

NOMINATION FOR 2009 SOCIAL WORKER OF THE YEAR

I would like to nominate Jeanne Harber Porter, LCSW, ACSW, MSW as the 2009 Social Worker of the Year. As a social worker, Ms. Harber Porter provides hope, heart-felt caring and the best clinical techniques for individuals, families and couples at the group practice, Consulting and Counseling Associates. She has advanced certification in couples' communication issues and provides group psychoeducation around these issues. In her practice, Ms. Harber Porter has long-standing experience in providing services in the areas of PTSD, sexual abuse and assault, depression, anger and anxiety management, personality disorders and issues of sexual orientation.

Ms. Harber Porter is deeply committed to advocating for the oppressed and disenfranchised on a local, state and national level. She has held offices in the Indiana NASW since 1999 and is now an NASW national delegate to the Assembly in Washington DC where public policy regarding social issues for the nation is shaped. This assembly has worked on such controversial issues as mental health parity, immigrant regulations, sex worker safety concerns and gay/lesbian/transgender rights.

Given Ms. Harber Porter's dedication and commitment to serving others, she has spent her professional life actively working for improved social services for the voiceless and vulnerable. Though she did not begin her career as a social worker, it was her work at the Fort Wayne Women's Bureau that lead her mentor to finally tell her that she "was indeed, a social worker" and should pursue her graduate degree in social work.

After receiving her Master of Social Work from IUPUI in Indianapolis, she served as the director of programs and then program development at the Fort Wayne Women's Bureau. There she researched, designed and sought funding for both existing and new programs. She wrote grants as well as supervised numerous departments and a residential treatment center for chemically addicted women and their children.

Ms. Harber Porter also worked arduously at the Women's Bureau helping women break through the barriers of non-traditional employment. Working with labor union, apprenticeship program and major business leaders she pioneered work to diminish the resistance against women going into fields that had never before been open to them. Ms. Harber Porter also provided trailblazing training for women dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace, and the development of assertiveness and decision-making skills necessary to enhance women's confidence in knowing that they could and do have the same gamut of skills that men possess in the workplace.

From 1981 until 1995 Ms. Harber Porter directed the Rape Awareness Program in Fort Wayne, providing services for survivors of sexual assault, their family members and friends. She was then appointed by Mayor Paul Helmke to chair the Rape Task Force Commission. Under her leadership this Commission studied these crimes and provided education and awareness to the community.

From there, Ms. Harber Porter turned the Rape Crisis Center and into a 9 county program providing services free of charge to victims and their families. She also brought in self-defense classes and training, even taking these classes into the schools.

In 1990 Ms. Harber Porter worked as a founding mother to establish the Indiana Coalition Against Sexual Assault (INCASA), a commission overseeing state-wide sexual assault programs. Simultaneously, she directed the Fort Wayne Sexual Abuse Task Force, a coalition of agency members who collaborated and coordinated community efforts to treat victims of sexual assault through educating the community and professionals. This Task Force also published an information and referral directory of resources for the community.

Coming full circle, in 2006 Ms. Harber Porter was appointed to the Governor's Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Standards and Certification Board. Having helped establish INCASA, she is gratified to have a board set up to set professional and paraprofessional standards and guidelines for advocates for sexual assault victims. Through her leadership in coordinating these standards and guidelines, she is leading social services with sexual assault victims to new levels of accountability.

Ms. Harber Porter's leadership exemplifies the best of social work values and its mission. Through her years of work in NASW leadership, she has improved the quality and accessibility of services to the community and to social work professionals. Given her generous spirit, she has also established a scholarship fund for NASW members.

Ms. Harber Porter is truly a shining light as she pursues her belief in service-based leadership on a local, state and national level.