



Barbara Blain-Olds receives Ann DeBock Leadership Award

Leadership Grand Strand presented its 2011 Ann DeBock Leadership Award to Barbara Blain-Olds during the Leadership Grand Strand Class XXXI graduation ceremony May 13 at Pine Lakes Country Club. The three other award nominees were David Durant, Danny Isaac and Julie Kopnicky.

Born in Conway, S.C., Blain-Olds attended the University of South Carolina where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology and a master's degree in education. After deciding to go back to school after a number of years, she received her juris doctorate from the USC Law School in 2000.

She has spent the entirety of her adult life in the area holding positions as Assistant Solicitor for the 15th Judicial Circuit Solicitor's Office, Attorney for S.C. Department of Social Services, Assistant Public Defender for the Horry County Public Defender's Office and Assistant City Administrator for the city of Conway.

Among her many other accomplishments, Blain-Olds was the first female African-American to serve on Conway's City Council and as executive director of the Waccamaw Regional Agency on Aging, as well as the first female African-American to graduate from her high school to become a lawyer, and the first in her family to attend college.

According to those she has worked with, Blain-Olds has always held a passion for those less fortunate than her. She has worked tirelessly to help them through both the positions she's held and her volunteer civic work. "Her personal and professional commitment to service began long before I met her, when she served on the Conway City Council and in her work with the S.C. Department of Social Services," said Dr. Sally Z. Hare, Singleton Distinguished Professor Emerita at Coastal Carolina University, "In both these roles, Barbara often became aware of people who needed help, and she took it upon herself to either provide it or to find it."

Dedicated to community service, Blain-Olds has been involved in volunteer work throughout her life. Some of her most notable roles being as a Laubach adult literacy volunteer (12 years), a leader of youth ushers for Friendship Baptist Church (6 years), a foster parent (5 years), a River Sweep volunteer (4 years), a Girl Scout Troop leader (3 years) and United Way volunteer (1 year). She has also dedicated much of her legal career to pro-bono legal consultation and services.

Blain-Olds was one of the 21 employees let go by the city of Conway in March. She has since started her own business, Community Legal Services, developed in the interest of serving the legal needs of low-to-moderate income people.

Each year, the Leadership Grand Strand class honors an alum who has exhibited outstanding leadership and service. The Ann DeBock Leadership Award was commissioned and started by Class XIX in memory of Ann DeBock, the executive director of Leadership Grand Strand from its inception in 1979 until her death in 1998. To receive this award, the recipient must volunteer in service or civic roles, serve on appointed boards or commissions and exhibit an overall demonstration of effective leadership skills.