



For immediate release

News Release from
Canadian Federation of University Women –
Cranbrook Club

CFUW-Cranbrook Celebrates 100th Anniversary of International Women's Day with Local Recipients of their 27th Annual Award

Velma McKay and Vicky Dalton are this year's Women of the Year under the Cranbrook Club's prestigious Woman of the Year Award. Both women have been actively mentoring and advocating for women on all levels of society for the last 26 years. In this article, I will talk about Velma McKay.

Sharon Richardson, Department Head of Access Education and University Studies at College of the Rockies, who among many, nominated Velma, summed up Velma by saying, "She has been an exceptional friend, excellent colleague, outstanding mentor, amazing employee, remarkable advocate, first rate unionist and a tremendous community volunteer."

For those not lucky enough to have met Velma, she was an instructor at the College of the Rockies for over 25 years teaching math, computers, physics and psychology. Her students, who once struggled with math, found the upbeat songs Velma created to learn equations will never leave their minds. Velma made learning, even math, fun.

Bob Wakulich, President of CORFA, the local union for Post-Secondary faculty, said, "I think three words which describe her (Velma) best would be patient, tenacious and dedicated". She distinguished herself as a concerned, caring and effective educator, promoter and faculty representative as a tireless CORFA President and Executive member in good standing. She improved the working conditions of the members and worked in a collegially professional manner, proposing solutions to create an environment where employees and management could work amicably together. It did not end there. She also volunteered to work on efforts to make changes for students and support staff as well as the faculty.

When Velma was forced to go on sick leave last year due to health issues, she was honoured at the Employee Recognition Dinner for her 25 years of skilled teaching. Vancouver's Cindy Oliver, President of FPSE (Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC) wrote: "She has been a source of true inspiration to students, faculty and women."

College President, Nick Rubidge, sent out a memo last week thanking Velma for her major contribution in making changes to the College's vision and mission statements. He stated, "Velma consistently kept the Board on task, and when deliberations got difficult, she found the words that conveyed exactly what the Board was looking for."

Velma also loves to dance: everything from line dancing, to clogging, to ballroom dancing. Velma made sure everyone got up to dance if they wanted, taking the role of the male dancer so they could learn and creating an atmosphere to help prevent the inhibitions people had about two left feet. Singing is a talent and love of Velma's. She sang in her church choir and made up her own songs. She loves to scuba dive

and spent her summers in the Caribbean, most recently in Cuba, diving.

Some of you may know Velma through her many volunteer activities including Go-Go Grannies for which she was instrumental in starting the local group under the Stephen Lewis Foundation in 2007. Being a grandmother herself, Velma felt the need to support the struggles of the Grandmothers of Africa through the Canadian Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. The African Grandmothers play a crucial role caring for AIDS orphans and in holding their families and communities together.

Gwen Noble, Executive Director of Community Connections Society of SEBC, wrote saying, "Velma has been the person I go to for her wisdom, her calm, her reasonable and practical perspective and thoughtful advice. Velma is a strong advocate for all women and especially those that are marginalized, living in poverty or victims of violence. She has always been involved in activities that bring attention to women's right, the equality of women and women's safety. She is a woman of great strength, determination, compassion and strong faith"; all what have made Canadian women where they are today 100 years after the 1st International Woman's Day!

Most of you will remember Velma's smile; warm, reassuring and always with an impish twinkle be it in one of her classes, when she was dancing or researching facts for her many Legislative Committee hearings or important community meetings.

It is with sadness that we say Velma will not be able to receive her Woman of the Year 2011 in person as she is still in the lower mainland bravely struggling to beat cancer.

There will be a ceremony at the Education Centre beside the Cranbrook Library at 4pm, Monday, March 7th to celebrate Velma McKay and Vicky Dalton, this year's CFUW-Cranbrook's Woman of the Year 2011.

