

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 02/16/10

### TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST GROUP NAMES FOUR AS RECIPIENTS OF CLARA LEMLICH PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS FOR 2010

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Memorial (TSFFM) announced that four individuals have been named to receive a Clara Lemlich Public Service award for their work and efforts in calling attention to and participating in the reform of workers' compensation and improvement of occupational safety in New York State.

Those named to the Class of 2010 are: M. Patricia Smith, recently approved by the US Senate as Solicitor at the US Department of Labor and previously Commissioner of the NYS Department of Labor; Lillian Roberts, Executive Director of NYC's District Council 37; Veronica Montgomery-Costa, President of DC 37; and Richard D. Winsten, Esq., a partner at Meyer, Suozzi, Klein and English.

Lee Clarke, a member of the Board of Directors of TSFFM and Director of Health and Safety at DC 37, in announcing the awards, observed, "Although history is supposed to be a great teacher, we too often are not familiar with its many heroes who slug it out day to day for working men and women. Clara Lemlich, a young Jewish immigrant, was among those who rose to the occasion and inspired many with her voice and her actions. The Lemlich Class of 2010 represents this ideal."

In the early 1900's, Lemlich participated in efforts to improve the working conditions of her co-workers in the garment industry. Despite a number of severe beatings by goons hired by factory owners, Lemlich continued her organizing efforts. On November 22, 1909, after hours of speeches from labor representatives mostly men, she mounted the stage at Cooper Union and addressed the workers in Yiddish. Her words inspired 20,000 workers to strike, one which lasted until February 10, 1910 and resulted in better wages and working conditions for members of the ILGWU.

"But," noted Clarke, "the Triangle factory owners did not participate in the reforms of the 1909 labor action and it was the tragic fire of March 25, 1911 that woke up the entire nation. We need to be reminded of that. So, I am proud to honor these men and women and recognize their connection to, not only labor history, but to all who enjoy safer and better working conditions."

The awards will be presented at TSFFM's Eighth Annual Memorial dinner to be held at the NYC Fire Museum in lower Manhattan on March 25. Proceeds from the dinner and a journal are dedicated to a scholarship program for children of injured workers. Attendees are treated to cocktails, a four-star dinner, and entertainment with themes relating to the 1900's, the Triangle era, and performed by an amateur theatre group. "In this way," offered Jim McCarthy, President of TSFFM, "we fulfill TSFFM's mission to commemorate the Triangle tragedy and remind the public of the need for vigilance in workplace safety. The Lemlich awards and our scholarship program are concrete testimonials to these ends."

*And their work continueth,  
Broad and deep continueth,  
Greater than their knowing!*

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