

Board of Governors for Higher Education  
Department of Higher Education  
State of Connecticut



## Community Service Celebrated this Thursday

HARTFORD, April 21 — Higher Education Commissioner Valerie F. Lewis will present the 2004 Higher Education Community Service Awards to **seven** Connecticut college students and faculty members this **Thursday, April 22 at 6:00 pm.** in the Atrium of the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. Joining Commissioner Lewis will be State Representative William R. Dyson.

The annual awards ceremony is sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education and the Connecticut Commission on National and Community Service, chaired by Representative Dyson.

This year, 14 Connecticut colleges submitted 55 applications for the three award categories of *Student*, *Student Group* and *Special Award* for faculty and staff. Individual and group recipients receive awards of \$500 each which are paid to the charity or non-profit of the recipients choosing.

This year's *Student Award recipients* are Naralys Estevez of **Trinity College** in Hartford, Melissa Marchesseault of **Three Rivers Community College** in Norwich, and Nicole Murphy of **Quinnipiac University** in Hamden.

In the *Student Group* category, *award recipients* are Husky Reads at the **University of Connecticut (Storrs)**, the Empty Bowls Project at **Three Rivers Community College** and Habitat for Humanity at **Quinnipiac University**.

Recipients are selected based on their ability to create projects which distinctly help individuals, community groups or environmental causes; incorporate originality and unique approaches to community service; substantially increase student participation; promote diversity; and address urban problems.

The *Special Award* category recognizes college faculty and staff, non-profit agencies and others considered leaders in community service for their personal contributions and institutional commitment. Honored in this category this year is Linda Strong, assistant professor of nursing at **Sacred Heart University**.

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*Brief descriptions of each winner are attached.*

## 2004 Higher Education Community Service Awards

### Student Recipients

**Naralys Estevez - Trinity College** - Naralys served as College Buddy Director of the Best Buddies chapter at Trinity College. Best Buddies is a non-profit organization whose mission is to enhance the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by providing an opportunity for one-to-one friendships and integrated employment. With only two members in the club, Naralys recruited an additional 8 college student volunteers to make a total of 10 buddy pairs at the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year.

**Melissa Marchesseault - Three Rivers Community College** - There are many powerful messages contained on the Oxfam website, but none more powerful to Melissa than the devastating numbers of those who perish due to hunger-related issues. She created a counter that counts at a rate of 2.6 seconds to denote the passing of a life due to hunger and the total number of deaths counted. Melissa has worked to build awareness about world-wide hunger and the plight of coffee farmers and the Fair Trade Coffee organization.

**Nicole C. Murphy - Quinnipiac University** - During both her junior and senior year, Nicole served as Co-Director of Quinnipiac University's student organization, the Community Action Project (CAP). Under her leadership, CAP saw the development of a new service division, and two new volunteer experiences — Best Buddies and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Further, from summer to fall of 2003, Nicole worked with her co-chair to develop and lead Quinnipiac's annual campus-wide Community Service Conference; she aided in locating/contacting service sites and recruiting participants.

### Student Group Recipients

**Husky Reads - University of Connecticut Storrs** - Husky Reads is a nutrition education and literacy program which serve families who visit the public pediatric primary care clinics in Harford. UConn undergraduates volunteer weekly to read aloud, play games and conduct activities — all with a nutrition theme — to children waiting to see their medical providers in the clinics. The families who receive services at these clinics typically have limited incomes, many do not speak English as a first language, and they are from a wide variety of cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

**Empty Bowls Project - Three Rivers Community College** - In February 2003, Norwich High School (an alternative high school) approached Three Rivers about working on a collaborative community service project. Known as the Empty Bowls Project, its purpose was to engage high school students and Three Rivers' students on a community service project to benefit a local social service agency. The culmination of this effort was a successful fundraiser held at the college on April 11, 2003 for the St. Vincent DePaul Soup Kitchen in Norwich. The event raised over \$900 and 200 donated food items. The evening included music, theater and poetry about hunger related issues as well as serving soup and bread to the attendees.

**Habitat for Humanity - Quinnipiac University** - Since 1976, Habitat for Humanity International has built decent, affordable housing for people who otherwise would not have the means to purchase their own home. It strives to educate the Quinnipiac community about poverty, housing and homelessness; works to raise funds for Habitat International to build more houses for families in need; and builds the foundations and frameworks that create homes for those who do not have a decent place to live. The Habitat for Humanity Campus Chapter at Quinnipiac University is committed to this idea because "home" is something everyone in the world should experience and possess.

### **Special Category Recipient**

**Dr. Linda Strong - Sacred Heart University** - Linda L. Strong, EdD, an Assistant Professor of Nursing, has provided both the vision and the dedication for the creation and ongoing functioning of the St. Charles/Sacred Heart University Wellness Center, located on the East Side of Bridgeport in a poor, ethnically diverse but predominantly Latino, neighborhood. Her commitment to community health and service has helped the Center grow and become a welcoming place for the densely populated, medically underserved neighborhood. The Center provides free health screening and health education services to families and individuals in the neighborhood. Under Dr. Strong's supervision student and faculty volunteers from Nursing, Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy staff the Center.