

'Women who make a difference' honored

By Pamela Hale-Burns, Staff Writer

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(Jeff Gritchen / Staff Photographer)

Former Long Beach Mayor Beverly O'Neill was honored with the Trail Blazer Award for her service. "(Being mayor of Long Beach) was something I never dreamed of," O'Neill said.

LONG BEACH - Seven women and an organization were honored Saturday at the 28th annual Soroptimist International of Long Beach "Women Who Make a Difference" Awards Luncheon.

"We are honoring the women for their achievements as women who make a

difference and as women of distinction," said soroptimist Lynn Shrum, chair of the event. "Women of distinction come from all walks of life."

From counselors to health care providers, this year's awardees have impacted the lives of women and girls throughout the city.

"For 28 years Soroptimist International of Long Beach has honored women of distinction from our community," Shrum said.

Among the honorees was former Long Beach Mayor Beverly O'Neill, who was given the Trail Blazer Award. Nominated by Mayor Bob Foster, O'Neill, who served three terms, was honored for her distinguished service as an educator, an elected official and a community leader.

"I was delighted to nominate her and I'm happy she was awarded the prestigious honor," Foster said. "You all know what a role model she's been, you know her leadership and her vision for almost everything she does. She's been a great ally and a great contributor to this city even after leaving office."

"The Trail Blazer Award is reserved for a woman who is a role model, sets a new standard of leadership and advances the cause of women in the community," Foster

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said. "I could not think of anyone more deserving than Beverly O'Neill."

Nearly overcome by emotion, O'Neill was humbled by the many accolades.

"(Being mayor of Long Beach) was something I never dreamed of, I never imagined. I never thought I'd ever run for public office, but I tell you, it was probably the best 12 years for growth and expansion and understanding of people, the world, this wonderful city, the depth of feeling we have in this community," she said. "It's because of people like you ... women who make a difference, they are all pioneers. The thing that Soroptimist does is what makes Long Beach such a special place because we care, you care, helping families, helping women, changing lives and feeling a commitment toward community."

Other honorees included Virginia DeMoss, for her work through the Long Beach Found Theatre; Alyce LaViolette, for her work with Human Rights and Status of Women; Lillian Lew in Health; Michelle Molina, for her work in education; Sithea San, chair of Cambodia Town Inc., in the area of International Goodwill and Understanding; and Press-Telegram society columnist Shirley Wild, for Economic and Social Development.

The National Council of Negro Women Long Beach Section was honored for service in

promoting the welfare of women and children.

Soroptimist International is a worldwide organization for women in management and the professions working through service projects to advance human rights and the status of women.

Founded in 1924, Soroptimist International Long Beach has given more than \$190,000 to individuals and organizations in the Long Beach community over the past five years for the improvement in the lives of women and girls.

For more information about Soroptimist International or to nominate someone for 2010, visit www.si-longbeach.org.

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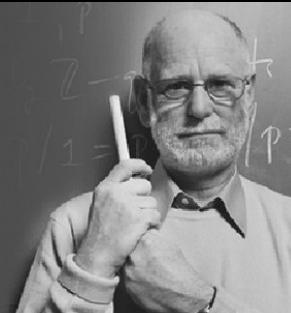


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