

## Community Foundation's Women's Fund Annual Luncheon and Celebration

### Ithaca Downtown Conference Center

#### Mary Pat Dolan, 2024 Laura Holmberg Awardee

Thank you so very much – this community has been incredibly generous and kind to me and this is yet another example of that.

I feel compelled to tell a tale on myself...when I left DSS many years ago, I followed Nina Miller's advice and for six months did very little that was productive. But waaay back then, knowing one's closets should occupy only so much of one's time and probably none of one's mental energy.... I read the want ads looking for something interesting and worthwhile. At that time. we had a newspaper with actual help wanted ads & I read them all. I quickly learned that I did not qualify for even the most basic \$8/hr positions.

My 21 century skills consisted of knowing enough MS Word to not embarrass myself in front of my wonderful secretary Melanie Scheffler – read and understand a budget. It was pretty much a **Hard Stop** right there. I could barely adjust a cell in an excel spread sheet and wouldn't know an Access data base if it hit me in the eye. So when a few people came calling to ask if I would help with .... , I was **elated** that someone actually thought I had some transferrable skills, jumped at the offer and hoped I wouldn't embarrass myself.

And incredibly luckily for me, both during my years at DSS and over the course of the intervening decades, I've worked with, worked for or observed the work an array of remarkable women who are ----- Running businesses, Chronicling our history, Educating our children and ourselves, Enriching our lives with the arts, Protecting the vulnerable, Supporting the rich array of community agencies, continuously creating and recreating our health care system, Enriching the lives of older adults, Lifting up the Invisible and despised, bravely stepping into the arena of government and economic development; using science to respond to the crises of today and the ones to come...and so much more.

In just my limited sphere I owe a tremendous debt for teaching me, tolerating me, opening my eyes and heart to new realities to these women and many many more who my aging memory has likely left out.... The likes of Marge Dill, Kathy Schlather, Cindy Wilcox, Lucia Sacco, Liza Burger, Sonia Apker, Marcia Forte, Karen Yearwood, Rene' Spear, Sue Chaffee, Laurie Mante, Chris Pothier, Christina Culver, Casey Verderosa, Deb McCardel, Lesley McBean Clairborne, Bonnie Howell, Helen Talty, Ann Dolan, Martha Robertson, Nicole Kerness, Audrey Cooper, Sue Dale Hall, Karen Schechere, Mary Call, Diane Cohen, Katie Simms, Martha Armstrong, Rachel Lampert, Patricia Carey, Kit Kephart, Alice Cole, Irene Stein, Natasha Thompson, Cecelia Vargas, Anita Fltzpatrick and my dear friends Carol, Harriet, Ann and Julie – whose shenanigans have landed me at this podium.

These women – those no longer with us , those here now and those who will come after us have created and recreated the fabric of our community – have made it better – different – more inclusive and they will continue to do so. If I have warmed a board chair at their request, dipped into my very small jar of wisdom or lent my support to any of them in the course of their varied and critical work – then that really is all that I have done and it has been my incredible privilege to do it. **Thank you again!**

Mary Pat Dolan



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Left to right: Nicole Kerness,  
Mary Pat Dolan, Helen Talty



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Left to right: Diane Cohen,  
Paula Younger, Mary Pat Dolan