

Margo Sutorius wins 2009 ATHENA Award

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Margo Sutorius (left) was named the 2009 ATHENA Award winner Tuesday evening at a reception in the Hopkins Park Terrace Room. Sutorius is supervisor of Children's Home + Aid and an instructor at Northern Illinois University. (John Puterbaugh – jputerbaugh@daily-chronicle.com)

DeKALB – Margo Sutorius accidentally baked her spatula recently while making dog treats.

Speaking Tuesday night to a packed audience at the Hopkins Park Terrace Room, Sutorius went on to describe a few other ways in which she exemplifies a new kind of woman. She also can't make a cup of coffee to save her life, she said, and has come to terms with the fact that she'll never be a good cook.

Sutorius was named the 2009 recipient of the ATHENA Award. The yearly award is bestowed to a local woman who demonstrates excellence in their business or profession and who devotes time and energy to their community and assists women in attaining their full leadership potential.

Sutorius said she knows she doesn't do things like other women and feels honored to have been named an ATHENA recipient anyway.

"I am very honored to be a role model for women, especially with the changing role of women in our ever-changing society," Sutorius said. "It empowers me. It reinforces the sacrifices I've made."

Sutorius, one of eight people nominated in 2009, said winning the ATHENA Award speaks well of those who nominated, supported and ultimately chose her for the award.

"I think they're embracing the fact that there are changing gender roles," Sutorius said.

And while there could be only one winner, the contributions of all eight nominees were recognized and honored. Pat LaVigne, past ATHENA winner and this year's ATHENA committee chairwoman, said the honor truly is in the nomination.

"All these women are so special," LaVigne said. "To be nominated for the ATHENA Award is a great honor."

The other nominees were Rita Anderson, development assistant for the DeKalb County Community Foundation; Lisa Angel, special projects manager for Shaw Suburban Media; Dee Coover, director of

DeKalb Public Library; Regina Harris, DeKalb County public defender; Christina Peddle, Northern Illinois University provost's office manager; Amy Polzin, NIU geology department office manager; and Sharon Rhoades, Realtor for McCabe Realtors.

Seventeen of the past 20 winners were in attendance Tuesday night.

"It's absolutely fabulous that we have so many come back," LaVigne said. "It's so good to see them. It's like a sorority."

"It's nice to come back and see the new generation of women leaders," said Dawn Littlefield, a past winner and ATHENA committee member.