

## Zonta honours four distinguished women

By Valerie Hill, Record staff

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WATERLOO — As an international service club dedicated to women's issue, there is perhaps no better celebration of women than Zonta International's Women of Achievement Awards.

On Wednesday night, four local women were recognized as trailblazers at the annual Zonta event held at the University of Waterloo's Laurel Room. They were: Rita Westbrook, the Justice Paddy A. Hardman, Shirley Fenton, and Elizabeth Witmer.

Westbrook, who is retired and lives Cambridge, spent 35 years in policing, coming from Hamilton to the Waterloo Regional Police Service. She was one of the first female officers hired by the regional police, and she faced plenty of hurdles in a male-dominated field. Determined to prove herself, Westbrook completed an undergraduate degree in sociology and began moving up the ladder. She was appointed superintendent in 2001.

She also distinguished herself as a leader in crime prevention, serving on the board of the Child Witness Centre and as a member of the regional police service's Critical Incident Trauma Team, and she was recognized with a Founders Award for her achievements with International Crime Stoppers. Among numerous volunteer activities, she has travelled extensively to administer polio vaccines, build schools and deliver mosquito netting.

Hardman was in law school when only 18 per cent of students were female. She ran a law practice in Cambridge from 1979 to 1991, at a time when women were not even allowed to join business groups.

She was appointed to the Ontario Court, provincial division, becoming the second woman to be appointed in the jurisdiction, and many of her ideas were implemented to smooth processes in the family court system. Hardman has been heavily involved in many charitable organizations, and was the first woman to be appointed chair of the United Way's major firms campaign and the second woman to become campaign chair.

Fenton, a director with the National Institutes of Health Informatics, is an accomplished computer sciences educator and researcher at the University of Waterloo.

The Waterloo woman created the first hands-on course to assist faculty and staff learn computers and she co-instructed the first Computing for Women course at Conestoga College and has led programs in Asia as well as the Waterloo Public Library.



**Zonta women.** Zonta International honoured some of its local trailblazers at an event Wednesday night: (from left) Rita Westbrook, Elizabeth Witmer and Shirley Fenton. Also honoured but not available for the photograph was Justice Paddy A. Hardman. Philip Walker/Record staff Source: Record staff

Witmer began her political career three decades ago as a school board trustee before being elected to the Ontario legislature as an MPP where she has held several portfolios, including such high-profile ones as Minister of Labour and Minister of Health. In 2002, she became deputy premier.

Over the years, Witmer has received several awards and has worked to encourage more women to enter politics. She also holds the distinction of being the longest-serving female MPP in the legislature.

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