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HERS Honored With Women's Way Award

Amid the applause of 1,100 guests, the Women's Way 32nd Annual Powerful Voice Awards were presented in Philadelphia on May 6, 2009. The awards honored the accomplishments of Women Organized Against Rape (WOAR) Director Teresa White, community organizer and HIV/AIDS awareness advocate Waheedah Shabazz-El, and women's rights activist and Hysterectomy Educational Resources and Services (HERS) Foundation President Nora W. Coffey.

Women's Way Executive Director Melissa Weiler Gerber says of the award, it "serves as a call to action to women everywhere, encouraging us to increase women's influence in the media and make a difference in the community."

Women's Way is the first major women's organization to publicly acknowledge the importance of educating women about the damaging effects of hysterectomy and the lifelong functions of the female organs. The award is recognition that hysterectomy is one of the most serious health issues facing women today. As demonstrated in Coffey's book **THE H WORD**, co-authored by Rick Schweikert, the hysterectomy rate is on the rise, and every woman with a uterus is at risk.

Short videos about the recipients' work were shown on two large viewing screens prior to presenting the awards. Click here http://hersfoundation.org/womensway_photos.html to watch the video about Coffey and HERS and to view photos from the event.

Women's Way presented HERS with an excellent opportunity to talk about the issues, but the award presenter was a pharmaceutical company representative. Coffey's first thought was, "I can't accept an award presented by someone from the industry." HERS is an independent women's health education organization with a policy of not accepting support from the medical industry.

"Because there was no opportunity to address this issue publicly at the banquet," Coffey said, "in keeping with HERS' mandate of education, I presented a copy of **THE H WORD** to the pharmaceutical rep as she handed me the award. That way, she could educate herself and her pharma colleagues about these issues."

Since 1977, Women's Way has been the country's oldest and largest women's funding federation. This award brings into focus the imperative to provide women with the information required for hysterectomy informed consent.

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