

THE JANE LA CHAPELLE MCCARTY UNITY IN DIVERSITY AWARD
Presented to Shannon Kenevan by Rev. Roger Bertschausen of Toward
Community: Unity in Diversity
January 16, 2006

The Unity in Diversity Award is named after Jane La Chapelle McCarty as a tribute to the amazing work Jane did in connecting people across the racial, religious and other divides that so often separate us from one another. Naming the award for Jane seems especially appropriate this year because all three of our nominees—Shannon Kenevan, Willie Pekah, and Dave Seborah—have similar spirits to Jane. Like Jane, each of these three men works quietly, often behind the scenes, and collaboratively. They each share Jane's modesty. My guess is each one would probably prefer not to be in the limelight that getting nominated for this award shines on them. But nominated they have been, and each richly deserves our recognition. It was a hard choice.

Particularly for his innovative, creative and groundbreaking work as a founder and Director of Harmony Café, we are honored to give the 2006 Jane La Chapelle McCarty Unity in Diversity Award to Shannon Kenevan.

It is not a stretch to say that without Shannon, Harmony Café would not exist. The idea for Harmony Café was born in October 2000 in a conversation with then Appleton West High School senior Sarah Marjenka as she and Shannon drove home from a leadership training event in Madison. Within a month, thirty-five people gathered for a brainstorming session to develop a plan for creating Harmony Café. The process of making this very good idea a reality was not an easy one, and even once that happened Harmony Café still faced many obstacles. With the move into its space in 2003, Harmony Café came to full fruition. As both a volunteer and then Director, Shannon helped steer Harmony Café through all of the obstacles it faced. His vision, dedication and sheer perseverance were essential ingredients of Harmony Café's successful creation.

As a safe, peaceful place to celebrate diversity of people, ideas and activities, Harmony Café embodies the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jane La Chapelle-McCarty as well as Toward Community's deepest aspirations for our community. Now that it is such an established part of our community, it's easy to take Harmony Café for granted. We should not do so, however, because Harmony Café is a remarkable, extraordinary, one-of-a-kind institution. With Shannon's leadership, Harmony Café continues to create new, innovative programs as it carves out a unique and valuable niche in the Fox Cities. We are so fortunate to have it alive and thriving in our Fox Cities!

There are three other accomplishments of Shannon that I would like to lift up. One is his role as a founder of the GLBT Partnership, a very important program that has created a safe place for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or questioning youth to come for support and information. The second is Shannon's role in the creation of the Fox Cities Rotary Multicultural Center—particularly his idea for the Center to be housed next door to Harmony Café, and Harmony Café's support of its fledgling neighbor. And the third is Shannon's creation of the Justice Coalition, a group which brings together people working for justice in the Fox Cities.

When I think of Shannon, these words especially come to mind: visionary, creative, innovative, always thoughtful, and bridge-builder. Shannon may be the most

extraordinary bridge-builder I have ever met. He welcomes conversation and connection with everybody, including with those whom he profoundly disagrees. In this time of angry, hostile and often ruptured civil dialogue, it is especially important to have people like Shannon Kenevan in our midst.

Congratulations, Shannon!