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TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors
FROM: Rosy A. Costas, President, Women in County Government
SUBJECT: Women in County Government Recognition Awards

RECOMMENDATION

Approve a Resolution authorizing the Board of Supervisors to honor, recognize and commend the outstanding individual contributions of three employees in the areas of Public Service, Self-Development and Community Service.

Previous Board Action

In May of this year you approved an update to the Women in County Government Strategic Plan, which serves as the foundation for all activities of the organization.

Key Facts

1. Women in County Government promotes the achievements and talents of all women employees in the County.
2. One activity sponsored by Women in Management is the Recognition of County Women.

Discussion

The Governing Board of Women in County Government distributes a brochure to all County employees in the fall, inviting them to participate in the nomination of women employees who have excelled in the categories of Public Service, Self Development or Community Service. This year the committee received 20 nominations and selected one person in each of the three categories for recognition.

Community Service: Providing outstanding volunteer service to one's community.
Leah Janet Berlanga, Family Support Officer III, Family Support Division.

Leah has worked for the County of San Mateo for 10 years. She personally exemplifies the spirit of service to her own community.

Ten years ago, Leah moved to an economically challenged neighborhood with many community problems. Drugs, gangs, unemployment and an underserved senior population were just a few of the problems that she identified.

She began to think of ways that the community could use their own resources to improve and inspire other community members.

Her first project was to organize a group of 60 volunteers to paint and refurbish the neglected community center. After this success, she organized a neighborhood partnership with the local police department for a zero tolerance drug free community and, with her neighbors, drastically reduced all illegal drug activity in her neighborhood. Next, she garnered her neighbors and appeared at the City council meeting to remodel a much used local park that was unsafe for the neighborhood children. Two years later, she cut the ribbon for the opening of the newly remodeled park!

Tirelessly, her next project included securing a \$150,000 grant to bring new programs into her neighborhood. From this grant, the first neighborhood computer lab for children will be launched. She supported and honored another community volunteer leader by establishing a local scholarship in her name.

Leah feels that "happiness is not a destination but a journey and everyday of our lives, every life that we touch, is a part of the journey." It is for the many lives that Leah has already touched that we honor her today.

Public Service: Demonstrating excellence by serving the citizens and employees of San Mateo County in an outstanding manner.

Mary Jane Wood, Ph.D., Health Services Manager, Public Health AIDS Program

Mary Jane Wood has worked in the HIV field for the past sixteen years, the last eleven with San Mateo County Public Health.

Initially employed as a program manager, she oversaw the Direct Services Department including health and social services. Approximately three years ago, she was promoted to a management position as the Associate Director of the AIDS Program. Within this position, she participates in many Public Health Services committees including Confidentiality and Outcome Based Management.

Mary Jane has served for the past eleven years on the San Francisco Area Ryan White Title I Planning Council and the California State Office of AIDS' Planning Group. Work with these groups improve HIV services throughout California.

In her advocacy role, Mary Jane works with many HIV community organizations assisting them to professionalize and provide competent, sustainable services.

In a leadership role, Mary Jane is viewed as a true mentor. She is a team player who continues to delight in new learning experiences. She is admired and respected for her knowledge, problem solving abilities, visionary planning and compassion.

Her extensive and tireless devotion to San Mateo County Public Health Department and the San Mateo County residents living with HIV is an example of the difference a woman in county government can make and is why we honor her today.

Self Development: Improving job-related skills, competence and knowledge that enhance personal value to the County.

Kathleen McKenna, Family Law Commissioner, Superior Court

As a child, Kathleen McKenna knew that she wanted to be a lawyer, but her family discouraged her, feeling that, at that time, a lawyer was not a profession that was open to women.

Not having the financial means to attend college after high school, she went to a trade school to become an animal technician and passed these boards in 1980. Working with one vet until 1984, she then changed jobs to work with another vet, Dr. Mell, who was a kind mentor who continuously encouraged her to return to college.

She enrolled at Foothill College and went to school full time while working full time, and even had her first child during this time. She graduated and transferred to the University of San Francisco in the summer of 1988. She completed her undergraduate work within one year and enrolled at the University of Santa Clara for law school. She graduated from law school in May of 1993 and passed the Bar exam in July.

During the time she was completing her degrees, she only stopped working for Dr. Mell for one year and completed her family with two more children. In her last year in law school, her husband was diagnosed with a serious illness and she became the only source of income for her family. Working two jobs, caring for her husband and children, and completing her law degree, she opened her own practice in 1994.

Kathleen was fortunate to have Dr. Mell as a mentor and supporter and other friends who assisted her in getting cases during this difficult start to her practice.

What Dr. Mell and her family and friends saw in Kathleen was the ability to succeed despite obstacles and commitments and pursue a dream that she has had since childhood. Their recognition of this spirit and her own knowledge of what she was capable of achieving led to her success. Her story of this journey and her continued success now as a Family Law Commissioner is why we honor Kathleen today.

RESOLUTION NO.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF SAN MATEO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE RECOGNITION OF WOMEN IN COUNTY GOVERNMENT

RESOLVED, by the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Mateo, State of California, that

WHEREAS, the Women in County Government Recognition of County Women Committee was given the task of developing a program which would highlight the achievement and talents of women in the County and;

WHEREAS, the 2001 honorees deserve to be honored and recognized because of their individual achievements and contributions which benefit the community of San Mateo County: Leah Janet Berlanga as Community Service Honoree; Kathleen McKenna as Self-Development Honoree and Mary Jane Wood as Public Service Honoree.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY DETERMINED AND ORDERED, that the Board of Supervisors is hereby authorized and directed to recognize the 2001 Recognition of Women in County Government Honorees.
