



Two Women Mayors

by Mikell Worley

C. Kim **BRACEY** City of York

A passionate desire to serve her community is what drives C. Kim Bracey, the first African-American mayor of the City of York, Pennsylvania. Bracey was elected on November 3, 2009, and sworn into office as the 24th mayor on January 4, 2010.

Mayor Bracey was born and raised in York and has a long lineage of community servants. “My grandmother was a missionary, and we went places that we probably shouldn’t have gone,” she laughs. “I learned at an early age to accept everyone. Our family was active through the church, and we knew the value of helping others.” Kim is the eldest of four children and took her role as older sister seriously. “I took on additional responsibilities and grew up quickly,” she recalls. “My mom is a strong woman who not only worked to raise a family, but she went to school and was active in church and volunteer activities.”

Kim describes herself as a “proud graduate of William Penn Senior High School” and says that her past experiences and opportunities were the building blocks that ultimately lead to her present role as mayor. “Before I was old enough to have a paying job I took a volunteer position as a candy striper at York Hospital,” she recalls. “Candy stripers, the name derived from their red and white striped pinafores, assisted the nursing staff.” Later in life she took on a much different role at the facility and served on the York Hospital board of directors. Where once she had worked as a volunteer, she later helped create policy—proving that, you never know where youthful choices and experiences may lead.

Kim continued to take on leadership roles in her church, community, and school. “I became involved in student government in high school, and my interest continued when I attended Bloomsburg University from 1981 through 1984. As president of the Black Student Caucus, I led our group to Washington, D. C., in March of 1982 to lobby for more tuition money for our school. Again,” she adds, “I didn’t realize what I was being groomed to do.”

In 1984, Kim joined the United States Air Force, from which she received numerous medals and citations, including the National Defense Service Medal and the Air Force Good Conduct Medal. She served honorably until 1994 then returned to York to work for the Crispus Attucks Association where she managed the local group of the national program of YouthBuild USA: AmeriCorps.

Bracey further honed her leadership skills when she served as executive director of the South George Street Community Partnership and as the Weed and Seed AID coordinator for the City

of York from 1999 through 2003. Within a 60-block area of southeast York City she worked to revitalize the area by galvanizing residents of the community and other stakeholders to build up neighborhoods through home ownership.

In June 2003, York’s mayor, John Brenner, appointed Kim as director of community development for the city. Then in 2008, when Brenner announced he was not running for mayor again, she says, “the wheels began to turn and I began to consider the possibility of running for office.” The idea blossomed and she ran a successful campaign that won her the office.

Bracey has a vision for the City of York that includes attracting businesses, keeping the streets safe, and encouraging residents to take pride in their community. She has a strong regard for the power of youth and works diligently to encourage them to invest in their community. In the short time that she has been in office, Mayor Bracey has visited every elementary school, most middle schools, and attended a high-school graduation.

Since taking over her new role in January 2010, Mayor Bracey’s workload has substantially increased, and she is faced with the need to prioritize numerous important decisions, tasks, and events. Along with this, like every working mom, she has to balance work with her family’s needs. Additionally she is active in the Friendship Baptist Church and continues to volunteer with organizations as time permits. She is a strong advocate for education related to the prevention of HIV/AIDs and is founding president of the York Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, a 30-year-old advocacy organization whose mission is to develop leaders who rebuild their communities.

To help keep herself on an even keel, the mayor turns to her friends for support. “I have a strong circle of folks who keep me grounded. We meet for dinner or call each other regularly to check in. They remind me to get that massage, go for a run, or send me a special article or quote.” One of Bracey’s favorite quotes is by former first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, “A woman is like a tea bag—you never know how strong she is until she gets in hot water.” Kim notes that her friends are her “nucleus of support. They help keep the joy in my life.”

As mayor, Bracey continues to work for the people of York, and she knows that all of her experiences have led her to this point. “As a graduating senior in my high school I remember stating that I would never come back to York, but this is my home so I returned,” she declares. “I hope the young people of our city will consider sharing their talents and skills here at home. This is where we live. We’ve been blessed.” ❖

Leading Two Cities

Linda D. **THOMPSON** City of Harrisburg



"I was born to be a public servant," Linda Thompson told me recently as we sat down to talk about how she came to be the first woman and the first African-American mayor of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the state's capital city. On the morning of January 4, 2010, Linda Thompson made history when she was sworn into that office after a heated battle with long-time incumbent Mayor Stephen Reed. She defeated Reed in the Democratic Primary on May 17 and then went on to best Nevin Mindlin, the Republican challenger, in the general election on November 3, 2009.

Even as a child, Linda Thompson had a desire to help others, and she soon learned that she had a powerful tool in her voice. She was born and raised in Harrisburg and is the youngest of eight children. She first became aware of her leadership talents in grade school when her Sunday school teacher chose her for a part in a play about Jesus called "Born in a Manger."

"Initially the role wasn't offered to me. I sat in the pews watching the children rehearse and the teacher kept trying to get them to project their voices and emphasize certain words. I got anxious and questioned, 'Why doesn't she call on me to play this part?' Finally, I jumped up and recited the part. I spoke loudly, with confidence and passion in a way the other children did not. My Sunday school teacher turned and looked at me and said, 'Child, where did you get that voice?' I just shrugged my shoulders as a way of expressing that I didn't know. Then she offered me the leading role."

After high school Thompson earned a degree in communications from Howard University in 1985. While attending college in Washington, D.C., she gained valuable experience by working with the Department of Justice and the President's Commission on Organized Crime as an intern.

When she returned to Harrisburg in 1991, she set out to help her brother Steven, who had been unjustly jailed for 28 years after being tried and convicted of murder. He was innocent of the crime and released in 2002. Evidence was never turned over to his defense team, which his attorneys believe would have changed the outcome of the jurors verdict. Through her efforts and with the help of others, the district attorney decided not to retry Steven's case. The State and Dauphin County settled with Steven out of court for an undisclosed monetary amount for his wrongful conviction.

Mayor Thompson has long been known for speaking with passion and heart, and delivering persuasive speeches. The mayor attributes her leadership style and her professional demeanor to her mother's influence. Mary Thompson taught her daughter the importance of being well-groomed, as well as modestly and appropriately dressed. There is no other way to be taken seriously in the

public arena. As a salute to her mother and to show her admiration for the strong, well-educated women from her mother's family who worked in the field of public service, Linda Thompson adopted her mother's maiden name.

While her strong and innate leadership ability has enabled Mayor Thompson to share her message and win elections to public offices, she adamantly maintains that a continued commitment to service is critical to effective leadership. "Initially, one may secure the opportunity to lead by making big speeches, but ultimately, only by serving the public can one maintain the ability to lead. I have always centered my leadership focus on serving the need—whether it be the needs of seniors in paying their property taxes; the needs of our youth in securing quality education and job opportunities; or the needs of the economically disadvantaged in obtaining the dream of home ownership."

She goes on to say, "I have also found that people respect my willingness to speak the truth in all of my dealings, because they always know where I'm coming from and where I am going. I make speaking the truth the central theme in my communications with others."

After sitting as a Harrisburg city council member from 2001 through 2009, Linda's constituency persuaded her to run for the office of mayor. "Indeed, many of my constituents demanded that I run for mayor. Several said if I did not they would not re-elect me to city council. As a personal choice, however, I decided to run for mayor because after nearly a decade of faithfully serving the public, I realized I could do no more [as a city council member]. I believe that I can be of greater service in the office of mayor."

The role of mayor is extremely demanding, and Linda makes it clear that it is her faith as a Christian that gives her the strength and stamina to deal with the daily pressures. "My goal is to always raise the conscience of our community to a higher level of motivation and morality. Though our nation was founded on the principles of separation of church and state, those who know me acknowledge that I am a very principled Christian. My Christianity is at the core of my leadership philosophy." Mayor Thompson credits her mother, the Biblical figure Esther, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and most of all, Jesus Christ, for inspiring her philosophy and leadership style.

Mayor Thompson notes that there are difficult financial challenges for Harrisburg, but it is still a great place to live, work, and play. "It remains the focal point of cultural, economic/commercial, and political discourse in the region, if not the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It provides a unique blend of opportunities that cannot be found anywhere else. Better days are ahead for our city. Just give us time, and a second look." ❖



Shirley WALKER

by Mikell Worley

As the president and CEO of PAR, which is Pennsylvania's service network for children and adults with autism and intellectual disabilities, Shirley Walker relishes her role as an advocate. From the PAR office on Front Street, overlooking the Susquehanna River, she and her team of professionals and volunteers demonstrate compassion, commitment, and integrity in the face of the daunting tasks they must often struggle to overcome on behalf of those they serve. The job is not an easy one. Despite the multitude of children and adults in Pennsylvania who receive services through the PAR network, there remain thousands of families still in need.

During her nearly 20 years as PAR's president and CEO, Walker has been in the forefront of numerous national and state battles for funding and for appropriate laws and regulations that enable people to get the services they need. PAR's most recent threat came this summer in the form of a proposal made by the governor to cut the intellectual disabilities budget by millions of dollars which would have reduced or cut services to hundreds of people with intellectual disabilities. In response, Walker and her team reached out to the community and orchestrated a grassroots movement urging the legislators to abandon the funding cuts that were proposed. They went to the halls of the state capitol and met with lawmakers and legislative staff and argued for the continuation of this state funding for services to Pennsylvania's most vulnerable children and adults, which resulted in the legislature restoring the funds to the final budget.

"Our mission inspires us to work toward a time where everyone with autism or intellectual disabilities can access the services they really need," Walker says. "We work every day to make sure our legislators, political leaders, and our communities understand the issues that impact children and adults with autism or intellectual disabilities and that people with disabilities are treated as valued members of our communities."

Walker was born in 1949 in Kansas as the daughter of a preacher. She completed her undergraduate work at Southern Nazarene University in Oklahoma in 1972 with a degree in psychology, then went on to earn a graduate degree in educational administration from California State University in Fullerton, California. From there Shirley moved to Chino, just outside of Los Angeles, where she spent a decade working as a teacher, counselor, high school vice principal, then district director of secondary education. In 1980, she moved to Pennsylvania to serve as the assistant superintendent of the Eastern York School District.

Four years later, Walker accepted a public service post as Governor Dick Thornburgh's operations director from which she was promoted to deputy secretary for the Commonwealth's Office of Children and Youth in the Department of Public Welfare. In this position, Shirley was responsible for overseeing Pennsylvania's foster care, subsidized

day care, child protective services, juvenile facilities, rape and domestic violence services, legal services, and various other statewide programs affecting children and youth. At the close of Governor Thornburgh's term, Walker returned to the private sector with a renewed enthusiasm for building public/private partnerships that would benefit the children and adults in critical need of human services.

Walker works to unify support for these services through several coalitions. She was a founding member of the Mental Health/Mental Retardation Coalition that includes the directors of several statewide organizations who share common interests in these fields of service. In 2007 she was appointed by Governor Ed Rendell to the Governor's Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities, where she continues to serve. Over the years Walker has led her organization in several successful efforts in persuading the United States Congress to reject proposed cuts in Medicaid funding, which supplies most of the funding for Pennsylvania's mental retardation services.

Within her community Shirley has opened her home to refugee families through her volunteer work and helped them learn English, enroll their children in schools, and find jobs. She also serves as an elected elder at the Presbyterian Church and works on Moldovan Humanitarian Relief and Jesuit Refugee Relief efforts.

In the national arena, Shirley is one of the pioneers of the non-governmental organization Diplomacy Program within FICE USA, the U.S. arm of FICE International, which is the International Federation of Educative Communities, a consortium devoted to children's services and education throughout the world. Under Shirley's leadership PAR became the first international NGO partner with a South African child care association. The agency helps to support children living in the most poverty stricken sections of South Africa, specifically those children who are affected by the loss of resources due to AIDS, economic hardship, and without access to education.

Walker's hard work has not gone unnoticed. Former PAR board chairperson Trina Losinno notes, "Shirley's energy and capacity to extend herself seems limitless." PAR's current board chairperson Dennis Felty says, "Shirley is an exceptional leader who consistently shows a versatility and commitment not typical in these times of change."

When asked what motivates her, Shirley responds, "I believe that we were born to love and help each other. If we don't choose to do that, things go dreadfully wrong and people suffer. But when we do help others, we find joy."

Walker's family is another source of joy for her. Fifteen years ago while on a humanitarian trip to Moldova, which is the poorest country in Eastern Europe, Shirley and her husband Jim, who is a physician, adopted two infants who are now healthy active teenagers. When I asked Shirley, "What's on your mind right at this moment?" she laughed and said, "Both of our kids are 16 and both are learning to drive. I'm happy about that ... I think." ❖

Susan MANN

by Mikell Worley

“Let me tell you a story,” begins Susan Man, interim director of the Pennsylvania Immigrant and Refugee Network (PAIRWN), as she reiterates an account first told by her niece Ingrid, a hospice nurse. Ingrid works in Vancouver, British Columbia, home to a large immigrant population. One day while Ingrid was on a home visit, an elderly Chinese woman pulled her aside and said, “Tell me please, Gu Niang [the Chinese honorific title for a nurse]. Tell me the truth. [My family] won’t tell me. They think I’m stupid. They think I don’t know, but I do. I have cancer, don’t I? What is going to happen to me?” Susan laments that, even though there has been a large Chinese presence in Canada since the early 1800s, “Cancer is still a taboo topic of conversation. They cannot talk about it to give comfort to an old woman in her final days, and they cannot talk about it for early detection.”

Susan used this account of a woman stricken with cancer, whose very illness was being hidden from her because of a cultural taboo, to encourage those who attended the PAIRWN’s Breast Health/Breast Cancer Eighth Annual Conference held in September 2010. Susan understands that when women share stories, they reveal a part of themselves and that can help bridge cultural differences. With stories such as this one, Susan hopes to educate, motivate, and inspire the immigrant and refugee population to utilize the services available to them and talk with one another about their experiences.

“Through friendships among women of many different ethnicities and cultures, PAIRWN has built an atmosphere of trust where we empower women to talk about many different taboo subjects—cancer, mental illness, domestic violence. We work hard to see that all of our events are fun, but behind the scenes we address serious topics.”

A great deal of work always goes into the planning of conferences and large-scale projects, because PAIRWN makes a tremendous effort to reach such a vast and diverse audience. “We advertise all of our events in the major languages of the local population. Languages include Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Hindi, Nepali, Somali, Laotian, Cambodian, and Swahili. During the conference, we provide interpretation services, transportation, childcare, meals, and door prizes!

“Our mission is to ‘honor and enhance the lives of refugee and immigrant women in Pennsylvania. We refer, advocate, network, and empower women to reach their highest potential.’ Through the vision of Ho-Than Nun, the founder of PAIRWN, we are proud to be the first organization in the Commonwealth to address the needs and to provide resources and support for this population.”

Susan’s enthusiasm and passion for supporting the women of PAIRWN is infectious, and she wants it known that there are opportunities for all to get involved. “There are many wonderful projects

and opportunities. We are working to meet the needs of a large, undeserved population, a rich kaleidoscope of women and their families from all over the world! Moving to a new country, with the challenge of language barriers, cultural differences, and the frustrations involved with acquiring resources and information, creates a need for a unique approach [for] service and support. Most of us remember stories that our ancestors tell of their struggles in this wonderful country. Isn’t it great to be in the position to pay it forward to help another newly arrived immigrant or refugee?”

Susan has been an avid supporter of PAIRWN since her initial introduction to the group. “My husband and I moved to the Harrisburg area in March of 2001. Soon after, I read an article in a local newspaper about a group of women meeting to support immigrant and refugee women, so I attended and met Ho-Than. We became good friends very quickly and I became an active volunteer. I served on their board when they were first incorporated and helped to define their charter and set up effective financial controls.”

Susan now applies the extensive management and educational skills she used throughout her career in telecommunications software development, in the for-profit sector of a non-profit corporation. She is happy to find that her strategic thinking, marketing, and financial skills are useful in her current position as interim director during Ho-Than’s extended stay in Vietnam.

The stories that Susan values so much are never-ending, as new women continue to encounter PAIRWN, and Susan knows their words are more powerful than mission statements or statistics. “During the last PAIRWN members’ meeting, Sokunverey Var (nicknamed Varee) had told us about her family’s struggles to escape Cambodia, their early struggles in the U.S., and her mother’s breakdown from post-traumatic stress syndrome. She was her parents’ only surviving child from the killing fields of Cambodia.” These kinds of accounts breed compassion. The women who tell them display strength, courage, and a desire to move forward, and PAIRWN is there to help them through this.

At that same meeting, after Varee shared her history, Susan began taking pictures of the event. Varee approached Susan and asked if she would take a photo of Varee and her mother, as her parents were leaving to spend six months in Cambodia. Susan was happy to oblige. When the opportunity came, Susan snapped the picture and soon realized that she had captured something special. The photograph shows Varee after she had suddenly placed her head upon her mother’s shoulder. It is this type of moment, a moment of tenderness between a mother and a daughter that transcends all barriers, all cultures, and symbolizes the work that Susan does with PAIRWN. ❖



Cindy STEWART

by Mikell Worley

Cindy Stewart, president and CEO of Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania (FHCCP), has a history of taking a unique approach toward enhancing the services provided by the not-for-profit organizations for which she has worked. By using corporate business concepts, strategies, and practices, Cindy has been able to improve the effectiveness of the not-for-profit organizations that have been under her influence. Furthermore, she has created a system in which clients have more personal responsibility and consequently, a greater sense of dignity.

Cindy Stewart is the only person I've ever met who can truthfully say she is from paradise. She was born and raised in the village of Paradise in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, although she has lived in the nearby city of Lancaster for the past 11 years. She considers herself fortunate to be surrounded by family. "My husband, Rich Stewart, and I live in the same county as my parents, sisters, and my nieces and nephews. My three adult children and my two granddaughters also live nearby."

Cindy's mother and father strongly believed that integrity was a quality worth rewarding. Both of Cindy's parents taught her to stand against injustice. She took the lesson to heart, and during a field trip in her junior year of high school, Cindy came face to face with blatant discrimination and put her parents' values into practice. "We went to the Educator's Insurance, a huge building on Route 30, since replaced by the outlets. During the presentation, a staff person told us there was a certain class of people that their company refused to consider for insurance coverage. I asked, 'Why?' The person leading the field trip was outraged with me for daring to ask the question."

Following her 1971 graduation from Pequea Valley High School in Kinzers, Pennsylvania, Cindy enrolled at Shippensburg University. From there she graduated with a bachelor of science degree in business administration in 1975. Not long after, she took a job with the Community Action Program, a not-for-profit organization located in Lancaster that provided financial support for starter organizations until they can become self-sufficient.

"I was working on the fiscal staff [at Community Action] and responsible for the Food Voucher Program which involved writing checks for food. I had summer experience in the corporate world, but I began to realize that in not-for-profit work I could use my business knowledge to create more efficient systems and ultimately give more people access to services."

Cindy's pioneering work at enhancing services at Community Action Program began to draw attention. In August of 1979, a

Community Action Program client, Welsh Mountain Medical and Dental Center, had seen enough success to detach from the not-for-profit organization and branch out on its own. Two years later Welsh Mountain hired Cindy as their executive director. She was 27 years old and the first non-medical director to hold that position.

She found that giving patients responsibility was a key factor in improving services at the center. When Cindy first arrived, the medical center functioned as a clinic with clients coming in at random times and served on a first-come, first-serve basis. "I introduced specific appointment times. By raising their respect for our services, they also raised their respect for their health care. We

taught them that they could live a healthy lifestyle on a limited budget.

"President Reagan was just beginning to force not-for-profits to look at their business models from a different perspective. If clients paid a fair fee, based on their income, it gave them a feeling of responsibility and dignity. In the not-for-profits I ran, I had no idea of the customer's payment status. All who entered were treated with the same respect."

In October of 1989, Cindy became the president and CEO of Family Service, where she served until May of 1999. That same month she was hired at Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania, located in Camp Hill. Throughout her

career, she has continued to explore innovative management styles and to strive for the most cost effective way to deliver services. "I always ask, 'How can I make the administration of public programs more cost effective?' Our organization is cutting-edge. We use an integrated, self directed, team approach with no middle management."

Cindy has dedicated her career to eliminating injustices and ensuring that all people have access to services. She oversees the FHCCP in their effort to build and support community based health networks through education, partnerships, advocacy, and effective resource allocation in the 28 counties that the FHCCP serves. She has strong bonds with family and friends who provide a support system. She has served as a volunteer in her community through the Lancaster Housing & Redevelopment Authority, the Lancaster Parking Authority, and the Non-Profit Resource Network, and she is a consultant for Essential Elements, a new venture for the Family Health Council.

"For me, looking back, I think my greatest success has been the ability to use my skills to teach, collaborate, improve, innovate, and create with the sincere desire to assure access to health and human services for all and to have had the humble honor of working with so many who joined with me in this goal." <http://www.fhccp.org/> ❖



frances RODRIGUEZ

by Mikell Worley

Frances Rodriguez is a catalyst for change, and she possesses a gift for gathering resources, building collaborations, and inspiring action. Fran serves as co-chair of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs (GACLA), the Commonwealth's advocate agency for its Latino residents. The agency was created in 1989 by an executive order of Governor Robert Casey to "ensure that the Latino community is afforded the opportunity to continue to prosper in Pennsylvania." In 2003 Governor Edward Rendell appointed Rodriguez to GACLA, where she works as a liaison to the Latino community on policies, procedure, legislation, and advocacy.

"When I was initially appointed, there was a level of intimidation, because I had never been involved in local or state government, but after a couple of meetings, I found my passion—education," says Rodriguez. "GACLA had a huge array of issues to consider, including economic development, health, the environment, and so on, but education stands at the forefront." She adds, "Without it we cannot progress."

Shortly after Fran's appointment to GACLA, the Latina Professionals of South Central Pennsylvania invited her to join them, and her passion for education found another avenue. "The mission of the group, founded by six Latina women in 1996, was to create an environment to foster the empowerment of Latinas of all ages, and to promote a better understanding of the Latino community," explains Rodriguez. "Initially the group had sub sales and car washes to raise money for books for students attending colleges such as Millersville University and Harrisburg Area Community College."

Fran recognized the value of combining the efforts of GACLA and the Latina Professionals, and the two groups joined to host the first annual Lancaster Latino Scholarship Banquet in June 2005. Three Latina educators were honored and five McCaskey High School seniors received \$1,000 scholarships. Fran credits the original concept to Norman Bristol-Colon, executive director of GACLA, and Blanca Gonzalez, a founding member of the Latina Professionals of South Central Pennsylvania, who envisioned the effort years before. "I was honored to be the driving force that made the dream a reality," she declares.

The banquet was a great success. "It is a wonderful feeling when others recognize the quality and caliber of your work," Rodriguez says. "It brings a sense of trust and respect. I finally had a voice within the community, which later opened many more doors and opportunities."

It wasn't long before Fran identified another potential avenue for action. In 2005, she negotiated with state government agencies and local non-profit organizations to secure funding for a study, *Latinos in Lancaster County: Voices, Perspectives, Myths and Realities*, to address factors affecting the economic and educational status of Latinos in the county. "Timing for the study was ideal," declares Rodriguez. "Lillian Escobar-Haskins, my mentor and a member of the Latina Professionals of South Central Pennsylvania, had just completed a similar study for Berks County and offered to do a study for Lancaster [but only] if we could find the funding. I think she was surprised when I found the money," she says.



"Scott Sheely, executive director of the Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board, immediately saw the value of the information. Because of our persistent efforts," comments Rodriguez, "the Alcoa Foundation, Fulton Bank, the Lancaster County Community Foundation, Lancaster Investment in a Vibrant Economy, State Representative Mike Sturla, and the United Way collectively raised the required funds. The 18-month study was completed in December of 2007, and I felt it was a Christmas gift for our community."

The results of the study offered a true picture of the issues confronting Latinos in Lancaster. Interestingly, the section related to education and the Lancaster school district uncovered several harsh realities. Fran saw this as an opportunity to address the needs and make significant positive change. For example, the study was instrumental in helping Rodriguez obtain funding to develop and manage two multifaceted programs—The Lancaster Latino Education Forum, which serves as a catalyst for students, parents, educators, and community members by addressing and supporting innovative educational ideas; and the Latino Empowerment Project, which provides a series of personal and professional leadership development workshops for Latinos.

Fran enthusiastically shares her passion for community involvement and public service, and she encourages others in the Latino community to run for office—something she has considered doing herself. "For some time now I've been talking the talk—now it's time to walk the walk," Fran declares. "I have a burning passion to serve, so the next chapter in my life will likely include running for public office." Fran's journey and her empathy for others have enabled her to make a dramatic difference, and she intends to continue to be an advocate for improvements in her community for many years to come. ❀