



CONTACT
Sheena Johnson
Director of Communications & Marketing
919.682.2133
sjohnson@durhamchamber.org
www.durhamchamber.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 1, 2008

******MEDIA RELEASE******

**Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce announces
PWN Inspiration Award winner**

DURHAM, NC – The Professional Women’s Network, a program of the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, announced today the recipient of its Inspiration Award at the annual PWN Success Luncheon. Yvonne Pena, director of the City of Durham’s Human Relations Department, as honored for her tireless dedication to Durham and her efforts to uplift women in our community. Stephanie Counts, president & CEO of the Women’s Inter-Cultural Council served as keynote speaker. More than 200 people attended.

The Inspiration Award recognizes a professional woman who works on behalf of women inside and outside the workplace, serves the Durham community by inspiring others through her leadership and gives of herself so other women might learn, grow, advance and succeed.

Since her arrival in Durham in 2002, Pena has demonstrated her commitment to bettering the lives of the people she serves. In her role, she is responsible for investigating allegations of discriminatory practices in the areas of housing, employment and public accommodations, yet she stretches her responsibilities to include women’s issues. Creating programs that support dialogue about women’s issues and human rights was never a part of the job description, but it was an obvious choice for a woman who is described as ‘working to make society free of injustices.’

Through her advocacy and programs in which she plans, implements and hosts, have influenced policy makers throughout the nation to make changes to the domestic violence laws. Pena has been instrumental in the creation of The Patients Bill of Rights, the adoption of legislations that support legal rights for domestic violence victims, and House Bill 1354 which includes education about domestic violence in basic police training. She has educated the community and elected officials on the issue of domestic violence with The Candlelight Vigil, now in its 6th year, which brings honor and remembrance for all domestic violence murder victims (98% of which are women) and their families during the holiday season.

Pena’s year-long study on the “Root Causes of Crime in Durham” included more than 60 incarcerated women, who she interviewed about their lives to better understand the factors that contributed to their situation. Upon their discharge, she counseled more



CONTACT

Sheena Johnson
Director of Communications & Marketing
919.682.2133

sjohnson@durhamchamber.org
www.durhamchamber.org

than 22 of the women for re-entry into society, addressing the issues that directly affect these women, such as prostitution and domestic violence.

She has been named as a "Crusader of Human and Civil Rights" by the United Nations for her work on the Women's International Equity Study, and is also referred to as a "Lady of Great Integrity" for being a hero to adults, a role model for the young, and an advocate for the eradication of all forms of injustices against women.

###