



Nancy Rutledge named Wise Woman 2008
Winner has been exemplary leader of Houston CPA Society for 30 years

by Beverly Denver

Nancy Rutledge, executive director of the Houston CPA Society, is the recipient of the 2008 Wise Woman Award. She was nominated by Paula Ruth of Paula Ruth & Company. Ruth has known the honoree since 1994.

When Rutledge joined the Houston CPA Society, the organization had about 3,000 members and a projected deficit budget. Today, the Society boasts more than 8,000 members and a yearly budget in excess of \$1 million — thanks in large part to the leadership and wise counsel of Rutledge.

Rutledge was instrumental in helping the Houston CPA Society grow from a social group to a leading professional development organization and advocate for the accounting profession.

It is rare in the association profession — where volunteer leadership changes every year — for the executive director to survive three or four years, let alone 30.

“The key [to success] is being flexible, but also being a Wise Woman,” said Ruth. She continued, “Throughout Nancy’s tenure with the Houston CPA Society, she has been a mentor to its leaders...In the early years, the Society’s leadership was largely male.”

However, Rutledge has also mentored three females to reach Society presidency and a fourth is now president-elect. One CPA she has mentored now heads the Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council.”

Ruth also notes that Rutledge “allows each committee chair or chapter officer an abundance of leeway, but she is careful to represent the Society’s best interests. She has been an exemplary model of ethics and professionalism.”

In 1997, Rutledge battled invasive breast cancer and missed only five weeks of work. “Seeing how she handled not only this disease, but also more recent professional, personal and health-related issues, has been inspirational to me and to Society members,” said Ruth.

“Nancy has mentored me in working with volunteers,” said Ruth. “She is the most organized person I have ever known. She has taught me the importance of incorporating exercise into every day and having fun while you do the work. She has been among the first to adopt new technologies, whether it was a fax, personal computer, digital camera, cell phone, email or Blackberry.”

Rutledge has also mentored many others in her field. She has served as president of the Houston Society of Association Executives in 1980 and on the board of directors of the

Texas Society of Association Executives and the TSAE Foundation. Rutledge is also a long-time member of the American Society of Association Executives and remains involved giving advice to current HSAE leaders, even when she cannot personally attend meetings.

“In the association business where staff leadership is often at the whim of the volunteer members who change each year, Nancy is truly a legend. That wouldn’t be true if she were not such a wise woman,” said Ruth.

The Houston CPA Society apparently agrees with Ruth; it has selected Nancy Rutledge as the honoree of the 2009 Scholarship Extravaganza.