

## **Alumni Association Awards Reception and Athletic Hall of Fame Induction October 13, 2012**

The Canton Community College/Spoon River College Alumni Association hosted the annual Alumni Association Awards Reception and Athletic Hall of Fame Induction on October 13, 2012 at the Spoon River College Conference Center in Canton.

Welcoming the honorees and guests were SRC President Curtis Oldfield, Kevin Gaul, SRC Foundation Chair, and Denny Delmasso, CCC/SRC Alumni Association President.

### **Alumni Achievement Awards**

#### **John (Chris) Dunker**

Chris Dunker attended SRC from 1986-1988, and is currently the principal at New Central Elementary School in Havana, where he has been employed for 23 years. During his time as principal, the school has won the 2009 Spotlight Award and the 2011 Academic Improvement Award. He is a member of the Illinois Principal's Association and the Sons of American Legion. Dunker served as a member of the Easton Rural Fire Department for 15 years and held the position of assistant fire chief. He is also a former Sherman Township trustee.

His wife Laura is a reading specialist at New Central. Their son Jeff is a freshman at Havana High School and daughter Samantha, also a SRC alum, is currently a junior at Benedictine University.

“Spoon River College was a great fit for me. I met great people, including my wife, had instructors that cared about their students, and attended a small friendly campus where everyone was willing to help. SRC taught me independence, responsibility, and skills I would need to be successful later in life. In a recent visit to Spoon River College, I was amazed to see the change in the campus, yet thrilled to witness that the vision of the staff and the camaraderie of the students have stayed the same,” said Dunker.

#### **Bailee O'Brien**

After graduating from Spoon River College, Bailee O'Brien attended Illinois State University, graduating from there in 2003 with honors. O'Brien began her career at MultiAd in Peoria, Illinois, working in client services for two years. She then joined State Farm, where she has been for the past seven years.

Her current role at State Farm is on the Sponsorship and Partnership Marketing team where she runs all of State Farm's music initiatives and works on entertainment integrations. She is also responsible for all Hispanic partnerships. Recent awards for her work include the Gold Ex Award for Best Multi-Cultural Event Campaign, Play Today/Illuminate Tomorrow in 2012; the Silver Reggie Award, National Consumer Campaign, Play Today/Illuminate Tomorrow in 2012;

Top Corporate Marketer in the US Asian Market by AdAge, State Farm in 2009; and the Field Marketing & Brand Experience Awards, Gold, Most Immersive Brand in 2009.

O'Brien is the daughter of Clif and Jeri O'Brien of Canton, and the granddaughter of Jackie Walters of Canton and Jerry and Eileen Marquis of Vassar, Kansas. She resides in Bloomington.

### **Netia Viano**

Netia Viano, whose brother Nick Viano accepted the award on her behalf, attended Canton Community College in 1960-1961. She returned in 1985 to what by then had become Spoon River College to complete the credit hours that finally enabled her to obtain her associate degree.

She worked in Bloomington for the Illinois Agriculture Association after her first year at CCC, but is better known for operating Viano's restaurant in Norris for 25 years with her brother Nick. She retired in 2002.

Viano's volunteer activities include serving as a board member for the Fulton County Humane Society since its inception in 1997. She has also served on the 708 Board and is a past president of the I-Care Board affiliated with the Fulton County Health Department. She has been recognized as a top fundraiser for the Muscular Dystrophy Association and Relay for Life.

While a student at CCC, Viano excelled in classes and was involved in cheerleading, the yearbook staff, and the drama department.

"My teachers at CCC all interacted with students and made it a very enjoyable experience," said Viano, who was also the First Princess in the 1961 Canton Friendship Festival Pageant.

### **Louise White**

Louise White worked at Graham Hospital School of Nursing, Lincoln College in Normal, and was the director of financial aid at Spoon River College for "13 rewarding years." Since retiring in 2006, White has served as a financial aid consultant, and fills in as a temporary financial aid director at Lincoln College and St. John's College of Nursing. Currently she is the Orion township supervisor and the organist at White Chapel United Methodist Church. She volunteers at the Health and Wellness Clinic and the Fulton County Humane Society, and is a member of Phi Theta Kappa.

A part-time student who worked the entire time she was attending college, White said, "Spoon River College made me a great believer in a community college education and you will not find a stronger advocate than I am." She attended classes at CCC, at Dahm Hall, and graduated on the Canton Campus. She received her B.A. from Western Illinois University.

## **Distinguished Alumni Award**

### **Curt Oldfield**

Curt Oldfield attended Spoon River College from 1993-1995 before transferring to Illinois State

University. He began his teaching career at Roseville High School, and then returned to Spoon River College as an agriculture instructor before becoming the Dean of Instruction. Oldfield moved to Iowa to serve as the vice president of academic affairs at Northeast Iowa Community College, and then returned once again to Spoon River College, this time as its 8th president.

Oldfield has served as a board member of the Junior Achievement of the Heartland, the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra, the Dubuque Young Professionals, as vice president of the Fulton County Board, and as finance chair of the Fulton County Board. He has also been honored as one of Peoria Area's 40 Leaders Under 40, a Dubuque Telegraph Herald Rising Star, and a Spoon River College Outstanding Faculty.

“Excellent faculty at Spoon River College, such as Gene McGrew, Doug Okey, Mark Welch, Sandy Weeks, Tracy Snowman, Jeannine Standard, Jan Hardy, and Bob Harland gave me a great start, helped me realize my full potential, and taught me more than just what was in a textbook. The quality of classes and instructors were unmatched, and my education at SRC provided me with the skills to complete my Master's degree from University of Illinois and continues to help me even now as I near the completion of my PhD from Iowa State University,” said Oldfield.

Oldfield resides in Canton with wife Pattie and children, Lauren and Nicholas. His parents are Verne and Carolyn Oldfield of Farmington.

## **Distinguished Retiree Award**

### **William (Bill) Wilson**

A highly regarded instructor at Spoon River College from 1966-1991, Bill Wilson was honored posthumously for more than 25 years of teaching service at Spoon River College. During his tenure, he was awarded the H. Truman Standard Distinguished Faculty Award and the 1991 Illinois Community College Trustees Association Outstanding Faculty Award. He was a member of the Human Anatomy and Physiology Society and numerous other educational organizations throughout his professional life.

Wilson was also a member of the Morning Star Lodge #734 A.F. & A.M., the Scottish Rite in Peoria, the American Legion, and was a Mason for 41 years. Wilson served in the U.S. Navy in both WWII and the Korean War. He was also the Committee Chairman of Boy Scout Troop 104 for 23 years and the Order of the Arrow.

Wilson's wife Mary and son Randy attended the reception and accepted the award on his behalf and on behalf of his other children who could not attend, Jeff, Carol, and Pam. They believe that if Wilson had been present, he would have said that he was fortunate to have found a profession that made him eager to start each day. As the years passed and he grew closer to retirement, Wilson told his family that “I'll know that it is time to retire when I don't want to get up and go to work in the morning.” He never had to make that decision. Wilson died in October 1991.

## **Outstanding Achievement Award**

### **Don Heller**

Don Heller served as the executive director of the Canton Family YMCA from December 1981-January 2009, and then served as financial development director until March 2012. He continues to serve in that role part-time.

Heller was instrumental in many of the YMCA's activities and fundraising projects for more than 30 years, spearheading two capital campaigns that raised more than \$2.2 million. He began the Partners of Youth Annual Campaign, the YMCA Annual Golf Marathon, the Character Development Program, and rejuvenated the YMCA Endowment Program. Heller opened the Otto Cowan Memorial Gymnasium with proceeds from the estate of Cowan's son Jerry. Heller was recognized with the State of Illinois "Chief Award" for the top YMCA executive and received the Business Person of the Year Award from the Canton Area Chamber of Commerce in 2006.

Heller served as a board member of Spoon River College, Graham Hospital, the First Christian Church, Canton Rotary Club, and many other organizations. He held numerous state, regional and national YMCA positions.

Heller and his wife Connie enjoy traveling and spending time with their children and grandchildren while still continuing to serve the community.