Highland Community College Foundation recognizes distinguished alumni

The Highland Community College Foundation presented its 20th annual Distinguished Alumni Awards on Thursday, October 16, at the Freeport Country Club. The distinguished alumni are nominated each fall by friends, family members and peers before the applications are reviewed by a selection committee made up of foundation staff, board members and Alumni Association steering committee members.

This honored distinction is reserved for individuals that exemplify community leadership, demonstrate professional achievement, and believe in the mission of community colleges and higher education. The 2014 award recipients are Jim Dixon (Johns Creek, FL), Steve Dornink (Dakota), Lynden Endress, posthumous, (Pearl City), Stephen Kroeger (Freeport), Dr. Michelle McFalls-Mills (Lacey, WA), Jeremy Monigold (Cedarville), and Dr. Jesse Wade Ivory (Oak Park, IL).

Jim Dixon
Jim Dixon was born and raised in Freeport, and earned his associate’s degree in Business Administration from Highland Community College, where he was a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1966 to 1970, and then began his insurance career at Crum & Forster in Freeport. His career in the insurance industry spanned 38 years, and included various positions at Crum and Forster. He was president of a start-up company, RSUI Group, Inc., which he sold to Allegheny Company in 2003, but stayed on as Chairman and CEO for five years.

Steve Dornink
Steve attended Highland from 1978 to 1980, and then transferred to the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in Agriculture and Agricultural Economics. In the late 1980’s, he bought out his father’s interest in the family farms. Since then, he has expanded Dornink Farms to 14 different farms and more than 1400 acres. He farms corn, soybeans, and also feeds and markets beef cattle.

Lynden Endress
Lynden Endress graduated from Pearl City High School in 1989, and from HCC in 1991. He completed a bachelor’s degree in Animal Science and Agricultural Business at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in 1993. He farmed on the family dairy farm all of his life and also worked at Pearl City Elevator for a few years. Lynden was tragically taken from us on June 20, 2014 in a farm accident. He leaves behind his widow, Tina; sons, Zander and Lexton, and daughter, Fallyn.
Stephen Kroeger
Steve completed his associate’s degree at Highland in 1974, and later earned his bachelor’s degree at NIU. Steve’s banking career began in 1982 with State Bank of Freeport. Over the years since then, he has stayed in the trust field, in positions of increasing responsibility. He is currently Vice President and Senior Trust Officer at Union Saving Bank. Steve served for 18 years as a Highland Trustee, including time as Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Steve was a member of the first class of the HCC Stephenson County Leadership Institute.

Dr. Michelle McFalls-Mills
Michelle (Shelly) McFalls-Mills graduated from Highland Community College in 1996. She earned a B.S. degree in Occupational Therapy from Mount Mary College in Milwaukee in 1999, and her Doctorate of Occupational Therapy from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, in 2008. She is currently an Occupational Therapist in Lacey, Washington.

Jeremy Monigold
Jeremy Monigold began his college career at Highland, graduating in 1996. After he earned his bachelor’s degree a few years later, he received a call from HCC asking him to return to HCC and teach Web Design courses part-time. Jeremy started teaching full-time at HCC in 2005. During his time at HCC, Jeremy has worked hard to create new courses and programs, and to make sure that HCC’s courses in Information Technology continue to evolve to best serve the students in our district.

Dr. Jesse Wade Ivory
Dr. Jesse Wade Ivory began her college career at Highland Community College before transferring to Bradley University in 2001. After her tenure at Bradley, Dr. Ivory went on to earn a Master’s in Educational Administration at Illinois State University and an Educational Doctorate in Ethical Leadership from Olivet Nazarene University. Dr. Ivory currently serves as the Manager for Business and Community Programs at Oakton Community College, managing more than 900 courses each year while providing leadership to more than 300 part-time faculty.
A total of 109 individuals have earned the Highland Community College Distinguished Alumni Award since nominations began in 1995. For additional information about the Highland Community College Foundation Distinguished Alumni Awards, go to www.highland.edu or contact the Foundation at 815.599.3413.