



News Release

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Century Women of Distinction Share Inspiring Stories

A sense of humor and a clear sense of self have proven essential to advancement in the male-dominated profession of law enforcement, White Bear Police Chief Lynne Tellers Banks told Century College Women of Distinction guests at the Dec. 9 reception at Dellwood Hills Golf Club.

Banks, one of four women honored at the event, said when she was hired for her first job as a police officer, a desk sergeant in Anoka County told her, “We ain’t never goin’ to have no broad working here!” Banks replied, “Hi, I’m your new broad.”

“A sense of humor has carried me through much of this career,” said Banks.

As she climbed the chain of command, she said she never asked for, nor sought any favors or special treatment. She did take advantage of having trusted mentors, who guided her path.

Banks said when she sought the chief's job in White Bear Lake, City Manager Mark Sather "handed me the hammer and that glass ceiling came shattering down. Mark is a true champion, mentor and friend."

Banks said she has a particular interest in helping women and girls learn how to "prepare, protect and defend themselves from bad guys." She said giving women the power to say no, to not take careless chances and to fight back if necessary changes the lives of women and girls.

The biggest influence in her life, Banks said, has been her mother, Marilyn Tellers, a widow who raised her two daughters to be all they can be. Her mother's philosophy is: "The work will wait while you show the child a rainbow, but the rainbow won't wait while you finish the work."

In addition to Banks, the three other Women of Distinction honorees were Debra Davis, executive director of the Gender Education Center; Gloria Contreras Edin, a St. Paul attorney who specializes in immigration law, and Nancy Stephan, founder of an organization called Honoring Women Worldwide.

Debra Davis, a transgender person who was an Eagle Scout and then president of a college fraternity as a young man, said she always knew that there was a woman inside her who needed to come out. She said her "amazing journey" has been supported by wonderful friends and family, and she has no regrets about being born the person that she is. "God doesn't make mistakes," she said. "We have the power to change the world and make it a better place by living as kind, caring, loving, compassionate people."

Gloria Contreras Edin said she was a poor, single mother in California, and the child of undocumented immigrants, when she started her college career at a two-year college in California. "I will always be grateful to that school," she said. "They took the time to invest in someone like me."

Edin said today's undocumented immigrants are hungry for opportunity and if the DREAM Act legislation passes, it will have a large impact on colleges like Century.

Nancy Stephan said being one of seven children, with an alcoholic father, was challenging. Her mother was her role model as she fought to gain her education and a career. "I have learned that women do not

stand up for themselves,” said Stephan. With a dedicated group of friends, she founded an organization that brings in monthly speakers and allows women to honor the accomplishments of other women.

The honorees were presented with original photographs by Century College Prof. Melissa Borman. Dr. Kris Peleg shared student comments about how much they appreciate the Women and Gender Studies Program at Century.

Each recipient was honored not only for her professional accomplishments, but also for her work in improving the lives and increasing opportunities for women and girls. Century began its Women of Distinction awards in 2005 to highlight the accomplishments of women in our society, and also to celebrate that more women gain access to higher education through community/technical colleges than through any other type of post-secondary institution.

Entertainment this year was provided by the North High Show Choir from North St. Paul High School under the direction of Peg Sorensen. The emcee was Robyne Robinson, the former anchor of Fox 9 News.

The Women of Distinction awards are sponsored by Century College and the Century College Women and Gender Studies program.



Honorees Gloria Contreras Edin, Debra Davis, Robyn Robinson (emcee), Lynne Banks, Nancy Stephan



Lynne Banks and her mom, Marilyn Tellers