

Spoon River College & Alumni Association Awards and Hall of Fame Inductees

Over 100 attendees honored the 2011 Alumni Association Awards recipients and inductees into the Sports Hall of Fame on Saturday, October 8th. Wonderful stories from former students and coaches who attended Canton Community College/Spoon River College were shared, old friends were re-united, and achievements were celebrated.

The Alumni Association is sponsoring a Named Endowed Scholarship program with the SRC Foundation to establish a permanent scholarship in the name of SRC Alumni. Denny Dalmasso, president of the association, pledged \$1,300 in contributions during the next year and presented the Foundation with his first donation at the event.

Read below to see the excellent community, state, and national contributions being made by SRC alumni. They “do us proud.”

ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

LISA BURCH, MSN, RN: Lisa Burch has served as a Freshman Nursing Instructor, Skills Lab, and Simulation Coordinator at Graham Hospital School of Nursing since 2004. Prior to her present position, Lisa worked in the Post Critical Care Unit at Graham Hospital. She also is a supporting member of the Central Illinois Diabetic Educators Group.

Lisa lives in Lewistown with her husband, Dr. James Burch, and her daughter Nicole. Lisa’s parents are Glenn and Donna Gearing of Macomb.

Lisa attended Spoon River College from 1983 to 1986 (LPN), from 1989 to 1991 (RN), and earned her associates degree in general studies in 1994. Her husband completed an associates in science degree at SRC and daughter, Nicole, will be taking part in the dual credit program while still in high school. They are a real SRC family.

In addition to being a member of Graham Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association, Lisa also holds memberships in the National League of Nursing, International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning, the St. Mary’s Altar Society, and the Lewistown Booster Club. Her honors include being the SRC Occupational Student of the Year and a Graham Hospital Student of the month. She graduated with honors from Cal State-Fullerton with a BSN and from the University of Phoenix with a MSN.

About SRC, Lisa says, “...I had the pleasure of being inspired by my instructor, Libby Grimm...the smaller class size allowed more individual help...and Libby inspired me to advance in nursing...she was knowledgeable, strict, encouraging, and a true leader....SRC follows through with its mission to provide a learning environment that empowers individuals...Thank you, SRC!”

RITA J. POTTER: Rita Potter is a lifelong learner. After graduating from Eastern Illinois University in 1965 with a BS in English, she taught school for five years and then took time off to raise her three sons: John, a gastroenterologist, Luke, Lewistown water department director, and Kyle, a major in the US Army and an orthopedic surgeon presently serving in Afghanistan. Rita is married to E. Warren Potter and the couple resides in Lewistown.

Rita returned to the classroom at Spoon River College in 1981. She says, “If it were not for SRC, I would not have been able to become a nurse until our sons (then 6, 8 and 10) were self-sufficient. I felt I got an excellent

education at SRC at a very low cost.” She heralds the exceptional teaching of Bob Harland, Bill Wilson, and Jay Curry in particular.

Rita is now a retired RN after 26 years at Mason District Hospital where she was the head nurse in ICU, coordinator of the Cardiopulmonary Rehab program and the director of Community Health and Wellness. She continues to assist with healthcare in and around Spoon River country yet today.

District as a board member, the Spoon River Professional Women’s Club, the Chapter C PEO in Vermont, GriefShare, the Emiquon Audubon Society, the U of I Master Gardener program, and Spoon River Anthology presentations.

Rita now attends Community Outreach offerings at SRC including the Retirees Leading program. “I hope to continue to learn until I die and Spoon River College is a big part of that learning,” Rita says. “I encourage every student in the area to consider attending SRC.”

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

COLONEL BARTON W. WELKER: Barton W. Welker currently serves as Commander of the 182d Maintenance Group, Peoria Air National Guard and is a C-130 Pilot. As the commander, Barton leads a team of approximately 240 of the Air Force’s best maintainers divided between two squadrons and one flight. The eight transport aircrafts they maintain are valued at over \$30 million each. Colonel Welker also manages \$14 million in support equipment, eight facilities, and the \$10.2 million flying hour program.

Barton attended SRC from 1981 to 1983. He states, “The instructors I had at SRC were some of the best I have ever had. I still use skills that Dr. King, Mr. Black, Mr. Smith, Mr. Lane, Mr. Curry, Mr. Smart, Mr. Till, Mrs. Strode and others taught me 28 years ago. I never met a staff member that wouldn’t do anything they could to help you. I am currently finishing my MBA. I can still remember my SRC instructors’ names and can only remember three of the instructors I had while working on my BS. So, obviously, my SRC instructors made a bigger impression on me.”

Barton lives in Lewistown with his wife, Julie. They have three children: Brodie (17), Jennifer (15) and Josie (12). Barton is very active with Boy Scout Troop 132, VFW Post 5001, the American Legion, the Air Force Association, the National Guard Association of Illinois and the National Guard Association of the United States, the Experimental Aircraft Association, and the American Society for Quality.

Colonel Welker’s awards and recognitions are numerous including the National Defense Service

Medal with bronze star, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Humanitarian Service Medal.

DISTINGUISHED RETIREE AWARD

MARTHA COULTAS STRODE: Martha Coultas Strode taught at Spoon River College from 1970 to 1995 as a full-time instructor and continued to teach part-time until 2000. She now enjoys her time in Canton, “where exciting things are happening,” and lives with, Ted, her husband of 57 years. She has two daughters, current SRC Board of Trustees President Gayle Strode Blodgett, and Megan Strode Taylor, and six grandchildren.

Martha’s teaching awards are numerous. She received the Truman Standard Award for Teaching at Spoon River College, the WIU Teaching Award, and the National Science Foundation Award to study the media and politics. She was also selected as a Canton YWCA’s Woman of Achievement.

Martha remains very active in several civic organizations including Shields Chapel, the Fulton-Mason Crisis Service, the Peoria Chapter of NSDAR, Fulton County Relay for Life, the Nature Conservancy, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Fulton County Democratic Women and the Peoria Cub Boosters.

Martha still reflects on her wonderful years at SRC. She states, “I began my SRC teaching at DAHM Hall in downtown Canton and then moved to the Jameson Building and finally to the current Canton campus. SRC students were a great mix of recent high school graduates and older adults filled with excitement about returning to school. Dr. Bob Smolich and Dr. Jan Gardner gave the faculty great freedom to develop courses as needed and to teach them in creative ways. I loved being involved with the Honors program and the cultural diversity activities. I cannot imagine a better profession than teaching.”

OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

JEREMY “JAMIE” KROCK: Dr. Jeremy Krock received his associates degree from Spoon River College after attending from 1976-1978. He is currently the attending anesthesiologist at Children’s Hospital of Illinois, with Associated Anesthesiologists, S. C. He is Associate Clinical Professor of Surgery at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Peoria.

About his time at SRC, Dr. Krock states, “My associate’s degree from SRC was even more important than I realized at the time. Attending SRC allowed me to mature as a student under the watchful eye of excellent teachers in a small class setting. Without the open door policies of Dr. King, Mr. Smart, Mr. Black, and Mr. Wilson, I’d probably still be trying to pass some required medical school admission courses.”

Dr. Krock has served as Chairman of the American Osteopathic Board of Anesthesiologists and currently sits on the Board of Governors at American Osteopathic College of Anesthesiologists.

Jeremy lives in Peoria with his wife Jeanette, and two sons: Spencer, a junior at Dunlap High School, and Mitchell, a freshman at Bradley University.

As the Founder and Director of the Negro Leagues Baseball Grave Marker Project, Jeremy has brought recognition and honor to several great baseball players who were previously laid to rest in unmarked graves. His efforts have been recognized by Sports Illustrated, ESPN, National Public Radio, and NBC. He received the Robert Peterson Award and the John Coates “Next Generation” Award for baseball research, the Fay Vincent “Most Valuable Partner Award” and the G.I.B.S.O.N. Community Service Award.

SPORTS HALL OF FAME AWARDS

RUDY SEPICH: Rudy has been a valuable member of the Spoon River College community for many years. During the 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s, Rudy served the Spoon River College Athletic Department as SRC Head Women’s Volleyball Coach and Head Women’s Softball Coach. In addition, he was the official scorekeeper at basketball games and drove the teams to competitions.

Rudy was also a leader in community athletics serving as the Canton Youth Softball Commissioner. In addition, he coached both the Youth Softball traveling teams and Youth Baseball teams.

Rudy’s invaluable service and leadership to Spoon River College, the Athletic Department and to SRC student-athletes cannot be measured.

ROBERT ALLEN: Robert Allen was a stellar basketball player for Spoon River College. At the national level, Robert was named the 1990 – 1991 National Junior College Division II Player of the Year and was honored as a two-time All American 2nd Team member. In 1991, he was named as the Region 24 Most Valuable Player.

For Spoon River College, Robert was and is currently the all-time leading scorer in Spoon River College history with 1550 points. He also holds the record for the most points scored by a Freshman. Robert led the Spoon River College Crusaders to a 1989 -1990 season record of 2 – 9 and their best ever record of 25-7 in the 1990 - 1991 season. The two year record of 47 16 stands as the best record for a basketball team in the history of the college. In addition, Robert was the co-captain of the 1990 - 1991 team.

The community recognized Robert in a number of ways while a student-athlete at Spoon River College. He was the Canton Jaycees’ “Athlete of the Year”. He was named as a player in the East Central Rotary Club Classic, the Chubb’s Spoon River College Classic, and the Laker Classic All - Tournament Team.

1978 WOMEN'S SOFTBALL TEAM: The 1978 Women’s Softball team is the first team to be inducted into the Spoon River College Athletic Hall of Fame. They currently hold the best Women’s Softball team record of 21 – 10. They were the 5th Place finisher in the 1978 NJCAA National Championship Finals. In 1978, they were the Region 24 State Champions.

Leading hitters for the team include: Debbie Bland, Katie Juraco, and Teresa Morgan. The Leading pitcher for the team was Teresa Morgan, a Spoon River College Athletic Hall of Fame Inductee. This championship team was coached by Spoon River College Athletic Hall of Fame Inductee Sandy Weeks.

On the heels of Title IX, Spoon River Colleges’ 1978 Women’s Softball Team produced an outstanding season, outstanding performances and especially, outstanding female student-athletes.

THE TEAM: Joyce Grissom (Shelby), Katie Juraco (Bartlett), Teresa Morgan, Gwen Davis, Cathy Pavely, Angie Busby (Courtosis), Kolby Harris (Hirth), Peggy Sherman, Marty Grzanich, Shelly Howater (Swope), Debbie Hammer, Mary Timmons, Debbie Bland, Cindy Dickso (Deceased), Head Coach Sandy Weeks, Asst. Coach Dick Sherman, and Asst. Coach Tim Davis.