

Magic 106.7 honors 6 exceptional women

Annual awards luncheon honors inspirational

By Robyn Bradley

At 6 a.m. May 16 the Grand Ballroom at the Sheraton Boston Hotel looked anything but grand; pastel tablecloths lay in heaps on the banquet tables and chairs were strewn about. Black duct tape plastered the walls from an event the night before. And center stage? Well, center stage appeared to be missing.

One of the many mysteries to me of special-event planning is the way it all somehow comes together in the final moments. The performing artist might miss her flight, another may cancel at the last minute, and clothes slated to be worn the day of the event may become lost in a sea of suits at the cleaners the morning of (all of these things have happened). No matter what happens in the months leading up to the Exceptional Women Awards Luncheon, it always amazes me that by 11:30 a.m. on The Big Day, no matter what has transpired in the hours leading up to this moment, 800 people mingle outside the ballroom doors sipping champagne, ready at any moment to pour inside the room for two hours of inspirational stories. Yes, if you build it, they will come. This year was no different.

The Sunday morning program *Exceptional Women: Radio Portraits of Women Who Will Inspire You* is the brainchild of Magic 106.7's Assistant Program Director Candy O'Terry. The program has received 11 awards over its nine-year history, including the 2002 American Women in Radio and Television Gracie Allen Award. Candy and her co-host, Gay Vernon, have interviewed hundreds of women — some are names you instantly recognize like Stevie Nicks or former first lady Rosalyn Carter, while others are women who make great strides and overcome obstacles on a quieter level. Each year since 1998, six



The Magic 106.7 sales and promotions teams are joined by Greater Media's VP/GM Matt Mills and all the Exceptional Women winners.

to seven women have been honored at a special Awards Luncheon. A portion of the proceeds support Family Connections at Dana-Farber/Partners CancerCare, a program that provides counseling services to the children of women with breast or gynecological cancers.

The tragedy of September 11th left many wondering if the Awards Luncheon should be scrapped for 2002. Despite a struggling economy and the fact that a lot of charitable giving went to support 9/11 funds, the committee decided that the plans for the Fifth Annual Exceptional Women Awards Luncheon should move forward and that the event had even more meaning in such uncertain times. The planning started in early winter and didn't stop until all guests were seated and the familiar voices of Candy, Gay, and emcee Nancy Quill (Magic's midday host) emanated from the speakers, their images projected on two gargantuan screens.

"You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it." Yolanda Cellucci stared out at the crowd, her signature white hat elegantly tipped to one side, her lithe frame disguising her 60-plus years. The recipient of the Business Award, Cellucci peppered her acceptance speech with words of wisdom, "Nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished without passion and love of people."

As the video played featuring the Courage Award recipient, I noticed people dabbing at their eyes with the linen napkins. This is not unusual. The stories of the Exceptional Women who fall under this category are so remarkable and heart-wrenching. This year was no different. Susan Davenny Wyner was in the midst of an incredible career as a soaring soprano when a hit-and-run driver almost robbed her of her life. Susan's vocal chords were destroyed, but not her spirit. Since that life-altering day in 1983, Susan has become a world-renowned conductor and is currently the music director and conductor for the New England String Ensemble and the Warren Philharmonic Orchestra.

Dr. Deborah Frank, the founder of The Grow Clinic at Boston Medical Center and the recipient of the Healthcare Award, acknowledged the women she works with: "I work with many exceptional women striving to care for the increasing number of malnourished children in the city of Boston and their families." One of the first females to graduate Harvard Medical School in the '70s, this petite, unassuming woman is a true pioneer.

With humor and charm reminiscent of her role as Mrs. Cunningham on *Happy Days*, Marion Ross accepted the Lifetime Achievement Award. Ross has made more than 400

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appearances on television and admits she never grows tired of the "mom" role. She is currently Drew Carey's mom on *The Drew Carey Show*.

Deborah "Debbie" Gibson opened the Awards Luncheon with a medley of her hits from the '80s including "Only in My Dreams," "Foolish Beat," and "Lost in Your Eyes." Upon accepting the Performing Arts Award, Gibson performed a song she had written on New Year's Day 2002. The piece showcased her Broadway voice — Gibson has had starring roles in *Grease*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Cinderella*. She will be returning to Boston this fall to appear in *Chicago* at the Northshore Music Theatre.

Salvation Army Captain Barbara George received the Community Service Award for her efforts in counseling airline workers and families on September 11th and the work she did at ground zero days later. George remarked, "I am but one woman among thousands of Salvation Army women in over 100 countries of the world, who day after day work to meet the needs of people in their communities. Any one of them would define *exceptional*."

After two hours of laughter, tears, and hugs, the house lights come up and the guests depart, returning to their jobs and to their families. The award recipients linger on the stage with Candy and Gay. They embrace. They exchange phone numbers. They have formed new friendships. Candy and Gay take pride in that.

Gay comments, "It's been five years, and the gathering and applauding of these amazing, inspirational women from all walks of life never ceases to delight and to leave me grateful for the opportunity to get to know them. As a friend of mine said this year, 'I left the awards luncheon so empowered to do something worthwhile with the rest of my life.'

"I couldn't say it any better."

"You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it."