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# Listowel Banner

Tuesday May 6th, 2008

Patrick Raftis  
Editor  
The Listowel Banner

Marie Seiler-Linden inspiration for new award

BY PATRICK RAFTIS  
Banner Staff

A Listowel woman became the first recipient of an award named in her honour at the inaugural Inspiring Women - The Experience event held Sept. 20 in Waterloo.

Marie Seiler-Linden arrived at the event, co-chaired by former Listowel resident Debb Ritchie, expecting to present the award, not receive it. "It was certainly nice to receive the award," said Ms. Seiler-Linden, who humbly deferred discussion to the significance and success of the event itself.

Inspiring Women - the Experience was co-chaired by Ms. Ritchie, business development manager for the law firm of Miller Thompson and Kathy Weiss, executive director of the Waterloo Region Business Centre. It was designed to provide the opportunity to network for high-profile businesswomen from the region. The sold out event drew 350 people, said Ms. Ritchie. The event was hosted by Lynn Haddrall, editor in chief of The Record. The unique, one-day event featured a keynote address by award-winning television personality Dini Petty and workshops by six of Canada's leading experts, popular speakers, and business owners. Ms. Seiler-Linden was at the event with a small contingent of friends and relatives from the Listowel area and learned she was to be the recipient when her name was announced.

"It certainly came as a big surprise to her," said Ms. Ritchie, who told The Banner that Ms. Seiler-Linden has long been an inspiration and role model for her.

Born and raised in Listowel Marie Basler moved to Kitchener as a young woman, and worked in an office as a secretary.

She met John Seiler, who later became her husband; they went into business together and opened a TV and appliance store in Listowel. Mr. Seiler died when Marie was 39, leaving her with children to raise and a store to run. "You can't even begin to understand and appreciate how women were treated in business back in the fifties and sixties It

was unheard of... and very hard for men to accept female businesswomen," said Ms. Ritchie in her remarks at the award presentation.

In addition to operating her business, Marie was very active in the Chamber of Commerce in Listowel, as well as the Zonta and Kinette Clubs. She was also an active volunteer in sports and church groups, as well as fundraising for the local hospital and other causes.

She later married businessman Bill Linden and they ran their respective businesses successfully for decades, until they retired.

Marie lost a daughter, Christine, to meningitis in the early '80s.

That's when she and Ms. Ritchie, who lost her own parents a few years later, became close.

"She became almost a substitute parent," Ms. Ritchie notes.

Ms. Seiler-Linden's second husband died suddenly some years later and when fire consumed a block in downtown Listowel in 1999, it claimed Ms. Seiler-Linden's apartment and a storefront she was renting.

"She just manages to be so positive and compassionate," said Ms. Ritchie.

Today, Ms. Seiler-Linden continues her quest for success and satisfaction by participating as a local political activist, at the municipal, provincial and federal level, working in campaign offices and on the riding associations.

Forde Studios Waterloo

INSPIRATIONAL - Marie Seiler-Linden of Listowel is the namesake and first recipient of a new award for an outstanding woman who inspires others.