

Dear Award Committee,

My name is Ralph Schlitz Jr. and I am writing to nominate my wife Linda Larson Schlitz for the Clifford Beers Award. I met Linda 21 years ago at Alcoholics Anonymous where she opened her talk playing guitar and singing a song she had written about how God has given her hope for recovery. Linda has been sharing her story of hope since September of 1976, coincidentally the year that Mr. Beers founded MHA and she quit drinking "Schlitz" "Beers" (and then later married a relative of the brewery founders :) Linda was planning her suicide when a 16 year old girl convinced her that God had a plan for her life and that was to share her experience, strength and hope with the world. Linda opted not to kill herself and walked through the last 41 years helping everyone she could meet find their purpose in life. Her unusual entrance into that meeting has given me more than I thought possible.

Linda was diagnosed in the 80's with ADHD and Depression and in 1996 with Hypomania Type II Bi-Polar Disorder which was about the same time we started our relationship. With my mental illness (depression & anxiety) and both of us in recovery from both alcohol and drug abuse, it has been challenging at times but Linda has been my rock and my inspiration.

Despite the learning problems Linda had in high school (not knowing her difficulties were ADHD related) she defied the odds and after working for a year as a Special Education Teacher's Aide she listened to a Career Counselor who convinced her she wasn't a dumb blonde airhead and encouraged her to take some classes. Five years later she graduated with a Masters degree in School Counseling and a 3.67 GPA as a single parent. She has been serving people with mental illness and substance abuse problems for the last 25 years in the counseling field and has paid high prices for being the advocate that she is.

When she was a School Counselor she started innovative programs and parent partnerships to support students with mental illnesses and substance abuse problems. She developed programs using kids with mental illness to tutor others and she didn't hesitate to report abuse and advocate for students that had developed behavior and emotional problems. In one school district she got an 8 year old into the state mental hospital because she was going to jump off a bridge. The parents and some administration were of course upset but the School Superintendent commended her tenacity as a "mover and a shaker that the district desperately needed." Unfortunately her contract was "non renewed."

In a different school district she challenged them for not having a 504 ADA policy in place to offer children accommodations for their mental and physical illnesses. By the end of the year one was in place. When several adolescents who were acting out in school disclosed their underlying cause of their struggles being sexual abuse by a prominent leader Linda defied an Administrator's directive to not report and it and her contract there was also "non renewed" costing her the job and reputation in that community. She was written off as a trouble maker. Her Supervising Principal however, commended her courage and called her a "Paradigm Pioneer unafraid to challenge the status quo."

Frustrated with the educational system Linda was offered an opportunity to work for a Psychiatrist as a School Liaison helping students with mental health problems to have a successful outcome of their mental health treatment at both school and home. Once again, Linda advocated for the children, at times to the frustration of the social service system that is set up to be reactive, not preventative. Her unwillingness to back down in the face of opposition once again cost her the continuation of that position as her boss wrote her a nice recommendation but said that the community viewed her as a "bull in a China Shop" for not walking more carefully on the "turf" issues that some feel she has no business advocating for such as demanding that families get the mental health and substance abuse treatment they need..

Linda was hired at the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development in 1998 where she became the Employment and Training Counselor in Wausau, and eventually took over all 9 of North Central Wisconsin Counties. Linda became the first Disability Program Navigator in the State of Wisconsin to educate the community and assist those with disabilities to find the resources to be gainfully employed and successful in life. Linda was one of the people in the state that piloted SAMHSA and MHA's "Mental Health Friendly Workplace" Curriculum. She expanded that to offering similar training to High Schools to ensure they too had a mental health friendly school for kids with mental health problems.

In 2001 Linda and I decided to reach out to those in our community that had substance abuse and mental illnesses and were falling through the cracks in 2001. We started a non profit organization called Randlin Homes homes that grew to 5 homes and 46 beds that was funded by businesses Linda helped the residents start and operate. The community was not optimistic that alcoholics, addicts, mentally ill, homeless, unemployed criminal offenders could operate businesses but by 2012 the organization was bringing in nearly \$250,000 in revenue with enterprise businesses that were operated almost entirely by the residents.

In the course of working with these chronic "losers" as many have called those with mental health and substance abuse problems, Linda has been relentless in challenging the "system" to review their lack of prevention and their unwillingness to intervene when our most vulnerable people are literally dying of diseases that could very well be cured or at least held at bay if the proper medication and treatment were provided.

Countless people will tell you that they would be dead if it wasn't for the intervention and support that Linda has given them. We continue to run a sober house for mentally ill/chemically dependent people who were homeless and needed a chance to recover. Linda oftentimes stands alone challenging Corporation Council and other county and state agencies that are charged to protect people from themselves and others, Linda has recently been called a "militant" by a Guardian Ad Litem when she stated in a child abuse court hearing that "the system" fails children. The epitome of her "risks" is when she was told she could lose her licensing for "crossing boundaries" to help people and she stated that she didn't need a license to advocate for people to help them live a healthy life where they are treated with respect and dignity for the irreplaceable asset they are. She chooses to risk the license to do what God has charged her to do....be an advocate for "the less fortunate" as Governor Walker put it.

Linda was a co-recipient of the Red Cross Heroes of the Year award in 2010 and she also received the "Athena Award" for her service to women. We were nominated for the Edge Award for people that go beyond the norm to help others in need and Linda was given the Spark Award for being a bright spot in the community by Preventing Substance abuse in our community. [Athena Award Acceptance Speech](#)

The next year Linda was nominated for the Wausau Daily Herald Person of the year by a woman the Governor of Wisconsin had referred to Linda at the Job Center to help. In turn, Linda received a letter of commendation from Secretary of Workforce Development Reggie Newson on behalf of the Governor and 2 years later she received a plaque from Governor Scott Walker commending her on her service to the residents of Wisconsin. When administration in the state department changed and Linda was no longer free to advocate for the less fortunate she retired and is now working to help others through Faucet Ministries LLC where she is developing a service to employers and job seekers ensuring that individuals understand their irreplaceable value to the world and that everyone else understands that as well.

Helping employers to identify a person's gifts, abilities, experiences, interests and yes shortcomings as well will help everyone to reach their goals more effectively.

Linda has 2 books published, a CD of 8 original songs and a line of greeting cards with poetry. She won the Most Innovative Painting at the NAMI Healing Arts Show in 2016 and inspired 3 other people to enter their work as well. Both of her books are about true life events, Ditzzy Blonde Faucet It's a God Thing is about her life with mental illness, substance abuse and the HOPE we all have and the other one is a children's handbook for abused kids called "All Season Front Row Seats to the Fights, whether you want to be there or not. Her acronym for HOPE is Help Opportunity Praise Encouragement and she does that well.

Linda had wanted to speak at this years MHA convention but we just could not afford to have her go. She has had powerful results using her guitar to do play therapy with troubled kids and was hoping to speak on innovative uses of music and art to heal others.y. She has sacrificed so much over the years that I would love to see her get this prestigious award and get to go to this conference. I can't think of anyone more deserving.

Sincerely

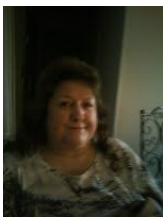
Ralph Schlitz Jr.

WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK.

[The Randlin Homes Story Video Link](#) These are a few of the statements you will hear on this video from some of the homeless, mentally ill/chemically dependent people that Linda and others have helped.

[Cheryl Zunker](#)

posted Oct 15, 2009, 1:51 AM by Linda Larson Schlitz [updated Jan 5, 2014, 7:34 PM]



"Being homeless is a scary prospect. The happiest best day of my life was walking into the Marathon County Job Center and meeting Linda Larson Schlitz. She took me under her wing and brought me to Randlin Homes where I am helping others and working to get back on my feet again. "

(Cheryl has since moved into her own home and is working at North Central Health Mental Health Care Center...she says the volunteer work she did at Randlin Homes was a great help)



SHANE MERTES*If Randlin wasn't here I am sure I would be back to drinking and in the Marathon County Jail. posted Oct 15, 2009, 1:50 AM by Linda Larson Schlitz [updated Jan 5, 2014, 7:42 PM]*

Ken- I had no where to go..... I think maybe if it hadn't been for her (Linda) and meeting her I might not be here, I don't think I would have survived to tell you the truth

Patricia Kehl- (Ralph and Linda) have given me hope for the future and a can do attitude, not a can't do

Niron Bonitz- I would have been living out in the woods or under a bridge..... I got a hand up not a hand out..

[Link to Recommendation](#)



Dr. Kari Miller- Linda is the kind of person you meet just once in a lifetime.....I was immediately impressed with her passion, her integrity and her generosity...she is a natural sparkplug for change energizing every situation she takes on. there isn't anything Linda wouldn't do to help somebody and there isn't a challenging situation that she can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. Linda is determined to help and inspire others to find their purpose in life because she knows that the best way to make your mark in the world and support yourself and your family is to use your gifts, we all have purpose in life and Linda's purpose is to help inspire each of us.....

[REAL HEROES STORY OF TROY JOHNSON LINK](#)

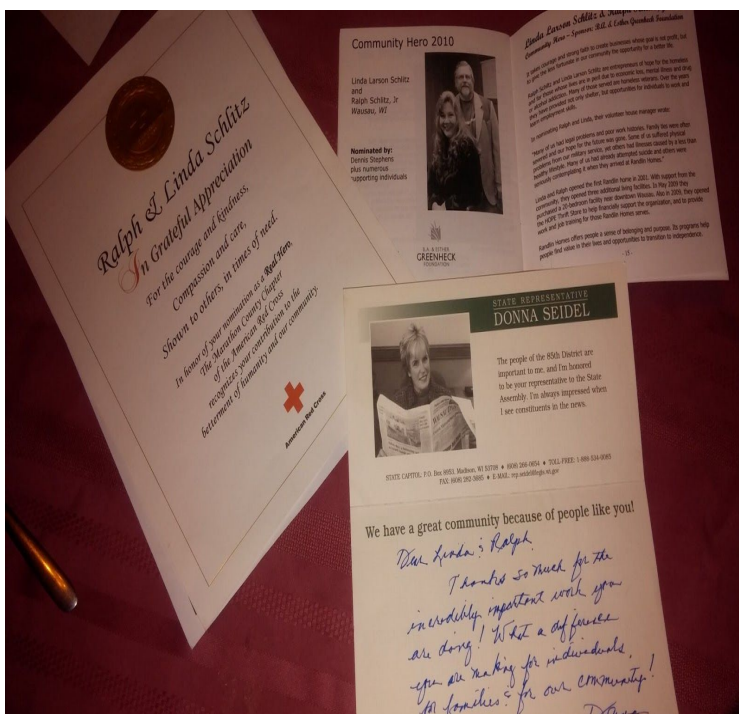
Troy Johnson says, "I was so screwed up and my direction was confused still cloudy. I knew what I wanted to do I just didn't feel like I could do it alone and with their help and support it made things a lot easier, simpler and I wasn't afraid."

Johnson was homeless in July of 2008 - Now, he's self-sufficient, employed and doing well. He owes it all to Ralph and Linda.

Johnson says, "Seeing my future at my time and I didn't feel or think I could be self-sufficient again with the situation I was dealing with I was faced with but they helped me and walked with me the whole way and showed me that it wasn't that unbearable to deal with because I wasn't alone anymore."

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DONNA SEIDL

GOVERNOR SCOTT WALKER



The State of Wisconsin

CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION

HONORING

LINDA LARSON SCHLITZ

ON BEHALF OF THE CITIZENS OF THE STATE OF WISCONSIN, I
CONGRATULATE YOU ON THE OCCASION OF YOUR RETIREMENT AND
THANK YOU FOR YOUR 12 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE.

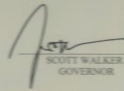
YOUR COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC SERVICE HAS GREATLY CONTRIBUTED
TO THE WELL BEING AND QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE CITIZENS OF
WISCONSIN. YOU HAVE BROUGHT PROFICIENCY AS WELL AS EXPERIENCE
TO YOUR PROFESSION AND WILL SERVE AS AN EXCELLENT ROLE
MODEL FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW. I EXTEND MY PERSONAL
THANKS TO YOU FOR THE CONTRIBUTIONS YOU
HAVE MADE TO THE STATE OF WISCONSIN.

MY BEST TO YOU FOR AN ENJOYABLE, REWARDING RETIREMENT.

September 2, 2014



DONE AT THE CAPITOL IN
THE CITY OF MADISON THIS
28th DAY OF JUNE 2014.


SCOTT WALKER
GOVERNOR