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For Further Information:
(609) 292-6055
Press Office

DCA Hosts the 2009 Connie Woodruff & Wynona M. Lipman Awards *11 Outstanding Women and Organizations Honored From Across the State*

PRINCETON - In celebration of Women's History Month, Governor Jon S. Corzine joined Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Joe Doria today to announce the recipients of the 2009 Connie Woodruff and Wynona M. Lipman Awards at Drumthwacket. The annual ceremony, sponsored by DCA's Division on Women and the New Jersey Advisory Commission on the Status of Women, honors outstanding individuals and community-based organizations that advocate for and support women.

"The individuals and organizations that are being honored today could not be more deserving of these awards", said Governor Corzine. "Each recipient has made incredible contributions, and it is clear that the commitment, drive and compassion embodied by Connie Woodruff and Senator Lipman lives on in New Jersey."

"The Wynona Lipman and Connie Woodruff Awards seek to recognize those making a distinct and definitive change in their community," said DCA Commissioner Joseph Doria. "The women and organizations honored here today have earned these awards through their commitment to creating better lives for people and families of New Jersey."

The Connie Woodruff Award is named in honor of the late Connie Woodruff, the first Chairperson of the New Jersey Advisory Commission on the Status of Women and past President of the National Association of Commissions on Women. The Wynona M. Lipman Award is named for the late Senator Wynona M. Lipman, the first African American woman elected to the New Jersey State Senate and a champion of women's rights, minorities and children.

"I am always encouraged when I see the applicants for the awards because it shows that no matter the times we are facing as a state and as a country, these women and programs continue to improve the lives of New Jersey women and their families," said Division on Women Director Janice L. Kovach.

(See attached list for more information on the awardees.)



2009 Connie Woodruff and Wynona M. Lipman Awardees

Connie Woodruff Award for Excellence

New Jersey Citizen Action Education Fund Statewide

As a nonprofit organization founded in 1983, New Jersey Citizen Action Education Fund (NJCAEF) promotes the empowerment of low- and middle-income people through research, education and training around public policy issues and direct counseling and services. NJCAEF has developed the following empowerment programs and services that seek to address the needs of New Jersey's women and their families:

- Home of Her Own: Women's Housing Initiative
- Free Loan Counseling
- Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Initiative
- Wealth Building Initiative
- Small Business Forums
- Peer Mentoring
- Asset Development Initiatives
- Homeownership Institute
- Fair Housing & Predatory Lending Education Campaign
- Consumer Rights Workshops
- Advocacy Work

Wynona M. Lipman Awards Empowerment Award

Leadership Scholars Program, Institute for Women's Leadership Rutgers University Statewide

IWL Leadership Scholars explore women's leadership and contributions to social change in contexts that range from the New Jersey Legislature to domestic violence shelters; from medical research labs to human rights organizations; from corporate boardrooms to the urban classroom; and from family dining tables to legal clinics. The program engages diverse models of leadership in classroom and experiential settings. IWL Leadership Scholars examine how different institutions inform our understanding and practice of leadership and how they encourage - or inhibit - civic innovation.

Eileen Stein Passaic County

Eileen Stein has been a tireless advocate on behalf of Jewish victims of domestic violence for 13 years. As coordinator of Project S.A.R.A.H. (Stop Abusive Relations At Home), Stein has provided services to members of the Orthodox Jewish community in New Jersey since 1996. Stein has been training the community leadership in understanding the dynamics of abusive relationships and providing adequate responses to victims who request assistance. In addition, she provides consultation and guidance to victims, Rabbis, students and clinicians around the state under the principles of empowering a client's self-determination and self-expression.

Innovation Award

Phyllis Eagle Kinsler Monmouth County

Phyllis Eagle Kinsler has dedicated the past 30 years of her career to women's health and the expansion of access to comprehensive reproductive health care services in New Jersey. As President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Central New Jersey (PPCNJ), Kinsler leads PPCNJ in serving the reproductive health care needs of over 15,000 clients and over 25,000 teens, parents, health care professionals and teachers through extensive education, outreach and professional training. Kinsler is passionate about serving Central New Jersey women through access to honest, comprehensive reproductive health care and education, believing that healthy, informed women are empowered women.

Mickie G. McSwieney Monmouth County

Mickie G. McSwieney has served New Jersey's displaced homemakers and their families for over 30 years. McSwieney reorganized the Displaced Homemakers Network of New Jersey (DHNJ) in 1984 and served as president of DHNJ from 1993 to 1996. In addition, she also worked with and represented New Jersey women for Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization in Washington D.C. that advances economic justice and equality for women. Through this collaboration, McSwieney advocated for New Jersey's displaced homemakers on a national level, addressing a variety of issues of importance to women.

Leadership Award

Laurel Theresa Brennan Camden County

Laurel Theresa Brennan made history in 1997 when she was elected the first woman Secretary-Treasurer of the one-million-member New Jersey State AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations), joining only a handful of women in the nation to serve in this capacity. Among her numerous accomplishments, Brennan has developed and implemented the successful Women in Leadership Development (WILD) Conference for the past six years. The WILD Conference commenced in 2004 as a way to recognize International Women's Day and has always been held in March in honor of Women's History Month. The Conference is designed to ensure that union women have every opportunity to be educated, develop leadership skills and build diversity within the labor movement.

Nancy C. McDonald, Esq. Morris County

Nancy C. McDonald launched McDonald Law Group, LLC in January 2008 to address the issue of the "marble ceiling" in the legal field that impedes women from attaining partnership and leadership positions. McDonald created a women owned and operated firm that provides a flexible and supportive network for female attorneys to excel in their field while balancing their family and personal needs. Under McDonald's leadership, the firm also focuses on diversity and service to the community through the following initiatives: the McDonald Law Group Equality Scholarship Fund, an LSAT Equality Scholarship, Facilitating Leadership in Youth (FLY) program, and the New Jersey Law and Education Empowerment Project, in addition to providing pro-bono services to deserving female and minority clients who could not otherwise afford legal services.

Synergy Award

Debra A. Nicholson

Bergen County

Since 2002, Debra A. Nicholson has advocated on behalf of Bergen County's low-income women through Bergen County Community Partnership (CAP), Inc. via her partnerships with social service organizations, welfare boards, educational institutions, financial institutions, government agencies, banks, childcare agencies and transportation services. As Bergen CAP's Training Coordinator, Nicholson has successfully collaborated with local agencies, organizations and corporations to meet the needs of her clients in the following programs: New Jersey Women's Micro-Business Program, which helps women with minimal business experience become successful entrepreneurs; PACTran (Providing Access to Careers and Transportation) Program, which assists clients in purchasing a car to address employment barriers; Jump Start Program, which provides women in the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) program with financial literacy education and emotional support so they can transition from welfare to self-sufficiency; and Time and Talents Program, which helps women who depart the TANF program to maintain employment.

Neena Singh

Somerset County

Neena Singh is founding member and President of MILAN (Montgomery International Ladies Association). MILAN was conceived as an organization of women dedicated to making a positive change in the community through fostering an environment of outreach and community service. Singh has collaborated with volunteers to organize a multitude of events that have impacted the local and global community. Locally, she organized monthly town hall meetings to empower women on topics such as investment and entrepreneurship, public relations, and managing blood pressure and cholesterol. Globally, MILAN's community partnerships successfully raised \$5,000 through their 2008 Spring Fest for READ, a global initiative to build self-sustaining libraries in developing nations. Singh lives by the dictum: "Be the change you want to see in the world."

Visionary Award

Renee Baskerville, M.D.

Essex County

Dr. Renee Baskerville has been working to expand health access for low-income women and families in Essex County and empowering them to be advocates for their health care and wellness needs for nearly 30 years. She opted to continue providing quality comprehensive medical services to residents of Essex County at a time when many private practitioners ceased providing health care for Medicaid recipients. Dr. Baskerville served vulnerable women and children in Essex County in both public and private health settings from 1982 to 2006. As a volunteer, she established a community-based teen center for "at risk" teenage girls in Newark. In addition, Dr. Baskerville participated in the development of pro-bono health care provisions for several school-based health facilities in an effort to expand students' accessibility to quality health care. Since 2003, Dr. Baskerville has served as the school physician at Irvington High School and Montclair High School located in Montclair, NJ, where she had provided medical services and health education to the students and their mothers.

Riki E. Jacobs
Middlesex County

Riki E. Jacobs served as an advocate in the HIV/AIDS community for the past 27 years. As executive director of Hyacinth AIDS Foundation since 1993, Jacobs provided leadership, support and guidance to her trustees and staff while serving as an important resource to legislators, educators and the general public. Jacobs' work in HIV/AIDS began in 1982 while working with the New Jersey Association on Correction (NJAC); she developed one of the first pre-release programs in the country targeting offenders living with HIV/AIDS. Beginning in 1986, she organized local and statewide coalitions to lead the fight against HIV/AIDS in New Jersey and was a co-founding member of NJWAN (NJ Women and AIDS Network). Her vision encompassed providing high-quality services while working to reduce the unacceptably high incidence of new HIV infections in the state. Jacobs realized the importance of educating the community that HIV is not just a health issue, but it extends to the greater challenge of poverty which limits access to health care. Riki Jacobs passed away on March 14, 2009, after a long illness.

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