



News Release

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BANQUET TO HONOR WESTERN ALUMNI AND FACULTY MEMBER

St. Joseph, Mo. —Sept. 29, 2005—Missouri Western State University's Alumni Association will honor five alumni and one faculty member with Distinguished Service Awards at their 23rd annual Homecoming awards banquet Oct. 21.

A reception will begin at 5:30 p.m., followed by the 6:30 p.m. banquet. The events will be held in the Fulkerson Center on campus. Cost is \$20 per person. To make reservations, call 816-271-5646 by Oct. 14. Alumni Association scholarship recipients will also honored at the banquet.

Recipients of the 2005 Distinguished Alumni awards include: Col. Stephen Cotter, '78, Dr. Robert Couldry, '71, Esther George, '80, Tegwin Pulley, '63, and Melody Smith, '87. The 2005 Distinguished Faculty awardee is Sharon Gray, associate professor of music and director of vocal studies.

Criteria for the Distinguished Alumnus Award include professional achievement and distinction; service to the community, state or nation; humanitarian contribution to society in general; and possession of those qualities that elicit pride from others who attended the same educational institution. Only living alumni are eligible.

The Distinguished Faculty Award is intended to honor the faculty member who has had the greatest and longest-lasting influence on students. Criteria include teaching excellence, availability to students, professional accomplishments and potential, lasting influence on students, and professional and ethical standards.

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Col. Cotter is commander of the 139th Airlift Wing, Missouri Air National Guard in St. Joseph. As wing commander, he is responsible for the management, administration and employment of over 1,000 assigned unit personnel. He has received numerous awards and decorations throughout his 30-year military career.

“My education at Missouri Western opened many doors and provided me a very solid competitive foundation. I credit Missouri Western with providing me a quality of education that has permitted me to not only compete, but compete successfully and advance in a very competitive career,” said Col. Cotter.

Dr. Couldry served the education community in northwest Missouri for 33 years and retired as superintendent for the Mid-Buchanan R-V School District in 2001. He began his career as a classroom teacher and had served as superintendent at three northwest Missouri schools since 1983. He also served in the Missouri Air National Guard and United States Air Force, and retired after a 36-year military career in 2003 as a Lieutenant Colonel. He currently works part-time as the director of Platte Valley Educational Cooperative.

“The foundation I received while attending Missouri Western prepared me for my career which I truly enjoyed, prepared me to continue my education which I am proud of, established lifelong relationships which I cherish and prepared me for life as an educator, citizen, husband and father,” said Dr. Couldry.

George is a senior vice president at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, where she has been employed since 1982. She heads the bank’s division of Supervision and Risk Management. She currently serves on Western’s Foundation Board and is a former member of the Board of Directors of Habitat for Humanity Kansas City.

“I was exposed to a wonderful array of learning experiences at Missouri Western through the classroom and foreign travel study,” said George. “The critical thinking skills I developed at Missouri Western, combined with an appreciation of global influences, allowed me to effectively contribute in the workplace and continue to grow and develop professionally over the 25 years since I graduated.”

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Pulley, of Dallas, joined Texas Instruments (TI) in 1966, and currently serves as vice president. Since 2001, she has been responsible for workforce development, diversity and WorkLife Strategies. Under Pulley’s leadership, TI’s Diversity and WorkLife Strategies have received significant external recognition. She serves on several local, regional and state boards, and is a founding co-chair of the Dallas Fort Worth Regional Workforce Leadership Council.

“I fondly remember St. Joseph Junior College as the ‘concrete campus,’ a big difference from today’s beautiful campus,” said Pulley. “Still, the concrete campus was a beautiful place to get an education.”

Smith is the director of secondary education for the St. Joseph School District. She has served in the district since 1987 as teacher, coordinator of seven-12 communication arts, assistant principal and secondary instructional principal. Melody also served Hillyard Technical Center as communications instructor and program developer and coordinator. She is currently a doctoral candidate in educational leadership and policy analysis at the University of Missouri – Columbia.

“My experiences at Western remain among my fondest memories,” said Smith. “Not only was I challenged academically to become a lifelong learner, but Western also taught me the meaning of community.”

Gray has been a Western faculty member since 1967 and the director of vocal studies since 1971. Review committees from the National Association of Schools of Music have consistently praised the quality of Western’s coursework in every aspect of the vocal studies area.

She is a 1962 graduate of the St. Joseph Junior College. She earned her bachelor’s degree in secondary music education and master’s degree in vocal performance pedagogy from the University of Missouri – Kansas City.

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Gray serves on many university committees and holds several professional memberships. She currently serves as the minister of music at the Zion United Church of Christ and has been a member of the St. Joseph Community Chorus for 12 years. Gray has performed as a soloist throughout the region. In 2001, she received the Mayor’s Award of the Allied Arts Council for Individual Artist.

“As a teacher and performer, I aim for the absolute highest standards of performance,” said Gray. “It is my objective to provide the student with the necessary tools for success. I take the student where they enter and guide them to where they need to be in order to be successful in graduate school, teaching and performing.”

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Missouri Western State University is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The university offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.