

## WCWI honors Riverton resident with Summit Award

By Carma Corra

Muhammad Ali's self-descriptive phrase, "floats like a butterfly, stings like a bee," may also apply to Andrea Clifford.

The Riverton resident recognized by the Wyoming Council for Women's Issues with its annual Summit Award on April 30, is tenacious in her efforts to assist her employees and their families yet reticent to call attention to herself. Although the award luncheon took place at Wind River Casino, where Clifford is the Human Resource Director, her deep humility kept her from inviting most of those employees and all but her closest friends and family members to the event. Several speakers, including Lorinda Lindley, Karen Black, Jenny Wildcat and casino CEO Jim Conrad, testified to Clifford's significant accomplishments on many levels and to her positive influence on their own lives. The Women's Council gave Clifford a blanket purchased at the Wind River Trading Post and embroidered with her name and award information; Conrad, her supervisor, presented her with flowers.

According to Pamela Downing, chair of WCWI's Employment Practices Committee responsible for the Summit Award, "the Women's Council likes to recognize those who have made employment conditions better through instituting programs or policies that broaden, strengthen and support their workforce." Ideally, broadening progresses toward an equitable and diverse workforce from under-represented populations, strengthening promotes wages and benefits comparable to regional or national averages for similar jobs and supporting allows flexibility and other services that minimize the stresses of balancing the demands of work and family and lead to increased employee productivity. Among Clifford's credits at the Casino, which employs 255 males and 355 females, many of them single mothers working night and graveyard shifts, are her efforts to provide childcare assistance by collaborating with local providers to guarantee spots, arrange payment plans and set up payroll deduction. After hiring four teenagers for summer employment and providing them with \$400 incentives, Clifford personally drove the youths to Denver to shop for school clothes. To aid employees without vehicles, she launched a shuttle service. "We don't go door-to-door; routes are set and they do need to get to the boarding site," she said.

In the areas of health and wellness, counseling service is provided to single mothers to help keep them employed. "If they are trying and struggling, we'll work with them; it is to our mutual benefit to keep them employed. We have saved a lot of people," Clifford said. She works with the counselor and advocates and provides specific counseling for substance abuse and domestic violence, paying 100 percent of what is allowable for rehabilitation and/or treatment if the employee is enrolled in the casino's health insurance plan. The casino also pays half the cost of membership at Riverton recreation and exercise centers and paid for \$100,000 in renovations, programs and incentives at the two recreation centers managed by the Tribal Council on the reservation.

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**Andi Clifford**

Clifford is wrapped in her award, a blanket embroidered with her name and other details regarding the honor.

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Mary Billiter – At-Large  
Pam Walker – At-Large  
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Those incentives include weight loss programs, monitoring and exercise attire such as shoes and jackets. Future plans include renovating the Arapaho workout center.

In addition, the Casino recently purchased a disease management program to provide free and complete blood panels for employees. It also plans to hire a registered nurse to seek out and work with high-risk employees with conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.

A graduate of the University of Wyoming, where she was a graduate assistant and American Indian student support coordinator, Clifford maintains a relationship with the Outreach School and remains dedicated to recruiting others to pursue higher education. She is also a 2010 graduate of the Leadership Wyoming program and just completed a five-year appointment to the Wyoming Humanities Council. She is a member of National Native American Resource, a coordinator for Eagle Staff Runners Association, a member of the Wind River Reservation Youth Council and a frequent speaker at Reservation schools. She is a former AmericCorps VISTA volunteer. Clifford and her husband Don, whom she calls the love of her life, are the parents of four children and six grandchildren, including two newborns.

For more information regarding the Summit Award or WCWI, contact Annie Wood at the Wyoming Business Council at 777-2844 or [annie.wood@wybusiness.org](mailto:annie.wood@wybusiness.org). The Council's website is undergoing reconstruction.

## Council packs September calendar

"They" say good things come in threes. The WCWI is taking that to heart this September, scheduling two major annual activities in two Wyoming communities on either side of its fall quarterly meeting.

The Council's **Young Women's Career Fair**, co-hosted this year with Northwest College, is scheduled on Sept. 15 in Powell, educating and inspiring young women from area high schools and featuring a keynote address from Philadelphia-based "SmallBizLady" Melinda Emerson, entertainment by Plumbers of Rome, hands-on workshops showcasing myriad career choices, and other activities.

Just two days later, WCWI will recognize Riverton resident **Dessie Bebout** as its **2011 Woman of Distinction**. Nominated by Central Wyoming College Board of Trustees Chair Roger L. Gose, M.D., retired U.S. Senator Alan K. Simpson, and Central Wyoming College President JoAnne Youtz McFarland, Ph.D., Bebout will be honored for her lifetime of achievement and service at a luncheon in her home community on Sept. 17. Bebout and her accomplishments will be featured in the Council's next newsletter.

Sandwiched between the Young Women's Career Fair and Woman of Distinction Luncheon, the Council's **fall quarterly meeting** on Sept. 16 in Powell will welcome new members and new officers and discuss plans for 2012, such as participation in the Women's Legislative Caucus Leap Into Leadership, updates to the Council's Women's Legislative Handbook, and future awards, events and activities.

Additional information regarding WCWI's September trio of events is forthcoming. Contact Annie Wood at the Wyoming Business Council at 777-2844 with questions.



Pictured with friends and colleagues who praised her accomplishments as Wind River Casino Human Resources Director, Andrea Clifford, center, with (L to R) Lorinda Lindley, Jenny Wildcat, Karen Black and Jim Conrad.

## Recipient exemplifies humility

by Mary Billiter, WCWI member and Casper Star-Tribune columnist, with permission of Casper Star-Tribune

The first thing you notice is her smile that begins in her dark eyes and gently fills out her face. Then there's her physical beauty that is utterly impossible to miss. Sleek black hair falls to her shoulder and frames an unblemished face. Her energy is palatable. Her beauty disarming.

She's not tall in stature, but she quietly commands attention when she enters a room. She is an embodiment of strength and vulnerability.

She has six sisters and she is fourth in the family. She is the mother of four and grandmother to one. She is married to her first and only true love.

She is from the Northern Arapaho Tribe and she represents her people with pride, integrity and grace. Her name is Andi Clifford and last weekend she was honored by the Wyoming Council of Women's Issues (WCWI) for her contributions as the Human Resources Manager at the Wind River Casino.

It's not just a job for Andi. She personally knows each employee and their background. She knows their strengths as well as their struggles.

As a newly Governor-appointed member of the WCWI, I had the good fortune of meeting Andi, her colleagues, family and friends.

My assignment at the WCWI Summit Award luncheon was to write a newsletter article on Andi. Falling back on my journalism skills, I went around the room hoping to get a personal insight into Andi.

"Tell me a funny story about Andi," I said to one woman in attendance.

"There's nothing funny to tell. Andi's amazing."

I nodded. "Well, how about at home. Does she like to cook? Is she a good cook?"

It was the only time I could get the woman to laugh, "Her husband does all the cooking."

Thinking I was on to something I pried further. "Great! What else can you tell me about Andi?"

"Andi is amazing." And with that the interview was over.

I went around the room but the minimal responses didn't vary. There was no funny story to tell about Andi. She was simply amazing.

I was briefed on Andi's accomplishments as the HR Manager but I wanted to get to know the woman, not the title. While Andi was easy to talk to when the questions came around to her, she deflected her response to acknowledge someone in the room.

I couldn't understand why I wasn't able to get anyone, including Andi, to open up to me. And then as the awards luncheon began the answer to my question was revealed.

"Andi is not someone who takes credit, that is why we are here to give her credit," said WCWI representative Carma Corra.

As each speaker went to the podium more about Andi was revealed.

"Northern Arapaho women do not talk about themselves. It is contrary to their way." This from a woman who wrote her dissertation on Northern Arapaho women and has known Andi for years.

The more I heard about the history of the Northern Arapaho Tribe the more clear it became to me. These are a people that still follow tribal ways.

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Respect for these traditions is a way of life. It is not in their nature to blow their own horn or discuss a "funny" story that could be perceived as embarrassing.

They are a humble, service-filled people and such humility is a welcomed change from the personal aggrandizing that tends to be more prevalent in our society. All too often far too much attention is paid to those that go out of their way to seek the spotlight.

The Wyoming Council of Women's Issue chose to honor a woman who neither seeks the spotlight nor calls attention to herself. But, unlike so many, Andi Clifford has actually accomplished something meaningful and worthwhile, and it did not go unnoticed.



Melinda Emerson

Small Business expert to share success story Sept. 15 at Young Women's Career Fair

She is known as "SmallBizLady" for a reason. For several reasons, in fact.

Melinda Emerson is a seasoned entrepreneur, professional speaker, social media strategist and small business coach and the Start-Up columnist for Small Business Trends. She has been featured on NBC Nightly News and in the Wall Street Journal, U.S. News and World Report and Black Enterprise and has received numerous awards including Top 50 Women in Business in Pennsylvania, Top 30 Leaders of the future by Ebony Magazine, and the National Association of Women Business Owners' Woman of Distinction Award.

Beginning her professional career in television as a producer and inspired by Oprah Winfrey's HARPO Studios, Inc., she left television within five years to pursue her entrepreneurial dream to create an award-winning production company. As the founder and CEO of Quintessence Multimedia, Emerson has created productions for clients such as Johnson & Johnson, Verizon, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Comcast and Radio-One. She also hosts the weekly talk show Smallbizchat on Twitter, discussing everything entrepreneurs need to know about launching and running a profitable small business, and she blogs at Succeed As Your Own Boss. Emerson's first book, Become Your Own Boss in 12 months; A Month-by-Month Guide to a Business That Work, was released last year and she also recorded the audio CD, 10 Things You Must Never Forget in Business.

A graduate of Virginia Tech, business owner, and wife and mother in Philadelphia, Penn., Emerson's Young Women's Career Fair keynote follows lectures at The Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University and Rosemont College and for clients including: IKEA, Verizon, GlaxoSmithKline, National Association of Women Business Owners, PA Governor's Conference for Women, U.S. Department of Labor, International Association of Business Communicators, the Small Business Administration, and the Center for Women's Business Research. Her areas of expertise include small business start-up, recession-proof marketing and social media strategy.



Plumbers of Rome

Comedy a cappella group Plumbers of Rome, previously known as Moosebutter and popular at WCWI's 2009 and 2010 Young Women's Career Fairs in Torrington and Gillette, will again entertain at the Fair hosted by WCWI and Northwest College on Sept. 15 in Powell.

Governor Mead appoints two to Council



Mary Billiter with Governor Matt Mead

The Wyoming Council for Women's Issues once again boasts a full house with two recent appointments by Governor Matt Mead. Pam Walker of Casper and Mary Billiter, an Alpine resident at the time of her appointment but now also of Casper, will serve as at-large representatives through June 30, 2016.

Well known to Casper Star-Tribune readers for her popular, soul-baring Saturday column, Billiter is a recently-divorced single mother of four, a novelist promoting her first published book--the mystery Not My Kid--and enmeshed in writing her second, and a writing instructor at Casper College. Her Casper Star column about Andi Clifford, recipient of WCWI's annual Summit Award, appears elsewhere in this newsletter. Inspired by her father, journalist Bill Billiter, the winner of two Pulitzer prizes who discouraged his children from following him in "a poor man's profession," Billiter graduated from California State University at Northridge and embarked on a journalism career. "He made it romantic to me," she said. Eventually, she found that her "best work was as a columnist."


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Visit [www.wyomingwomenscouncil.org](http://www.wyomingwomenscouncil.org) for more information.

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**Pam Walker**

Of her dual roles as writer and writing instructor, Billiter says she strives to balance the scales on topics and issues of concern to communities in the state in her column--"I don't take my position or placement in the pages of the state's largest newspaper lightly"--and knows her job at Casper College is to inspire. "Teachers can play a pivotal role in shaping futures," she says.

In Alpine, Billiter served on the Friends of the Library Board and was a motivational speaker for CLIMB Wyoming. After her life took an unexpected turn and she became the sole support for her family, she also moonlighted as a restaurant server in Jackson.

"As a single mom of four school-aged children, I feel that in some part I have a pulse on some of the concerns facing children and their parents. As a single woman, I hope to keep a pulse on issues concerning women," she says. "From my resume, the biggest obstacle facing women is the gender wage gap...my earnings pale in comparison to my male counterparts. For Wyoming to truly be the Equality State, significant measures, to bridge the distance in gender wage gap, are required."

**PAM WALKER**

A Casper resident since 2005 when she married the love of her life and became mom to "three charming and wonderful sons," Walker has an extensive background in non-profit management, advertising, public relations and community relations. She is the associate director at the Wyoming Medical Center Foundation, handling the Annual Giving Program, including three events, employee giving, annual campaign, and building donor relations.

Raised mostly in Texas with stints in Munich, Germany, where her father served in the Air Force and then the Army and Air Force Exchange Service which supported the military, Walker spent her last two years of high school in Munich before graduating from Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

Her early work experience included working as a copywriter for the advertising department of Foley's, a public relations specialist for Genex Homes, and a copywriter for Julie Ray Creative Services, and back to Foley's.

Eventually, Walker became a communications department writer for Houston Lighting and Power before moving into community relations where she was in charge of their volunteer and blood drive programs and also served as president of Houston's Corporate Volunteer Council. Recruited to serve as regional director for Points of Light Foundation in Washington, D.C., she later entered into what she describes as a mid-life crisis and moved to Wyoming.

As director of the non-profit, state-owned, city-supervised Wyoming Territorial Park in Laramie, Walker faced significant challenges in securing funding and laying the infrastructure for the commercial development opposed by most residents. She became director of the Public Relations Department at Laramie County Community College until marrying her husband and moving to Casper, where, in addition to her duties as an instant mother, she worked for local foundations. While at the McMurry Foundation, she produced the 2006 Wings Over Wyoming Air Show.

"I began getting interested in women's issues when I moved to Wyoming," Walker says. "I found myself facing outright gender discrimination (that I could identify at least) for the first time in my life." Looking back, she realizes she was somewhat isolated through her work in predominantly female-run businesses and may have ignored inappropriate behavior by male counterparts or leaders.

"Things started to change for me when I joined LCCC--I was given the opportunity to participate in the Women in Educational Leadership program which instigated some soul-searching on my part into issues facing women," Walker says. "In the spring of 2010, I had the opportunity to attend the National Women's Law Center Advocacy Workshop in Baltimore and met some wonderful role models who changed my life. Since then, I have been searching for an outlet to use my skills and talents to move women's issues forward." Walker lists the issues capturing her interest as the gender wage gap, helping women learn how to negotiate better roles and salaries for themselves, and teaching women to be advocates for--not critics of--themselves and other women. "I am excited about joining the Council and with that, I am also excited about continuing my work with the NWLC and advocating for women on a national level."