

Anthony House Owner Crossed gets Achievement Award

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By: Ryan Hutton, North Adams Transcript

WILLIAMSTOWN -- For the first time ever, the Northern Berkshire Business & Professional Women have given their "Woman of Achievement" award to someone who is not from Berkshire County.

Carol Crossed, owner of the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace and Museum, lives in upstate New York, but she has earned a place in the hearts of North County business women, according to the organization's first vice president, Nancy Lescarbeau.

"We've never given it to anyone not from the area," Lescarbeau said Thursday. "But we look for people who are deserving of it and who have made an impact on society and their community. We thought that the work Carol has done with the museum and the advocacy was unparalleled to what anyone else has tried to do to that home."

She added, "It took someone from out of the community to do it. She may not be from here, but her heart is with us. She may not be living with us, but she's one of us, in that she has invested herself and her money in that place."

Crossed bought the 191-year old childhood home of Susan B. Anthony back in 2006 for \$164,000 and then invested \$200,000 of her own funds in emergency repairs when the roof collapsed in early 2007. For the last few years, she has established the property as a nonprofit and worked toward getting it restored and opened as a functioning museum dedicated to the famed suffragette's memory.

"If you go online and Google her, you'll find tomes of information about her," Lescarbeau said of Crossed. "I didn't realize she was as big and as important of a woman as she is. I thought she was just a regular person who found the house and bought it and did something with it."

Crossed will be honored at a benefit dinner at the Williams Inn on Wednesday night at 6 p.m. The prime rib, baked scrod and pasta primavera dinner is \$35 per person, open to all and will benefit the Margaret E. Lanoue Scholarship Fund. The scholarship was established by the Northern Berkshire Business & Professional Women to benefit a non-traditional female student.

While Lescarbeau said it was Crossed's insight and work in bringing the museum to fruition that earned her the organization's top honor, Crossed said all the honor and prestige goes to Anthony herself.

"The way I look at it is that it's an honor to Susan B. Anthony, and I am happy, overwhelmed and humbled to receive it on behalf of her vision," Crossed said. "She was not a politically correct person, and she didn't necessarily behave well for her day. She had some radical ideas about equality that would really rattle the political establishment."

Lescarbeau said Crossed's contribution to the Anthony birthplace was crucial to preserving a critical piece of Adams' history as well as the heritage of women's suffragists all across the nation.

"She was chosen for what she has done for the community, and she doesn't even realize what she has done," Lescarbeau said. "People are asking at the visitors center where the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace and Museum is. It's a destination place. People used to ask for the Quaker Meeting House; now they ask for Susan's birthplace. People are out there, and they're looking for it."

Crossed said restoring the house was vital to understanding who Susan B. Anthony was and what she stood for.

She said the best way to let Anthony speak to future generations was to fully grasp her past and how it shaped her.

"The house on East Road is her Quaker home, and it shaped her values and gave us who she became, in all of it's power and it's glory," Crossed said. "She clearly was the single most important woman in U.S. history and probably the most important woman in international history. She liberated half of the population of the world. How much more significant can a person's life be?"