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Women's History Month Honors Four

Original article posted March 6, 2011 <http://www.rdrnews.com/?p=23440>

By Emily Russo



From left, Anjali Suri, Margaret Rodriguez, Donna Paul and Shelly Currier, National Women's History Month 2011 honorees, during the annual Women's History Month Celebration Brunch held Saturday at the Roswell Museum and Art Center. (Mark Wilson Photo)

Four local women were honored at the 12th annual Roswell Women's History Month Celebration brunch at the Roswell Museum and Art Center, Saturday morning. Founded by WESST, the annual event is "a celebration of our collective past, present and future," according to Cindy Wilson, chairwoman of the Women's History Month Committee.

Donna Paul, Anjali Suri, Shelly Currier and Margaret Rodriguez were fêted for their outstanding contributions to the community. Wilson called the women "unsung heroes" who should be recognized for their achievements and for inspiring others.

"They do so much for our community ... that most people don't know," Wilson said. "They're true leaders, and being true leaders, they're quiet about what they do, but their passion is inspiring others."

Suri, an Indian-born financial consultant at Financial Network, has worked to improve literacy in the community, and is chairwoman of the Literacy Committee for Altrusa, a service organization specializing in literacy, the environment and AIDS/ HIV.

Paul lost her husband of 13 years to cancer and now helps fund raise for the Mary Kay Ash Charitable Foundations, which donates millions of dollars each year to cancer research and domestic violence. Currier, originally from Philadelphia, was a registered nurse for 22 years and was part of an emergency medical relief team in Ethiopia during the 1985 famine.

She later became involved in prison ministry and helps with several faith-based programs that provide lifeskill training for inmates. Rodriguez, born and raised in New Zealand, was a school teacher for 26 years and founded Roswell Right to Life (now Citizens for Life) in 1975 and helped found a pregnancy crisis service, Lifeline, in 1979.

Mayor Del Jurney congratulated the honorees and read a proclamation declaring March 2011 Roswell Women's History Month "in recognition of the many women in our community for the examples they have set that paved the way for our future leaders." Guest speaker City Councilor Judy Stubbs reminded the 100-plus crowd that although women have made strides in the past century, true parity still awaits. "

The things we stand for today are with us today because of the work of generations of women before us who fought for ideals, such as the right to vote, equal pay and ending violence against women," Stubbs said.

"So I guess I have to say, one out of three isn't too bad. We do get to vote." The Roswell Women's History Month Committee was formed in 1998 and began honoring women in 1999 as part of national Women's History Month. Wilson says the four women were nominated by members of the public.

During Wilson's address, she read aloud the proclamation of Women's History Month that President Barack Obama issued earlier this month. She read, "As we move forward, we must correct persisting inequalities. Women comprise over 50 percent of our population but hold fewer than 17 percent of our congressional seats.

More than half our college students are female, yet when they graduate, their male classmates still receive higher pay on average for the same work. Women also hold disproportionately fewer science and engineering jobs. ... This month, let us carry forth the legacy of our mothers and grandmothers.

As we honor the women who have shaped our nation, we must remember that we are tasked with writing the next chapter of women's history.

Only if we teach our daughters that no obstacle is too great for them, that no ceiling can block their ascent, will we inspire them to reach for their highest aspirations and achieve true equality.