

# NEWS ARTICLE #8

## CONROE, TX WOMAN HELPS PLACE STRUGGLING WOMEN IN TECHNICAL JOBS THROUGH VOCATIONAL TRAINING

### HELPING HANDS

Faye Turner has known hard times. She doesn't want other women to experience what she had to go through. Turner learned about difficult times when her husband became ill eight years ago and was physically unable to work. She had worked at minimum wage jobs for extra money but hadn't the skills to earn enough to support her family. Her house was in foreclosure and, "I had a good friend who said, 'You must do something because your kids are going to school hungry,'" Turner said. That same friend said there are signs everywhere, so why not become a sign painter.

With that thought in mind, Turner got her first painting assignment, made \$4,000, saved the family home from foreclosure, established her own sign company and ultimately put her two children through college. This experience provided the impetus for Turner founding Women Helping Women six years ago. In recognition of her efforts, Turner received the ninth annual Drum Major Award presented at a Martin Luther King Jr. holiday ceremony. "We look for the justice, righteousness and serving others that comes from the Martin Luther King Jr. speech as criteria for the award," said Rosa Dye, chairwoman of the four-person award committee. "We selected Faye because of her reaching back to bring others forward. She found herself in a situation and didn't stop there. With her helping other women she is helping the whole family. It crosses the color line." Dye said Turner is humble about her accomplishments. "She does not broadcast about what she does," Dye said. "In Martin Luther King's dream, he says we'll work, pray and struggle together.

These women do struggle together. That stood out for me and Faye met that." Turner, a Conroe, TX resident began Women Helping Women to assist women who, for whatever circumstances, must support themselves and their children but do not have the job skills required to get anything more than minimum wage jobs. "As I built my company, I would go to women's clubs and I heard of women in shelters," she said. "They had been beaten and were divorced with big house payments and kids. They hadn't worked in 20 years, and one by one, they lost it all. "Their kids would say, 'If you can't feed us, we're going to live with dad.' No one would hire them even for low-paying positions. We have women wanting to commit suicide because they have no money."

One of Women Helping Women's services is job training. School counselors volunteer their time to administer a test to determine a suitable course of vocational skills. "We have nine different trades, including commercial vehicle lettering, lab tech, pest control, forklift driving and inventory control, and Hermann Hospital just came on as a trainer for pharmaceutical technicians," Turner said. "These are things in non-traditional areas where the pay is higher." "We look at higher paying jobs that take four to five months to prepare for," said Turner, who then places the women at companies that are "non-judgmental" She said these are the best employees. "If you can live with an alcoholic husband, raise your children and take a beating — what can you do in the business world with those survival skills?" she said. Remembering the company that gave her that first sign contract, Turner said, "We have loyal employees. The trucking company saved my home. It creates a certain kind of loyalty." In addition to job training and placement, the group offers consulting and related services.