

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WJA Announces Charlotte Preston "Gets It Done" Member Grant

Grant will be awarded annually to a female member

The Women's Jewelry Association announces a new Charlotte Preston "Gets It Done" Member Grant to honor the memory of one of its most committed members, the late Charlotte Preston, who died in October at the age of 62. She was an ardent supporter of WJA and served most recently as president of the WJA Twin Cities Chapter. The Charlotte Preston grant will be funded annually by WJA Foundation and the WJA Twin Cities Chapter. Member Grants are awarded to female, professional-level WJA members to be used toward professional growth.

Preston was a consultant to the jewelry industry for many years, via her business, Charlotte Preston Catalysts. She provided jewelry industry education program planning and execution, small business management group facilitation for jewelers, and individual coaching for members of the jewelry industry. As an educator, coach, and mentor to many industry professionals, Preston embodied the goals of WJA to help members advance and develop professionally through networking, education, and leadership development. "Gets It Done" was her email address for many years and the grant honors her "can do" attitude towards her work.

Preston received the national WJA Award for Excellence for Special Services to the jewelry industry in 2004. The WJA Twin Cities chapter also honored her with its "Shining Star" award in 2011, bestowed on the top volunteer who contributes extraordinary effort and energy to the group. Her industry clients included the JCK Shows, the American Gem Trade Association (AGTA), and the Retail Jewelers Organization (RJO). She was awarded the RJO Board of Directors Award for her work planning the group's education programs, and AGTA presented her with its Leon Ritzler Honorary Member Award, for an individual who has made a meaningful contribution to the growth and/or improvement of the natural colored gemstone industry. She was the AGTA GemFair Tucson's seminar planner for nearly two decades.

Preston received her MA in English from Kansas State University, and studied further in the Ph.D. program in Rhetoric at the University of Southern California. She was a gifted teacher, first at Marymount College in Salina, Kansas, then at USC. Beside her work in the jewelry industry, she was also dedicated to community service, as a member of the White Bear Lake, MN, Chamber of Commerce, and as president of the White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church. Preston also served on the Board of Directors of the Mid-America Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association. In addition, she was a gifted essayist and lyricist and a powerful singer.

Preston is survived by her wife, Mary Kurth, their son, Jake Kurth and his wife Emma, along with her sister, Sharon Stapleton and her husband Roy Van, as well as nieces and nephews, and a host of friends and colleagues. The announcement of the grant was presented to Preston's family on Nov. 8, 2015, at a memorial service honoring her.

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About the Women's Jewelry Association

WJA's mission is to help women in the jewelry and watch industries advance and develop professionally through networking, education, leadership development, and the provision of grants and scholarships. To inquire about the WJA Foundation, please contact Bernadette Mack, WJA executive director, bernadette@womensjewelryassociation.com.

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