

AYR GARY NICHOLS PASSION AWARD

ELLEN BROWN TRIBUTE:

Ellen Brown was the first full time YMCA Secretary in America and was employed for working with boys. Whether employed as a program director or a business administrator, Ellen Browns personal quest was to make a difference in a boy's life. Often working long hours in the evening mentoring and shaping and guiding young boys who were a step away from detention or trouble with the law Ellen Brown would help them back on the right path through her caring and trusting support. Many of our early YMCA leader's, both volunteer and professional, grew up under her wing learning respect and accepting responsibility as they grew into young adults and leaders in their community. Today we would refer to Ellen Browns work as 'Mentoring', but back then it was just good old friendship and guidance with a listening ear and sometimes a strong hug.

The Ellen Brown Award will recognize today an individual for his contributions and efforts in Administration of program and business operations in his YMCA active career. As Ellen Brown recognized the importance of mentoring and educating young boys, successful administrators understand the relevance of developing and nurturing staff and volunteers. With the likeness of Ellen Brown, this nominee is a person of stealth judgment, superior qualities and master of motivation while 'Staying the Course' in the area of Administration and building strong community.

INTRODUCTION OF GARY NICHOLS:

Gary Nichols is certainly an 'unsung' hero in our YMCA family as he served his entire career in a single Association. This 'intrepid' individual sustained a high level of personal integrity while tending to the advancement of the YMCA's mission with both passion and tenacity. Here is one colleague who stands tall in this category who rarely received public notice and recognition that he well earned and dearly deserved though he never sought the limelight.

Gary Nichols spent his entire career in the Houston Association and retired as Chief of Operations serving faithfully in the shadow of a number of talented and demanding CEOs. Gary was the essential coach and mentor for rising stars regardless of their positions. He was especially watchful for talented program staff. He defined the art of human resource management before the portfolio became a more articulated profession within our movement.

Gary espoused a code of ethics by example and expectation before it was written and more widely understood. He did serve in leadership roles for AOS/APD and consistently encouraged participation of performing staff in the fellowship with colleagues from afar. While he remained in Houston, he firmly believed that advancement of talent, even if it meant relocation to an opportunity elsewhere in the movement, would be a fruitful return of investment in recruiting strong leadership for the local Association.

Having mentioned that, Gary always looked within for advancement into key positions as they opened but always with an eye for strong leadership development elsewhere. Gary's acumen for the fundamentals of good management practices contributed significantly to the continuity and sustainability of steady growth of the YMCA in Houston.

JOHN 17:21 AWARD STATEMENT:

In John 17:21 Jesus prays for his Disciples 'That they may all be one. Father! May they be in us just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe you sent me.' It is this application of unselfish giving and oneness for all humanity that was instilled in the Disciples that it also found in Gary Nichols who has given of himself for the betterment of our organization and for humanity.

We wish to recognize our 'intrepid' but perhaps more so 'unsung' hero from our YMCA family who has excelled in his career and in retirement and has made significant if not magnificent efforts in developing, supporting and communicating this passion for others.

In summary "To Be One With The Father". This was the inherent vision of Ellen Brown and the inherent vision of Gary Nichols.

WELCOME GARY NICHOLS:

TO SIT AROUND AND WAIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO DO WHAT GOD HAS CALLED ME TO DO MYSELF. OH, I COULD CHOOSE NOT TO MOVE BUT I REFUSE!!

Gary Nichols always knew "it was time for him to follow through and do what he was made to do."

Gary Nichols could not be with us today. I would ask Norris Lineweaver, who nominated Gary to stand and accept the John 17:21 Passion Award 2011 for Gary and see that it is presented with grace and honor at an upcoming Chapter meeting.