



Savvy Sister Award for 2009 Goes to Laurie M. Glaze

by Kim James

Laurie Glaze is the recipient of Houston Woman Magazine's 2009 Savvy Sister Award.

Throughout her 30-year social work career, she has worked tirelessly as an advocate for children, youth and adults in Houston.

Glaze was nominated by co-worker Peggy Boice. Boice says, "Through her distinguished leadership and passion to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic needs of all people, Laurie has truly made our community a better place for all."

Glaze began her social work career at Spaulding for Children, where she worked to support the adoption of special needs children in Harris County. At the time, Glaze says, the concept of "special needs" adoptions was brand new. Historically, if a child was of school age, a member of a sibling group, a minority child or one with special needs, the plan was for him to grow up in foster care."

While at Spaulding, Glaze started the agency's development department. It was here that she served on some of the first public/private committees at the state level for Children's Protective Services (CPS).

Since 2000, Glaze has been managing director of Adoption, a community collaborative of eight child placement agencies and CPS that works to place children in permanent adoptive families. The organization was created out of the need to increase adoption opportunities for children in foster care.

Glaze says Adoption's strength is its community partnerships, creating efficiencies that make the service delivery system more available to families and better utilize the agencies' limited resources.

Prior to Adoption, this CPS region placed 175-200 children per year with adoptive families. Between 2000 and December 2008, more than 5,000 children in this region became members of permanent families, an average of 555 per year.

The Adoption Coalition of Texas, a collaborative of child placement agencies in Austin, took notice of Adoption's success and is modeled after Adoption. Glaze is credited for giving valuable assistance during its development.

"Through Adoption, I became a true believer in the collaborative model," Glaze said, "and we shared with ACT both organizational and programmatic information that had been beneficial to Adoption."

In 2003, the 78th Texas Legislature left many health and human services organizations struggling to meet the needs of the community. This led Glaze and other advocates to find a way to address the problem of increasing need and decreasing service dollars. From this effort came One Voice, an organization that works to ensure the health and human services needs of all Texas are addressed through various initiatives, including community awareness and advocacy.

Glaze was asked to lead One Voice in 2004 and was hired as its executive director in January 2009. Because the organization is small, she has many roles but says her favorite is “working with the membership and within the community on issues we hope will improve the quality of life for everyone in Houston.”

Her experience building Adoption was invaluable in building One Voice. Even though she knew the strengths of collaborative effort, One Voice was not formed without some challenges. There was no particular model to follow. Child welfare was one of seven focus areas, many of which she knew little about. Glaze also knew member organizations would need to feel their time was being spent on something that brought value to them. If One Voice was going to be an organization that represented the community, everyone in the community would need to have a voice in the conversations.

Those initial challenges did not delay the creation of the organization. The influence of her mother has inspired Glaze to press on throughout her career.

“Because of my mother’s involvement in nursing education, we spent a lot of time with women professionals,” she says. “I never questioned whether or not I could do something or accomplish what I wanted.”

Glaze says the rewards have been great. The member organizations view health and human services as a total system – each one is in it for the whole.

“While our members may come from organizations that focus on one specific area, such as child welfare,” she says, “they understand the need for a strong education system, available and accessible healthcare system, affordable and safe housing, a community that recognizes the needs of its seniors and its persons with disabilities.”

One Voice is turned to by legislative staff for feedback on legislation affecting seniors, people with disabilities, children and children and families facing mental health problems.

“I am proud of my professional accomplishments, but I know the recognition truly belongs to a lot of people,” Glaze says. “I have been merely one of many who believed in something strongly enough that we were all willing to play together for a larger cause.”