

Marietta Daily Journal

Wonder Women

3/26/2009

By Talia Mollett
tmollett@mdjonline.com

COBB GALLERIA - Nearly 400 people attended the YWCA of Northwest Georgia's 24th annual Tribute to Women of Achievement gala Thursday night at the Cobb Galleria.

The tribute honors 15 outstanding women in the community every year, from entrepreneurs and business leaders to elected officials, educators, volunteers and mothers.

The gala is also the YWCA of Northwest Georgia's annual fundraiser. About \$100,000 was raised at Thursday night's event, which will support programs at the YWCA of Northwest Georgia.

Kim Gresh, president of S.A. White Oil Company, was chosen as the 2009 Woman of the Year.

"I think this is an award for all of us, Cobb County and for what the Y does. I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart," she said.

Gresh not only oversees S.A. White, but she is also on the Board of Trustees for the WellStar Foundation, a MUST Ministries board member and the 2008 Marietta Citizen of the Year, among other achievements. She is the first female board member of the Georgia Oilmen's Association and the first female council member for ConocoPhillips National Marketing Council.

Last year's recipient of the award, Lillian Darden, said of Gresh: "She enjoys working on many committees and boards, but knows the true reward comes from seeing the many accomplishments and improvements that have been made to our community. She loves to take on new and challenging opportunities that may arise to further help the community."

Tribute Committee co-chairs Beth Sessoms and Kim Menefee said this year's nominees were among Cobb's cream of the crop.

"We wanted to really raise the bar and select the top achievers," Sessoms said.

Added Menefee, "And we wanted to make it worthy of the quality of the women in the community, as well as make them feel like it's an honor to be nominated."

Gresh was selected from a field of nominees that included Debbie Abernathy, Alexis Amaden, Tracey Atwater, Marie Dobbs Barnes, the Honorable Beverly Collins, the Reverend Karen Evans, Cheryl Graves, Winsome Hawkins, Joni House, Lorraine Martin, Cheryl Musial, Linda Parker, Allison Toller and Mayor Pat Vaughn.

Nominee Toller said she was humbled by the nomination.

"I feel like there are many more women in Cobb that are more deserving, especially here in the Cobb School District. Humbled is the way I feel and grateful (to be nominated)," said Toller, director of community relations and executive assistant to Cobb Schools Superintendent Fred Sanderson.

A new award was also added to the tribute this year. The Pat Head Dignity Award recognizes someone in the community from law enforcement, victims service providers, elected officials or community citizens who champions the cause for dignity and respect for those the YWCA serves.

Amy Phillips, YWCA Board President and Holly Comer, YWCA CEO, presented Head with the award.

"This award is established in honor of Pat Head, district attorney for the Cobb Judicial Circuit, for his years of dedication to those who no longer have a voice, who need us to be their voice and for their loved ones," they said.

Head, who had no idea an award had been named in his honor, thanked his staff and others for their support.

"This award is really for staff of the DA's Office," he said.

The Kathryn Woods Racial Justice award, which rewards a business or organization for its commitment to or solving racial inequities, was given to Waste Management Inc.

The 2009 Bright Future Scholarship recipient was Bonnie Pintur, a senior at Walton High School. Judge Juanita Stedman, Pintur's juvenile drug court judge, nominated the 17-year-old for the \$1,000 scholarship towards a college education.

"What Bonnie has done is learn to make recovery part of her life and use all her resources. This is a great challenge and one that most 17-year-olds will not ever face, yet alone overcome. She is stronger and more determined, which combined with being bright and vivacious, will serve her well in college and throughout the rest of her life," Stedman said.

Condace Pressley of WSB Radio was the mistress of ceremonies for the gala.

Cobb Chairman Sam Olens, members of the Cobb County Commission, Marietta City Schools Superintendent Dr. Emily Lembeck, former Georgia Gov. Roy Barnes, Cobb's Chief Deputy Sheriff Lynda Coker and Cobb Sheriff's spokeswoman Nancy Bodiford also attended the event.