Chamber honors former KU dean
Leadership on women’s issues earns recognition for Emily Taylor

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By SHARON DICKINSON J-W Staff Writer

The Lawrence Chamber of Commerce’s 1991 Citizen of the Years is cited in a new book called “Women of Influence, Women of Vision” as a key woman in leadership during the 1940s and ’50s.

But Emily Taylor’s contributions to women didn’t stop there, and she’s still an active player in the movement for social equality.

“They call me a predecessor, but I also continued with new initiatives,” she said.

As Kansas University’s dean of women for 18 years, she saw the organization of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Women’s Resource and Career Planning Center, now called the Emily Taylor Women’s Resource Center.

In 1974, she left KU to head the Office of Women in Higher Education for the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C. She semi-retired in 1982 and returned to Lawrence in 1986.

Now a sought-after speaker — mainly on the topic of women — Taylor addresses issues such as the status of women, cultural diversity and preparing for retirement.

“I just try to keep abreast of the times and try to help women and college women with whatever problems they have,” she said. “I try to give them a sense of how we got to where we are now. As with all movements, you can’t expect the younger ones to believe the way things are now is not the way it’s always been or that there’s still a long way to go.”

TAYLOR EARNED a teaching certificate from Urbana College in Ohio in 1955, and graduated from Ohio State University’s school of education in 1937. She taught in Ohio schools and received a master’s degree from Ohio State University in 1944.

She worked as assistant dean of women at Northern Montana College in Havre, Mont., but resigned to work on a doctoral degree, which she received at Indiana University in 1955.

She was the associate dean of women at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, before joining the KU faculty in 1956 as dean of women.

“The beauty of all the jobs I’ve had was, since I was hired to be helpful to women, no one could complain when I was,” Taylor said with a smile.

Her leadership in the Lawrence community and the state has extended beyond the movement for women’s equality, however.

Former Gov. Mike Hayden appointed her to a three-year term as chair of the Kansas Advisory Council on Aging in 1988. She also serves on the board of directors for the Douglas County Historical Society and is a member of the Older Women’s League and the American Association of University Women.

“I TRY to be helpful in ‘friends of this, that and the other in town and at KU,” said Taylor.

She will receive the Citizen of the Years award during the chamber’s annual meeting tonight, said Gary Toebben, chamber president.

“We look for individuals who have made a significant contribution to the community and their profession over the years,” he said. “Emily Taylor has had an impact on Lawrence, KU and the country as a whole. She has left her legacy on this community and country.”