

'I try to keep them from ruining their lives'

Ruth Newcomer has spent 30 years giving an important message to kids who need it most

Ruth Newcomer believes youths at the county's juvenile detention center just need to be told the truth about drugs, alcohol, sex and many other topics.



Lori Van Ingen
Senior citizens

And she's been telling them the truth for 30 years.

Newcomer recently received two awards for her years of visiting with the youths at the Youth Intervention Center and former Barnes Hall. She received the Jefferson Award for public service and the

Fulton's Women Who Care Award quilt square.

"I try to teach them that what they do in their teens will get worse in their 20s. I try to keep them from ruining their lives," she said.

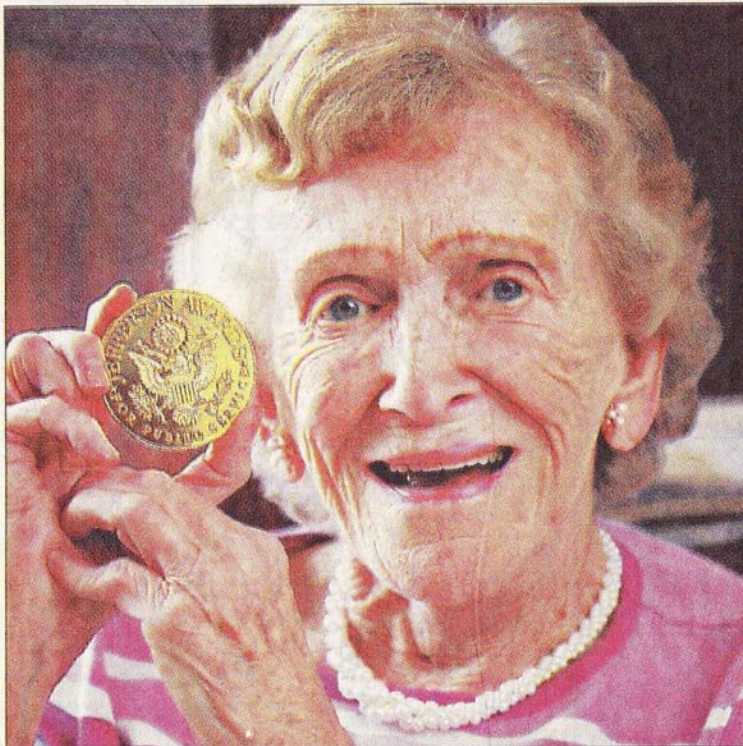
When Steve Brubaker, a member of Newcomer's church who had a degree in criminal justice, began visiting the teens in 1976, Newcomer asked to join him.

At that time, there were four people from different churches who visited one group of teens. Now, Newcomer takes her own group of 12 teens under the age of 17 — a group that recently included a 10-year-old boy — while another couple, William and Patricia Howell, takes a second group of 12.

"We were never briefed on what we could or couldn't do. Unlike at schools, we can give tracts or Bible verses to the kids," Newcomer said.

One-half to three-quarters of the youths come from dysfunctional homes, she said.

"They have no decent home life, so they get into trouble," the 89-year-old Lititz woman said. "I tell them I'm a grandma, and when they line up to leave, I give them a hug and say something pri-



Dan Marschka / Intelligencer Journal

Ruth Newcomer holds the Jefferson Award she received for her years of work with young people at the county's juvenile detention center.

vately to them in their ear. I compliment their looks or leave them with something positive."

Newcomer tells the youths how important it is to stay out of the detention center. When they're out looking for work some day, a stay in the center will be on their record — so they should stay out, respect the law and have positive attitudes, she said.

"Everyone makes mistakes, but some

are worse than others. They need to learn to respect the law and keep themselves on the right track," she said.

Newcomer asks them if they have ever gotten drunk. All hands go up.

"I'm very direct. I tell them if they start to drink in their teens, they could be a drunken bum on the streets by 25."

She asks them if they have ever smoked. Again, all raise their hands.

She tells them she had two sisters who

smoked — and died of smoke-related illnesses.

"When they have oxygen tubes in their nose and an oxygen tank at their side, they won't like it then," she said.

Have they ever smoked pot? And again, all raise their hands.

"They are amazed when I tell them I never knew what marijuana was when I was a kid. It's so different today," said Newcomer, who is known as Grandma Ruth.

"I tell them experts say if they smoke marijuana, they will want to try harder drugs. When they start under 17, they will have major troubles when they are 20."

All the kids have guns, too.

"No kid is allowed to have a gun, so they should get rid of them," she said.

She also tells them all people have a sex drive, but they've got to learn to control it.

"You won't be a gentleman until you do. The same way with drugs and drink," she said. "This is my mission work. These kids need to hear the truth. No one trained me, but anyone with horse sense will know what to say."

She said the teens are learning something important — that life can be orderly.

Newcomer tells the teens when the lights are out and they are in bed, they should say to themselves, "I think I'm worth something with God's help." And say it again when they wake up. Within a week, they'll want to live like it, she said.

"They need to learn to respect the law, or it will not be safe for anyone to go out their front doors. We live by the law, and we just can't do what we want," she tells them.

Newcomer plans to keep coming back for her once-a-week visits as long as she can walk and talk.

"I just have a heart for these kids," she said. "I tell them I came because I care for them and don't want them to spoil their lives."



For Outstanding Public Service By Individuals in the Susquehanna Valley

**Wednesday
April 26, 2006**

**Wyndham Harrisburg-Hershey
Lindle Road, Harrisburg**



United Way



The 2006 Jefferson Awards Program is sponsored by WGAL 8,
PSECU, and your local United Way.



SOCIAL HOUR AND REGISTRATION

6:00pm

DINNER

6:30pm

Wyndham Harrisburg-Hershey

PROGRAM

GREETINGS & SPONSOR RECOGNITION Paul Quinn
President & General Manager, WGAL 8

SPONSOR COMMENTS John Marisie
PSECU Board Of Directors

INVOCATION Rev. Chris Rankin
Pastor, St. John's UCC, Fredericksburg

DINNER

INTRODUCTION OF UNITED WAY REPRESENTATIVES... Kim Lemon
Anchor, NEWS 8

UNITED WAY COMMENTS Joseph M. Capita
President & CEO, United Way of the Capital Region

RECOGNITION OF JUDGES Joseph M. Capita

RECOGNITION OF NOMINEES & PAST WINNERS Kim Lemon

AWARD PRESENTATIONS Kim Lemon

CLOSING REMARKS Kim Lemon

2006 Winners



Ruth Newcomer

Nominated by: Bryan Hubbard

"Ruth first came to the former Barnes Hall Juvenile Detention Center in 1980. Through her church work, this 60-year organist from Lancaster Grace Evangelical Congregation wanted to reach out to delinquent youth being detained in Lancaster County. Who would have thought that after twenty-six years, at the age of 89, she would still have that same drive and passion to make a difference in young peoples' lives? If you ask any previously detained youth who Grandma Ruth is, they'll know for sure."

Bryan Hubbard



Cheryl & Randall Eshenour

Nominated by: Mary Bihl

"In July 1997, Cheryl & Randall's 12-year-old son, Jonathan, died as a result of injuries he received in a bicycle accident in Derry Township. Despite wearing an approved bicycle helmet, Jonathan received massive internal head injuries and died of those injuries. Since the Township of Derry had no funding available to construct a bike or recreational trail system, the Eshenours formed the Jonathan Eshenour Foundation and have raised over \$500,000 which has been used to construct two phases of a bike trail. Plans are underway to build more trails. In addition, they have become very active in the Gift of Life Program."

Mary Bihl



T. Grace Ziegler

Nominated by: Vivian Ziegler

"Grace shows her love by doing deeds for those often overlooked: the handicapped, aged, refugees, unwed mothers and disaster victims. Without any education beyond high school, but strongly motivated by living in foster homes as a child and experiencing physical, sexual and emotional abuse, a deep love for all hurting people and encouraged by the support and example of her late husband, Grace has made a difference".

Vivian Ziegler



Mary Bardin

Nominated by: Sarah Pultra

"Mary has the sweetest, most caring personality you will ever find. At the age of 90, she is still going strong. She volunteers at least six days of the week and sometimes all seven days at both the American Red Cross and Hanover Hospital. Mary is always willing to help no matter where, when, how hard the job is and how much time it takes. She has inspired many others to give back to their community".

Sarah Pultra



Mark Krushinsky

Nominated by: Peter Miller

"Mark volunteers at least 20 hours a month in teaching and instructing Martial Arts to students who are considered special needs. He has provided parents and children in Central PA with an outlet to learn something challenging that most Martial Arts instructors would not even attempt. Teaching special needs kids Martial Arts is a major undertaking and progress is slow. These students have gone on to earn green, brown and even black belts and have learned and adapted many eastern ideals in this complex field. Mark has accomplished all this while legally blind".

Peter Miller



Hank Merges

Nominated by: Patrick Purcell

"Hank has helped the community in many different ways over the years, but most notably by creating Tennis for Kids, a program that instructs children from the ages of 8 to 16 about tennis. This program is free and open to anyone in the community. Children who do not own or cannot afford a racquet are given one. He was nominated for the hard work and effort he has put in over the years for the betterment of his community".

Patrick Purcell

Local United Ways participating are:

United Way of Adams County
(717) 334-5809

United Way of the Capital Region
(717) 732-0700

United Way of Carlisle & Cumberland County
(717) 243-4805

United Way of Lancaster County
(717) 394-0731

United Way of Lebanon County
(717) 273-8144

United Way of York County
(717) 843-0957

2006 Judges:

Steve Niebler, *Adams County Office of Aging*

John "Mac" Aichele, *Active Community Volunteer, Hershey*

John Rinehart, *Leadership Cumberland*

Charito Calvachi Mateyko, *Active Community Volunteer, Lancaster*

Rene' Numer, *Director of Human Resources, APR Supply Co. Lebanon*

Randy Freedman, *Executive Director York Jewish Community Center*

Rich Davidson, *Videographer, WGAL TV*

