

Minerva Winners 2005



Anita L. DeFrantz is recognized for helping female athletes overcome discrimination at all levels of sports. An Olympic medalist in rowing, Vice President of the 1984 Los Angeles Games Organizing Committee and the first American female and African-American to serve on the International Olympic Committee, Anita L. DeFrantz is widely considered one of the most powerful women in amateur sports. Throughout the past two decades, Anita L. DeFrantz has used her power to help low-income boys and girls obtain access to quality sports experiences. She worked to ensure surplus

funds from the 1984 L.A. Olympics went to support more than a thousand youth sport organizations, including Ability First which provides athletic opportunities for children with developmental challenges. The Los Angeles Amateur Athletic Foundation which DeFrantz heads, has also provided more than 150 million dollars to help hundreds of thousands of children enjoy sports — many of these children return as adults to serve as mentors and coaches.



Sister Jennie Lechtenberg, SNJM, turned her passion for teaching and devotion to children into a success story that any corporate CEO would envy. After serving as a teacher and administrator at local elementary and junior high schools for 30 years, Sister Jennie founded the nationally and internationally renowned PUENTE Learning Center in 1985 and continues to serve as its Executive Director. Sister Jennie broke new ground with PUENTE, a multi-generational learning center for both children and adults which provides need-specific educational instruction to over 3,000 economically and educationally disadvantaged students each day. This amazingly effective teaching program with centers in East and South Los Angeles has a near perfect success rate with the high school students it has helped — seeing them graduate and succeed in life. Sister Jennie is widely regarded as a pioneer in family literacy and broadly heralded as a compassionate community leader. Her views are sought out by Presidents and mayors, even the Prince of Wales. But for Sister Jennie, it's the thousands of children who have been helped by PUENTE that matter most.



Janice Mirikitani is a modern-day Renaissance woman. As an author, Janice has written four books of poetry, edited nine anthologies by women, children and communities of color and served as San Francisco's Poet Laureate for two years. As an advocate and creator of groundbreaking programs serving the poor and homeless, Janice has devoted herself to those in the greatest of need. She is the Executive Director of Glide Memorial Church and the President of the Glide Foundation, which together provide over fifty widely hailed social programs for the poor and marginalized, especially women and children. Overseeing an annual \$12 million budget, a diverse staff of 175 and a volunteer corps nearing 50,000, Janice, in partnership with her husband the Reverend Cecil Williams, presides over a comprehensive array of programs designed to help people move from despair to hope and from dependency to empowerment.



Betty Ford's name alone represents the great crusade she has waged for over thirty years to raise awareness around the once taboo subject of breast cancer and to banish the shame of the great taboo surrounding addiction. Since she first entered a life of public service as the wife of Congressman Gerald Ford in 1948 to this day, Betty Ford has focused her energy and intellect and commitment around the issues of women, their rights and their health. As a partner in her husband's political career and the mother of four, she has been a role model for confronting life's problems with dignity and without shame. She has turned convention on its head when need be even as First Lady. She has been a fierce advocate for those suffering from disease and a vocal supporter of the quest for women's equality. The Betty Ford Center in Southern California, which she worked tirelessly to establish, is the premier addiction treatment facility in the nation helping thousands earn a second chance at life. Betty Ford has courageously used her position of political prominence with grace, purpose and success. This woman of peaceful means has battled heroically in a style that could intimidate even Minerva herself.