This recognition is named for past president Lois Higgins-Grote, who in 1956, revitalized and reorganized the IAWP then served as its president for eight years and as executive director for twelve more years.

The Heritage Award is an honor bestowed upon an individual member when warranted due to substantial and significant contributions to women police and the International Association of Women Police over a period of years and especially during milestones of the organization. The honor is meant to ensure the recording, recognition, and appreciation for outstanding and dedicated service to IAWP. The IAWP's Heritage recognition is the highest tribute given by the IAWP.

Heritage Award winners represent the legacy of the IAWP. They are the historical memory of an organization that continues to grow. By virtue of participating in its history and having a resolve that the organization evolve, these leaders confront core goals and serve as tangible evidence to the rest of us of the honor it is to serve the IAWP.