

Macomb Feminist Network Writing Women Into History

2014 Honorees

Gordana Rezab made generous contributions of her talents, energy, values and money to WIU and Macomb until her final illness. As head Archivist at WIU, she was instrumental in developing the division of Archives and Special Collections and gave invaluable advice to faculty and community members doing research and writing grants. Her passion for knowledge, especially area information, moved her to spend twenty years collecting material for her 2008 publication "Place Names in McDonough County," a scholarly history. She devoted many hours to community groups and served as Treasurer to most: Macomb Beautiful, McDonough County Choral Society, and for decades, the League of Women Voters. She served on the board and as head of acquisitions for the Western Illinois Museum. As President of the McDonough County Historical Society, she focused the organization on restoring dignity and beauty to the Old Macomb Cemetery on Wigwam Hollow Road and raised over \$15,000 for a new fence. Adjacent land purchased by her husband to prevent commercialism in the area had been donated to the WIU Foundation, and Gordana persuaded that Board to donate the land to the city with the promise that the historical society would convert the land into a prairie meadow. The summer before she died, 12 of 14 trees were planted and native prairie seeds were sown. After her death the city named this area "Rezab Family Prairie Meadow."

Alice Swain was an educator in all areas of her life. She taught American History and English at WIU, and through her service to the community, she helped educate many others. In 1959 she was one of the first alderwoman elected to the Macomb City Council. She said at the time, "Women should run for office because they have a different point of view." She served on the Zoning Board, was elected to the Park Board and served as its president for four years. In 1990 she received the key to the city from Mayor Robert Anstine. She had a long-standing involvement in health services. A member of the McDonough County Hospital Auxiliary, she also initiated and chaired the WIU Bloodmobile, an ongoing service to the community. With others from the American Association of University Women (AAUW) she helped establish a bi-county health department. In women's organizations, she was a local president of the AAUW, and the League of Women Voters named her "Woman of the Year" during the Bicentennial. In her later years, she enrolled as a student in Spoon River College, saying, "The day you quit learning is the day you quit living."