

Dianne Nagy Receives 21st Annual Butler Human Rights Award

Brookings, SD – The Brookings Human Rights Commission announces Dianne Nagy as the recipient of the 21st Annual Dorothy and Eugene T. Butler Human Rights Award. Dr. Nagy is being recognized for demonstrating quiet yet determined commitment to inclusivity in the City of Brookings for many years in many ways.

The Butler Human Rights Award will be presented by Mayor Corbett at the October 27th, 2020 City Council meeting.

Dr. Nagy is humble, always working behind the scenes to further humanitarian causes within our city (and beyond). She keeps planning teams and organizational members mindful of their missions, and keeps event attendees focused on their shared purpose. She leads with quiet passion and clear vision. She models inclusivity, treating everyone with kindness and speaking with compassionate candor, unafraid to address “the tough stuff.”

“Dianne’s tireless willingness to engage others on issues of human rights is a leavening agent in the dough of our community,” stated Phyllis Cole-Dai who along with Nagy and others created the Brookings Interfaith Council in 2010. The Brookings Interfaith Council is a wonderful and diverse group of people who meet monthly (prior to the COVID pandemic) to discuss their various faith traditions, often within the context of a specific issue or concern. Dianne provides the perspective of the Baha’i Faith in the Council’s dialogues.

In 2016, Nagy petitioned the Human Rights Commission to publicly reaffirm the city’s commitment to equity and social justice and then was one of the primary drafters of the resulting City of Brookings Resolution of Inclusivity which was adopted by the City Council. As a result, the HRC created an inclusivity team, on which Dianne served. This team worked for over a year with the Brookings Public Schools to promote inclusive programming. This led to the formation of a formal district-level inclusivity committee with representatives from each school and an administrative team.

In the spring of 2017, Nagy, on behalf of the Brookings Interfaith Council, submitted a successful mini-grant to purchase “Welcome, Neighbor” signs for community residents. The grant was matched by the HRC enabling the purchase of 240 signs. When demand exceeded supply, Nagy helped find funding for additional signs that now are visible throughout Brookings.

Nagy did more than lament the demise of general civility in today’s society. She co-convoked an open discussion group based on Parker Palmer’s book *Healing the Heart of Democracy: the Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit*. This Healing Democracy Action Circle resulted in a meaningful year-long public discussion group (2017).

Some of Nagy’s other activities include Brookings County Youth Mentoring Program (mentor) and Brookings Area Habitat for Humanity (director 2005-2012, 2015-2018).

Ruth Harper, 2016 Butler award recipient, stated “Sometimes it is more important to consistently show up and involve others than to offer large donations; sometimes it is the quiet but insistent voice that has the greatest resonance for justice. Dianne Nagy makes Brookings a more accepting, affirming, humane community.”

In her career as a research administrator at SDSU, Dr. Nagy ensures compliance with human research protocols as well as other governmental regulations regarding research. She also led SDSU service-learning programs as a part of SDSU’s Diversity Enhancement Office for five years.

Dianne was born in Oregon, grew up in Guam and Greece, went to school in Ohio, and moved to Brookings from St. Louis in 2001 when her husband (Michael) joined SDSU’s English faculty. Dianne has worked at SDSU since 2002.



The Dorothy and Eugene T. Butler Human Rights Award is named after the Butlers in recognition of their lifelong advocacy in human rights issues on the local, regional, national and international levels. The annual award recognizes significant volunteer efforts on behalf of human rights. Previous honorees, in addition to Dorothy and Eugene T. Butler, Jr. are: Dr. Philip and Winnie Baker, First United Methodist Church, the Rev. Carl Kline, the Rev. Scott Miller and Lisa Wolff, Margaret Denton, Dr. Steve Marquardt, Lawrence Novotny, Dr. Charles Woodard, Dr. Geoffrey Grant, Dr. Timothy Nichols, Scott Nagy, Dr. Ann Marie Bahr, Phyllis Cole-Dai, Harriet Swedlund, Drs. MaryJo and Richard Lee, Dr. Ruth Harper, Professor Doris Giago, Dr. Allen Branum, and Aki and Tomoko Ichinomiya.