

## Cape chapter of Church Women United honors four for human rights work

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The interdenominational church group recognized a woman raising her two grandchildren, a minister who started a farmers market, a police officer known as “an ambassador of goodwill” and a graphic designer who advocates for the rights of Palestinians.



Kerry Bickford, of Marstons Mills, listens to the speakers before receiving an award during the ceremony.

CENTERVILLE — In an annual celebration of human rights Tuesday, an interdenominational church group honored a Cape woman raising her two grandchildren, a minister who started a farmers market, a police officer known as “an ambassador of goodwill” and a graphic designer who advocates for the rights of Palestinians.

The four people being recognized by the Cape chapter of Church Women United did not listen when people said they couldn’t help change the world, board member Olivia White said. “They are examples we can all make a difference in the lives of people,” she said.

The first person recognized, Kerry Bickford, is not only youth development educator at the Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, she is on the Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Massachusetts and is in charge of Operation Military Kids on Cape Cod. Bickford has an innate ability to “seek out those broken in spirit” and help with practical solutions, Pat Donahue said during the Human Rights Celebration held at Our Lady of Victory Church’s parish hall.

Bickford said that after she and her husband, Rick, received custody of two grandchildren 10 years ago she joined the governor’s commission on caretaker grandparents. “This helped me to see we were not alone in this alarming trend,” she said. Bickford said she was dedicating her award to military veterans and asked people to be more sensitive to the challenges veterans face.



Presenting the award for Barnstable police Officer Brian Morrison, Sara Hunter said the officer was known for topping off Toys for Tots donation boxes and is credited with starting the friendly “Stuff-A-Bus” Toys for Tots collection challenge among Cape police and fire departments. On bicycle patrol, Morrison is known for handing out Ben & Jerry's ice cream certificates to youngsters wearing bicycle helmets, Hunter said. She said a patrol partner said Morrison was stopped so often “it was like trying to ride your mountain bike through town with Santa Claus.” Morrison said he was blessed to have a great life growing up as the youngest of seven children and dedicated his award to his mother, Mary Morrison, who attended the awards presentation with several family members.

Presenter Janet Cymbala said another award winner, the Rev. Nell Fields, has started several new ministries at Waquoit Congregational Church since becoming pastor four years ago, including a spring farmers market and Higher Grounds Coffee House, which helps fund a warming space for people affected by extended power outages.

Fields also has participated in Falmouth Builds Together for Habitat of Humanity, provides leadership for a “Death Cafe” where people can talk about the subject of death and sponsors an annual blessing of the animals and an animal fair to raise money for nonprofit animal groups.

“She is a doer and inspires action,” Cymbala said. Referring to the size of her church, an 1848 Greek Revival known as “the little church on the side of the road,” Fields said, “Small is beautiful. Small is powerful. Small can change the world, and it doesn’t take much.”

The Rev. David Good, who helped found the Tree of Life organization that advocates for the rights of Palestinians, introduced the fourth award winner, graphic designer Elaine Brouillard, who is coordinator of the Cape Cod committee for the Tree of Life. Good called Brouillard “an extraordinary voice of conscience” for those “over there who are simply not being seen over here.”

Tree of Life works with Christians, Jews and Muslims to make sure Palestinians have the right to work, education and health care, he said. Brouillard, who has traveled to the Middle East twice with the Tree of Life, has housed Palestinian and Israeli students and families and given them the opportunity to break bread together and become friends, Good said. “It’s become a very important ministry for me,” Brouillard said. “Tree of Life is all about peace, justice and equal rights for all.”

Marilyn Lariviere, of Hyannis, the national president of Church Women United, said the 120 people attending the awards ceremony and brunch were doing their best to promote this year’s theme, “Journey Toward Peace.” “There is a way. We can make things work,” Lariviere said.

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