

2004  
VIRGINIA MCKNIGHT BINGER

AWARDS  
IN HUMAN  
SERVICE



THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION







# FAR FROM ORDINARY



ARE . . . exceptional . . . uncommon.

Twelve individuals are honored here for their contributions, their selflessness, and their giving with no thought of reward. They represent a fraction of the more than 50 nominations received this year for the Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service.

They join the hundreds who have been nominated and recognized in the 19 years since the program began.

The call to serve touches each one differently. Some are inspired by an influential leader. Others follow the example of parents or act upon a personal spiritual calling. Yet all of us benefit: former criminals start new lives; a homeless program is founded; and generations of youth better understand other cultures and ethnicities.

Each year we are humbled by the exceptional individuals we meet through the Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service. My grandmother, for whom the awards were named, would have been pleased to get to know this year's honorees, just as she was eager to hear from each of the previous winners. As Ginnie did—they work tirelessly to improve our communities by assisting the most vulnerable among us. I am honored to follow in my grandmother's footsteps in celebrating this year's awardees.

In the stories of these individuals—and the stories of those they serve—we hear not only the struggle but also the hope. We just have to listen. . . and then we must act.

Today's award winners are indeed far from ordinary. We hope that they inspire you as individuals, and as families, organizations, and businesses. We ask that you not only thank them, but join them. There's much to be done and these individuals prove it's possible.

Erika L. Binger

Board Chair, 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 209 Minnesotans, including this year's group, who have given time and effort to help others without expecting material reward for themselves.

The Foundation created the Awards in Human Service in 1985 and renamed them 10 years later as a tribute to Virginia McKnight Binger. Mrs. Binger served the Foundation for nearly 50 years, first as a board member, then as president from 1974 through 1987, and finally as an honorary chair from 1988 until her death in 2002. Known for her compassion and generosity, Mrs. Binger set the standard for the Foundation's work.

Like Virginia Binger herself, those who receive these awards are keenly aware of others' needs and are motivated to contribute to their communities. They are nominated in confidence by someone familiar with their work, and the nominations are researched and evaluated independently. To qualify, nominees must live in Minnesota and show commitment to helping others achieve a better life, while receiving little or nothing for their own efforts. Each awardee receives \$7,500.

The Foundation invites nominations each spring. Beginning in August, a committee of people active in various human services fields evaluates the candidates and recommends nominees to the Foundation's board of directors.

The following pages describe the 2004 award recipients and their work. The names of the recipients for the past five years 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 website, [www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org), in May 2005.



# PROGRAM

The McKnight Foundation  
710 Second Street South, Minneapolis  
2:30 p.m.  
Friday, November 19, 2004

## WELCOME

Rip Rapson

PRESIDENT, THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

Lisa J. Braun

CHAIR,

VIRGINIA MCKNIGHT BINGER

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COMMITTEE

Erika Binger

BOARD CHAIR, THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

## PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

Erika Binger

Rip Rapson

## AWARDS IN HUMAN SERVICE COMMITTEE

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Ron Buzard, Rochester

Forlarin Ero-Phillips, Minneapolis

Sue Liedl, Tenstrike

Juan Rangel, West St. Paul

Stephen Silberfarb, Minneapolis

# JAMES ANDRE

ROSEVILLE



HE HEALING PROCESS is a personal journey, with each individual dealing with his situation in a different way. Jim Andre recognizes this and works to build unique relationships with each of his clients at the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT). “It gives me inspiration to see their strong desire to move on and get back into life,” he says.

Jim personally drives clients to CVT appointments and is often called upon to help clients with difficult situations and crises.

Through all of Jim’s work, he has become an extremely effective spokesperson on behalf of social justice and has spearheaded a letter writing and calling campaign for the federal Torture Victims Relief Act. He also volunteers on the St. Stephen’s Legislative Advocacy Committee fighting for affordable housing; mental health; benefits for immigrants; and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender human rights. He is devoted to changing public policy to help those he serves. “My involvement is a continuing motivation to change public policy for those in society not well attended to.”

Jim is deeply committed to all of his volunteer service. Through the Loaves and Fishes program at Corpus Christi Church, he has spent 16 years as a volunteer for the downtown St. Paul Dorothy Day Center. His wife, Nonnie, shares his passion for social justice and involves herself in volunteer opportunities as well.

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"JIM'S COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE IS AT THE CORE OF HIS BEING."

—Beth Wickum

# ELSIE DUGAR

ST. PAUL



FAMILIES are important support systems. Unfortunately, some people don't have this foundation. This is where Elsie Dugar comes in. She understands the importance of having a supportive and caring family and works vigorously to help others achieve it. "I've had so much love around me," she says. "Everything that I've done has always led me back to helping people."

Elsie has spent 20 years with the Red Cross Emergency Social Services team helping families and individuals find the assistance they need in the areas of child protection, foster home and shelter placement, adult protection, counseling, economic assistance, and referrals. Her skills are so extensive that she is often called in to help with the Red Cross's Crisis Response team.

In addition to her work with Red Cross, Elsie is a full-time Ramsey County social worker for the Neglect Early Intervention Services. She is a long-time, active member of Mount Olivet Baptist Church and has mentored more than 50 children and young adults, encouraging them to pursue their education and helping them develop a plan to succeed. Friends describe her life as a tapestry made from threads of the many lives she has touched, lives that remain entwined with hers. Elsie's hope: "... that children are safe. That they have stable lives and can meet their potential."

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"ELSIE HAS SERVED AS AN INSPIRATION NOT ONLY TO THE PEOPLE SHE HAS  
SERVED, BUT ALSO TO HER CO-WORKERS AND ASSOCIATES."

—Susanne Hoyt

# MAHMOUD EL-KATI

ST. PAUL



MAHMOUD has opened the eyes of two generations of youth to the African American experience. “Young people are the only hope we have, if you want to be a change agent,” he says. An early contributor to the African American culture movement, Mahmoud

was head of creative education at The Way Unlimited, Inc., a multifaceted community center in north Minneapolis from 1966 to 1971. He then helped establish the Afro-American Studies Department at the University of Minnesota. Beginning in 1974, as a faculty member at Macalester College in St. Paul, he taught African American culture and related courses. Today, Mahmoud teaches African American history at North High School in Minneapolis and volunteers at other metropolitan schools.

Mahmoud’s students can also see him at work in the community. He is founder and facilitator of the Communiversity of Minnesota, which seeks to bridge the gap between academia and community life. He is a commentator on KFAI and KMOJ radio stations, writes for community and mainstream press, and is the author of 12 monographs. One of his continuing contributions is the annual Pan African Conference at Minnesota State University in Mankato, which brings international scholarship to students and community leaders. Mahmoud’s models for shaping his world include Frederick Douglass, Paul Robeson, and Ida B. Wells, among others. He believes that “a community should transcend where it is,” a belief he has clearly modeled in his ongoing tradition of service.

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"MAHMOUD IS OUR MASTER TEACHER, ALWAYS INSPIRING AND INFORMING."

—Seitu Kenneth Jones

# DONNA GILLEN

ST. PAUL



AS A YOUTH, Donna Gillen was involved in extracurricular activities such as Girl Scouts, 4-H, and FHA (renamed Family, Career and Community Leaders of America). After participating in and leading these organizations, she wanted to create similar opportunities for other young people. Now, as director, in a volunteer capacity, of the Upper Midwest Affiliate of PeaceJam International for Compass Institute, she is inspiring new generations of peacemakers. Donna has spearheaded three PeaceJams for high school and college students and two Days of Peace for incarcerated young people, directly reaching 1,500 youths, who then returned to their communities to share their peacemaking skills with hundreds of other youths.

“I love creating opportunities for young people to lead and be engaged in the community,” Donna says. Her contributions include working with youth as leaders in asset mapping projects in the Phillips and Powderhorn Park neighborhoods of Minneapolis, and in the cities of Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center. Donna is also a strong advocate for intergenerational activities. As AARP Minnesota’s Executive Council Member for Community Service, she advises the staff on volunteerism and community service, and is committed to ensuring that AARP uses its influence to help Minnesotans of all ages make positive social change. Her volunteerism has given youths and older adults new opportunities to share and grow. “I have a passionate belief that service is an integral part of living a successful life,” Donna says.

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"DONNA DOES NOT 'GIVE' PEOPLE A VOICE—SHE CREATES OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR INDIVIDUALS TO FIND THEIR OWN VOICE."

—Maya Babu

# MARY GNERER

ROSEMOUNT



MARY GNERER provides support and encouragement for women living with challenges of many types. In association with the League of Catholic Women, Archdiocesan AIDS Ministry, and Blessed Virgin Mary Restorative Justice Ministry—and as an individual volunteer—she frequently sees people with diseases and situational mental health issues. And it is always Mary who plans an activity to motivate them to get out of bed, to eat something, to be involved in life, and to reach their potential. She organizes the celebrations of birth and death, even of the good news of a child who tests negative for HIV.

“I do what I do because it’s what my parents taught me to do,”

Mary says. And she’s glad she had a chance to give back to her parents. After her father died, Mary and her mother lived together for 10 years, sharing life and caring for each other.

Mary keeps others in mind constantly. An exceptional knitter, winning ribbons at local and state fairs, she buys yarn in bulk to share with women at the correctional facility where she volunteers.

“My whole premise is to bring women together to support women,”

Mary says. “I have no special powers or wisdom. I’m there if someone wants me to walk along beside her.”



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"MARY SHOWS OTHERS HOW TO CELEBRATE LIFE AND TO CREATE RITUALS  
OF OPENNESS AND GRATITUDE."

—Barbara Jordano

# DANIEL HAWKINS

SOLWAY



AS A FAMILY-ORIENTED individual and an English teacher by training, Daniel Hawkins understands the importance of communication. A father of five, Daniel uses his parenting experience to help perfect his counseling skills. For six years, he worked directly with youths and families

as a counselor at the Evergreen House, an emergency youth shelter that provides counseling, outreach services, and workshops to more than 1,000 children, teens, and families each year. He also offered parenting education and support to Caucasian and Native American families in the Bemidji area, which is near the state's three largest Indian reservations. He now applies these same skills working with foster children at North Homes, Inc.

"They are not problems—they are people," Daniel says. "My vision is to reestablish a true sense of community wherever they are, re-forming their bonds with their parents."

Daniel has truly immersed himself in his goal to bring families together. He serves with several community-wide initiatives such as Children's Justice Initiative, the Underage Drinking and Illegal Drug Use Taskforce, and the Children's Mental Health Interdisciplinary Resource Team. He works as a Students Teaching Attitudes of Respect (STAR) team leader for Schoolcraft Learning Community, planning monthly meetings, activities, and retreats for youth. In addition, Daniel is board chair of TrekNorth High School, a charter school in Bemidji.

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"DANIEL HAS MADE AN INCREDIBLE PERSONAL COMMITMENT  
TO MAKING THE GREATER BEMIDJI COMMUNITY A FAMILY- AND  
YOUTH-CENTERED COMMUNITY."

—Rebecca Schueller

# RAYOME CLARK KOEHLER

ERSKINE



OSSTON, MINNESOTA, wouldn't be the same place without Rayome Clark Koehler. As the founder, board president, and a volunteer of Embassy Community Center of Fosston, Rayome has been involved with practically every aspect of the organization. He brought teens and seniors together to create a multigenerational choir. He established the Embassy Senior Nutrition meal program, serving three meals a week and holiday meals, and he started the Fosston Community Theatre, where he also directed productions. Rayome even opened his own home to others, founding the Singles' Christian Fellowship for northern Minnesota, which drew a peak attendance of 125, crossing three generations. "I would like to make sure that people in the community aren't lonely," he says. "After my parents died, I would have been alone, but these services have brought the community together."

The townspeople credit Rayome for helping restart the Fosston Garden Club and securing teachers for safe driving classes for those age 55 years or older. Rayome has also immersed himself in the activities of Rodnes Lutheran Church, where he is the current vice president, past president, and a past Sunday school teacher and superintendent. He helps decorate for special events, writes for the church bulletin and newsletter, and helps coordinate the music each Sunday. Rayome has dedicated himself over the past 20 years to helping his community succeed.

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"RAYOME HAS SHOWN YEARS OF SELFLESS DEDICATION TO ALL."

—Norma Quam

# MARY MAAS

ST. PAUL



OME PEOPLE may not believe in second chances, but Mary Maas does. She is committed to restoring individual lives and communities, repairing the damage done by crime. For the past five years as a volunteer for the AMICUS Reconnect program, Mary has helped ex-offenders rejoin their communities. Her assistance allows them to find jobs, housing, and sobriety support. Mary's positive one-on-one support has helped hundreds of them build new lives. "I feel called by God to work with men and women incarcerated, those returning to the community, and their families," she says. "It's as simple and profound as that."

Mary's work doesn't stop at the end of her volunteer day. She's known for her ability to transcend bureaucracy and develop new ways to help people in need. She played a significant role in the formation of several programs at Shakopee, Lino Lakes, Moose Lake, and other correctional facilities. Those programs include Transitional Conferencing, which helps offenders and their families build new relationships; Women's Circle, which helps women come to terms with their crimes; Women's Gathering, helping jailed women deal with truth, guilt, and healing; and prison Bible studies. Mary's life is a testimonial to the belief that everyone deserves a fresh start.

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"IF YOU ARE WALKING DOWN A STREET WITH MARY, IT IS LIKELY  
THAT SOMEONE SHE HAS HELPED WILL RUN UP AND HUG HER."

—Louise Wolfgramm

# MARGARET MCBRIDE

EDINA

**I**N 1996, Margaret McBride did something few people are willing to do. She met a homeless woman named Michelle and welcomed her and her four children into her home. Thus began a new life for Michelle's family. The changes and growth that Margaret and her husband, Rodger, witnessed in the family inspired them to create The Michelle Project as a ministry of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Edina. The Michelle Project now provides assistance to many struggling families. A team of volunteers and case managers from Episcopal Community Services provides a support network in which each individual is treated with respect and love. A special bond is forged between the volunteers and the "Michelle Project Moms" through an annual retreat and other activities. To date, The Michelle Project has helped 18 homeless families with rent subsidies, emergency financial assistance, donated furniture, clothing, and educational support.

"God has blessed me so richly," Margaret says. "This is my way of saying thank you." Her work to fight homelessness includes speaking to churches and other organizations, encouraging them to start similar programs. "I'd love to convince the faith community that they are the ones who can make a real difference in eliminating poverty and homelessness," she says.

Margaret's personal faith plays an ongoing role in her service. She is certified as a spiritual director and leads the Spirit Ministry for Seniors at St. Stephen's.

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"SHE HAS A GIFT OF COMPASSION THAT GOES BEYOND  
HER CARING SMILE AND HUG TO AN UNRELENTING COMMITMENT  
TO RESULTS-ORIENTED SERVICE."

—Vanessa L.P. Johnson

# CHRISTINE NORTON

COTTAGE GROVE



WHEN CHRISTINE NORTON was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1990, she started on a new journey. Almost immediately Christine became involved with the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC) and co-founded and directed the Minnesota Breast Cancer

Coalition. As the team leader and field coordinator for the NBCC in Minnesota, she organizes the efforts of breast cancer activists regarding national, state, and local breast cancer and health care policy. She played a crucial role in the passing of the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act in Minnesota. Under this law, Medicaid covers treatment of breast and cervical cancer for low-income women under age 65. To gain greater acceptance for breast cancer survivors, Christine created the “Faces of Breast Cancer” exhibit, which has been displayed in more than 80 locations throughout Minnesota, including Mall of America, and has been seen by over one million people. Christine has been a prominent advocate for breast cancer education, distributing informational brochures, giving educational lectures, and fundraising.

Christine plays other leadership roles as a caring wife, mother, grandmother, teacher, and coach. She recognizes the importance of her advocacy: “Everything I do is for my daughter, Kathleen, and all the young women I teach. There are many legacies I want to pass on to my daughter,” Christine says, “but breast cancer is not one of them.”

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"EVERYONE AT THE NATIONAL BREAST CANCER COALITION IS HONORED  
TO WORK WITH CHRISTINE."

—Fran Visco

# KAY TRAINOR

RED WING



KAY TRAINOR has devoted her life to improving the lives of others. Kay knows firsthand the difficulties of living with a family member with mental illness. She has seen how the disease affects individuals and their loved ones.

As president of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) in Goodhue County, she helps teach a 12-week family-to-family class on mental illness, organizes forums on suicide and other mental illness issues, and arranges for speakers at area schools. She also works closely with service providers, including the police in the county, to help them better understand those suffering from mental illness. “I began working with NAMI because they have so much to offer,” Kay says. “It was the only organization I could find that offered an educational program for families dealing with mental illness.”

Kay constantly reaches out to others in the community. In addition to her classes, she offers advice to those battling mental illness and distributes educational materials at churches, libraries, and schools. “I hope to educate the public about mental illness, eliminating stigma, and promoting support services, advocacy, and research,” Kay says. “This all helps people realize that they are not alone. One in five families is affected by mental illness.”

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"KAY IS WELL RESPECTED AND LOVED IN THE COMMUNITY."

—Sue Abderholden

# CAROL VOSS

HIBBING



IGHT YEARS AGO Carol Voss became director of the Hibbing Food Shelf and has been relentless in her efforts ever since. She recruited volunteers, found a new location, remodeled the building, and organized everything from forms to food distribution. The food shelf now serves more than 300 families a month.

Carol's service doesn't stop at the food shelf. As a mother of three sons and now a grandmother, Carol has been a supportive hockey mom and volunteered with Boy Scouts for more than 18 years. Her personal journey taught her the importance of helping those in need. "After using the Food Shelf myself when my children were young," Carol says, "I vowed to take over the organization once I got back on my feet."

Carol offers her assistance to the United Way, is a member of the local Lions Club, and is active in her church. She enjoys sewing and has even found ways to serve members of her community with this hobby. Carol sews holiday gift bags for the children at the food shelf; has made hundreds of fleece headbands for the young men at Mesabi Academy, a juvenile center; and created a special outfit for a young girl with a feeding tube. "It is my mission to help people," Carol says, "and one day I hope to see the food shelf closed and see that no one is going hungry."

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"CAROL'S WORLD REVOLVES AROUND HER FAMILY, HER COMMUNITY,  
AND HELPING OTHERS BE ALL THEY CAN BE."

—Cheryl Danculovich





## HUMAN SERVICE AWARDS

PROGRAM OFFICER Jocelyn Ancheta  
PROGRAM ASSISTANT Marketta White  
TEXT Cathryn Kennedy  
DESIGN Barbara Koster  
PHOTOGRAPHY Mark Luinenburg

The McKnight Foundation is committed to the protection of our environment, a philosophy that underlies our practice of using paper with postconsumer waste content, and where possible, environmentally friendly inks. This book was printed with soy-based inks on recycled paper containing 30% postconsumer waste.

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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 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 \$1.9 billion and granted about \$75 million in 2003. Mr. McKnight was one of the early leaders of the 3M Company, although the Foundation is independent of 3M.



