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**Joan Berkman among Ten Local Women Recognized at the Annual Women of Achievement Awards Luncheon for Outstanding Volunteer Contributions**

**May 12, 2009** Joan Berkman was recently recognized for her many contributions to the community by the Women of Achievement of St. Louis. In addition to a stellar career as a telecommunications executive, Berkman has been an active community volunteer for over 30 years. She is considered one of the go-to volunteers in St. Louis and gives countless time to organizations including the Press Club of Metropolitan St. Louis, Opera Theater, Laumeier Sculpture Park, Clayton Camber of Commerce, University of Missouri St. Louis Friends, Center of Contemporary Arts and the local march of Dimes. Berkman is founder of Radio Broadcasters for Babies, a signature event that has become a national model for the March of Dimes Foundations. To her many outstanding accomplishments, she has added the title “Author” having written a book with her mother entitled, Face Watchers: Wrinkles are Physical. Face Lines are Mental.

Berkman, who was recognized in the category of Innovative Communication, joined 9 other women who were honored at the annual luncheon held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Clayton. A sell out crowd of more than 775 friends, family and colleagues joined with Mistress of Ceremonies KMOX radio’s Carol Daniel, in welcoming the 2009 Women of Achievement which also included Susan Block, Creative Philanthropy; Arlen Chaleff, Mental Health; Suzie Knopf, Women’s Health; Amanda L. Murphy, Ph.D.; Community Betterment; Noemi K. Neidorff, Arts Champion; Cheryl Polk, Human Concerns; **Deidre Pujols**, Youth & Family; Norma Stern, Lifetime Service; and Virginia Wachter, Cultural Enrichment. The group reflects the region’s ethnic, religious and socio-economic diversity. The women come from all walks of life, and represent a wide range of interests, careers and ages.

Since 1955, when this prestigious recognition program was first established, over 540 St. Louis area women, whose volunteer efforts positively impact the well-being and welfare of this community and the lives of those who live here, have received this coveted award and have been honored at an annual luncheon.

Each honoree receives a silver tray engraved with "Women of Achievement," the year, her name and the area for which she is being recognized.

In 1993, the St. Louis Women of Achievement Organization was established as an independent, non-profit entity. Its board of directors, comprised of past recipients of this award, assumed all the responsibilities for planning and implementing the nomination, selection and awards processes. This was done to ensure that the Women of Achievement Award would continue to thrive and recognize outstanding women volunteers, in the St. Louis region, for many years to come. Each year, the Women of Achievement organization oversees the nomination process and then invites community leaders to help select the new honorees from the numerous nominations and recommendation submitted by friends, family, colleagues and volunteer organizations. Past recipients of the Women of Achievement award create the luncheon which honors the new group of award winners. St. Louis Women of Achievement Award is the oldest, on-going program in the area whose sole mission is to honor and recognize the volunteer efforts of women. It serves both as a thank you to its recipients and as an inspiration to others. Over the past 54 years, the region has benefited immeasurably from the efforts of these special women.

Bess Wilfong, Chair of the 2009 Women of Achievement Luncheon, along with her Co-Chair Gwendolyn Packnett, headed up a stellar committee of former Women of Achievement. According to Wilfong, "It was a privilege to chair this year's luncheon and a joy because of the outstanding committee of hard working volunteers who did the heavy lifting. It is true that when you want something done right, just call on a Woman of Achievement."

This prestigious award and the luncheon were made possible through the generous support of the **Presenting Sponsors, KMOX 1120; Suburban Journals; and Ladue News**. The Platinum Sponsor: Neiman Marcus. The Gold Sponsors: Centene Corporation; Emerson; Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation; the Gatesworth at One McKnight Place; Heartland Bank; Plaza Motors; the Ritz-Carlton Hotel; RubinBrown; Tricorbraun-A Division of Kranson Industries, Inc; and Wells Fargo Advisors. The Silver Sponsors are: BBJ Linen; Dash Multi-Corp, Inc.; Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar; Kwame Building Group; Maryville University; Monsanto, and Panera LLC.

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