

It's my pleasure and honor to introduce the 2021 VRA Awards and one of the recipients.

The Distinguished Service Award and the Nancy DeLaurier Award are the highest honors that the organization can bestow on its members. Each summer the Awards Committee puts out a call for nominations. Any member of the organization may nominate someone they consider to be an appropriate candidate for these awards. More information on the process can be found on the Awards Committee's website.

The Distinguished Service Award recognizes an individual whose contributions and service to the organization and the field of Visual Resources are significant. Nominees and recipients of this award are demonstrated leaders and contributors who have left an enduring positive mark on the VRA. This year I am delighted to tell the membership that the recipient of the VRA Distinguished Service Award is...

Marcia Meeker Focht

Marcia's experience with VRA began in the mid-1980's in the first days of databases in our profession. Prior to working with slides and images she apparently was in training for bikini roller derby. Fortunately for the VRA this career did not pan out, but it sets the stage for another major theme of Marcia's life: sport and fitness. While worth mentioning, we'll concentrate on the VRA part today. Specifically, we'll look at two things for which Marcia is most known and appreciated – service to the organization and fostering camaraderie and growth in the VRA

Marcia's CV shows a remarkable dedication to this organization. Her list of professional service, leadership, publications, and presentations is extensive and is all related to VRA. Perhaps the biggest impact-maker is her work with as Mentor Coordinator. As a co-founder of the Mentor Program with Betty Antrim, Marcia took over the program in its second year and led it for 14 years.

She essentially designed and implemented our process of bringing new people into the organization. Numbers aren't available, but were we in a room together, it would be interesting to see a show of hands of those impacted by this program. My guess is it would be a very large percentage of any VRA group.

The other characteristics that Marcia is particularly known for are camaraderie and kindness. Marcia's good energy is legendary within the VRA, and her acceptance of all and desire to see everyone grow has been noted by many.

Her goodwill and positive spirit extend well beyond VRA. She has served as church pastor, and I have watched her speaking with, and giving comfort to homeless people on the streets in some of the cities of our conferences. Her ability work collaboratively to solve problems while having fun is one of her trademarks, and may explain why so many committee and task force leaders are glad to have her as part of their working groups.

And let's not forget the goofy stuff. Who else can dance with the Fonz in Milwaukee, treat a scooter ride in Rome like a roller coaster, or practice a career as a car model with the Oscar Meyer Wiener mobile? Who else makes such a dramatic entrance from a Port-a-Potty? Only Marcia.

I feel obligated to mention something that Marcia became known for, particularly among her colleagues on the Executive Board. We used to have ribbons that were attached to nametags and described various roles that someone might play in the conference. They would drive Marcia nuts, and it was a source of

amusement for the rest of us to watch. But in typical Marcia fashion, she took something that she found difficult and turned it into something funny; so much so that it became her among Board members.

Marcia Focht has given this organization years of dedicated service. She has developed a mentoring program that has influenced many members. She has provided inspiration for a large number of members who themselves served in significant leadership positions. Betha Whitlow perhaps puts it most succinctly, "Marcia has aced it through not only the considerable quantity of her contributions to the VRA, but in their humane, nurturing quality. Marcia has given VRA her head, but more importantly, her heart, which beats in our organization in countless ways."

I am privileged to present this year's Distinguished Service Award recipient, Marcia Meeker Focht.