

The Purple Starfish Award

Honoring

Perdita Huston's

vision and

leadership

AWARD COMMITTEE

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THE MAINE WOMEN

WRITERS COLLECTION,

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NEW ENGLAND

A proud daughter of Portland, Maine, Perdita Huston spent most of her adult life traveling the world, advocating for sustainable development, stewardship of the earth, women's rights, and support for families everywhere. She insisted on the possibility that people in any society could create a better future. This award is given in her memory.

AWARD DESCRIPTION

The Perdita Huston Purple Starfish Award is given annually to an emerging Maine woman leader who inspires others with her transforming vision and action to create a vibrant, culturally pluralistic society, embracing equal rights and a healthful environment for all. The purpose of the award is to validate the vision embodied in the recipient's work, celebrate her emerging leadership, develop her skills—especially in empowering others, and make her life and work more broadly visible.

Initial funding for the award has been provided by the Lillian M. Berliawsky Charitable Trust. The Maine Women Writers Collection at the University of New England, which houses the writings and letters of Perdita Huston, is the fiscal sponsor of the award.

The Perdita Huston Purple Starfish Award Committee (PHPSAC) selects awardees and administers the Award.

The PHPSAC invites nominations for the award from a broad-based group of citizens, inclusive of Maine's many ethnic groups and located throughout the state. The award is being widely publicized and nominations are accepted from any Maine citizen. The awardee will receive her award and be honored at the NAACP Celebration of Excellence in Education on April 18, 2008 in Portland, Maine. At a PHPSA gathering just before this ceremony, the awardee will meet potential mentors as well as former awardees and finalists.

A cash award of \$1,500 will be given to each year's awardee. In addition, the PHPSAC is developing a roster of seasoned community leaders to serve as mentors. Mentors will be available to help each awardee: —

- maintain and clarify her vision;
- learn how to engage her community more fully;
- formulate long-term strategies;
- sharpen her capacity to advocate through enhanced oral and written communication skills;
- enhance her skills for transforming her vision into social reality; and, as appropriate,
- mobilize other resources.



The Purple Starfish Award

“Have you ever seen anything as precious as a purple starfish? You and me, kiddo, we’re the purple starfish of this family. We’re just different. I admire you. You’re so brave. You’re doing just fine. You keep it up. I compromised my dreams...stayed close to home...and now, it’s too late. Don’t do what I did, kiddo...walk out and make your own life.”

— From “Perdita,”

— a play

by Pierre Marc Diennet

Mentors will help the awardee consolidate and/or expand her goals at a meeting occurring early in the award year and attended by additional resource people--former nominees, awardees, and finalists. Each recipient will be invited to review for the PHSAC at the end of her award year how she grew, how her work developed, and what role her mentors played. She will also be invited to greet and mentor new awardees.

CRITERIA

A candidate eligible for the Purple Starfish Award is an emerging woman leader, residing in Maine, who as a community activist

- works outside the usual organizations or channels to challenge the status quo;
- demonstrates a spirited commitment to intergenerational and multi-ethnic values by embracing the courage, nobility, and intelligence of all the world’s people;
- shows openness of heart in her work;
- demonstrates strategic thinking, and the spirit of an agent for social change, through developing the ability to encourage self-advocacy and resourcefulness in others; and
- performs whatever roles she sees necessary to bring about social change and better lives for her community members.

Nominees may be engaged in journalism or other writing or research, but must demonstrate community-based vision, advocacy, and leadership.

NOMINATION SUBMISSIONS

A nomination form is available on the Maine Women Writers Collection website www.une.edu/mwwc. All nominations must be submitted in paper form and in e-mail form, postmarked by February 15, 2008. The awardee will be announced on April 1.

PHPSAC VISION

It is the PHSAC’s vision that one day this process can lead to a new community — **The Purple Starfish Society** — that would link path-breaking young advocates for social activism, cultural pluralism, environmental protection, and human rights with Maine’s experienced leaders in mutually supportive ways. This is how women traditionally have organized for social progress. We are excited about this potential to encourage vibrant 21st century Maine communities.

