

Macomb Feminist Network Writing Women Into History

2016 Honorees

Alice Henry, McDonough County Board member and Finance Committee Chair, was nominated for her significant public leadership and service to the local community. She was described by her nominators as an unsung heroine in county government "who exemplifies all the best qualities of a skilled, dedicated, and talented public servant who has worked tirelessly for many years for the good of McDonough County." Alice's public service and leadership go well beyond her work in county government and extend to conservation efforts. She serves as Vice Chair (as well as previous Chair) of the Prairie Land Conservancy. With her husband, Bob, she has preserved 265 acres in Macomb County, including an Illinois Department of Natural Resources Land and Water Reserve area and an Illinois Nature Preserve. Her advocacy in this policy area also includes an additional leadership role, as Alice also serves on the Board of the Prairie State Conservation Coalition. According to one of her nominators, Alice's contributions to our area and her commitment to public service truly make her the role model for engaged citizenship.

Alta Sargent has been involved in many important endeavors in our local community throughout her life. She has been an innovator, inspiring others to work with her to make this a better place to live and work. Alta successfully owned and operated the Sargent Funeral Home at a time when few women were licensed funeral directors in Illinois. As a member of the Macomb Park District, Alta was instrumental in persuading John Patton to donate land to the city for Patton Park, a park that continues to be enjoyed by the public. She was a founding member of the Altrusa Club in 1961, and still participates actively, enriching the club with her knowledge and experience. At her initiative, the Altrusa Bazaar was begun in 1965, growing into a huge event that raises thousands of dollars to support local literacy projects. Alta also has been active with the McDonough District Hospital Auxiliary, contributing more than 100 Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls for the hospital gift shop and serving as the treasurer of the MDH Auxiliary's Coffee Shop, a position that requires her daily supervision. Attesting to her life-long commitment to improving McDonough County, Alta Sargent was the recipient of an Ageless Achiever Award from the Illinois Area Agency on Aging.

Peggy Scharfenberg has contributed much to our community through her roles as a teacher and as a founder of the Festival of Trees and Baby Talk. Although Peggy started out teaching at the secondary level, most of her career was spent at the kindergarten/elementary levels in the Macomb Schools. Retirement from the classroom did not end her contributions to our community. In 1993, she began the Festival of Trees, an annual event that has become a major fundraiser and holiday event for the MDH Foundation. This event has helped to fund purchases such as an ambulance, a Digital Mammography System, a CT scanner and also has helped with renovations to the MDH

recovery center and provided support for the Dolores Kator Switzer Women's Center. In 1997, Peggy did the research, became a trainer, organized the volunteers and established Baby TALK (Teaching Activities for Learning and Knowledge) at MDH to encourage new parents to read to their babies. All parents of babies born at MDH receive a hospital visit and materials from a trained Baby Talk volunteer. From its early stages, Baby TALK has grown and become a collaborative effort with MDH, local libraries, and service clubs. As a teacher and as a founder of the Festival of Trees and Baby TALK, Peggy Scharfenberg has demonstrated the true meaning of volunteerism. Community members of all ages continue to benefit from her contributions.