



## **2011-2012 Ransome Prize Winners Rosalyn Wood and Susan Casey**

Rosalyn Wood and Susan Casey were instrumental in the founding of Esperanza Academy. Both women, along with concerned parents, neighbors, and community leaders from across the region, believed that young Lawrence women of diverse faiths, cultures, and races deserved access to academic excellence. They also believed that a unique learning center could reach well beyond the classroom walls to spread hope, health, and sustainable living throughout the community.

Rosalyn is currently serving as the chairwoman of Esperanza's board of trustees. Since the planning stages of the school, Rosalyn has been an enthusiastic advocate for Esperanza and its students. Rosalyn doesn't miss a committee meeting (she is on almost every committee at the school) or an Esperanza event. In fact, even a recent broken leg and confinement to a wheelchair couldn't keep her away. She calls the development office every few days with ideas for new grant proposals or events and it is evident that Esperanza is always on her mind. She can often be found giving tours of the school to prospective donors and volunteers. She has been the biggest donor to the school for the past several years, however, she is extremely humble and often prefers to remain anonymous. She opens her home for monthly trustee meetings and makes all feel welcome and appreciated. Rosalyn's love for the girls and school is infectious.

Susan, a current member of the board of trustees and chair of the development committee, was the school's first director of development. Working day and night to secure the funds required to operate a tuition-free middle school, Susan's commitment never faltered. Many of the people who donate to the school today cite Susan as the reason they became involved. Over half of the partnerships with foundations and corporations are relationships that Susan fostered and grew. At a recent phone-a-thon Susan was the first to arrive and the last to leave. She even managed to convince several people who had previously declined to donate to change their minds. Susan has also been instrumental in the graduate support program. She has driven numerous girls to high school visits, helping them select schools that will prove to be good matches academically, socially, culturally, and athletically. She has advocated for Esperanza with independent schools in an effort to help its students receive generous financial and scholarship packages. Chaperoning field trips, teaching the girls about healthy eating and exercise, coaching, and helping the students write letters to their sponsors are just a few of the many ways that Susan is present and active in the life of Esperanza.