

Macomb Feminist Network Writing Women Into History

2015 Honorees

Lois Ganyard worked for many years as a grant consultant for the City of Monmouth, with small community needs through the Western Illinois Regional Council, and in counseling seniors at the local YMCA Senior Center. Lois's time as a charter member of the McDonough County League of Women Voters and on the state LWV Board are contributing factors in her development of civic responsibility and knowledgeable expertise in decision making. Having served for 30 years on the Macomb City Planning Commission, she was chair of the Commission eight of those years. She was elected as a trustee of the Macomb Public Library for two terms and served on the Friends of the Library Board. As a member of the MDH Hospital Auxiliary, she chaired the Health Careers Scholarship Committee for twelve years, and continues as a volunteer weekly. As a member of the AARP Creative Elder Options Committee that has produced an annual edition of the McDonough County Illinois Senior Services Directory, Lois has assisted with its development and editing. Tenure with the various groups attests to Lois' excellent organizational and leadership capabilities. She is best described by her nominator as "tiny, but mighty."

Margaret Ovitt has been a longtime supporter of causes relating to the environment and to healthy living – two closely intertwined fields of interest. She is a former nurse who went back to school to earn a master's degree from the University of Illinois in Landscape Architecture. For several years she ran a local landscaping business that specialized in native plants. She is a past chair of the Macomb Food Co-op and serves as a member of its steering committee. The ultimate goal of the Macomb Food Co-op is to become large enough to support a grocery store selling locally produced meat, produce, honey baked goods, and other items. The Co-op opened an on-line market in 2014. Margaret also is a founding member of the Prairie Land Conservancy, a trust that focuses on conserving open land and preserving wildlife habitat. She is a member of the Emiquon Corps of Discovery, a citizens group working to restore two lakes on the Illinois River near Havana. In addition, Margaret serves on the Macomb Tree Board, a group that she helped form. Margaret and her husband, Ed Card, are restoring a prairie on former farmland they purchased west of Macomb. Her many contributions have helped to improve the quality of life in Macomb and the surrounding area and have made a difference in the lives of others in our community.

Suzan Nash's interest in planning and community development led her to the Western Illinois Regional Council (WIRC) in 1979. Within 2 years, she was made Executive Director and is serving her 34th year in that position. She and her staff have expanded community and economic development opportunities for the units of government in the 6 counties in its service region. In 1982, the agency began providing services to help meet the needs of those less fortunate as it expanded into community action programs. During

her tenure, programs assisting local units of government and their residents have been funded including housing rehabilitation and infrastructure improvements; a facility for electronics and paint recycling has been opened; and the McDonough County Public Transportation program has been expanded to include a Transfer Station, a Vehicle Maintenance Center and transit services have been added in Hancock County. The human service initiatives at the WIRC-Community Action Agency, serving a four county area, include a Food Pantry, the Hunters Helping the Hungry program, Project Santa, the Clothing Center, energy and home weatherization assistance, and a variety of housing assistance programs. Suzan and her staff saw a need to address the void in services to victims of domestic and sexual violence and as a result, Victim Services was initiated in 1986. All of these programs and services have been started and consistently maintained in spite of fluctuating state and federal funding. Suzan is quick to credit her committed staff and, with her leadership, the WIRC team has worked diligently and successfully to improve the quality of life in the region.