

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

~ by Barbara Birger

Meticulous, scrupulous, vigilant, mindful, diligent, conscientious, ethical and virtuous. These are some of the words that describe this year's Distinguished Service Award recipient.

This year's DSA recipient was born in July of 1964 and is a Colorado native, growing up in Arvada, Colorado, in a family of five girls. This year's DSA recipient graduated from Arvada High School, and 22 years ago met her future husband at Pennington GMC where they both worked.

In 1991 this reporter graduated from Mile High College and began her career as a court reporter for now retired Judge Peter Booth in Colorado Springs. After working eight years for Judge Booth, this year's DSA recipient applied for and received a position in the 20th Judicial District as an official reporter for the Honorable Carol Glowinsky.

In her letter recommending Susie DeWitt for the Distinguished Service Award, Judge Glowinsky wrote, "After I interviewed Susie for a court reporter position in 1999, I recall thinking She is too good to be true. Therefore, I subjected all of Susie's references to vigorous cross-examination about her strengths and weaknesses. I hired Susie within seconds of completing the last phone call. In those calls, I heard about Susie's openness to help in any way needed, including answering phones, looking for files, assisting litigants who are confused – all this in addition to being an accomplished real time reporter and wonderful person. Susie was described as the quintessential team player.

"Susie DeWitt has been everything she was touted to be and more. As my court reporter, she has demonstrated great skill, the utmost professionalism and unfailing loyalty to her colleagues, the judicial system and to me. As my friend, she is a mainstay and inspiration in my life.

"In my view, Susie has changed the culture of court reporters in this district and statewide. She was instrumental in developing a court reporter system here that was premised upon cooperation, coverage and service. As a result, despite the budget cuts, we, as judges, were intent on maintaining our court reporters as a critical part of our system."

In 1999 Susie became involved with CCRA as a board member. She also served as secretary and president elect before serving as president in the 2003-2004 year. While serving on the CCRA board, Susie was involved as the Legislative Committee chair and the Officials Committee chair. She has also worked on the State's Planning and Analysis Committee and Appellate Case Preparation Panel.

As the Legislative Committee chair and Officials Committee chair, Susie was instrumental in monitoring the JBC and working with the state court administrator's office during a time when the elimination of official reporters was a real threat. This threat continued into Susie's presidency, and because of her tireless efforts very few positions were eliminated.

In Susie's personal life she is a wife to her husband Randy and mother to her three children, Cody, Gabrielle and Gia. While working full time as a reporter and being involved with CCRA, Susie has always stayed active in her children's lives. She has been involved as team mother for Cody's football team while he was in high school, and now is Cody's biggest supporter in his journey through college at CSU in Fort Collins. Susie has always been involved with Gabrielle's cheerleading, traveling with her to state and national cheerleading championships. Susie has taught Gia all she needs to know to embark on her journey to school this fall.

On January 9, 2004, Susie was faced with her greatest challenge yet when she was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. While most people would settle for receiving treatment for their cancer, returning to work and trying to have as normal a family life as possible, Susie decided that she would become a spokesperson for women with lung cancer. After enduring weeks of chemotherapy she returned to her job in Boulder, working two and a half days a week.

While continuing to support her husband Randy in his business and be active in her children's activities, Susie also is active in her church, serving on the welcoming committee as a greeter, usher and supporter. She created the Susan L. DeWitt Foundation for Extended Breath. Susie is a patient advocate for the Anschutz Cancer Center at the University of Colorado Cancer Center. She is a speaker for the University and their Cancer Awareness program, "Frankly Speaking about Lung Cancer." Susie has been interviewed and reported in the Rocky Mountain News, attended the Specialized Programs of Research Excellence in Washington, D.C., as a patient advocate for UCCC, and published an article "Did you Know?" that outlines the facts about lung cancer.

Susie is involved with the volunteers for the phone buddy program in association with the Lung Cancer Alliance, developed and hosts a cancer support group for cancer survivors and their spouses in the Boulder area, spoke at the "Together, Facing Lung Cancer" conference held by the Lung Cancer Alliance, was a participant in the planning for a lung cancer awareness month being promoted by the University of Colorado and Anschutz Center, and is chairperson for the Colorado Coordinating Committee.

Probably the most influential task Susie has taken on during her fight with lung cancer is a video that she made with Cody and Gabrielle where Cody and Gabrielle speak frankly about how their lives have changed since their mother was diagnosed with lung cancer. The purpose of this video is to have it shown in schools across the nation so that students can see firsthand the devastating effects of smoking. Susie has appeared on Good Morning America and the ABC Evening News to promote the video.

Just three short weeks ago Susie endured another surgery for two tumors on her brain. I talked with Randy a week after the surgery, as I needed to obtain more information on Susie, and I asked Randy how Susie was doing. He told me that she was doing well, she was up and around, and working at home on transcripts.

I always told Susie she was the poster child for super woman. Her endless energy and constant enthusiasm for life and all of life's challenges is undaunted. I can think of no one who deserves the Distinguished Service Award more than this amazing lady. Please join me in recognizing Susan DeWitt.



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