

Macomb Feminist Network Writing Women Into History

2019 Honorees

Winona Malpass is being honored posthumously for her work as the person who initiated, and then coordinated, the first hospice program in Macomb, an invaluable service for families and individuals facing imminent death. Winona embraced the ideas Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross explored in *On Death and Dying: What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy, and Their Own Families* and volunteered to provide counseling at McDonough District Hospital to help patients and their families facing death. Her work as a volunteer, begun in the late 1970s, was so significant and so much appreciated by the many people she counselled, the hospital hired her to coordinate the hospice services she had organized. She also became an important resource and support for other county agencies, including the McDonough County Health Department, especially for the people they served through their Home Nursing and Community Care programs. She not only gave direct care through her counselling but worked to educate the community about hospice care and advocated for its acceptance. What Mr. Greg Case, Winona's supervisor at MDH, remembers most about her is "the strong sense of empathy that she shared with her patients; . . . they truly loved and trusted her." When she retired, a tribute fund was established in her name to help support programs she initiated.

Belinda Carr, a Western Illinois University (WIU) graduate, will be honored for her multiple contributions to WIU as Director of the Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center and to the larger community through her service on the Boards of the Housing Authority of McDonough County and of the Macomb Equal Opportunity and Fair Housing Commission, as well as the McDonough County Board and the Central Committee of the McDonough County Democrats. As a Board member of P.R.I.M.E. (Pride & Responsibility in My Environment), an organization that, for 20 years, provided educational options, recreational activities, and service opportunities for youth in an eight-week summer program, she partnered with WIU departments to provide workshops in a wide range of subjects, from biology to dietetics and fashion merchandising, from computer science to fire safety. As Director of the GBCC Belinda helped organize the annual Juneteenth Celebration in Macomb, a celebration of the end of slavery that brought people from throughout the region to Macomb to learn more about and enjoy African American culture. She was also a critical contributor to annual Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebrations, Soul Food Festivals, and countless other programs featuring scholars, artists, and activists. As Director of the GBCC she was central to the organization of these programs and, though she is a dynamic presenter, characteristically, she worked behind the scenes while giving students opportunities to develop and showcase their talents. Belinda took up the challenge of creating a welcoming environment for African American students through her work in the WIU and Macomb communities.

Susan Lawhorn is being recognized primarily for her many contributions to Loaves and Fishes, a food pantry initially organized 25 years ago by two churches but now supported by twelve congregations and serving over 400 households each month. A member of the Loaves and Fishes founding committee as well as the original—and current—boards, Susan has contributed to the success of Loaves and Fishes in numerous ways for all the years of its existence. She not only helped determine the structure of Loaves and Fishes, but has also consistently and graciously contributed to its day-to-day operations. She trains and coordinates the 30-40 volunteers who help the people who come to the pantry for food and emergency assistance each month; she prepares the monthly schedule of volunteers and fills in as needed if another volunteer has to cancel; she makes herself available via phone when volunteers have questions or need help identifying additional resources for clients; two months of the year she is one of the volunteers who interacts directly with pantry clients; she helps stock the pantry shelves and arranges for deliveries from food banks and local grocery stores. During her quarter century with Loaves and Fishes, Susan has been ready to do whatever is needed to keep the pantry open five days a week for people in need. As an artist, she has a long history of promoting art in the schools and more recently through the West Central Illinois Art Center.

Essie Rutledge, a Macomb Feminist Network member, has been contributing to Western Illinois University and the city of Macomb since she came to the university in 1976 to chair, and in many ways, to define the African American Studies Department. She is being honored primarily for her advocacy for equity and justice through her mentoring of individuals both on and off campus, and through her participation in organizations ranging from the Macomb Equal Opportunity and Fair Housing Commission to the Lions Club to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Western Illinois Regional Council. She helped complete the research that led to the creation of WIU's Women's Center, served on the Center's Advisory Board, and participated in many of its programs. As a member of UPI, WIU's faculty union, aware that women and people of color were often disadvantaged in salary and promotion negotiations--but without overlooking the needs of all university personnel,--Essie consistently looked out for the individuals in traditionally underrepresented groups. Though frequently facing opposition when she directs attention to the ways racism and sexism play out in the lives of people of color and women, Essie stands her ground, refusing to acquiesce when equity and justice are challenged. Because of her particular position in a world where whiteness carries privileges often not recognized by the very people who enjoy them, she has been willing to step forward and call attention to the inequity that often results.

Patricia Walton is being honored most specifically as a “defender and advocate for children's rights.” As a general practice attorney, she focused on family, juvenile, and criminal law. Since her 1994 appointment as an Associate Judge of the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court, she has established the Drug Court, the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program, and the Improvement Committee for Juvenile Court, all in

McDonough County. The Drug Court offers adults a way to avoid jail time when found guilty of alcohol and drug related offenses. CASA provides a court appointed advocate for every abused or neglected child to assure s/he is not lost in the legal system or placed in a home that is inappropriate. Advocates stay with “their” child until a permanent placement is made. A licensed foster parent, Patricia has served as a temporary foster parent for children and assisted in the training of individuals seeking a foster care license. She has Advanced Certification from the Child Abuse and Neglect Institute, a program that promotes best practices for judges presiding over child abuse and dependency cases. She helped establish the Big Brothers Big Sisters in Bushnell, became the first Big Sister there, and in 2015 was named Big Sister of the Year for Warren and McDonough Counties. Her community service includes Past President of the Bushnell Rotary Club, Board member of McDonough County Habitat for Humanity, and member of the McDonough Bar Association, McDonough County Republicans, McDonough County Republican Women, and Macomb’s Women’s Club.