

A TRIBUTE TO INVOLVEMENT

Commitment to serving others a trademark of YWCA award winners

Stories by Terri Finch Hamilton
The Grand Rapids Press

Inspiration. Power. Commitment. Energy. They show such things in different ways. One expresses hope through art. Others make reality out of dreams. One woman uses her passion for helping others to inspire her four young sons.

They're the winners of this year's Tribute! Awards, given annually by the YWCA to honor our community's outstanding women.

Five women are recognized for their accomplishments in advocacy; arts; business, management and industry; community service; professions. One 17-year-old will be honored in the student category, both to recognize her achievements and inspire her to continue to excel.

The winners - profiled here and on Page C2 - will be honored at a luncheon Wednesday at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. But because of their efforts, everyone wins.



PRESS ILLUSTRATION/MILT KLINGENBARTH



Carol Karr

She's earned an impressive list of firsts, an exceptional professional rating, prestigious awards and the respect of her peers. Ask attorney Carol Karr what her secret is, and she'll tell you: a supportive husband, helpful parents and a wonderful babysitter who has been there for her family for 14 years.

"Without them, I couldn't do half of what I do," said Karr. "I wish I could mandate this kind of support for everybody."

Karr is a member (a title formerly known as partner) at the Miller, Johnson, Snell and Commiskey law firm in Grand Rapids.

Her career is filled with firsts.

She's the first woman to lead the State Bar of Michigan Taxation Section and one of only two women in the Grand Rapids Bar Association to be named in the 1995 Best Lawyers in America.

Karr, 42, was the first chair of the state bar's Taxation Council gender bias committee. Last year she was awarded the Quotarian of the Year award for the state of Michigan for her community service and leadership. She's the first member in the 50-year history of the Grand Rapids Quota Club to win the state award.

While her list of female firsts is impressive, Karr says it doesn't represent her true mission - empowering all people, not just women.

The Harvard Law School graduate is president of Indian Trails Camp for the physically challenged, is involved in the Black Educational Excellence Program for African-American high school students, is active in the Ryerson Library Foundation Endowment Committee and has provided free legal services through Legal Aid of Western Michigan.

For years she was the only woman at Miller Johnson. She chaired her firm's recruiting committee to increase the percentage of women hired and mentors female associates and law students.

"A lot of women drop out - it's a demanding profession," she said. "More women are choosing not to sacrifice their family life."

Karr admits having "typical working mother guilt," but has found a way to succeed at work and motherhood.

She shares her professional and community activities with her four boys - Adam, 14, Ben, 11, Bill, 8, and Alex, 6. Out-of-town speeches turn into family weekends away.

When she has activities at Indian Trails Camp, the boys often go along.

"It shows them why this stuff is important to me," Karr said. "Then when I do have to go away to do something, they know it's for a good cause."

"And," Karr added, "it teaches them early the importance of helping other people."

Artist and educator Eugenia Marve has taught art to troubled teens, senior citizens, drug abusers, the physically challenged, kindergartners, inmates.

Their pasts don't concern her. Their potential does.

Marve believes all life forms in the universe are part of one divine whole. Her sculptural ceramics and drawings typically include faces of different shades and shapes. Animals and people coexist in the same piece, symbolizing our kindred spirits.

"We need a healing component on this planet," said Marve, 47. "Through art, we can set a wonderful tone."

She teaches art at Riverside Middle School, but she has touched many students - of all ages, races and backgrounds. A visiting artist, workshop leader and lecturer at public schools and colleges, Marve stresses how similar all people are.



Eugenia Marve

She has gathered youngsters together from different ethnic and racial backgrounds to create art of ceramic tiles.

In her view, the process was as important as the product. It taught kids of different colors

they have a lot in common.

"In the traditional school arena we don't give kids a chance to talk about who they are, what they believe," said Marve, who earned bachelor's and master's degrees in fine art from Michigan State University.

"We don't tell them often enough, 'You have something very wonderful to say to people.'"

Her striking art of earth and sky, planets and animals, interesting faces and provocative themes has been widely exhibited and is in numerous national and international collections.

Her favorite piece sums up her philosophy, her educational mission. Called "Tree of Life," it's a ceramic tile mural representing people of all cultures coexisting happily.

Its positive message is a contrast to real life, said Marve, who was disheartened by the racial divisiveness caused by the O.J. Simpson murder trial.

"For as long as we've been on this planet, we've learned very little," she said.

She's making a difference the best way she can, through art and the young people she teaches. Her Riverside students learn more than the art of watercolor from their passionate teacher.

"On the first day of class I tell them why I believe they should be marvelous," Marve said. "I say, 'You are here, you are beautiful; I need you, the world needs you.'"



Bridget Lawrakowski



Linda Samuelson



Beth Goebel



Diana Siegor

See profiles of these Tribute! winners on Page C2