



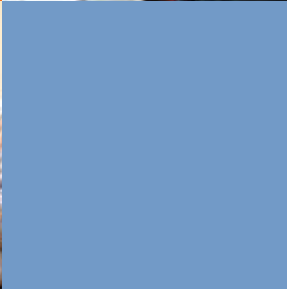
2009 Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service



THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION



The McKnight Foundation, a Minnesota-based family foundation, seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. Through grantmaking, coalition-building, and encouragement of strategic policy reform, we use our resources to attend, unite, and empower those we serve.



Nancy Guenette MINNEAPOLIS

Mohamed Hassan Osman COLUMBIA HEIGHTS

Ken Porwoll ROSEVILLE

John Poupart WEST SAINT PAUL

Linda Riddle DULUTH

Renee Tomatz HIBBING

2009 Virginia McKnight Binger
Awards in Human Service

Statement by Board Chair

Even in the best of times, Minnesota's tradition of civic engagement and volunteerism has served us well. Our state is blessed with a dedicated volunteer workforce and committed nonprofit professionals, driven to get involved and measurably improve community life for generations to come. Every year for 24 years, the Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service have honored a few of those special individuals. These awards were created to recognize those who give selflessly of themselves to help others, without expectation of material reward.

Every year, such work is important. This year, however, as needs grow and resources shrink, these six awardees' contributions have particular resonance. They demonstrate the human value of effective philanthropy. They remind us that we must listen to each other, now more than ever. We must first recognize and understand our neighbors' needs, and then consider how our own strengths might make a difference.

Some give gifts of time to mentor youth, and some lend support to the elderly or the ill. Several provide warmth and compassion to those who have been marginalized or otherwise forgotten. Each offers himself or herself in a personal way, strengthening our entire community in the process.

These remarkable people reflect the values behind all McKnight's work, and our belief in the individual as the foundation on which all successful societies rest. On behalf of The McKnight Foundation and the awards committee, I commend these awardees for their boundless compassion and humble work on behalf of others.

Robert J. Struyk
The McKnight Foundation

The Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service are an annual tradition at The McKnight Foundation. The awards reflect the Foundation's deep belief in the virtue and power of compassion. Since its inception, this honor has gone to 253 Minnesotans, including this year's group. Each recipient has given time and effort to help others with no expectation of material reward. Each exemplifies the life-changing difference one person can make through service.

In 1985, the Foundation created the Awards in Human Service, which were renamed 10 years later in tribute to Virginia McKnight Binger. Mrs. Binger served the Foundation for nearly 50 years as a board member, as president from 1974 to 1987, and then as honorary chair until her death in 2002. Although William L. and Maude L. McKnight established the Foundation, it was the compassion and personal generosity of their daughter that set the standard for such work.

Like Virginia McKnight Binger in her time, the recipients of these awards are acutely aware of others' needs. Each was nominated in confidence by someone familiar with their work. Nominees live and volunteer in Minnesota and show commitment to helping others achieve a better life. All nominations were researched and independently evaluated.

The Foundation invites nominations annually. Beginning in April, a committee of volunteers who are active in various human service fields evaluates the nominations and recommends finalists to the Foundation's board of directors. Each approved awardee receives \$10,000. For more information about the program, visit the Foundation's website at www.mcknight.org.

Program

The McKnight Foundation

710 South Second Street, Minneapolis

2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Thursday, August 27, 2009

Welcome

Kate Wolford, PRESIDENT

Erika L. Binger, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Diane Rauschenfels, AWARDS COMMITTEE

Presentation of Awards

Erika L. Binger

Awards in Human Service Committee

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Patrick Moore, MONTEVIDEO

Anni O'Neill, PRIOR LAKE

Diane Rauschenfels, PROCTOR

Dan Wilson, CROOKSTON



“For Nancy, helping students is not a job. It’s her life.”

— Rebecca Wallin

Nancy Guenette



After working for nearly 20 years as an advisor and mentor to more than 400 Minneapolis high school and college students, Nancy Guenette never knows what to expect when her phone rings. What her students know is they can count on Nancy to be there for them.

Just ask Laura Mitchell. Laura’s life changed when she met Nancy while attending P.M. Alternative High School in downtown Minneapolis. “I was a kid with problems. I got into a lot of trouble,” says Laura. “Nancy encouraged me to be more involved and to think about continuing my education.” With Nancy’s guidance, Laura received a Wallin Scholarship and recently graduated from Metropolitan State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Services. “Nancy continued to motivate me,” adds Laura. “Without her support, I would have taken a very different path. She’s like an angel to me.”

Before retiring in 2008, Nancy was an advisor with Minneapolis Community and Technical College’s TRiO/Talent Search Project. She also served as a mentor for both the Page Education Foundation and the Wallin Scholarship Program, volunteering hundreds of hours to tutor students and help them apply for financial aid. As a dedicated user of public transportation, Nancy still buses around town to meet with students and their families. She leaves a lasting impression wherever she goes and regularly receives calls from past students saying, “I’ve been thinking about going back to school. I need to talk to you.”

Nancy sums up her dedication by saying, “Once a student has met me, they will never be able to say, ‘Nobody cared.’” She is quick to point out that she wouldn’t be who she is today without the people who believed in her. She attributes her success to that of her mentors and is committed to paying it forward.



“What makes Mohamed stand out among Somali leaders is his compassion for the common individual.”

— Mohamed Jibrell

Mohamed Hassan Osman



When Mohamed Hassan Osman immigrated to the United States in 1993, he immediately saw the challenges his fellow refugees and immigrants were facing. He had a dream to serve Somalis by helping them understand American culture, while at the same time drawing upon their own heritage. Against all odds, Mohamed co-founded the Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota, an organization aimed at providing Somali youth and adults with employment programs, social service offerings, educational support, and community events. Some said it couldn't be done. Today the organization serves more than 2,000 individuals each year.

Mohamed also co-founded the Dugsi Charter School, a K-8 school with an enrollment of 270 students, and the Somali American Education Program, a tutoring program that meets the educational needs of an additional 275 adults each year. According to Mohamed, education is one of the foundational elements for lifelong success. He started the Dugsi Project, which prepares students for higher education, on the belief that refugee students can easily get on track for college once they are taught English, develop enhanced mathematics skills, and gain familiarity with university campuses. By building a network of supporters, Mohamed and other community leaders have made it possible for hundreds of youth to enroll in and graduate from colleges and universities.

One of the qualities that sets Mohamed apart is his interest in serving the needs of each individual. In Somali culture, a person becomes an elder if he or she steps forward for the common good. Mohamed has been an elder since he was 25 years old. He is also a teacher, visionary, author, and role model to others. His advice to today's youth is simple, yet powerful: “Be trustful and truthful. Be respectful to your elders and each other. Be a good friend. And keep your faith.”



“His tender touch, compassionate ear, and gentle nudging are as critical to our guests as is his hair cutting. His presence and spirit scream, ‘You are worth it!’”

— Julie Borgerding

Ken Porwoll



In 1983, Ken Porwoll learned that a new homeless shelter was opening in downtown St. Paul. On his first visit to the Listening House, he saw the director cutting hair with what appeared to be grade school scissors. Recognizing how inadequate those scissors were, Ken offered to donate the hair clippers he had used on his children. When he brought them in, the director convinced Ken to give his first free haircut. By the time he was done, there was a line of men across the room. At age 89, Ken continues to return to the Listening House once a week as the volunteer barber.

Ken’s life could have turned out very differently. In 1942, he was sent to the Philippines during World War II. Ken’s troop was forced with thousands of other soldiers to surrender to the Japanese army. As a prisoner of war for three and a half years, Ken endured the Bataan Death March, beatings, forced labor, sickness, and starvation. He saw hundreds die. Yet, he also saw the goodness in people, including a Philippine woman who was willing to sacrifice her own life in order to risk helping the American soldiers.

It was this POW experience that led Ken to the Listening House. He says it gave him a natural affinity for those who are neglected. As Ken reminds us, “Homeless people are often unwanted. I felt that way as a POW. My own people didn’t want me. The people who had me sure didn’t want me. I think this is how people who are homeless often feel. When I am cutting hair, I have a chance to encourage them. I am there to say, ‘You can survive. You can thrive. Keep trying!’” Everywhere he goes, Ken’s presence affirms this message.



“When it seemed like resolution was impossible, John’s commitment to traditional systems of decision making allowed solutions to rise up effortlessly from the group.”

— Jennifer Bendickson

John Poupart



Born on the Lac du Flambeau Indian Reservation, John Poupart grew up around traditional Indian values. He also experienced firsthand the challenges associated with being American Indian. For the first half of his life, he struggled with chemical dependency and homelessness, eventually dropping out of school. He calls these his “darkest days” and became determined to reclaim the inherent values of his people.

Notwithstanding failures of the past, John went on to receive an undergraduate degree in criminal justice from the University of Minnesota and a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University. He says his greatest achievements involve using his skills and experience to help Indian communities.

In 2000, the women of the Native American Leaders Circle asked John to facilitate a group focused on revitalizing the Ojibwe and Dakota languages in Minnesota preschools. Native language is core to the Indian belief system, and the request appealed to his sense of community. As facilitator of the Dakota Ojibwe Language Revitalization Alliance, John helped bring together American Indian elders, fluent speakers, highly educated linguists, young people, early childhood workers, public school staff, and many others. Over several years, he listened and encouraged traditional Indian decision-making methods. As a result, the group developed one of the few statewide indigenous language revitalization efforts in the United States.

Ogema benais is John’s Indian name. It means “eagle,” translated literally as “chief of the birds.” Symbolically it suggests one who has vision, because the eagle flies the highest, sees the farthest, and has the best sight for hunting. When you ask him if there are any Ojibwe words that capture his dream, he replies, “*Mino-bimaadiziwin*. The good life. Working for good things with the people for a better future. Knowing that you’re good at something.” John personifies his name and is achieving his dream.



“Through her deep respect for the women and children she serves, Linda has opened her heart and her mind to their experiences.”

— Denise Lisdahl

Linda Riddle



After fleeing an abusive marriage in 1987, Linda Riddle began her work in the battered women’s movement. She has remained a tireless advocate for women and children in Minnesota ever since.

Linda’s first involvement was serving as a volunteer board member with the Women’s Resource Center of Winona, the organization that had provided her with legal advocacy and services. In 1992, Houston County Women’s Resources recruited Linda to serve as its director. For 15 years, she initiated programs that continue to serve the safety needs of women and children. The work led Linda to Duluth in 2007 to lead the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, an organization renowned internationally for its model of responding to domestic violence. In just two years, Linda’s leadership has provided renewed energy and vitality to the effort. Program enhancements include collaborating with community partners to better serve families using the Duluth Family Visitation Center; working with local law enforcement to fund specialized officers who handle only domestic violence-related cases; and forming a collaborative to work with women with disabilities whose lives have been affected by abuse.

Linda has also served on the Boards of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless since 2000 and the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women for the past five years. She has an innate passion for these two issues and believes they are inextricably related. When working with homeless women, Linda finds too many who share personal experiences of abuse.

Despite the ongoing challenges of the cycle of domestic violence, Linda remains optimistic. “I encourage each woman to focus on her strengths, her dreams, and what she wants her life to be,” says Linda. “We need to help her see she has gifts that she can draw upon as she moves forward. Everyone deserves personal happiness and personal freedom.”



“She aspires to help all of those around her to have a better life, helping them to find the resources they need to achieve their dreams.”

— Cheryl Danculovich

Renee Tomatz



Sit down with Renee Tomatz and the stories start to flow. As founder and former director of the Family Investment Center in Hibbing, Minnesota, Renee helped found dozens of programs during the past 15 years, including the Hibbing Soup Kitchen, Hibbing Food Shelf, Clothes Closet, and Project Warmth. Renee shares stories of her work to educate and motivate others.

There’s the story about JJ, a little boy who Renee found at her Center’s after-school program writing 100 times, *I will wear my boots to school tomorrow*. Renee first asked the boy if he had boots. “No, but please don’t tell my mom,” he pleaded. “She gets paid next week and plans to buy me boots.” “But what will you do tomorrow?” asked Renee. He replied that he’d repeat the writing assignment until he had boots of his own. Renee made sure JJ got his boots that night, and also helped his teachers to better understand their students’ challenges.

Or consider the young mom whose husband left without warning. Alone, she couldn’t pay her rent and had to move just days before Christmas. Not wanting her son to know that she wasn’t able to afford presents, she told him, “Since we’ve had to move, Santa won’t be able to find us this year.” Hearing of the woman’s situation, a neighbor contacted Renee, who quickly mobilized a group to provide gifts for the family. Upon seeing the presents on Christmas morning, her son exclaimed, “See mom, I wasn’t bad. Santa does love me.”

Even during illness, Renee remained devoted to helping others. Now a cancer survivor, she continues to encourage others. “You need to plant seeds,” she says. “You may not be able to see immediately what will grow, but even if one out of 20 grows, that one will make a difference.”

Previous Recipients

Since 1985, The McKnight Foundation has honored 253 recipients of the Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service, including this year's honorees.

The recipients from the past 24 years are listed below:

2008

Ibrahim Ayeh
Isaac Combs
Robin and Starla Krause
Jimmy Longoria
Patricia Melody
Steve O'Neil

2007

Ada Beh
Johanna Christianson
Virginia Clark
Bernice Cowl Gordon
Charlitta Ellis
Rachel Kincade
Darcy Knight
Barbara Lewis
Mary F. Nelson
Mark Ochu

2006

Dee Cotten
May Pa Heu
Russ Irvin
Shegitu Kebede
Sarah Mollet
Vivian Peterson
Erik Rodriguez
Jim Soderberg
Jodi Townsend
Patrick Wood

2005

Said Salah Ahmed
Linda Brown
Wafiq Fannoun
Melvin Giles
Ora Hokes
Beth Holger
Curtis Levang
Larry and Noreen Luck
Sister Jean Thuerauf
Hedwidge "Hedy" Tripp

2004

James Andre
Elsie Dugar
Mahmoud El-Kati
Donna Gillen
Mary Gnerer
Daniel Hawkins
Rayome Clark Koehler
Mary Maas
Margaret McBride
Christine Norton
Kay Trainor
Carol Voss

2003

Cal Appleby
James Dodge
Jayne Frank
Linda Jemison
Cindy Johnson
Nathaniel Khaliq
Nancy Meyers
Rajiv Shah
John Siegfried
Char Thompson

2002

Andrew Benjamin
Martha Cardenas
Bonham Cross
Mohamed Essa
Ann Hooley
Jacqueline Kavanagh
Ed and Fern Ostberg
Ron Schwartz
Margaret Smith
Gail Weigle

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
Darlene Edwards
Denise Gubrud and
Margarita Reese
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 Winkels

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

Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: Tim Hanrahan

WRITER: Susan Guck

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PRINTING: Reflections

The McKnight Foundation is committed to the protection of our environment, a philosophy that underlies our practice of using paper with post-consumer waste content and environment-friendly inks. This book was printed on paper containing 80% post-consumer fibers. Additionally, we use printers and papers that are Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified. The FSC standards represent the world's strongest social and environmental systems for guiding forest management and the use of paper resources toward sustainable outcomes.

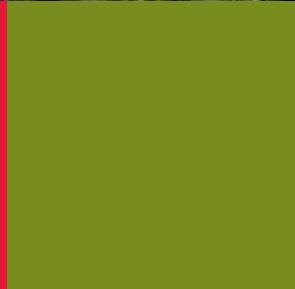
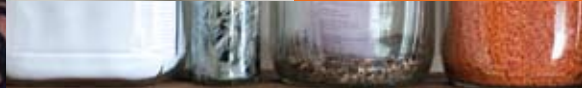
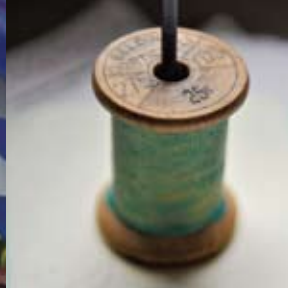
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About The McKnight Foundation

The McKnight Foundation, a Minnesota-based family foundation, seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. Through grantmaking, coalition-building, and encouragement of strategic policy reform, we use our resources to attend, unite, and empower those we serve. The Foundation's grantmaking priorities include support of child and youth development, the region and communities, the arts, the environment, and scientific research in selected fields. The Foundation's primary geographic focus is the state of Minnesota. Founded in 1953 and endowed by William L. McKnight and Maude L. McKnight, The McKnight Foundation had assets of approximately \$1.6 billion and granted about \$99 million in 2008. More information and program-specific grantmaking guidelines are available at www.mcknight.org.





The McKnight Foundation
 710 South Second Street, Suite 400
 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401
 612-333-4220
www.mcknight.org

