

**SERVICE TO MANKIND AWARD
2015-2016**

South Seminole Sertoma Club

P.O. Box 950019

Lake Mary, FL 32795-0019

Contact: Debbie Spitzer, Club Liaison



RUBY HOMAYSSI

713 Silver Birch Place

Longwood, FL 32750

407-865-4129

South Seminole Sertoma Club is proud to name Ruby Homyayssi as the recipient of our 2016 Service to Mankind Award.

Ruby was born in 1945 and raised in East Baton Rouge Parish as the oldest child of 4 four. From her earliest days, Ruby displayed the traits that would define her throughout her life - self confidence, desire to be of help, unbridled initiative, and pursuit of excellence.

Her immediate neighborhood was comprised of homes occupied by relatives - aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins. Children were sometimes moved to temporary quarters in the home of a nearby relative when their primary residence ran out of space. Ruby stood out in this atmosphere of helping and sharing. Once an aunt stopped by Ruby's house on the way home from the hospital after delivering twins, ostensibly to show off her new babies. These added offspring had brought her total number of children to seven. The aunt asked Ruby if she would watch the twins for her while she went on an errand. She did not return for several years and Ruby, as a young teenager, became their primary caregiver.

Even with all of the responsibilities and distractions at home, Ruby excelled in school and was a popular participant in extra-curricular activities. To help pay for the added cost of special school activities, Ruby made and sold popcorn balls. She was so successful with this entrepreneurial endeavor, a spirit which she retains to this day, that she came under fire; because some kids were spending their lunch money on Ruby's popcorn balls.

Ruby had planned to join the U.S. military after graduating from high school, but she was under age, and to her great disappointment, her father refused to sign for her. With no funds available for college, she convinced Southern University in Baton Rouge to accept her on a work study program. As soon as she turned 19 years of age she acted on her long standing desire and joined the U.S. Marine Corps. Because her date of reporting for active duty was extended, commonplace at the time, she was able to complete her BS Degree in Foods and Nutrition.

Upon completing her basic training at Paris Island, South Carolina, Ruby was sent to the Army's Quartermaster School to be trained for duties as a

cook assigned to Quantico. In the Marines, she rose to the rank of Lance Corporal. Because of her outstanding specialized abilities she was selected to become a Navy Dietician. This required, in continuous actions, her honorable discharge from the Marines and transfer to the Navy as an Ensign. She was the first woman to obtain an inter-service transfer from Enlisted to Commissioned Officer - continuing her life as a pacesetter.

The Navy sent her to Tuskegee Institute to be trained in Hospital Dietetics after which she was assigned as a staff dietician and later made Head of Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics at the Naval Hospital in Chelsea. An expert in her field, Ruby had assignments at the Submarine Center in New London, Connecticut, and the Naval Hospital in Portsmouth. All the while, she served as a consultant to small commands such as Iceland, the Naval Academy, Cuba, Italy. In 1988, Ruby completed her last Naval assignment as Head of Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics assigned to the Naval Hospital in Orlando, Florida, and consulting to the Food Service Department and Submarine Duty recruits at the Naval Training center. At the time she retired in Orlando, she had risen to the rank of Lt. Commander and received the Unit Commendation Medal and the National Defense Medal.

Concurrent with her active duty service to her Country, Ruby used off duty hours to serve the community at hand. She was a member of a small group in Connecticut that started and staffed the country's first domestic violence shelter for women. She also initiated the first nutritional program to treat gestational diabetes in pregnancy. She volunteered with the Red Cross teaching nutrition classes to medical staff and the community. She found ways to serve every community in which she was stationed. Ruby was honored by the Navy as an Outstanding Community Volunteer.

Although Ruby retired from active military duty, she did not retire from serving her community. She has worked to obtain gifts for approximately 300 kids at a "Breakfast with Santa" program. She helped set up an endowment for Pace Center for Girls and the Foundation for Seminole County Public Schools. As a member of the Board of the Civic Theater she chaired their grassroots fundraising. As Chairman of the Board for Festival of Orchestras, during difficult times, she devoted three years to getting the

organization's finances back in the black. The Orlando Opera was able to meet and exceed its budget for the first time in many years when Ruby was First Vice President in Charge of Fund Development. She launched "Your Two Cents Count" which encourages folks to pick up pennies and other coins dropped on sidewalks or parking lots to give to charity.

Even though Ruby has satisfied her entrepreneurial urges by owning and operating Ruby's Catering and Elmira's Tea Room, her time has primarily been devoted to literally dozens of charitable boards and endless hours working in activities ranging from a municipal foliage festival to a Holocaust Center Dinner. She is constantly looking for ways to help make the community better and to serve others. She is fulfilled when utilizing her skills and talents developed at home, in school, in the Marines and in the Navy.

Ruby has not gone unrecognized for her accomplishments, her service to her Country and to her fellowman. She has received numerous awards in various categories of achievement and from levels that include national, municipal, organizational and corporate. The spirit that has driven this exceptional woman from her childhood until now is, however, best embodied in the name of the highest honor bestowed by Sertomans to a non-Sertoman and awarded today to Ruby Homyssi - "Service to Mankind."