

Lifespan
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For Immediate Release
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**Lifespan Hosts 13th *Celebration of Aging* with Dr. Ruth Westheimer
Six to Receive “*Second Half Hero*” Awards**

Lifespan, an organization dedicated to helping older adults take on both the challenges and opportunities of the second half of life, hosted the 13th *Celebration of Aging* community luncheon on Thursday, March 19 with guest speaker Dr. Ruth Westheimer. 1200 people attended the noon event at the Riverside Convention Center.

Lifespan’s *Celebration of Aging* highlights older adults who are breaking stereotypical myths about aging by “taking it on” in the second half of life and features a nationally known speaker who also is a role model for productive aging.

Born Karola Ruth Siegel in Frankfurt, Germany, the only child of an Orthodox Jewish couple, Dr. Ruth was sent to Switzerland in 1939 after her father was taken by the Nazis. She came of age in an orphanage, and later learned that her parents had been killed in the Holocaust. After moving to Israel, and despite her 4’7” height, Dr. Ruth was trained as a scout and sharpshooter in a Jewish paramilitary organization and was seriously wounded in action by an exploding shell during the Israeli War of Independence in 1948.

In the early 1980s, when her radio show, *Sexually Speaking*, began taping at 30 Rockefeller Center, it was reported that work was stopping in the building as people gathered to hear this "cross between Henry Kissinger and Minnie Mouse," as the *Wall Street Journal* would later describe her.

Dr. Ruth is currently teaching weekly courses on Jewish Family Life at Yale and Princeton Universities. She is a fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine and in addition to having her own private practice, she frequently lectures at universities across the country and has twice been named "College Lecturer of the Year." Dr. Ruth also has been honored as "Mother of The Year" by the National Mother's Day Committee. She is the author of more than 30 books.

Lifespan also will give *Second Half Hero Awards* to six older adults. The five were among 40 nominated by community members as people who “take it on” in the second half of life. The honorees are:

Sonny Veltre of Greece, 81, lifeguards at the northwest YMCA five days a week. Teaches water-borne arthritis relief classes for other older adults. Two years ago he saved the life of a young woman who had a seizure while in the pool.

Nettie Robinson, 87, of the City of Rochester who is parenting both her 15-year-old GREAT-grandson and her 20-year-old GREAT grand-daughter. She adopted both as infants.

Dick Seils, 66, of Webster, is a retired industrial arts teacher, who, despite regular exercise had a heart attack – but it did not slow him down. Dick volunteer with eight different non-profit organizations, teaches Euchre classes in senior centers and senior housing and operates a handyman business.

Mike Perri, 84, of Greece volunteered for the Red Cross for 20 years following retirement. When his wife's illness (Alzheimers) forced a placement at St. John's Home, Mike became fixture at the home. Though his wife died four years ago, Mike still attends support group meetings at St. John's to share his story and help other caregivers cope with this dreaded disease.

Al and Carolie Simone, honored for their work at RIT, and their continuing roles in the community.

Lifespan also gave the **Carter Catlett Williams Award for Excellence in Aging or Long-term Care Services** to Nancy Smyth, Executive Director of the Presbyterian Home for her work bringing resident-centered care to the home.

Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Inc. was founded in 1971. The agency provides more than 30 services and employs 95 at two locations, 1900 S. Clinton Avenue and 25 Franklin Street, Lifespan served 20,500 people in 2008.

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