Coming Together
Reunion 2008

One of the most inspiring parts of serving as the Alumnae Association Council (AAC) President is presenting the Distinguished Alumnae Awards at Reunion each year. As if you needed further proof, Emma Willard alumnae are an impressive group. This year's winners all excel in their professions, and what a diverse group they are this year: a scientist and businesswoman, a minister and therapist, a doctor and advocate, a fundraiser and entrepreneur, and a financial advisor and deeply dedicated volunteer for Emma Willard.

Isn't it interesting how these women can't be categorized by one label or another? They lead multi-dimensional lives, making choices each day about where to apply their energy and talent. Like Gay Johnson Grossman '84, my classmate and good friend profiled in this issue, EW alums live lives of accomplishment, too often not celebrated with awards or public recognition.

As Trudy notes in her letter, there are so many of these amazing women in our midst. I think of the alumna from the class of 1990 who home-schools her kids while running a farm with her husband, or the alumna from the class of 1969 who is dean of a community college in the small town where she grew up in Iowa, one of the only options for higher education in the region.

Equally impressive is the alumna from the class of 1994 who is a welder, building satellite towers all over the world on construction sites where she is nearly always the only woman, or the women who serve with me on the AAC. They donate their time and energy to Emma Willard, coming back to campus three weekends each year to help reconnect alumnae to the school and to each other, run the DAA program, oversee regional clubs in many parts of the country, and connect recent graduates to older alumnae. These, too, are Emma Willard women making a difference!

Erin Crotty '84
President, Alumnae Association Council

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01 Katie Carella '98 toasts Jack Easterling

02 Head of School Trudy Hall speaks with Trix Tolles Smalley '58 at dinner Friday night

03 Biddy Harte Owens '68 talking with Holly Ford Ridgway '68 and principal emeritus Bill Dietel

04 Sara Johnson Meyers '73

05 Liz Toohey '03 and Linda Glazer Toohey '66 with the inaugural Maddie Levitt Scholar Natasha Kappaya '10

06 The Class of '73 in their parade finery

07 Heather Wells '88, Emily Cross '88, and Wendy Jenkins '88

08 The Class of '63: This was a class!

09 Ardelle Fenn Darling '58, Sara Lubin Schupf '58, and Peg Doud Christie '58 accept the award for highest reunion giving participation

10 The Class of '03 after the memorial chapel service

11 The Class of '83 at dinner

12 The Class of '48 at the awards ceremony

2008 Distinguished Alumnae Awards

Geraghty

George

Jelinek

Nabrit-Stephens

Strickler

Outstanding Young Alumna
Deborah Frease Geraghty '88

Described by friends and colleagues as upbeat, compassionate, curious, enthusiastic, persevering, driven, thoughtful, and, oh yes, energetic, Deborah Frease Geraghty is a young leader in science and business. Following college, Deb earned a Ph.D. in cell and molecular biology and an M.B.A., both with honors. She worked two years in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry before becoming a director of the biotech consulting firm where she is now vice president, managing a majority of the company's consulting projects.

In addition, Deb enthusiastically serves Emma Willard as national co-chair of the Annual Fund, board member, and reunion gift chair. Despite all this responsibility, she maintains the qualities captured in her Emma Willard college recommendation: "Hard-working, yet full of fun, a twin, but an individual, a scholar, and a committed school citizen."

Accomplished Alumna
Vanessa George '83

Vanessa George possesses a limitless view of the future coupled with a deep sense of compassion that inspires all who know her. As she put it, she has spent the last several years following her "dream of helping to improve the lives of women." Toward this end, she helped build the Women of Color Action Network (WCAN) and joined the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) Center for Gender Equity, where she expanded programs focused on women of color and launched professional development and networking programs for women in the community. She now serves as director of development for the UCSF Medical Center.

In addition, Vanessa has started a side business helping other African-American women become entrepreneurs and last year launched the Kayla A. George Dare to Dream Fund for Girls at Emma Willard after being featured in *Money Magazine*. This fund will help African-American girls benefit from an Emma Willard education.

Life Achievement
Bonnie Scott Jelinek '63

At Emma Willard, Bonnie Scott Jelinek learned that "I could do anything I wanted to do professionally, as a woman, in spite of overwhelming odds." She has lived out that lesson in the years since graduating from Lake Forest College and Yale Divinity School, pursuing a career in Christian ministry at a time when the field was just opening up to women. Bonnie was one of the first women to be ordained into a Protestant denomination in the state of Connecticut in 1977. A group of women held picket signs around the church, saying: "Put back on your apron," but she persevered with a belief in her calling and a deep desire to make a difference in her world, both as a minister and later as a therapist.

Her ability to touch lives is an example of the power of one individual to make a difference; Bonnie possesses an exuberance that infects everyone with whom she interacts. One of her congregants described Bonnie as spinning "a web of love and support for everyone she comes in contact with on a personal, professional, and community level."

Humanitarian
Barbara Nabrit-Stephens '68

Barbara Nabrit-Stephens's college recommendation from Emma Willard stated that she had "both the drive and the capability to make a place in the world, and to achieve much for both the world and herself."

In the years since, she has achieved much for the poor and those without access to medical care, both as a pediatrician and professor of medicine, and as an advocate for improved healthcare policy for those who rarely have a voice in the process. Barbara chaired the Pediatric Section of the National Medical Association, guiding the development of the strategic plan, which focuses on health disparities in minority children and families. She continues to advocate on behalf of children as a member of the National Children's Study Advisory Board and the National Medical Association, and as a Fellow of the Academy of Pediatrics. Equally important, she has lived a personal life of civic engagement as a role model and community leader.

Service to Emma Willard
Ellen Braestrup Strickler '53

Classmates, a former board chair, a former campaign chair, and a former head of school all wrote to support Ellen Braestrup Strickler's nomination, illustrating the depth of her contribution to Emma Willard. She has been a board member, committee chair, fundraiser, leader, and event host many times since her graduation.

Ellen brought a deep understanding of the independent school world to the board of trustees. In 10 years as a trustee she vigorously advocated endowment growth, urging the board to consider a broader range of investments to create an optimal asset allocation model. She chaired the investment committee masterfully, deftly balancing the risks and rewards in the near term with a vigilant eye to the long term and formalizing the investment advisory structure to expand the range of the school's money managers. To this day, Ellen's investment philosophy echoes in the minds of board members when they discuss prudent use of the endowment. Her keen mind for complex fiscal and investment issues has helped ensure that Emma Willard continues to be financially secure now and into the future.