



# March 17, 1997 Wyandotte Distinguished Graduate Inductee



## E. Virginia (Sheppard) Lapham Class of 1949

E. Virginia Lapham, Ph.D., Social Worker, Educator, and Humanitarian has reached the goals she set for herself after graduating from Theodore Roosevelt High School in 1949. She credits many of her high school teachers with seeing more in her than she saw in herself; they gave her the independence to pursue learning on her own.

From Roosevelt, she went on to Michigan State University, earning a B.A. with a major in speech. During her college years, she returned to Wyandotte as a student teacher, both at Roosevelt (speech and social studies) and in the elementary schools (speech therapy).

Dr. Lapham formally pursued learning for 30 years after her undergraduate work, earning her M.Ed. in special education from Wayne State University, her M.S.W. from Hunter College in New York City, and her Ph.D. in social work from the University of Maryland.

After serving as a speech therapist for the Southgate Public Schools, Dr. Lapham and her late husband went to the Middle East to work with Palestinian refugees. Dr. Lapham cites contributions to the communities in which she has lived (Michigan, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, New York, and Virginia), primarily in the areas of equal rights, peace and justice. She has worked for fair employment practices and fair housing opportunities, to establish an international kindergarten and special education for the American School in Rabat, Morocco; to organizing groups in response to the excesses of the Vietnam War; to working with persons with disabilities to achieve equal education rights; to providing short and longer term solutions to problems of Washington D.C.'s homeless. Additionally, the mother of five children, Dr. Lapham has worked on PTA, Brownies, Girl Scouts, and youth groups.

Dr. Lapham is probably most noted for the work she is currently doing to educate people and alert them to opportunities and risks of genetic discrimination. As science is developing more sophisticated methods of genetic testing, Dr. Lapham is keeping people aware of the potential for discrimination, including loss of health insurance and loss of jobs.

Dr. Lapham is an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Georgetown University where she continues her research and teaching. She also holds adjunct appointments at Catholic University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the University of Maryland. She has published numerous books, articles, and videos and has been a speaker at many professional conferences.

Through all her work, her accomplishments, and her honors, Dr. Lapham values one award the most, and it speaks not only to her distinguished career, but to her life of service. In 1987 she was awarded the Annual Distinguished Professional Award by the Parent Association of Children with Multiple Handicaps, Greater New York Area. That is the award that hangs in her office.

Dr. Lapham currently resides in Vienna, Virginia.