



# Schenectady Business & Professional Women's Club, Inc.



## 2017 Woman of the Year

### Madelyn Thorne

**Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity, Schenectady County**

#### **Family Values**

At the age of 12, Madelyn moved to Rotterdam, NY from Philadelphia, PA with her mother, father and four older brothers. Her father was an electrician and her mother was a housewife. Though she and her neighbors were poor, she says there was not a feeling of being deprived. Families were connected and there was very much a spirit of taking care of each other.

As a young adult, Madelyn lived by the ideals instilled by her parents as community involvement became central to her life. Whether collecting food or clothing for the poor or being active in local government, Madelyn has always acted upon a personal obligation to serve her community. She has been involved in numerous organizations over the years and currently holds board positions with the Upper Union Street Business Improvement District, Habitat for Humanity of Schenectady County, and Friends of the Schenectady County Library. She is also an active volunteer for The League of Women Voters, Zonta, Mooncatchers, and the Whitney Book Corner.

#### **A Working Woman and Mother**

As a working woman, first in clerical positions and later in industrial sales in the printing and imaging industries, Madelyn found herself continually having to stand up for her rights. In reference to the popular series "Mad Men," she calls the show's portrayal of the inequity and sexism "all too accurate." She remembers help wanted ads divided by "men" and "women" and job descriptions for women that expressly listed "making coffee for the men in the office" as a core responsibility. In interviews, it was perfectly acceptable to ask questions about religion, race, marital status, and intentions to have children.

In sales she covered a territory larger than the 49th District and found that not only was she able to have more control over her earning potential, which was based on commission, but that she also greatly enjoyed being on the road and connecting with people. Still there were barriers. Some customers reasoned that they should buy from a man who had a family to support.

Ironically, Madelyn would find herself in that role of family provider. When faced with an unplanned pregnancy, she chose to become a single mother. Her ardent support of all 10 points of the Women's Equality Act comes from a deep appreciation of her freedom to make that very personal choice, and the belief that a woman's reproductive rights must remain intact.

On November 18, 1988, Madelyn married Chuck Thorne. Her son, Michael, and Chuck's two daughters, Jessie and Alison, became a happy, blended family. As of today, Madelyn and Chuck have two granddaughters and two grandsons.