

Macomb Feminist Network Writing Women Into History

2025 Honorees

Sandra Nelson has shown particularly strong leadership in the field of mental health where she helped establish the McDonough County Mental Health Center. She coordinated presentations before the Macomb City Council and civic and social organizations to ensure passage of the referendum that made critical local funding possible. She continued her support of mental health services through her twenty-plus years on the 708 Mental Health Board of McDonough County, ten of those years as chair. Part of her motivation for helping found the county's League of Women's Voters in 1967 was her interest in forming a community mental health board. She is the epitome of a volunteer who makes a difference through compassion, intelligence, persistence, and meaningful action.

Bonnie Smith-Skripps is well regarded for her leadership as a member, then board member, and for the past ten years, president of the Humane Society of McDonough County (HSMC). She is arguably the Society's most reliable on-the-ground member since she appears every morning, rain or shine, at the county animal shelter (MCAS) to walk the dogs there. She is keenly aware of the need to replace the present facilities with a more adequate shelter and has nurtured partnerships across the county to raise funds for it. She has worked with the HSMC board to create novel approaches, such as Casino Night, to ensure participants have fun while helping to raise the money. Bonnie's deep concern for the welfare of animals earned her recognition as the 2017 City of Macomb Volunteer of the Year.

Kathy Veroni excelled as the Western Illinois University women's softball coach during her tenure there, but she also reached out to the Macomb community by founding the Macomb Magic, an independent women's fastpitch softball team. At home, the team sponsored so many successful events, it was named an honorary citizen and given a Key to the City. As a Master Gardener (MG) in the University of Illinois Extension program, she brought a willing and generous spirit, organizational skills, a creative imagination, extraordinary stamina, and woodworking expertise to her MG participation. Visible testimony to this is the gazebo she imagined, designed, and, with a friend's help, built on the fairgrounds, but most significant is her ability to see, listen, and live as a caring member of a team/community.

Marla Vizdal's experience and enthusiasm for local history were evident when she worked in Archives and Special Collections at Western Illinois University, a position that paved the way for her community service as a member of the McDonough County Genealogical Society (MCGS), the Western Illinois Museum (WIM), and the local Historic Preservation Commission. A WIM and Genealogy Research Center volunteer,

she regularly applies her experience, writing and editing skills, and reenactment savvy whenever needed. Marla has been a MCGS board member, secretary, president, and is currently treasurer. Her facility in telling McDonough County's story reflects her compassion and capacity to listen to the people who hold that story in their hearts and minds.