in myriad ways.

After receiving a Bachelor's in Education from Calvin College, Wendy began her teaching career. Still working, she also earned a Master's in English from Boston College and a Ph.D. in English from Michigan State University. When she decided to pause her career in academia to care for family, she found she couldn't leave that world behind entirely. She quickly found herself deeply engaging in her two sons' schools in the Grand Rapids Public Schools system.

She started with the Grand Rapids Montessori Parent Teacher Association, and was soon encouraged to run for the Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Education. Her election was successful, and she has served on the board since 2009 in a variety of roles including president, secretary, and treasurer.

Wendy helped lead the district through a transition between superintendents, and supported new superintendent Teresa Weatherall Neal with a drastic and successful transformation plan. Today, GRPS is making headlines with its first increase in enrollment in 20 years, a positive trend many urban school districts have not seen in a long time.

Wendy stepped into the role of Executive Director for the Literacy Center in 2014, where she leads a volunteer-driven organization toward its mission of bringing about a just and vibrant West Michigan through the power of literacy. She instills a culture of community service by serving as a tutor herself, and encouraging staff members to tutor as well. Staff members note that you often find them swapping tutoring stories or talking about best practices with each other. Under her guidance, the organization has seen a 20% increase in the number of volunteers and 28% increase in number of people served.

Wendy also serves on the Downtown Development Authority, the board of the Student Advancement Foundation, and as co-chair of the Grand Rapids Public Museum millage campaign. She wholeheartedly believes in the importance of education, particularly public education, and its role in creating a more equitable and just community. She sees her community engagement as a charge to develop urban education to address inequities. Her success in doing so speaks highly to the power of a volunteer.

PROFESSIONS



Vicki Seidl

Senior Attorney,
Kent County Prosecutor's Office,
Juvenile Division
*Nominated by Judge Janet Haynes
and Judge Patricia Gardner*

As Senior Attorney overseeing the Juvenile Division of the Kent County Prosecutor's Office, Vicki Seidl manages a staff that prosecutes defendants who are younger than 17 years. Vicki readily admits that not many seek out the Juvenile Division as a career path, but for her, it's a calling. The complexity of cases and the impact of the outcomes means that Vicki often finds herself working as much outside the courtroom as in it. She frequently coordinates with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, various child welfare agencies, therapists, and others. In all corners, Vicki is seen as a committed advocate for children *and* justice. At the same time, she is a realist, saying, "You can't always treat kids with kid gloves, but you can always be fair."

Her dedication to the field and those involved in the cases she manages has been demonstrated through her efforts to educate the community about child welfare and juvenile justice. She never turns down an invitation to speak and regularly presents to prosecutors, legislators, academics, researchers, and students.

Vicki constantly seeks to understand juvenile behavior, issues impacting

today's youth, and the consequences — both intended and unintended — of policies. Her study and support of successful intervention programs, such as Kent County's Adolescent Sex Offender Treatment Program (ASOTP) has improved the safety and welfare of not just our community, but those who follow it as a model. Her goal is always to charge youth appropriately with fair consequences for all parties, but also with best possible outcomes for the future.

She credits her parents with her worldview, instilling in her the importance of taking responsibility for one's own actions. At the same time she says, "My vision is that we can rehabilitate most young offenders and put them on the right track."

The graduate of Central Michigan University (B.S.) and Southern Illinois University of Law (J.D.) has also played an instrumental role in the annual Women Lawyers Association of Michigan - Western Division vs. Judges Charity Softball Game benefiting the YWCA. She is the long-time coach of the women lawyers' team (although looking for a replacement so she can return to playing). Through her involvement on the planning committee thousands of dollars have been raised for YWCA services.

Vicki's leadership greatly serves the youth of our community, with hope for a brighter future for each of them.

SPORTS, FITNESS, AND WELLNESS



Dr. Adejoke Ayoola

Associate Professor of Nursing,
Calvin College

Nominated by Matt Kucinski

Adejoke Ayoola is a recognized expert in reproductive health. Yet face to face with a pregnant woman, it is she who will be listening.

The nursing professor knows it is in this way that she can empower the women she works with, helping them create their own solutions and make informed decisions. Her hope is that they take their knowledge and share it, teaching children and neighbors. It's a hands-on, generational approach that you can see in all her work. Trained as a midwife in Nigeria, Joke has constantly sought to improve the health of women and their children.

After earning a BSN and MSN at Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria, Joke continued her education, earning a Ph.D. in Nursing from Michigan State University. From there, she came to Calvin College, eager to learn about the reproductive health needs of her new community. While she had seen adverse outcomes for child-bearing women in Nigeria, she was surprised to see similar struggles in Grand Rapids and quickly set out to remedy them.

Joke began by running focus groups to direct her research, and received a \$350,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Nurse Faculty Scholars to fund her study focused on how to effectively promote reproductive

health among women of child-bearing age that are at-risk of having unplanned pregnancies. She created the Preconception Reproductive Knowledge Promotion program where Calvin students, under the supervision of faculty, teach women about their reproductive health. The program partners with three low-income Grand Rapids neighborhoods, with a two-fold benefit — improving the well-being of women and their families, and also modeling to students the power of community nursing.

In the summer of 2016, Joke also launched H.E.A.L.T.H. Camp (Health, Education, and Leadership Training for a Hopeful Future), a free camp for girls ages 9-15 to promote a culture of health and educate girls about their bodies. More than 10 Calvin departments were involved in the camp, with Joke's coordination.

Joke is frequently published in her fields, including the *Journal of Nursing Education*, *Western Journal of Nursing Research* and the *Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health*. She serves as a reviewer for multiple journals, and regularly presents at conferences. She is a member of the Honors Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International, and has received numerous awards within nursing and academia for her work.

Joke's efforts have saved lives, developed the next generation of nurses who are keenly attuned to the needs of their patients, and improved the well-being of families throughout the community.

JUDY LLOYD STUDENT LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP

PRESENTED BY THE YWCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Judy Lloyd

September 18, 1945 to June 1, 2005

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

-John Quincy Adams


It was this way with Judy Lloyd as well. Her kindness and extraordinary grasp of the issues facing our community inspired countless people to follow her lead. She was a role model for us all, the most graceful and respected of leaders. Judy led in a quiet, unassuming way as she connected individuals and organizations to the benefit of those most in need. She was a cheerleader and a touchstone, knowing who to bring to the table to get a job done and then devoting herself wholeheartedly to the tasks needed to get there. She touched hearts and strengthened our community at the same time. Judy's passing was met with an outpouring of generosity in her memory, which the YWCA has housed at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation and directed to long-term support of our services — all to create a community supportive of women and their families that Judy loved so much.

Judy's two decades of influence at the YWCA is immeasurable. She participated on the Tribute Planning and Selection Committees and helped establish and grow the YWCA's Circle of Women Celebration (now Open Circle) exponentially. Judy was a member of our Finance Committee, helping manage finite resources to effectively address the seemingly

infinite challenges facing women and girls. She led the YWCA's Board of Directors during some of the organization's most historic moments and helped lay the foundation for fundamental change in the national YWCA. In each moment, with each task, Judy offered those she worked with warm words of encouragement and the practical hands-on help to succeed beyond expectations.

With a corps of volunteers who resemble Judy's dedication and quiet leadership, the YWCA has worked hard over the last century to create an environment that allows women and girls to thrive and lead. The Tribute Student Award is an extension of that. We honor those young women who — while still in high school — have already shown themselves to be gifted, competent models for us all. The connection between these young women and Judy is natural and apparent. It is most appropriate that the scholarship should bear her name.

Inspired by Judy's life and work, the YWCA Board of Directors chose to establish the Student Leadership Award in her honor. It is designed to offer practical help to this and future student honorees as they work to fulfill their dreams. It is in this way that we recognize Judy and commit ourselves to a future motivated by her values and example.


Carla Blinkhorn, YWCA CEO

STUDENT HONOREE

RECIPIENT OF THE JUDY LLOYD STUDENT LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP



Taylor Jones

Senior,
Rockford High School
Nominated by Kathy Ryan

Taylor Jones knows what she wants to do. And what she does is a lot.

The Rockford High School senior takes courses at Kent Career Tech Center's Health Science Early College Academy to prepare for a career in nursing, works and volunteers at Equest Center for Therapeutic Riding, participates on the Rockford Varsity Equestrian Team, participates in Kent County 4-H, and pursues equestrian lessons and competitions. While completing it all, she never misses a day of school or work, earning a perfect attendance award for the 2015-16 school year.

The list of activities is long, but they all boil down to her two main loves: horses and helping. Through summer camp as a child, Taylor took an instant liking to all things horses. She got involved at Equest Center as a camper, rider, volunteer, and eventually staff, becoming the youngest person they have ever hired (at 14). The team at Equest praises Taylor's leadership, maturity, reliability, and attention to detail as she leads volunteer groups and works with riders of varying abilities, needs, and ages.

Taylor inspires those who live with disabilities to simply try and serves as a role model, demonstrating that anything is possible. She lost her foot in a lawn mower accident at age four, but does not let this hold her back. She is compassionate to others with special challenges, and strives to help them see how they can still accomplish their goals in life.

Her ultimate goal is to become a nurse anesthetist, and she plans to begin nursing school next year. She is well on her way, with a 3.87 GPA overall and a 4.0 GPA in her college-level coursework. She has made the Honor Roll for six consecutive years, and was the recipient of the Academic GPA Award for the past three years. She is currently enrolled in the Certified Nursing Assistant Program, and has taken opportunities at Mercy Health, Spectrum Health, and Metro Health to shadow medical staff in outpatient surgery, emergency rooms, mother/baby departments, and radiology.

Whether in a hospital or a horse arena, a classroom or a competition, Taylor is an example of what determined effort, a can-do attitude, and confidence in one's abilities can accomplish.