

Group honors clients who turned lives around

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Clara Lovett, a former president of Northern Arizona University, received the top award Thursday from the Arizona Women's Education & Employment group at its annual Faces of Success lunch.

She was given the Jeanne Lind Herberger Award, named after a longtime supporter, that recognizes women who help empower women and men.

In her acceptance speech, Lovett praised the group, which started in 1981, for reinventing itself over the years and responding to changing needs.

"AWEE is a microcosm of what is happening, what should be happening in society," she said. "All of us need to assess where we are succeeding and where we fall short."

The group began helping mothers on public assistance secure jobs and has since branched out into helping men, ex-prisoners and soon, veterans.

Marie Sullivan, the chief executive officer, said AWEE's \$3.2 million budget is strained this year because it has already served about

8,000 people this year, compared with 5,000 last year.

Other faces of success honored Thursday:

- Alex Lopez, Phoenix, who reached out to AWEE at 16 to find a way to become the first person in his family to graduate from high school. He has not only accomplished that but is learning auto body repair at Maricopa Skills Center.
- Dana Whitworth, Gilbert, and her husband approached AWEE last year after they found themselves out of work and about to lose their home. The group helped them get back on their feet and she is now taking classes to become a registered nurse.
- Gail Rossi, Scottsdale, went through drug addiction, homelessness and prison from the time she was 22 until she was almost 50. She has been arrested more than 50 times and spent 18 months in jail. In July 2007, with AWEE's help, she got a \$40,000-a-year job as a legal assistant at a law firm.
- Josie Madrid, Guadalupe, was honored as honoree emeritus. She became a Face of Success in 2000 for moving from welfare to a job at Scottsdale Healthcare. Since then she

has moved up from being a clerk to human resources assistant.