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## West Chester Rotary set to honor 4 local residents

**A pastor, a professor, an artist, and the borough's mayor will be honored at a dinner next weekend.**

By Walter F. Naedele

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Minister. University professor. Artist. Mayor.

The West Chester branch of the 1.2 million-member service organization Rotary International is presenting its annual honors to four such folks on Saturday.

They are the Rev. Robert Scott Jones, senior pastor of St. Paul's Baptist Church in West Goshen; **Monica Lepore, a professor of kinesiology at West Chester University**; Nancy Thompson, a West Goshen painter; and West Chester Mayor Richard Yoder.

The Greater West Chester Sunrise Rotary Club will honor them at a dinner and auction Saturday at the Penn Oaks Golf Club in Thornbury Township.

Christine Hasen, a spokeswoman for Sunrise Rotary, said at this third annual event each will receive a plaque "and \$1,000 to a charity of each's choice."

**The Rev. Robert Scott Jones** earned a divinity doctorate from Virginia Seminary and College in Lynchburg and, he said, has been at St. Paul's for 35 years.

He began his ministry "preaching as a teenager in Chester," Delaware County, after moving there from his home in San Francisco.

"My uncle pastored at a very prominent church in Chester, Bethany Baptist," Jones recalled in a recent interview.

His relatives, he said, "were determined that I should study under him and be guided by him."

It was the 1960s, said Jones, now 60, and so "I started the ministry during the civil-rights movement, and the civil-rights movement greatly shaped my ministry."

With other young preachers, he said, "we insisted on summer jobs for students and got an agreement with the local business community to provide jobs for students.

"Chester was in a lot of turmoil," he said. There were "older ministers who thought we should go slower, [and were] offended that we had gone around them."

Because the civil-rights movement influenced his ministry, he said, "I adhere to a social gospel."

These days, that means several outreaches to the disadvantaged.

Parishioners volunteer at several Chester County homeless shelters - among them, Care Center For Christ, Gaudenzia House, and Safe Harbor.

"We also operate a food pantry that's available for families," he said, and "we partner with other community groups for AIDS awareness."

All part, Jones said, of St. Paul's Ministry of Christian Compassion.

Since 1983 **Monica Lepore** has taught at West Chester University and since 1987 she has been director of its weekly physical-education program for the disabled.

She had worked for United Cerebral Palsy before moving to WCU. And so she began the phys-ed program, she said, because "I really missed working with the children."

Every Wednesday, from 6 to 7:10 p.m., 100 college volunteers work with 60 disabled who range from 5 years old to 21.

"They are brought to us by their parents," she said. "You name a disability and we have it - children with intellectual impairments like Down syndrome, physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy."

They work out, she said, "in six gyms and the dance studio for the first five weeks of every semester, and then go to the pool after that for four weeks."

The students do it "as a laboratory experience for a class that they get credit for," Lepore said. "I thought it was an important component of my students' education, to have a hands-on experience."

**Nancy Thompson's** art ranges from cookbooks to cows.

Though not unfamiliar with awards, she said, "I'm still a little bit shocked when something like this happens."

Last year, she was given a lifetime achievement award by the Chester County March of Dimes. In 2005, she and her husband received a founders' award from the Chester County Historical Society.

Married for 46 years, she is the widow of State Sen. Robert Thompson, who died in January 2006.

"Art has always been just a safe place for me to be," she said. For a recent group at the First Presbyterian Church in West Chester, she presented acrylic paintings based on Psalm 121.

"It speaks of the Lord being my refuge," she said.

**Richard Yoder**, 71, is a model of self-deprecation.

"I'm just a local yokel kid," says the borough mayor, "who's spent his whole life here.

". . . If it wasn't for a tour with the Marine Corps," he said, "I never would have been out of town."

Yoder recalled that "it was a boyhood dream to go to West Chester State Teachers College and play for the great coach Glenn Killinger."

He became the starting quarterback on Killinger's football team and, at 24, became a quarterbacks coach for Killinger.

He coached, taught phys ed, became athletic director.

"In 2000, I retired after 38 years at the university," he said. "What do you do with a 63-year-old local yokel kid? You make him mayor."

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