



NEWS RELEASE

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USI announces Mary Lou Howard as Volunteer of the Year

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The University of Southern Indiana Volunteer USI Advisory Council and Office of Alumni and Volunteer Services held a recognition dinner for 1999 volunteers on Thursday, July 22, in Carter Hall at USI. The Volunteer USI Advisory Council awarded the third University of Southern Indiana Volunteer of the Year honor to Mary Lou Howard.

A four-year volunteer to the USI International Students Club, Howard invites international students into her home and teaches them how to prepare a meal or sew a garment; she takes students to the supermarket and teaches them to shop economically; and drives students to the airport, to the nearest Amtrak station in Illinois, or to an appointment. Mary Lou assists with international club meetings, travels with the students on trips and tours, and hosts birthday parties for the students away from their families. She was appointed to the Volunteer USI Advisory Council in 1998.

USI President H. Ray Hoops said, "Her dedication to USI and her commitment to the international students is admirable. Mary Lou brings a high level of passion to her role as a mentor, substitute parent, and teacher."

Howard's international outreach began in 1978 when she worked as a nurse and directed a clinic in the southern Phillipines. During her 12 years there, she worked closely with the village health workers. She is now multicultural coordinator for General Baptist Church in the Midwest.

Heidi Gregori-Gahan, USI director of International Programs and Services, said, "Mary Lou has been a wonderful goodwill ambassador to many of our international students over the years. She has reached out, offering a helpful hand and an open heart to anyone in need. Mary Lou represents all the very best qualities of American culture."

Howard has touched the hearts of many students during her four years at USI. Sajeeb Chand and Garima Rana, international students from Nepal, consider Mary Lou to be a mother away from home. Chand said, "She has treated us like her own children. It will take us our whole lives to thank her."

Since the Volunteer USI program began in July 1996, Mary Lou has donated over 480 service hours to USI.

USI's youngest volunteer Meredith Alcorn, 11, was recognized for her role in the acting company at this year's Lincoln Amphitheatre productions. She has accumulated over 205 volunteer hours in *Young Abe Lincoln* and *The Music Man*. Alcorn is the daughter of Nick and Bonnie Alcorn of Evansville. She is a fifth grader at Daniel Wertz Elementary School, where she sings in the choir, plays the violin, works as a library assistant, and serves as Student Council president.

Since 1996, 1,800 volunteers have donated 207,028 hours to various USI programs and departments. Calculated at minimum wage, volunteers have saved the University \$1 million since July 1996.