

STATE BAR NEWS
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By Brad Carr

Douglass to receive '06 Ruth G. Schapiro Memorial Award

Founded, directs organization that provides free legal services to and advocates for immigrants, poor women and children who have been battered, abused

Catherine J. Douglass, founder and executive director of inMotion, and co-founder and co-chair of the Lawyers Committee Against Domestic Violence, will receive the Association's 2006 Ruth G. Schapiro Memorial Award at a ceremony on Friday, January 27, during the meeting of the House of Delegates at the New York Marriott Marquis hotel in Manhattan.

InMotion, a non-profit organization, provides free legal services to indigent and working poor women in New York City. Since 1993, inMotion has assisted thousands of women in freeing themselves from abusive relationships, retaining custody of their children, staying in their homes, and winning financial support to which they and their children are legally entitled.

Donna M. Petrucelli of New York, chair of the Committee on Women in the Law which confers the award said, "Indigent and poor women, many of whom are in the midst of a crisis, and who are without the financial resources to retain counsel in Family and Supreme Courts, are at a significant disadvantage in navigating the court system. InMotion provides these highly vulnerable women with free legal representation and other services ensuring that they can exercise their legal rights effectively and improve their families' quality of life."

Douglass is an undergraduate of the University of Michigan (1965) and holds a master's degree in

English literature from the University of Minnesota (1971). She earned her law degree from the University of Arizona Law School (1976).

After 14 years in private law practice, six as a corporate partner in the law firm of Willkie Farr & Gallagher, she developed a pro bono program that would be attractive to thousands of lawyers working at major law firms who wanted to use their skills to help women and families in times of crisis.

Her inspiration for the creation of inMotion was her seven years' service on the board of directors of a battered women's organization in New York City.

In his nominating letter, former New York Governor Mario M. Cuomo wrote, "In keeping with her commitment of finding ways to improve access for New York City's working poor and indigent women, Catherine gave up her lucrative 14-year legal career in private practice to form this not-for-profit organization whose sole purpose is to provide 'Justice for All Women.' My admiration for her life-changing decision, the creation of this organization for service to others, and nurturing it to where it is today, by itself, in my opinion deserves an award."

In 1993, Douglass co-founded the Lawyers Committee Against Domestic Violence, now a coalition of nearly 100 legal services lawyers, prosecutors, private practitioners, court system representatives and academics, that educates professionals about domestic violence and strives

to improve the response of the judiciary and law enforcement to the needs of survivors of domestic violence.

Douglass serves on the Mayor of New York City's Advisory Committee on the Judiciary, the State Bar's President's Committee on Access to Justice (formed to help ensure civil legal representation is available to the poor) and the state Parent Education Advisory Board. In addition, she was recently elected to the board of directors of The Fund for Modern Courts. She is the recipient of the

University of Arizona Law School's Distinguished Alumna Convocation Award in recognition of her significant contributions to the public interest law community.

The Schapiro Award was established in 1992 to honor an Association member who has made a noteworthy contribution to the concerns of women through pro bono work, service to bar associations or other community organizations, writing, or other related activities.

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Southern District Judge Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum, left, congratulates Catherine J. Douglass, executive director of inMotion, who received the Ruth Schapiro Award at the New York State Bar Association's annual meeting last week, as State Bar President E. Vincent Buzzard looks on. The award, established in 1992, recognizes a bar member who has made noteworthy contributions to the concerns of women.