

The background of the entire page is a light green color with a repeating pattern of stylized green leaves and oranges. The oranges are depicted with a textured, slightly mottled appearance, and the leaves are simple, elongated shapes with visible veins. The overall aesthetic is clean and natural.

2002

Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service

THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

The Awards in Human Service are an annual tradition at The McKnight Foundation, reflecting the Foundation's deep belief in the virtue and power of compassion. Since 1985, the award has gone to 187 Minnesotans, including this year's group, who have selflessly given time and effort to others with no thought of material reward for themselves. Each recipient exemplifies the life-changing difference one person can make through service.

The Foundation created the Awards in Human Service in 1985 and renamed them 10 years later as a tribute to Virginia McKnight Binger, the Foundation's honorary chair and past president. Her personal compassion sets the standard for the Foundation's work. In 1999, an evaluation of the program's first 15 years found that award recipients continue to make important contributions to their communities.

Those who receive these awards are not motivated by a desire for recognition. Someone familiar with their work nominates them in confidence, and the nominations are researched and evaluated independently. To qualify, nominees must live in Minnesota and show commitment to helping others achieve a better quality of life while receiving little or no pay or recognition for their own efforts. Awardees each receive \$7,500.

The Foundation invites nominations each spring through the media and charitable organizations. Beginning in August, a committee of people active in various human services fields evaluates the nominations and recommends 10 nominees to the Foundation's Board of Directors.

The following pages describe the 2002 award recipients and their work. Names of previous recipients are listed in the back.

To receive a nomination form or more information about the program, contact The McKnight Foundation at 612-333-4220. Next year's nomination form will be available on the Foundation's Web site, www.mcknight.org, in May 2003.



2002

Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service

Andrew Benjamin

Martha Cardenas

Bonham Cross

Mohamed Essa

Ann Hooley

Jacqueline Kavanagh

Ed and Fern Ostberg

Ron Schwartz

Margaret Smith

Gayle Weigle

Program

WELCOME

Rip Rapson

President
The McKnight Foundation

Marge Hamersly

Chair
Virginia McKnight Binger
Awards in Human Service Committee

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

Erika Binger

Director
The McKnight Foundation

Rip Rapson

2002 Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service Committee

Marge Hamersly, Glenville, Chair

Lisa J. Braun, St. Cloud

Tony Looking Elk, Minneapolis

Deborah Montgomery, St. Paul

Sheldon Olkon, St. Paul

Juan Rangel, White Bear Lake

Somly Sitthisay, Oakdale

2002

Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service

Earle Brown Heritage Center

Brooklyn Center, Minnesota

November 22

2:30 p.m.

Harvest of Hope



Here in Minnesota, we're just settling in for our usual long winter, the season that defines our state's character. For those of us with many material blessings, it's a time to snuggle in, light a fire, and enjoy our warmth and security. For those who are hungry, cold, homeless, or lonely, however, it is a bitter season that aggravates already difficult living conditions. Perhaps the kindness often cited as a Minnesota trait stems from our winter-borne knowledge of how hard life can be, and that understanding endows us with a measure of empathy.

One of the greatest rewards of our work at The McKnight Foundation is the chance to meet people whose empathy is so deep that they set aside their own interests to make life better for others. They give time, money, and energy without expecting anything in return. It is these people—not only those selected for awards but the many others who do their good work quietly and unceremoniously—that we honor today.

Volunteerism benefits both those who give and those who receive. More important, it strengthens the community. In providing food and shelter, befriending the young and the old, and helping people solve problems, compassionate individuals plant seeds of kindness. As they flourish, these seeds yield a harvest of hope and compassion. The true climate in which we live is one where human warmth overcomes the physical and metaphorical winters of life.

We have given the Awards in Human Service for 18 years. There is no shortage of people to recognize. Today we are proud to honor 11 who, like gardeners of the spirit, sow kindness as they walk the earth. Our community is a better place because of them.

Virginia M. Binger
Honorary Chair
The McKnight Foundation

Andrew Benjamin

St. Paul

“I’m a weird person,” Andy Benjamin admits. “I love to do taxes!” Thousands of low-income clients are thankful that he does. Nearly 20 years ago, Andy signed on as a volunteer with AccountAbility Minnesota. He now manages two tax sites, supervising 17 volunteer accountants and reviewing tax returns for about 550 families. This year those two tax sites resulted in net returns of nearly \$600,000. Low-income clients may not have big deductions, but they are entitled to complicated earned-income tax credits that help them survive poverty, providing as much as a third of their yearly income. “If it weren’t for the earned-income credit, some of these people would really be out on the streets,” Andy says.

During the 12-week tax season Andy puts in 12 hours a week with AccountAbility and also meets individually with homebound clients. In addition, he is an overnight shelter volunteer with Simpson Housing Services, mentors prisoners through Prison Fellowship, and serves on the board of Emma Norton Services. Asked why he volunteers, he says he is simply fulfilling the command of Jesus to help the poor, the homeless, and the prisoner. When he retires from his full-time job with H.B. Fuller Co. later this year, he vows to devote even more time to helping low-income and elderly people with their taxes.



“When Andy volunteers, the atmosphere is charged with energy. He has the kind of compassion that brings joy to the people he is working with.”

—Kurt Zilley

“Martha has always been an advocate for communities of color in Worthington. She has helped more than 250 families in the last two years.”

—Leticia Rodriguez



Martha Cardenas

Worthington

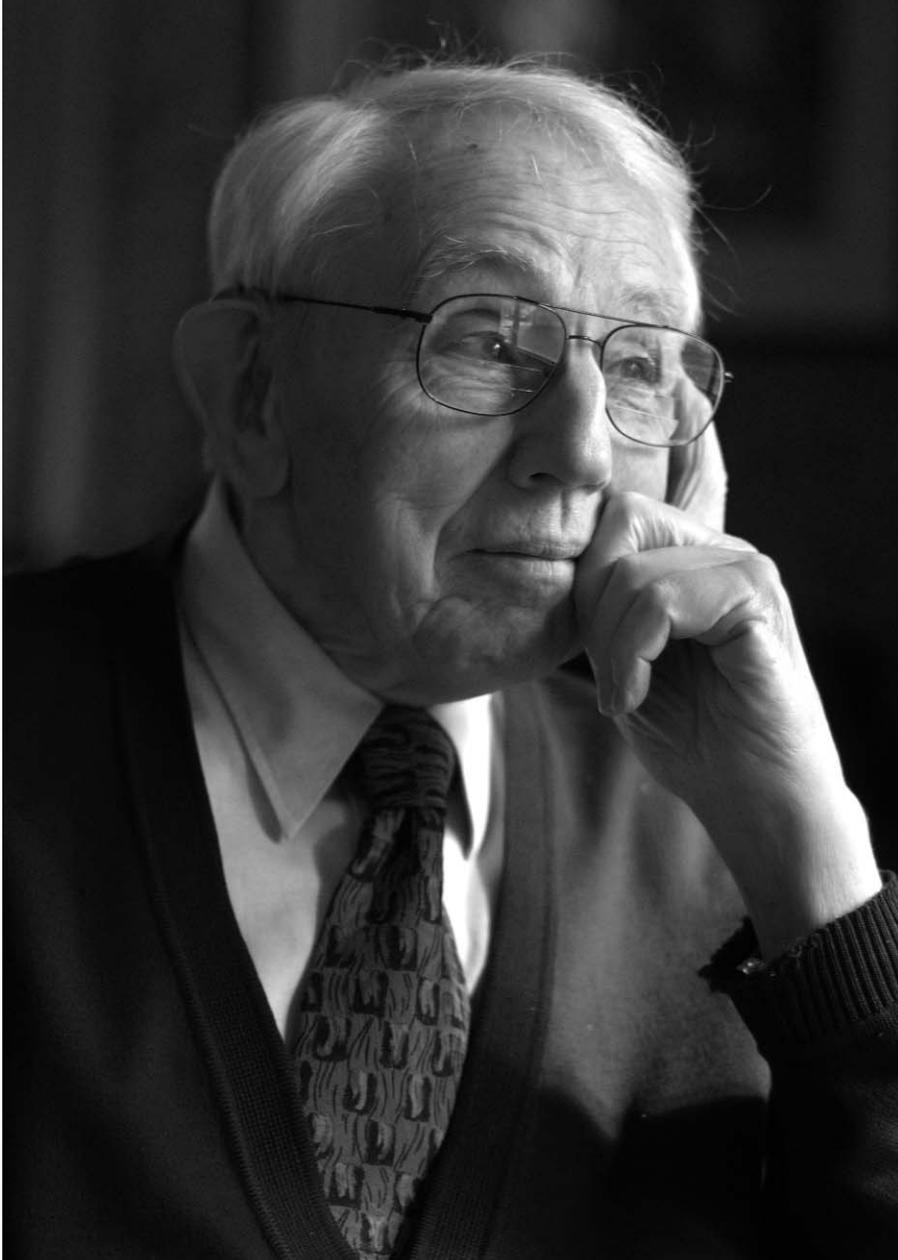
Her house was filled with desperate people: families with children, single men, couples, recent arrivals who had journeyed to southern Minnesota in search of work. But before they could get a job, they needed a place to live. And in a community where housing was scarce, especially for poor strangers who spoke no English, a welcome mat was hard to find. “They were sleeping in cars and didn’t have anyplace to go,” Martha Cardenas says.

That was the impetus for Home of Hope, a nonprofit organization in Worthington where Martha, as volunteer executive director, maintains three apartments where newcomers may stay for up to 30 days. After struggling for five years to raise money and quell opposition, she was able to buy the century-old house in 1999 and rally community leaders behind it.

Martha, who has lived in Worthington since 1973, helps Spanish-speaking newcomers by providing interpretation and referrals to community agencies, advocacy, and mentoring. “I let them know my heart is open, and I’m there for whatever they need,” she says. Yet she never feels the job is done. Home of Hope is always filled to capacity. “I don’t have room for more people,” she says, “and I know 73 people who need a place to stay.”

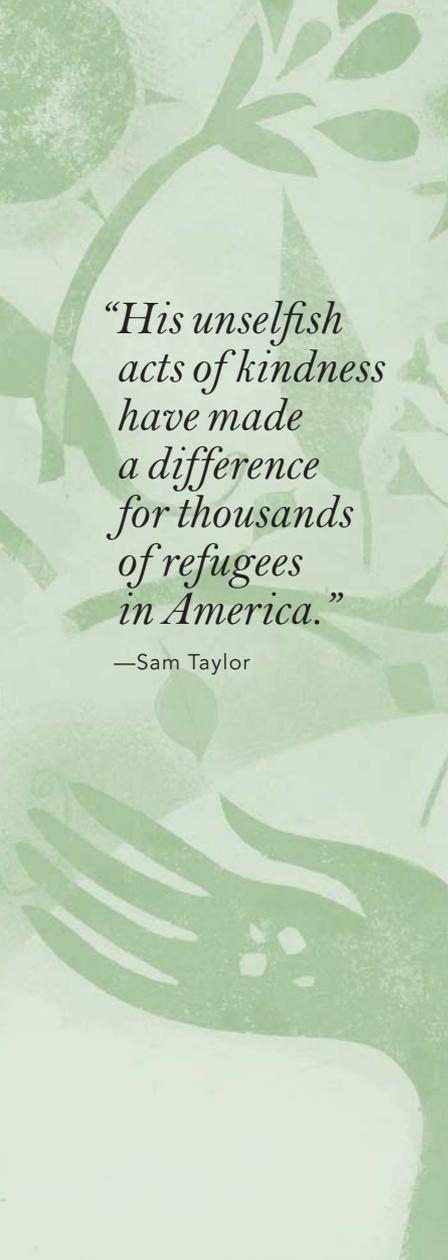
While flying a combat plane in World War II, Bonham Cross partially lost his hearing. Although he isn't deaf, he understands the needs of deaf people and has been ingenious in helping them participate in the democratic process. As a photographer and then advertising sales representative at the *Star Tribune*, he needed to communicate with deaf employees. He learned sign language and became active with the Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens in persuading the legislature to establish the TTY text-messaging system, which enables deaf people to communicate with hearing people by phone.

Bonham volunteers regularly with the Minnesota State Association of Self-Help for the Hard of Hearing (SHHH) and Vision Loss Resources/Deaf-Blind Services of Minnesota. He also shows nonprofits, churches, and government how to adapt available technology, such as microphones, amplifiers, and FM systems, into affordable "assistive-listening" devices. "These devices are not that complicated," he says, "yet I am frequently asked about how to use them." His work has made it possible for thousands of people to share their ideas in meetings, at work, and at home. "My satisfaction comes from realizing that I am helping many people who otherwise would not be getting much help," he says.



*“He has helped
bring together
those who
have normal
hearing and
those who do not,
so we can be one
community and
work together.”*

—Rich Diedrichsen

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*“His unselfish
acts of kindness
have made
a difference
for thousands
of refugees
in America.”*

—Sam Taylor





Mohamed Essa

Eden Prairie

Mohamed Essa arrived in the Twin Cities in 1990 as a well-educated Somalian businessman. Most Somalians who came later weren't so fortunate. During the 1990s, waves of refugees fled the strife-torn country for safety and a future in the United States. As many as 65,000 now live in Minnesota, Mohamed estimates.

In 1991, he and his wife, Indadeeq Omar, founded Somali Community of Minnesota. The largest such organization in the nation, the agency helps Somalians cope with immigration issues, become self-sufficient, and learn the ropes of American life. With his help, many have started their own businesses. Mohamed also works with schools and nonprofit organizations to educate the community about Somalian culture and to design programs for at-risk Somalian teenagers. He gets people to donate warm clothes for new arrivals. He helped establish culturally appropriate childcare facilities and set up advocacy services for immigrant and refugee women. He and his wife, a social worker, also find time to volunteer at a homeless shelter.

As the first person many Somalians in Minnesota turn to with a problem, Mohamed feels he has a mission. "When you see a family and you've made them smile," he says, "it makes your day."

Ann Hooley

Stillwater

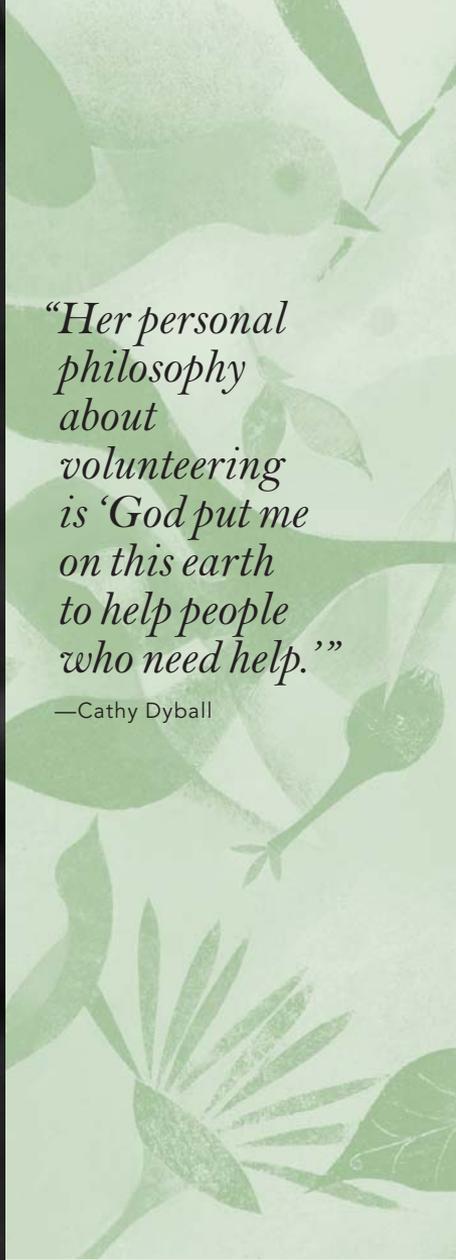
Ann Hooley had already completed her daily rounds of the Stillwater senior center and a local nursing home, where she helps serve meals and visits people who need company. She was looking forward to an appreciation dinner that evening recognizing her years of service with the Washington County Fair. The next day she'd be on clerical duty in the hospice office. She routinely drives people to appointments, bakes cookies for special events, and provides comfort and emotional support to her neighbors. "I want to be busy!" says Ann, who is 87.

Widowed in 1973, Ann continued working on the family farm outside Stillwater with her two sons before deciding to leave rural life for a new life in town. At first she cared for a relative and subsequently adopted other "senior companions" in nursing homes. She was one of the first volunteers in Stillwater to complete hospice training. Recalling one hospice patient, she says, "I'd visit with her, stay a little bit, rub her arm, hold her hand." Ann's daily life attests to the meaning, importance, and personal satisfaction of just being there for someone else.



*“Her personal
philosophy
about
volunteering
is ‘God put me
on this earth
to help people
who need help.’”*

—Cathy Dyball





*“Jacqueline
is drawn to
the front line
where she can
have impact
one person
at a time.”*

—Christine Welsand



Jacqueline Kavanagh

Edina

At the Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, where she has volunteered for six years, Jacqueline Kavanagh once met a woman with three children and three trash bags, the sum of their earthly possessions. “To think that was all she had,” Jacqueline recalls. “She had just been evicted and she was looking for a place for her kids to sleep. How could you not be compelled to do everything in your power to help?” That heartwrenching story—just one of many—compels Jacqueline to promote the nursery tirelessly and inspire others to support it.

When her own children were younger, she brought them to help prepare and serve food for the kids. They also sponsored and decorated a child’s room. Jacqueline is past chair of the board, chaired the nursery’s annual ball, and has led many board committees. She is active with other local nonprofit organizations as well.

She uses her infectious passion for the nursery to secure hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations and in-kind support. “Selling” the charity isn’t hard for her. “Truly,” she says, “all you need to do is show the nursery and tell its clients’ stories.” When prospective donors see the impact their dollars will have, they quickly understand. “In children,” she says, “people can see the future.”

Ed and Fern Ostberg

Minneapolis

The Ostbergs met 54 years ago while volunteering at a summer program for children in St. Paul. It proved to be a firm foundation for their life together. Married 53 years, they continue volunteering together at Northeast Senior Citizens Resource Center, Courage Center, Habitat for Humanity, Simpson Housing Services, Stephen Ministries, Feed My Hungry Children, Meals on Wheels, Lucy Laney school, and other organizations. “You don’t know how hard it is for nonprofits these days,” Fern says, citing the challenge facing a fundraising committee on which she serves. “It’s just fierce.”

She and Ed are certainly doing their part, although Fern wouldn’t make such a claim. “We’re far from unusual,” she says. Of course, it’s hardly usual for couples of 78 (Fern) and 80 years old (Ed) to be staying overnight at a homeless shelter, or doing drywall, insulation, siding, and roofing in Nicaragua. But Ed and Fern both grew up in families that volunteered, and it is the life they understand. Since Ed retired from Unisys in 1981 and Fern from part-time work as a hospital dietitian, they have filled their days minding the needs of others. “We’ve been so richly blessed we need to share,” Fern says, “and besides, it enriches our life far more than anything else would.”

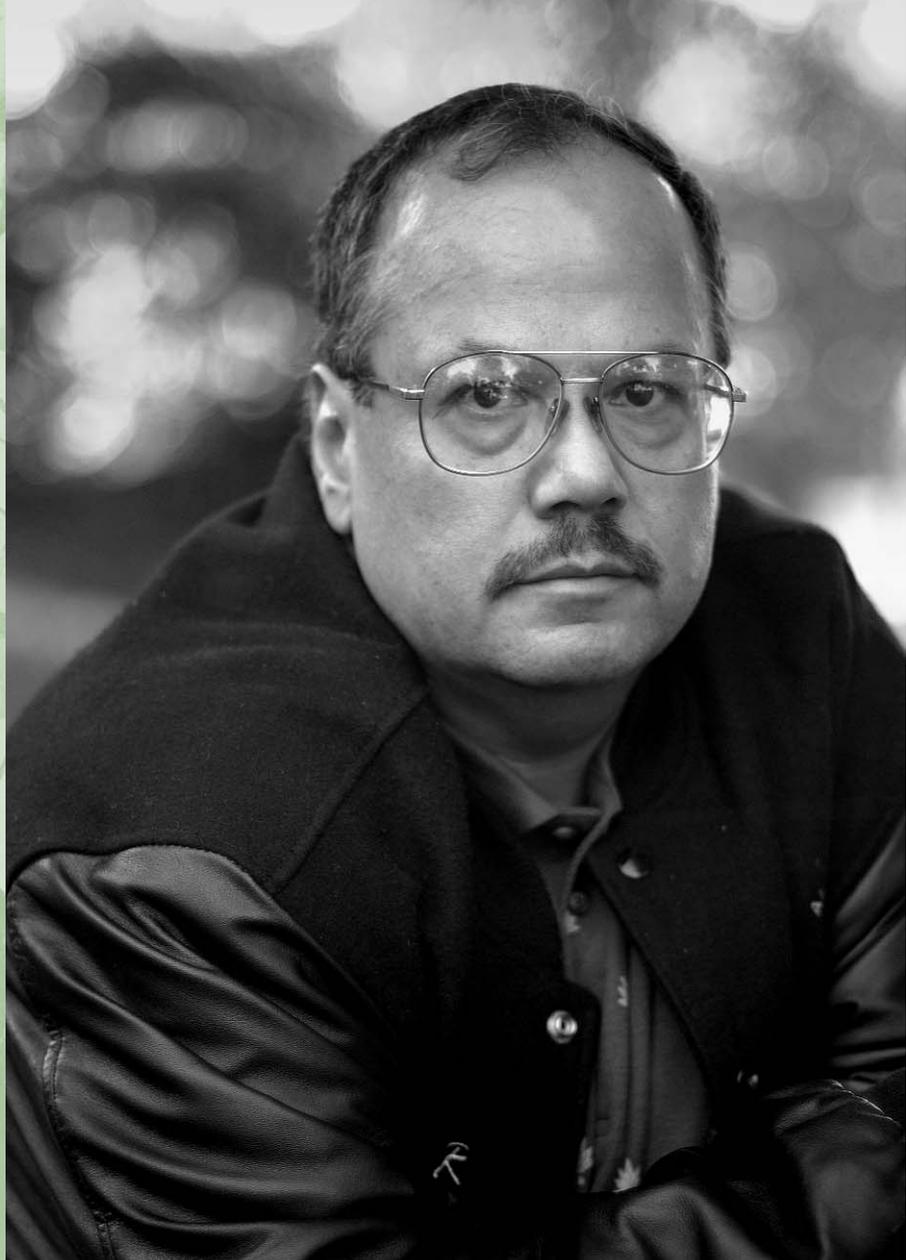


*“Their
commitment
to one another
mirrors their
commitment
to serving
others.”*

—Monica Nilsson

“He gives freely of himself to several community organizations. He is funny and compassionate and is genuinely interested in his community’s welfare.”

—Gabrielle Strong



When Ain Dah Yung, a Native American social service agency, needed help four years ago to plan a powwow, the director turned to a friend, Ron Schwartz. It was the first time he'd helped an organization in a big way, and he met others who also wanted to tap his organizational skills. "From there on it was just people needing help," Ron says.

Ron, a Leech Lake tribal member, serves on the boards of the Elders Lodge in St. Paul and of Amerian Indian Family and Children's Service. One of his major commitments is leading a weekly fathers' support group at the St. Paul American Indian Family Center. Fathers help each other cope with child support, relationships, divorce and separation, and parenting. "I've been involved for more than three years, and I'm still learning things from other dads—not them learning from me," Ron says. "We share experiences and strengths and hopes."

A single parent to three children, Ron also has a demanding job as a counselor at the Greenhouse Recovery Center for chemically dependent men. He lost a leg in an accident in 1985 but hasn't slowed down. "To be honest, the things I do [for other people] are the easiest things I do," he says. "It's not even work for me."

Margaret Smith

Ponsford

With nearly 200 packages of *mino-miijim*—“good food”—packed into her car, Margaret Smith drives across the White Earth Reservation, from Rice Lake to Mahnomen to Beaulieu to Bejou, delivering wholesome, traditional meals to elderly and diabetic people. She stops to visit and, for many, is the only contact with the outside world on a given day.

Margaret created the program through the White Earth Land Recovery Project. Personal experience—her husband, who died in 1990, was diabetic—and visits with elders on the reservation convinced her of the need. Many elders and shut-ins couldn’t afford healthy food or didn’t have the stamina to prepare it.

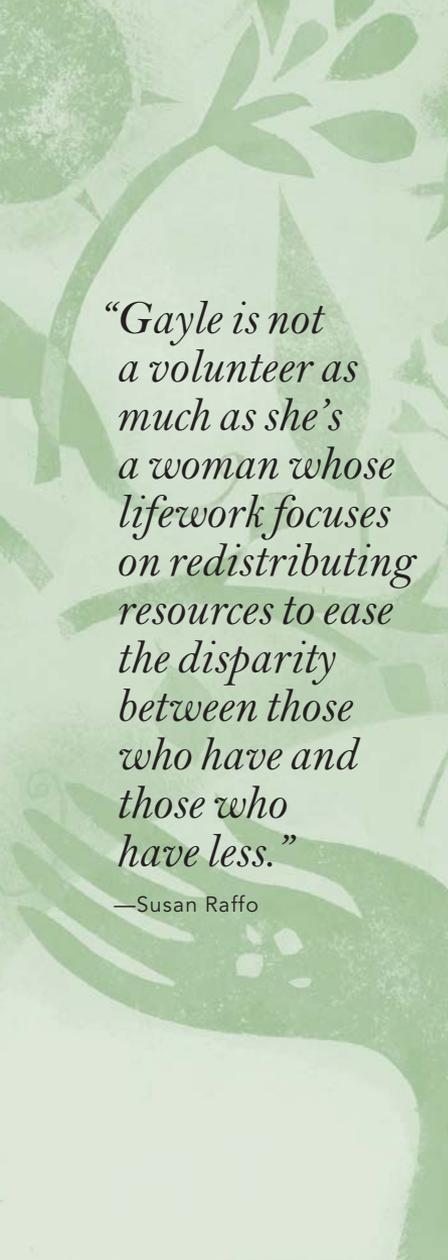
At 84, Margaret herself is an elder who has dedicated her life to Native American culture. She spent several years in the Twin Cities, where she was one of the founders of the Upper Midwest American Indian Center, volunteered with social service organizations, and introduced urban Indian youth to their tribal heritage. She managed a marketing program to secure a fair price for craftspeople and wild-rice harvesters.

In 1972, she moved back to the reservation, where she had been born. Undaunted by her long days on the road now, she says, “I like to do it. I get out, and the people are expecting me, and they invite me in and we talk. It’s fun.”



*“If you need help,
ask Margaret,
is the sentiment
among those
who know her.
She is a
cherished elder
who makes
herself available
to those who
need her.”*

—Winona LaDuke

A vertical green panel on the left side of the page. It features a stylized leafy branch at the top and a hand reaching upwards at the bottom, both in a lighter shade of green. The background has a subtle, textured pattern.

*“Gayle is not
a volunteer as
much as she’s
a woman whose
liferwork focuses
on redistributing
resources to ease
the disparity
between those
who have and
those who
have less.”*

—Susan Raffo



At her south Minneapolis shop, Earth Circles, Gayle Weigle sells Native American arts and crafts. A dozen years ago a man wandered in with a teenage boy. The man was making medicine bags for the boy and other homeless teens at Project OffStreets, and Gayle was enthralled. She got acquainted with Project OffStreets, and at Christmas she and some friends bought practical gifts—wool socks, hats, gloves—for the Native American kids there. “Homeless kids aren’t cute and cuddly; they’re teenagers,” Gayle says. “So at Christmas they don’t get the gifts and toys that younger children do.”

Now her work with Project OffStreets is inseparable from her life and identity as a Native American. “It’s not what I do for a living, but I can’t imagine not doing it,” she says. Gayle uses their culture to teach skills and instill pride in Native American homeless teens. They’ve made and sold dreamcatchers and currently are collecting frybread recipes, stories, and photographs for a book and website (www.frybreadlove.org). She organizes an annual benefit for Project OffStreets—the FryBreadLove concert. Frybread has become a metaphor for feeding the spirit. “Frybread is kind of like loaves and fishes,” Gayle says, “only it’s frybread.”

Previous Recipients

Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service

2001

Susan Baxter
George Failes
Bertha Givins
Maria Inés Hitateguy
Barb King
Marge Melich
Kristine Reiter
Muriel Simmons
V.J. Smith
Sang Vu

2000

Jean Andrews
Melvin Carter, Jr.
Sylvia Carty
Richard Endres
John and Julie Funari
Hazel Jacobson
Raleigh Kent
George Nelsen
Delroy Schoenleben
Manuel Zuniga

1999

Henry Bruns
Ernesto DelVillar, Sr.
Marcelle Diedrich
Denise Gubrud and
Margarita Reese
Darlene Edwards
Phoenix Hill
Geraldine Hull
Ardis Knutson
Yako Myers
Joyce Segelbaum

1998

Christine Barich
Dawn Glaser-Falk
Joe Huber
Michael Kirk
Kevin L. Perez Rodriguez
Edwin Reich
Scott Schlaffman
Choua "Mindy" Thao
Georgeanna Toftum
Clorasteen Wilson

1997

Marjory Aldrich
Jim Christy
Dianne Kimm
Allan Law
Sue Liedl
Larry Cloud Morgan
William Radueg
RaeAnn Ruth
Frankie and Velma Tyson
Peggy Wells

1996

Vivian Blount
Cynthia Hawkins
Gregory Horan
Dale Hulme
Joe LaGarde
Percy and Lillian Olson
Joan Peterson
Jody Porter
Dave Ronning
Georgia Theis

1995

Laurice Beaudry
Dianne Binns
Leonard Gloeb
Fran Heitzman
Algjuan Hixon
Bruce Lubitz
Mary Robillard
Bill Rowe
Pat Schwartz
Jamie Slattery

1994

John Bobolink
Lori Ellis Boswell
Bill Driscoll
Janet Gostanczik
Shirley Ellen Jensen
Art Johnson
James Francis Kelly
Katherine G. King
Forrest R. Osterholm
Fred Rupp

1993

Eileen Bohn
Francisco Caballero
Sandra Gessler
Frank R. Johnson
David Lund
Don Mooney
Tyrone Smith
Art Stoeberl
Sheila WhiteEagle
Eleanore Whitmyre

1992

Peggy Holmes Bellecourt
Dorothy Bilheimer
Jane Blattner
Eugene Chelberg
Dr. Kenneth and Grace
Covey
Dorothy Haynes
Norma Schleppegrell
Roger and Donna
Urbanski
Quang Vu
Glen Wilfong

1991

Cynthia Ann Barry
Shirley Benitez
Julia Dinsmore
Dan Edgar
Terry Ford
Alice McHie
Kouthong Vixayvong
Walter White
Marie Wing
Mary Stier Winkles

1990

Ruby Alexander
Dan Celentano
Cheryl Ford
Muriel Gaines
Patrick Hartigan
Tri Dinh Nguyen
Phillip Sayers
Sister Leanore Stanton
John Stone
Diane Williams

1989

David L. Asmus
Lois V. Boylan
Ron Cronick
Phyllis Gross
Loeung Khi
Dana Lehrer
Sister Charlotte A.
Madigan
William O'Connell
Leo Treadway
Diane Ziegler

1988

Jewell Anderson
Willard A. Brunelle
Dollie D. Foster
Carol LaFavor
Kwame McDonald
Rosita Meehan
Marvin S. Moe
Anastasia Sery
Ray Wilson
Winona Wilson

1987

Robert L. Buckley
Linda Byrne
Mary Jo Copeland
Kathy J. Davis
John Fields
Sandra Huff
Mazi E. Johnson
Lou Anne Kling
Norma P. McDuffie
Pat Schmidgall

1986

Barbara J. Colhapp
San Juana Flores
Bernice E. Genereux
Flo Golod
Louise T. James
Maxine M. Kruschke
Robert Russell
Dana Lee Shato
Vernell Wabasha
Dellie Walz

1985

Ruth G. Andberg
Laurie Colbeck
Alieene Davis
Juanita G. Espinosa
Debra Jones
Elaine La Canne
Grace L. Sandness
Lucille T. Silk
Connie Strandberg
Justina Violette

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ABOUT THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

The McKnight Foundation is a charitable foundation that seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. The Foundation supports efforts to improve outcomes for children, families, and communities; contributes to the arts; encourages preservation of the natural environment; and promotes scientific research in selected fields. The Foundation's primary geographic focus is in its human services and arts grantmaking is the state of Minnesota.

Founded in 1953 and endowed by William L. and Maude L. McKnight, the Foundation has assets of approximately \$1.8 billion and paid grants totaling \$90.8 million in 2001. Mr. McKnight was one of the early leaders of the 3M company. The Foundation, however, has no connection with 3M.

HUMAN SERVICE AWARDS

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