

Heritage Award Recipient

Deborah Montgomery

The Heritage Award is an honour bestowed upon an individual member when warranted due to substantial and significant contributions to women police and the International Association of Women Police over a period of years and especially during milestones of the organisation. The honour is meant to ensure the recording, recognition, and appreciation for outstanding and dedicated service to IAWP. The IAWP's Heritage recognition is the highest tribute given by the IAWP.

We are delighted to announce that the 2013 Heritage Award Recipient is Saint Paul Police Department Senior Commander (Retired) Deborah Montgomery from the USA. Commander Montgomery has been involved at the forefront of many movements and causes from a very young age. From her athletic prowess in high school to her current involvement in the YWCA, she has always actively pursued establishing routes for women and minorities to follow in their quests for opportunities.

The Early Years

Deborah's trailblazing began in her childhood and has continued throughout her life. She was a Civil Rights leader as the President of the St. Paul NAACP Youth Group in the late 1950's, and worked for open housing. At the age of 17 she was the youngest person ever elected to the National Board of Directors of the NAACP and served for six years. She participated with Dr. Martin Luther King in the 1963 March on Washington, DC, for civil rights laws, and in 1965, she again marched fifty miles from Selma to Montgomery with Dr. King for Voters Rights. In 1964, she was a GAA All City Award recipient (recognising her athletic interests and skills and the importance of physical fitness).

Law Enforcement Career

Deborah became the first female officer on patrol in the St Paul, MN, Police Dept. and rose to the rank of Senior Commander, where she supported the hiring and promotion of other female officers. In beginning her law enforcement career, Deborah developed precursor vanguard policies and practices which permeate still today. She competed for the first time with men in the "Police Officer" job title and was the only woman who successfully qualified on the physical agility testing. She was the first woman to work patrol in the St. Paul Police Department, and as such set the bar high for others throughout her career. Many new issues, such as uniform and assignment policies for women, were resolved then that paved the way for women officers today. As she advanced in her career to Senior Commander level, Deborah was keenly aware of the need to reach out and mentor girls and women. While commanding the Juvenile Unit, she served on the St. Croix Valley Girl Scout Board of Directors and the International Association of Chiefs of Police Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, which proposed programmes for at-risk youth. Additionally, she was active in the National Organization for Black Law Enforcement Executives and the National Latino Police Officers Association.



IAWP Contributions

As Deborah embraced her career, she understood the value of interacting and networking with other women in law enforcement, many of whom faced similar challenges because of their gender. Deborah became extremely involved in the IAWP and remained so for many years. Deborah served in several positions on the Board of the IAWP: Regional Coordinator for Region 7, Secretary, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President and 3rd Vice President. In 1998 she was recognised by both the Minnesota Association of Women Police and the IAWP as their Officer of the Year. Additionally she travelled the world to Africa, Australia, England, Russia, and China to train women in policing skills.

Beyond the Badge

Outside her law enforcement career, Deborah has always been active in her community and with those who need her advocacy. In 2004 Deborah was the first African American female elected to the St. Paul, MN, City Council, where she focused on issues of economic development, housing, and opportunities for youth and seniors. Deborah was a delegate for Citizen Ambassadors, People to People cultural and training exchanges in China, Inner Mongolia, Russia, Australia, in addition to Africa and England. Deborah currently serves as the Board President of the YWCA of St. Paul. At every opportunity, she has encouraged character and confidence building in youth.

Other Accolades

In 2006 Deborah was inducted into the St. Paul Central High School Hall of Fame. In 2013 she was the Minnesota Lynx WNBA team "Inspiring Women" nominee and showcased on the website www.wnba.com/lynx. Deborah served on the Board of Trustees for Blue Cross-Blue Shield Foundation where she was an ardent champion for policies to cover women's health issues, as well as benefactor for females to be advanced to executive status in the company. She has served as a member of the boards of the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center and the St. Paul Urban League. She was the 13th Annual Spurgeon award recipient in recognition for her contributions as a role model for youth. Deborah has received numerous other awards for her advocacy for youth, minorities, and women, and for her community involvement.

Deborah Montgomery has demonstrated courage, confidence, and leadership skills throughout her life, and the IAWP is a better organisation because she has served in it.

Heritage Award winners represent the legacy of the IAWP. They are the historical memory of an organisation that continues to grow. By virtue of participating in its history and having a resolve that the organisation evolve, leaders such as Deborah Montgomery confront core goals and serve as tangible evidence to the rest of us of the honour it is to serve the IAWP.

Congratulations, Deb!