10-8-1992

1992 Alumni Awards Honor Five Local UD Alumni

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/8183
1992 ALUMNI AWARDS HONOR
FIVE LOCAL UD ALUMNI

DAYTON, Ohio -- The University of Dayton will pay tribute to the accomplishments of five local alumni during Homecoming weekend on Sat., Oct. 17.

Thomas J. Frericks, UD’s longtime vice president for athletic programs and facilities and athletic director who died of cancer in January, will be honored posthumously with the Distinguished Alumnus Award. Judge Arthur O. Fisher, Colonel White High School teacher Margaret E. Peters and Womanline Executive Director Linda J. Mercuri will receive Special Achievement Awards. Eleanor A. Kurtz, director of UD’s Kennedy Union, will receive a Special Service Award.

One of the most influential lay persons in UD’s history, Tom Frericks, a 1953 alumnus, had served his alma mater since 1964 in various administrative positions. Among the highlights of his career was the construction in 1969 of the $4.5 million UD Arena, host to 49 NCAA Tournament games. Frericks also played in a national arena, serving as secretary-treasurer of the NCAA and as chair of the NCAA Division I Men’s Basketball Committee. A leader within the NCAA since 1983, he was recognized nationally for his work to improve intercollegiate athletics and was esteemed as a man of honor, integrity and fairness. His death was mourned by a national audience when CBS-TV noted his passing at the conclusion of the NCAA men’s basketball championship.

A judge in the Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions of the Montgomery County Common Pleas Court since 1971, 1948 alumnus Arthur Fisher is known for his ability to see the potential in youthful offenders and point them in the right direction. Although his office deals with more than 16,000 cases a year, Fisher believes in children: "every child
Alumni Awards: Page 2

has got to be born with a spark of divinity. And what we have to look for and seek is that divinity, no matter how much it’s hidden."

In his 42-year legal career, including 30 years on the bench, he’s earned a reputation for community involvement, advocacy on behalf of area citizens and youth, and commitment to family values. The recipient of the Ohio Supreme Court’s Superior Judicial Service Award for two years in a row, Fisher has also been honored for Outstanding Service to the Judiciary by the National Bar Association. In 1991 he received the Martin Luther King Jr. "Living Legend Award" and the Marks of Excellence Award from the National Forum for Black Administrators.

Margaret E. Peters is a two-time UD graduate (1959, 1972), whose three-decade career in education has been marked by a commitment to teaching African-American culture and history. As a teacher at Dayton’s Colonel White High School, an author and an active community participant, she has worked to bring the richness of African and African-American culture to the forefront. She helped found and since 1984 has served as president of the Dayton chapter of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History and was elected to the national association’s executive council.

The author of The Ebony Book of Black Achievement, which is frequently used as an elementary and high school reader, Peters also prepared two collections of Black History Month materials published by the Dayton Daily News Newspaper in Education series. Her contributions have reached audiences beyond the classroom. Her narrative "Goin’ up Yonder: The Story of Black Migration from the Rural South to Industrial North" is performed by the Dayton Contemporary Dance Co.

Peters also chairs the committee that coordinates the Martin Luther King Celebration county-wide arts, poetry and prose competition and the scholarship competition.

Among her awards and honors are the National Council of Negro Women’s Excellence in Teaching Award for the Midwest Region (1991); Teacher of the Year for the Dayton Public Schools (1982); and Minority Educator of the Year for the state of Ohio (1983).

When President Bush in 1991 named Womanline "Daily Point of Light No. 528" for outstanding volunteer service to the community, no one who knows two-time UD
Alumni Awards: Page 3

graduate Linda Mercuri (1969, 1982) was surprised. As executive director of the non-profit social service agency that provides counseling, educational services and material assistance, Mercuri has been making a difference in the lives of women and their families for years. With a small professional staff and a network of volunteers, Womanline holds more than 5,000 counseling sessions yearly and responds to some 18,000 phone calls from women seeking support.

She has chaired the Miami Valley Adoption Coalition, a group she initiated; chaired the Montgomery County Emergency Housing Coalition; served as president of the Miami Valley Teen Coalition; is president-elect of the Miami Valley Association for Counseling and Development; and serves on the board of directors of the Eastway Corp.

Mercuri and Womanline win increasing recognition: The "Teen Vision" abstinence program for preteens she initiated in 1987 won the Ohio Department of Health's Distinguished Service Award for teen pregnancy prevention in 1990, and this year she received the "Making a Difference for Women" honor from the Dayton Soroptimists.

It's hard to imagine there was ever a time when Kennedy Union wasn't the center of UD's cultural and social life, and Ellie Kurtz wasn't its heart and soul. Since returning to her alma mater in January 1964, as program director of the facility still under construction, her name has become synonymous with Kennedy Union and University Activities. Kurtz, who received degrees from UD in 1947 and 1974, founded the University Activities Organization, co-chaired the Arts Series and helped launch the Distinguished Speakers Series. Over the years, she's brought a legendary list of speakers to campus — Frank Capra, Erma Bombeck, Jesse Jackson, Gerald Ford, Martin Sheen and Jimmy Carter.

But it's Christmas on Campus that is Kurtz's most enduring and endearing claim to fame. She developed the event from a candlelight procession to a community-wide celebration that brings children and senior citizens to campus each Dec. 8. On the 25th anniversary, the city of Dayton proclaimed Dec. 8, 1988, "Eleanor A. Kurtz Day." Her leadership inspired a Christmas Off Campus celebration sponsored for the past two years by the St. Louis alumni chapter. The event is now promoted in 19 chapters across the nation.

-30-

Editor's Note: Arthur O. Fisher resides in Jefferson Twp. and Margaret Peters, Linda Mercuri and Ellie Kurtz reside in Dayton. For photos, call Teri Rizvi at 229-3241.