

from **August 20, 2007**

WIF's Focus Awards go to three amazing women who rose to the top in advertising, film, theatre



Producer/director Betty Thomas to receive a WIF Focus Award

Perseverance, fresh approaches and talent, of course, are always the cornerstones of an enduring, successful career. Those qualities are exemplified and illuminated in Women in Film's choices for this year's Focus Awards

Tributes will be presented to ad agency owner Carol H. Williams, actress/director/producer Betty Thomas and theatre director Joyce Piven Oct. 16 at the Ritz Carlton hotel.

Named one of Black Enterprise magazine's 50 Most Powerful Black Women in Business in 2006, Carol H. Williams is CEO/chief creative director of the \$350 million advertising agency bearing her name.

Williams started her advertising career as in 1969 at Leo Burnett as a copywriter on the Secret and Pillsbury accounts. She was an SVP/creative director at FCB in San Francisco, and started her own agency in Oakland in 1988. She moved back to Chicago in 1993.

Among her many honors and awards, Williams' alma mater, the University of Missouri, last year awarded her a Missouri Honor Medal for Distinguished Service in Journalism for her pioneering work and award-winning advertising.

Williams is also a former Chicago Women's Advertising Club Advertising Woman of the Year.

St. Louis native Betty Thomas was a Chicago school teacher who found self-expression when she joined Second City as an ensemble member in the late 1970s and moved with the troupe to Los Angeles.

She is also associated with Chicago through her long-running TV role in "Hill Street Blues," the hit TV series that was set in a Chicago police station.

For her role in "Blues," Thomas won an Emmy for best supporting actress and seven Emmy nominations, and later took home an armful of awards for directing and producing. They include a DGA award for the HBO movie, "The Late Shift," and many DGA nominations.

After "Blues," Thomas segued into directing and producing TV shows and movies, many under the banner of Dominant, her own production company.

Her body of work embraces direction of 24 TV movies and episodes for series, and 21 movies and videos she's directed and/or produced—"John Tucker Must Die," "28 Days," "Charlie's Angels" and "Surviving Christmas" among them. She is currently in postproduction on a TV movie, "Dash 4 Cash."

Director, actress and teacher Joyce Piven is artistic director emeritus of the Piven Theatre Workshop in Evanston, which she co-founded in 1972 with her late husband, actor Byrne Piven.

Using an ensemble-based, community-oriented approach to theatre training and performance, the Workshop annually serves 1,000 children and adults. Among its illustrious graduates are John Cusack, Joan Cusack, Aidan Quinn and their son, Jeremy Piven, who began their training there as children.

Joyce and Byrne Piven have been praised as "Chicago's first family of acting" and for founding one of the most successful theatre training programs in the country. Among their many honors were Joseph Jefferson and Chicago Improv Festival lifetime achievement awards.

The Focus Awards take place at the Ritz Carlton ballroom, 160 E. Pearson, 11:30 a.m. reception, noon luncheon. WIF members, \$90, others, \$125.