Florida Commission on the Status of Women Holds Annual Women's Hall of Fame

By Fredricka Williams
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The Florida Commission on the Status of Women held its annual Women’s Hall of Fame ceremony in the Capitol courtyard on March 24th at 6 p.m.

The ceremony kicked off with a welcome from Yvonne Fry, Chair of the Florida Commission on the Status of Women. Following the welcome was a special selection from “Powerstories”, a theatrical production company that performs true stories on stage.

Introductions and acknowledgments were given by Chief Financial Officer, Jeff Atwater, and the Commissioner of Agriculture, Adam Putnam. Elizabeth Pines who serves on the Florida Women’s Hall of Fame Committee Chair gave greetings and introduced Attorney General Pam Bondi. Pam Bondi introduced the 2015 inductees: Mary Lee Nunnally Farrior, Evelyn C. Keiser and Charlotte E. Maguire who have been dedicated to making change throughout Florida.

Mary Lee Nunnally Farrior, the first inductee, has committed her life to improving the lives of Florida’s children over a span of 55 years. Her zeal for helping children transformed into the founding of Mary Lee’s House, a child advocacy assessment and protection center that houses multiple services in one location. Since its opening in 2008, Mary Lee’s House has helped more than 12,000 abused and abandoned children; and trained more than 2,500 individuals on how to identify and report child abuse.

The next inductee: Evelyn C. Keiser co-founded the Keiser School in 1977 with Arthur Keiser Ph.D. Keiser school began with one student and one program, 38 years later it grew into Florida’s second-largest independent, regionally accredited university.

The final inductee, Dr. Charlotte E. Maguire was one of the first women to enter the University of Arkansas Medical School. After graduating and returning to Orlando, the local newspaper announced her return as “Orlando’s first girl doctor”.

The ceremony concluded with another number from the “Powerstories” and Closing Remarks from Florida Women’s Hall of Fame Committee Chair, Elizabeth Pines. Guests were invited for dinner inside of the Capitol courtesy of The Flying Bear Restaurant.

Suzie Kate Morris, an attendee of the event, said she enjoyed hearing the legacies and how each woman has given so much in each decade of their lives.
“It was truly inspiring for women to motivate other women,” Morris said.

Morris said she drove from Tampa, Fla. to attend this event so she could inspire her daughter, Megan Lynn Morris.

“Just to have these women come here and to hear of their accomplishments was motivational and to see participation from so many men,” Megan Morris said.

Dhyana Ziegler, Ph.D, a Commissioner for the FCSW, said that the committee she serves on has worked hard to ensure that this event is a place where women can empower one another.

“We have been working hard all year long, just to recognize these outstanding women is just amazing, they are a testament to what we as women can become. All women, all races, all economic groups. This is all for dynamic women to empower each other and we have worked tremendously hard on this event,” Ziegler said.

FCSW plans to continue honoring women and studying the issues that impact women.