

The Center News

1200 W International Speedway Blvd., Daytona Beach, FL 32114 • Building 100 Room 218

Celebrating Women with the Honorable Penny Brown Reynolds

On March 31, 2011, the Women's Center hosted its annual luncheon celebrating National Women's History Month at the Mori Hosseini Center. This year's national theme, *Our History is Our Strength*, was the focal point of the welcome address from the Center's Director, Isalene Montgomery. She highlighted the importance of sharing the history of pioneers and trailblazers who paved the way for women. These great women not only had a destiny, but a

determination to leave a legacy for the next generation. Montgomery stated, "Their stories, or your story, may very well be the lifeline that someone needs to hang onto until their

vision materializes – visions of becoming the next doctor, lawyer, professor, president or entrepreneur." She felt the relevancy of strength was a viable message as people's lives continue to be impacted by the economic downtrends and nationwide budget cuts and reminded everyone that the Center continues to advocate for male and female students by promoting educational and supportive services that further their path to self-sufficiency.

Keynote speaker Judge Penny Brown Reynolds gained national attention as an Emmy nominated television personality but she has a myriad of talents beyond that, first and foremost being a wife and mother. Her other achievements include executive

producer, author, former assistant prosecutor, ordained minister, preacher, scholar, retired judge, licensed attorney, theologian and entrepreneur. A voice for change, Reynolds gave a dynamic and compelling message to over 250 attendees saying that women must start building a *sisterhood* – one that transcends color, nationality and *everything*; we are women and that should mean more than anything else, because we need to be there for one another.

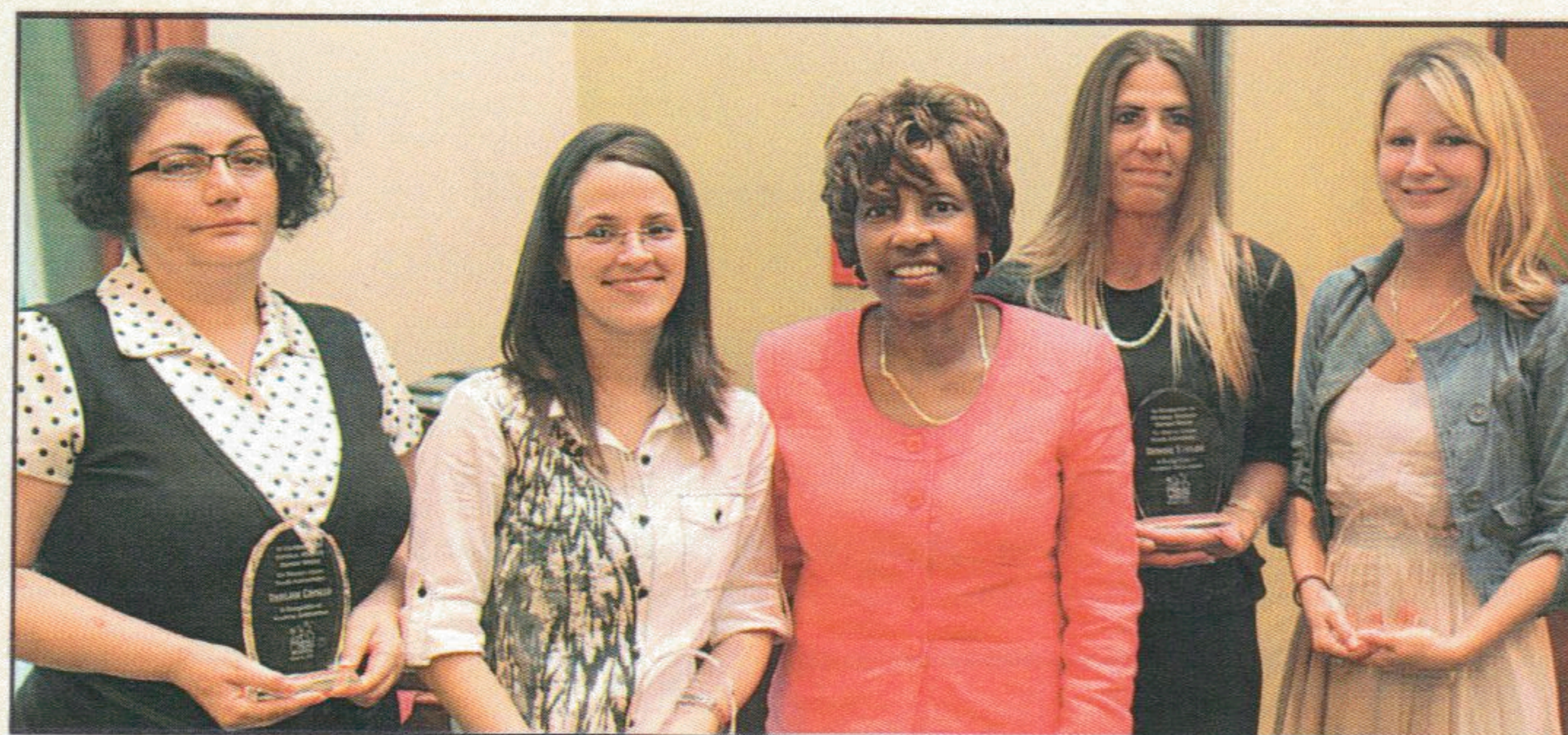
Judge Penny used her experiences as the training tools that positioned her where she is today and the powerful teachings from her mother and grandmother ensured that the scars never took root to hinder her God-given destiny. She told one story of a phone call she received during her time on the bench from a woman who needed a letter of reference for law school. This woman had gotten into some trouble and turned to Reynolds for help as they had known each other growing up. Reynolds shared how, as a young girl, she had been invited to a tea party at the home of a little girl—who was the woman on the phone. She recalled her excitement about attending the party, all dressed up with a matching purse, hat and shoes. Upon arriving at the party, the little girl's mother exclaimed, "You don't belong here!" and made her

leave; she was labeled by society because she was from a single parent home, considered poor and lived in a "shotgun house." As she began her seven mile trek back home, she realized she still carried the little girl's present. She ran back to the house and left it at the front door. When she returned home, she pretended that she was at the party and that everything was fine. It was at this age, she said, that she took on grown up responsibilities. Reynolds realized later in life that her actions illustrated her refusal to wear the label of society. Her mother raised her with morals, dignity and a sense of self respect, and she was taught to treat others with kindness and love. So, when the woman on the phone asked if Reynolds remembered her, she said yes; and instead of responding negatively, she said she would be happy to write the letter. Reynolds said her response is what every woman's response should be when another woman needs a helping hand, "What can I do to assist you?" It is called *sisterhood*. As Reynolds concluded her speech she left the stage to a standing ovation. Afterwards, she held a book signing in the atrium for her newest book, *7 Steps to Peace of Mind*.

The Women's Center also honored five students for their outstanding academic achievements: Darejan Cavallo, Lauren Krebs, Phyllis Mayers, Denise Taylor and Jamie Viera. The honorees shared life stories of overcoming the odds and remaining true to themselves. As they accepted their awards they expressed their gratitude, the audience seemed to feel a connection with these real life stories. Changing lives, one life at a time is not just the Center's vision but a reality.



Judge Penny Brown Reynolds



Student Award Recipients (left to right) Darejan Cavallo, Jamie Viera, Women's Center Director Isalene Montgomery, Denise Taylor, and Lauren Krebs (Phyllis Mayers not pictured).