

2008 Nominees for National Federation of Press Women Communicator of Achievement

Alaska / Elise Patkotak

Elise Patkotak writes the most humorous and thought-provoking articles ever published in the Anchorage Daily News. The former nurse who turned professional communicator 27 years ago has received 36 awards from Alaska Press Women for her work. She has served on Anchorage's radio boards of directors, state boards and the area's broadcasting commission and the KBRW Public Radio board of directors. Patkotak was Alaska Press Women's first vice president from 1999 to 2000 and president in 2005.

Colorado / Judi Buehrer

In her more than 40 years of writing and reporting, Judi Buehrer has covered an attempted coup in the former Soviet Union, interviewed American "drug mules" in Thai prisons and learned of Osama bin Laden long before 9-11. She has served on the boards of two Press Women affiliates and also has supported a variety of community organizations ranging from youth orchestras to cancer charities. Wherever she has lived around the globe, she has written stories that were notable for their sensitivity and accuracy.

Delaware / Barbara C. Roewe

Now retired, Barbara Roewe was an English teacher for 27 years and an award-winning journalism adviser for 11 of those years. A two-term DPA president, she is now vice president of student activities and director of the annual First State High School Communications Contest. She is a facilitator with the YWCA-sponsored Study Circles, whose mission is to eliminate racism. For that effort, she was named a YWCA Community Winner for the 2003 Jefferson Awards.

Idaho / Teri Ehresman

An active member of Media Network Idaho and NFPW for 32 years, Teri Ehresman has been an elected officer or chaired a committee every year she has been a member. She participated in planning the 1989 NFPW conference in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and has taken the lead in planning the 2008 conference in Idaho Falls. A former newspaper reporter/editor, she leads nuclear and energy communications efforts in the Communications and Public Affairs Division at the Idaho National Laboratory

Illinois / Marianne Wolf-Astrauskas

Marianne Wolf-Astrauskas reinvented herself after serving as a VIP Volunteer during the 1994 World Cup in Chicago. She went on to organize volunteers during the fourth International Congress of Educating Cities. For 12 years she has managed Volunteers for the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. A fiction writer, she is second VP/membership chair of IWPA, and chaired IWPA's Book Fair in 2006 and 2007.

Indiana / Gena Asher

Gena Asher was already an award-winning reporter for the Bloomington (Ind.) Herald-Times when the Internet caught her eye. She went back to school for degrees in information and library sciences. A bout with breast cancer gave her a reason to set up her first Web site, BreastCancerFYI.org. She teaches at Indiana University at Bloomington and edits the Department of Journalism's Web site. She received Kate Milner Rabb Award, the highest award given by WPCI.

Kansas / Elizabeth Kennedy

Elizabeth "Liz" Kennedy has a long history of using communication to improve the world around her. She is the program director of Arts Partners, a nonprofit arts-in-education organization dedicated to inspiring children to learn and create, literary guide for About.com children's and co-owner with her husband, Dennis, of Wichita Scribe, an online source of information. She has a 20-year history of serving KPC, most recently as historian at the local and state level.

Nebraska / Ruth Brown

Ruth Brown is a remarkable teacher of advertising, to which her University of Nebraska at Kearney students, colleagues and administrators readily attest. However, her biggest accomplishment is being Mom to twin daughters and a son. Coincidentally, Brown earned her doctorate the same year her twin daughters earned their bachelor's degrees. Brown advises up to 40 students, sponsors the advertising and public relations club, and is involved with faculty senate and several other UNK committees. She will run for president of NPW this fall.

New Mexico / Cary Herz

In the early '70s, award-winning photographer Cary Herz made her mark recording the women's movement for Ms. Magazine and other publications and covering the "new" phenomenon of women's sports. She has owned her own business, Cary Herz Photography, since 1987, and her book, "New Mexico's Crypto-Jews; Image and Memory," was published in 2007. A member of NMPW for more than 20 years, she has twice been president of the Albuquerque chapter.

North Carolina / Clara Cartrette

When Clara Cartrette walked into the Whiteville (N.C.) News-Reporter 47 years ago to apply for a secretarial job, it was the best "mistake" she ever made. The newspaper needed someone to run the women's department, her high school English teacher recommended her. Today she is the paper's news editor. As a key organizer and a founding member of NCPC, she credits it and organizations like NFPW for training and keeping her interested and enthusiastic about her work.

North Dakota / Merrie Sue Holtan

For more than 20 year, Merrie Sue Holtan has been an instructor in communication studies — first at Concordia College and now at Minnesota State University, both at Moorhead. She has been a freelance feature and public relations writer for more than 25 years with more than 300 published articles at the local, regional and national levels. She is the editor of a cookbook and an education text for college advisers, an author and managing editor of OPEN magazine in Fargo.

Ohio / Irene Wright-Abraham

Irene Wright-Abraham, The Cincinnati Enquirer's first female bureau chief and retired 25-year staffer, branched out to include books and play writing, medical reporting, radio broadcasting, program notes and scripts for events. She has twice served as president of Ohio Professional Writers and also provided leadership on committees and other offices. An Ohio Buckeye Colonel, she has been honored by the Ohio House of Representatives with commendations.

South Carolina / Katherine L. Brannan Freseman

Katherine L. Brannan Freseman is the director of public relations at The Charles Lea Center, a large nonprofit organization in Spartanburg, S.C., supporting 1,450 individuals with disabilities and special needs. As a member of many professional and community boards, she shares her expertise in the area of public relations and graphic design with professionals at a local, state and regional level, including helping plan a conference on crisis communication for the Piedmont Media Professionals, the Upstate Chapter of Media Women of South Carolina.

Southern California / Diana Saenger

Recently nominated by California Assemblyman Joel Anderson for Woman of the Year for California's 77th District, journalist Diana Saenger has sold more than 1,000 short stories and articles and won awards for 12 consecutive years. The president of SANDS Publishing, past president of Southern California Media Professionals and San Diego Film Critic's Society, Saenger's books include, "Everyone Wants My Job: The ABC's of Entertainment Writing" and "The Vietnam War: Life as a POW."

Texas / Bonnie Arnold

Staff writer for the weekly Hill Country Community Journal at Kerrville, Bonnie Arnold has 35-plus years in newspapers and public relations work. She is past president of Press Women of Texas and the co-director of the upcoming 2009 NFPW conference in San Antonio. Arnold is a consistent winner and four-time sweepstakes winners in the Communications Contest. Arnold also does commercial sewing for Wildgoose Manufacturing, producing luggage and leather goods.

Wisconsin / Connie Dornfield

With no formal journalism education — not even working on the high school newspaper — Connie Dornfield has been employed more than 35 years with the Beaver Dam (Wisconsin) Daily Citizen (Madison Newspapers). At age 84, she still averages 35 hours per week covering the city council, school board and committee meetings and writing features and general news coverage of Horicon, Wisconsin. She has survived breast cancer and a heart attack that was suffered shortly after attending the NFPW convention in Denver in 2006.