

Diamond Award winner dazzles fellow seniors

BY MARY RODRIGUEZ

Bette Strauch's first reaction to being named the 1995 Diamond Award recipient was "I don't deserve it. Give it to someone else."

But the folks at the Farmington Area Commission on Aging were persistent about recognizing the woman who has been volunteering at Providence Hospital for more than 11 years.

And since she met the criteria of being 75 years old and living in Farmington, they continued to persist.

"She was very reticent," said Kathleen Pohutsky, a FACA board commissioner. "She is a shy, very humble lady."

But Strauch, who had been nominated by her daughter's mother-in-law, gave in to family pressure and graciously accepted the honor.

"I've only lived in Farmington for five years," she said. "I was surprised and reluctant. I just felt that there are so many people more deserving."

With her daughter, Diane, at her side, she accepted the plaque and a \$75 check in a ceremony at the Farmington Hills Senior Center earlier this month.

The retired education secretary who worked at McIntyre Elementary School in Southfield started her volunteer work at Providence in February 1984. She has racked up 2,600 hours of service there.

"I joined with a gift to do a lot of fun; you meet a lot of people," she said.

She usually volunteers one day a week in the pastoral care office in Southfield, delivering communion to patients. She works a



Maggie Loridas

second day at Providence Park in Novi at the front desk, greeting patients and pointing them in the right direction.

"She's been there since it opened in June 1992," said Karen Wiley, a Providence spokeswoman.

"Anytime you have a volunteer willing to travel between the two centers, that's special. We've been really lucky to have her. When people give of themselves, it's appreciated."

Wiley noted that the hospital is always in need of volunteer help. "It's a nice outlet for retirees," said Strauch. "You can be committed to something and yet without the pressures of a regular job."

Strauch and her husband, James, a Detroit Edison retiree, are members of Our Lady of Sorrows Church, where she is a le-



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LAMERIX

Award winner: Harry Keszera of the Farmington Area Commission on Aging awards Bette Strauch the Diamond Award for her volunteer efforts at Providence Hospital.

tor.

Pohutsky said she also drives homebound senior citizens to shopping or appointments.

"I used to like to golf, but I don't do that anymore," Strauch

said. "I belong to a pinocle league. Other than that, things are pretty quiet."

She is also the doting grandmother of two young men, ages 25 and 21.

The Diamond Award was created just three years ago to recognize citizens, at least 75 years old, still making contributions to their community.

"The basic criteria is that they

be 75 and live, work or volunteer in the Farmington area," said Pohutsky. "There are a lot of senior volunteers out there. What we've tried to do is recognize the unsung heroes."

ACLU chief gives heart, perspective to local liberals

BY JUDITH DONER BENNE

SPECIAL WRITER

Although she lives in a neighboring town, Edwina Davis is concerned over the open seat on the Southfield Board of Education that must be filled by write-in vote since no candidates filed for the June election.

She wants it to be filled by "a fair-minded candidate."

That concern was also voiced by a fellow member of the 300-person audience gathered to hear Ira Glasser at the Birmingham Temple in Farmington Hills Monday night.

The long-time national director of the American Civil Liberties Union urged, "It is important you pay attention to local school board elections."

"The Christian Coalition is eight degrees of sophistication beyond the Moral Majority," he said. "It is organized politically and they all start with local office."

If you allow these "stealth candidates" in, he said, "you not only create problems in the schools but political careers start. They're very good at it."

It was obvious from the attentive, supportive, mainly over 60-something audience, that Glasser was preaching to the choir on "Confronting the Radical Right in America."

As the religious right reads its agenda for the second 100 days, the New York Times Tuesday reported Glasser sent letters to President Clinton, all members of Congress and the 50 governors calling the Christian Coalition's plans an assault on constitutional freedoms.

But from this local lecture, he delivered a mild-mannered and upbeat history lesson, designed to provide perspective on why the radical right is "playing so well right now."

Look to the economy, he said. "A large number of people believe their children will be less well off than they are." It takes optimism to hand out rights.

Today, "we have a meanness of spirit. They're doing everything right and the American dream isn't working. And the Republicans are telling them — be angry."

"It's an engine of anger waiting to be attached."

In fact, Glasser said, "The odds are far better today than the day the ACLU was organized. There is no way even this court and this Congress can roll back anything except marginally."

"What counts is what people who demand their rights do. Not what the other side does."

He cautioned his audience not to lose heart over setbacks. That's where the perspective comes in.

For the most part, the Bill of Rights provided no shelter for 130 years, Glasser recited. "There was rigid discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, race, separation of church and state existed only in civics classes; constitutional litigation was too expensive."

That began to change in the '20s with the formation of the ACLU, NAACP and labor unions. "Without organizations to finance and bring attorneys in, individuals couldn't have done it," Glasser said.

Slowly, he said, an edifice of legal rights began to build. Following World War II, things began to move fast. "We had fought a war abroad against racism. We couldn't ignore it here any longer."

Jackie Robinson breaking the color line in baseball (1947) and Brown v. Board of Education (1954) striking down school segregation were key. And "a virtual explosion of rights supported by the Warren Court" burst from 1954 to 1973 when *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion.

But rights, Glasser reminded, equals limitations on power. "People don't like to give up power." So this rights explosion "got a lot of people mad."

People like Pat Buchanan, Glasser says, want to "take back the country — not your country,

his. They feel their country was stolen."

"The galvanizing decision was the abortion decision. We celebrated and they organized."

Catholic fear of Protestant influence in schools had helped allow the decisions that took prayer and celebrations of Christmas and Easter out of the public schools. "But they are united on the abortion issue."

That coalition then became a home base to push for censorship, move against affirmative action

and try to reinstate school prayer.

He claims in 1980 they found their hero — Ronald Reagan.

"Suddenly there was a movement we weren't ready for — because we had relied on the courts. It took us a decade to catch up. We forgot courts weren't forever."

Glasser had these responses to questions on:

Foster nomination: "My guess is that they'll find a way not to back the appointment."

Presidential race: "My instinct is in the long run Clinton's real

hope is Phil Gramm gets the nomination and Clinton gets to run as the moderate Republican."

Supreme Court: "We've come back from the brink on many issues. But the question is who's going to make the appointments in the next four to eight years."

"He just capitalized everything I've been thinking," said Gloria Holzman of Southfield. "We are forming a group that is going to resist the GOP party today. People want to know what to do."

FARMINGTON FOCUS

A special volunteer

Peggy Harris, a Farmington resident, was one of 300 volunteers for the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency to be honored May 2 at a brunch at the St. George Cultural Center in Bloomfield Township.

Harris was one of 11 OLHSA volunteers given special recognition for their efforts. She has volunteered with the organization 10 years as part of the Community Food Distribution project at St. Alexander Catholic Church in Farmington Hills.

She is responsible for recruiting volunteers to assist with the food distribution, site set-up, and pickup and delivery of the food.

'Prayer and Values'

The Rev. Harry T. Cook II, an Episcopal minister and a well-known journalist, will speak on "The Public Schools: Prayer and Values" at 8:30 p.m. Monday, May 22, in the Meeting Room of The Birmingham Temple, 28611 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills.

Cook's talk, which is free and open to the public, is part of the temple's "Humanist Forum . . . Confronting the Religious Right," according to a flier. For more information, call 477-1410.

'Mostly American'

Some musical students at Farmington High School and Larkshire Elementary School will combine their talents to produce a concert — "Mostly American: Musicals, Movies and More" — at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 23, in the auditorium of Farmington High on Shiloh Avenue. Performing will be the Larks and Handclimbs

from Larkshire, as well as the PHS Mixed Choir, Concert Choir and the Falconaires. For more information, call 469-3461.

Quiz the candidates

The two candidates for the open seat on the Farmington Board of Education — Linda Enbert and Jennifer Levin — are expected to participate in a candidate forum sponsored by the Farmington Democratic Club at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 24, at the Botaford Inn on Grand River northwest of Eight Mile.

The format calls for a panel of two club members, Vicki Barnett and Michael Shipice, to question the candidates prior to opening the floor for questions. The event will be open to the public.

Memory Lane

From the May 19, 1955 edition of the Farmington Enterprise:

- The Farmington City Council adopted a record \$266,737 budget for 1955-56.
- A five-day carnival was to be held to raise money for the planned lighted football field at Clarenceville High School.
- Don McLeod, well known Detroit-area disc jockey, was to be the guest of the Farmington High Student Council at the D-J Hop at the school.
- Short item: "Politeness is an inexpensive way of making friends."

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48338; faxed to 477-9722; or dropped off at the newspaper office. For the computer listserve, the Internet E-mail address is: packygo@online.com.

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