



Commonwealth of Kentucky
Office of the Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kerri Richardson
502.564.2611
502.330.6633

Jill Midkiff
502.564.2611
502.330.1185

Crystal Martzall
502.564.2611

Governor Beshear Honors Extraordinary Kentucky Women

Three honorees inducted into the Kentucky Women Remembered exhibit

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 16, 2010)—Governor Steve Beshear today joined the Kentucky Commission on Women (KCW) to honor three inductees to the Kentucky Women Remembered exhibit at the state Capitol. The exhibit recognizes outstanding Kentucky women and their lifetime achievements.

Gov. Beshear also proclaimed March Women’s History Month in the Commonwealth.

“Since the beginning of Kentucky’s history, women have been essential to the development of our society in areas such as medicine, science, politics and religion,” said Gov. Beshear. “I am truly honored to recognize three such outstanding women for their commitment, dedication and contribution to our Commonwealth and declare March Women’s History Month to honor all women for their devotion to the betterment of Kentucky.”

“It has been a great honor to serve on the Kentucky Women Remembered Committee for the past two years,” said Lt. Governor Daniel Mongiardo. “Today, as we mark the 162nd anniversary of the Women’s Rights Movement and Women’s History Month in the Commonwealth, we salute these three amazing recipients who blazed a trail for women in Kentucky’s history.”

“For years, many contributions women have made in the fabric of Kentucky history have gone unnoticed and unrecorded,” said Eleanor Jordan, executive director of KCW. “This annual ceremony and recognition of women’s history month is our way of writing some of those women back into history and highlighting how significant their roles have been to the Commonwealth.”

Emphasizing the importance of the role women have played in Kentucky’s history, Gov. Beshear unveiled the portraits of Dr. Grace Marilyn James, Lillian Henken Press and Verna Mae Slone. Their portraits will hang alongside the 59 portraits already displayed in the west wing corridor of the state Capitol.

The late Dr. Grace Marilyn James, of Louisville, began her practice of pediatric medicine in 1953 when city hospitals were segregated by law. She became the first African-American woman to obtain membership in the Jefferson County Medical Society and the first African-American woman on the faculty at the University of Louisville School Of Medicine. Dr. James made a career of serving those who other doctors—black and white—were reluctant to assist. The patients others passed up, she welcomed with open arms. She went on to found the West Louisville Health Education Program and headed the Council on Urban Education.

Lillian Henken Press, of Lexington, has accrued a lifetime of public service to her adopted state and its citizens. Press played a critical role in the organization and development of Kentucky’s first Regional Mental Health Board and Comprehensive Care Centers, which became the prototypes for a state system of regional centers proclaimed “the best in the nation” by the National Institute of Mental Health. In 1982, she was recruited by then-Governor John Y. Brown to organize and direct the new Governor’s Scholars Program—a non-traditional, innovative summer program for Kentucky’s brightest rising high school seniors. Twenty thousand students have been motivated and inspired by this transformative program, now in its 27th year of operation. In 2000, Press worked to establish The Women’s Network, which aimed to increase the involvement of women in the political process. The Women’s Network now has branches across Kentucky and more than 900 women as members.

“I am humbled to find myself in the company of the outstanding Kentucky Women Remembered of the past, and those who will be honored on March 16th. I am grateful to many, especially my nominator, Ann Garrity, who produced the presentation and managed to keep it all a secret from me. And I am personally challenged: it motivates me, even at this time of life, to keep on keeping on,” said Mrs. Press. “I am particularly grateful to Governor Steve and First Lady Jane Beshear for supporting this wonderful project of the Kentucky Commission on Women, especially in these hard times. Those portraits, each with its own story, hanging on the west wall of the Capitol, emphasize and remind us of the major contributions Kentucky women have made and continue to make in all fields for the growth and improvement of every aspect of life in the Commonwealth.”

The late Verna Mae Slone, of Pippa Passes, is widely known for her extraordinary writings, which brought honor and pride to the people of eastern Kentucky. Concerned over the many stereotypes that plagued the region, Slone began to put her thoughts on paper. At age 65, she authored, *What My Heart Wants to Tell*, a work that shattered many of the myths about the Appalachian culture. She penned five other books over the course of her life. In 1993, her portrait became the centerpiece of photographer Barbara Beirne's exhibit, *Women of Appalachia*, at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. *What My Heart Wants to Tell* is now in its eighth publication in the United States and abroad.

Kentucky Women Remembered began in 1978 and consists of portraits depicting outstanding women in Kentucky's history. The exhibit found a permanent home in the Capitol in 1996 after many years of traveling around the state. Thousands of visitors to the Capitol view the portraits each year and learn about the heritage and contributions of Kentucky women.

Each year, the Kentucky Women Remembered Committee selects up to three Kentucky women to become part of the exhibit and assure their place in the state's history. Nominees must have been born in or spent a significant part of their lives in Kentucky and may be living or deceased.

For more information on the Kentucky Commission on Women, visit www.women.ky.gov.

###