

Alvirita Little Award FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

Who was Alvirita Little?

Alvirita Little contributed more than 50 years of professional and volunteer service in support of youth and families in Seattle. Her legacy of community involvement has been an inspiration to all of us at Therapeutic Health Services. The granddaughter of a slave, Alvirita grew up among German immigrant farmers in Spring, Texas. Her first experience in social work came in 1925, when she organized a Women's League at her church to help families in need. In the 1950's Alvirita moved to Seattle, where she instituted the area's first community program for young girls: the Girls' Club of Puget Sound, known today as Girls Inc. YWCA. Alvirita served as executive director of the Girls' Club for 19 years, overseeing the club's move into its own building on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. Upon retiring, Alvirita continued her service to the community by hosting overseas students attending the University of Washington and volunteering for the American Red Cross and the VA Hospital. She was also an active volunteer with the Boy Scouts, who presented her with the William H. Spurgeon III award in 1980. In the words of former Washington State Governor Dan Evans, "Alvirita provided some great leadership here in this community without an enormous amount of notice. She just went ahead and did things."

When did the THS Board decide to create the Alvirita Little Award?

In 1988, in honor of her selfless dedication and tireless commitment, the Board of Directors of Therapeutic Health Services created the Alvirita Little Award. The award honors an individual or organization that has contributed continuously and selflessly to help at-risk children, youth, adults and families — especially those affected by chemical dependency and mental illness.

Who are the past recipients of the Alvirita Little Award?

The Alvirita Little Award has been awarded 16 times since its inception in 1988:

1989: Mother Hale of New York City for her work with drug addicted babies.

1993: The Alcohol/Drug 24 Hour Helpline for its all-volunteer crisis, information and referral service to the residents of Western Washington.

1997: Senator George McGovern for his advocacy on behalf of individuals and families affected by chemical dependency.

1999: Tsuguo "Ike" Ikeda for his contribution of over 50 years of professional and volunteer service to under-represented communities in Western Washington State, including 33 years as the Executive Director for the Atlantic Street Center.

2001: Elizabeth Thomas, ARNP, for her leadership and advocacy on behalf of children and families and her work with children as a pediatric nurse practitioner with the Odessa Brown Clinic and Children's Hospital.

2002: Steve Pool of KOMO 4 TV for his advocacy and fundraising work to ensure that all children in the community have access to medical care, regardless of their financial situation.

2005: Patrick Gogerty, former Executive Director of Childhaven, for his tireless and passionate advocacy on behalf of abused and neglected children.

2006: Alan Sugiyama, founder and Executive Director of the Center for Career Alternatives, focusing on youth employment.

2007: Dr. Maxine Mimms, founder of the Maxine Mimms Academies, a leader in a "transformative model of education" designed for underperforming students.

2009: Patti Skelton-McGougan, Executive Director of Youth Eastside Services in Bellevue since 1997, for her work with at-risk, underserved youth.

2010: Phil Smart, Sr., for his many years of philanthropic and volunteer service in Puget Sound, including over 30 years of reading to young patients at Children's Hospital.

2011: Dr. Constance Rice, a longtime civic volunteer and community advocate on behalf of youth in foster care and those with HIV/AIDS in Africa.

2012: Dr. Carol Simmons, for her 35 years of service within Seattle Public Schools and for her tireless dedication as a community activist for quality education for all students.

2013: Trish Millines-Dziko, realizing an unmet need within the public school system for rigorous, relevant technology training she founded Technology Access Foundation (TAF). TAF's goal is to increase access to STEM education, especially among kids of color, girls and young women.

2014: In her thirty-two year career in public education, Mona Bailey worked to promote equity and excellence for all students especially for those most at risk for not achieving their academic potential.

2016: Justice Bobbe Bridge, Retired, is the Founding President/CEO of the Center for Children & Youth Justice, a nonprofit organization she created in 2006 to reform Washington State's child welfare and juvenile justice systems. She served on the State Supreme Court from 2000 to 2008 and the King County Superior Court from 1990 to 2000, where she was Chief Juvenile Court Judge for three years.

2017: Edith Chavers Elion, Executive Director of Atlantic Street Center, which under Edith's leadership created programs and services for children, youth and families in areas of education, homelessness, family support, adolescent development, violence prevention and mental health.

Why does Therapeutic Health Services give an Alvirita Little Award at its annual fundraiser?

Non-profits typically create awards named for people whose life and work parallel the mission, vision and values of the organization. In many ways, this person and the award named in their honor become a symbol of the agency and the work it does. Fundraising events are not only a means to engage people about financially contributing to support the organization's mission, but are also a means of acquainting a broader audience about the agency's work and the people it serves. Giving the award at a key event, like a fundraiser, helps to reinforce these messages and exposes new segments of the community to the organization.

What Therapeutic Health Services programs are supported by funds raised at the Alvirita Little Award event?

Ticket sales and other contributions made by event attendees support Therapeutic Health Services programs for youth, young adults and their families. In any given year, Therapeutic Health Services provides substance use and mental health treatment and prevention services as well as a range of specialty programs which directly address youth homelessness, juvenile justice system involvement, gang violence and school-related behavioral issues.

Can you tell me a little bit about Therapeutic Health Services?

At Therapeutic Health Services, our mission is to foster healing and recovery. We rehabilitate individuals and heal families affected by alcohol dependence, drug dependence, and/or mental illness, helping them to lead healthy and productive lives. We offer the most effective evidence-based behavioral health treatment in an outpatient setting. Treatment includes one-on-one and group counseling sessions, life skills groups, vocational groups, case management, a relapse prevention groups. Our experienced, compassionate and professional staff includes licensed chemical dependency and mental health professionals, case managers, vocational rehabilitation specialists, nurses, ARNPs, physicians and psychiatrists. Providing strengths-based programs and services, individualized to the unique goals and capabilities of the individual, allows us to help our patients achieve positive outcomes. Our primary care team helps our substance use and mental health patients manage their overall physical health as well as commonly occurring chronic conditions. In an average year, our 10 service locations in King and Snohomish counties serve approximately 8,500 adults and over 1,000 youth in our community. Therapeutic Health Services is the largest non-profit provider of medication-assisted treatment for opioid addiction in Washington State. We specialize in treating high-risk, low-income, ethnic minority, multi-system involved, and "harder to serve" adults and youth.