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WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

## GRAWA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### SPCC: An unsung community hero

By **HEIDI SCHULT GREGORY**  
Daily Record Columnist

The Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys (GRAWA) proudly nominated the Society for the Protection and Care of Children (SPCC) for *The Daily Record's* 2008 Nathaniel Award.

The Nathaniel Award has been given annually since 1996 to an individual or organization (in past years, to multiple recipients) based on the individual's or organization's significant contributions to the administration of justice, "above and beyond the day-to-day responsibilities of his or her job." The SPCC was one of six finalists. Another well deserving nominee — congratulations to First Assistant Public Defender Brian Shreffin! — received the Nathaniel Award, but the true honor for the SPCC is in the nomination.

While the SPCC did not win — they are and will be in GRAWA's eyes a community champion. June Castellano, a past GRAWA president, said it best: The SPCC is "one of our unsung heroes in the community."

The Rochester-based nonprofit was founded in 1875, and as such is the second oldest SPCC in the country. SPCC works tirelessly (often quietly, behind the scenes) to provide critical services to victims of child abuse and neglect, domestic violence and community violence. The SPCC consistently, and with little public recognition, goes "above and beyond" on a day-to-day basis serving as a resource to our local courts, including the Monroe County Family Court, and the legal community at large.

I had heard of the SPCC prior to GRAWA's nomination, but admittedly did not know much about the organization. I am now officially educated on all of its offerings, overwhelmed by the organization's breadth and capacity. The SPCC's mission is quite simple — to cultivate a strong and thriving community by providing exceptional services to children and families. Through its many quality services, the SPCC empowers children and families to develop a positive sense of self and become all they are capable of. With a staff of only 80 full- and part-time employees, the SPCC remarkably impacts the lives of more than 8,000 children and family members each year.

Services and programs include school-based after-school program designed to impact children's lives through creative academic

enhancements, tutoring services, social/recreational activities and arts/crafts; home-based counseling and case management programs such as teenage parent support services (TAPSS), family outreach and family violence; supervised visitation and supervised exchange, which provides a safe, supportive and neutral setting for children to visit with non-custodial parent; and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food and nutrition education program, which spans five counties.

What makes the organization special is its volunteer base as well as its dedicated paid staff who work determinedly on behalf of the most vulnerable citizens in our community, and have done so for more than a century! I had the pleasure of meeting the SPCC's dedicated leaders: President and CEO Lisa LaShomb Butt, Vice President of Programs Laurie Valentine and Vice President of Finance and Human Resources MaryAnn D'Ambrosia. What impressed me the most was their respective length of service to the SPCC — almost 50 years collectively. They believe in the mission, live the mission and have become the heart and soul of the organization.

With organizations such as SPCC available and ready to serve the Rochester legal community, we must find ways to highlight our "unsung heroes." We need to applaud them for their jobs well done, continue to recognize their dedication through award nominations and other means, and thank them for their service at any and every opportunity. Most of all, in the tough economic times we now face, we need to donate our time, talent and money to the organizations that provide behind-the-scenes support and vital programs. Let's face it, without organizations such as the SPCC, the Rochester community would not be as strong. We owe the SPCC (and other organizations like it) a very big pat on the back and our monetary support! Without necessary funding, the SPCC cannot serve all of those now in need.

To learn more about the SPCC and its programs, I encourage you to explore its Web site at [www.spcc-roch.org](http://www.spcc-roch.org) and identify areas in which you can volunteer and/or sustain the organization.

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