

## **Seven UWO alumni to receive top honors**

**by Sheng Lee - Friday, May 20, 2011**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/12352/seven-uwo-alumni-to-receive-top-honors/>

Seven University of Wisconsin Oshkosh alumni from across the U.S. will return to their alma mater to receive UWO Alumni Association awards during Homecoming 2011.

The awards reception and dinner will be held Friday, Oct. 21, in Reeve Memorial Union.

At the event, four UWO alumni will receive the Distinguished Alumni Award ? the highest alumni award from the association ? for being active in their professional fields and widely recognized for their career and civic accomplishments.

The 2011 UW Oshkosh Distinguished Alumni Award winners include: David Gillingham '69 and MST '77, Mount Pleasant, Mich.; Sandra (Whiting) Smeeding '70, Salt Lake City, Utah; Patrick Stiegman '88, Canton, Conn.; and Thomas Taraska '75, Brookfield.

The Outstanding Young Alumni Award, honoring alumni who have graduated within the last 15 years, is given to graduates based on professional and civic accomplishments and future promise.

Recipients of the Outstanding Young Alumni Award include: Michael Fredrick '97, Oconomowoc; Lori Kraus '02, Cumming, Ga.; and Ginger Lee-Held MS '00, Oshkosh.

The following are the accomplishments of the Distinguished Alumni Award winners:

- Graduating with a degree in music education, Gillingham went on to earn a master's degree in teaching from UWO and doctorate in music theory/composition from Michigan State University. Gillingham's doctoral dissertation, "Concerto for Bass Trombone and Wind Ensemble," won the 1981 DeMoulin Award. In 1990, his "Heroes, Lost and Fallen" won the prestigious International Barlow Competition. He is currently a music professor at Central Michigan University, teaching composition, instrumentation and scoring and graduate-level theory.
- After graduating from UWO with her nursing degree, Smeeding earned her master's degree in nursing and cellular physiology from the University of Utah. She continued her education by obtaining a family nurse practitioner certification and a doctorate in health promotion and education from the University of Utah. Smeeding is the founder and associate director of the Integrated Health Clinic and Program within the Federal Veterans Affairs Health Care System, offering psychological, social, spiritual and physical care using research-based complementary and alternative medicine therapies.
- Stiegman graduated from UWO as a journalism major and radio/TV/film and political science minor. As the vice president/executive editor and producer for ESPN.com, he is responsible for content planning and management of an award-winning team of more than 200 editors, writers and producers. Before his top-management position at ESPN.com, he spent nine years as vice president/director of Internet operations for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and Journal

Communications, building award-winning websites, including JOnline.com, Packer Insider and Badger Plus Online.

- Taraska graduated with a bachelor's degree in education from UW Oshkosh and a master's degree from UW-Whitewater. He is one of the longest-tenured coaches in Wisconsin high school football. He has been coaching football and teaching physical education at Arrowhead High School for the past 29 years. His teams have won four state championships, finished runner-up five times and won 11 conference championships. In 2004, he was inducted into the Wisconsin Football Coaches Hall of Fame. In 2008, he was inducted into the UW Oshkosh Athletic Hall of Fame.

The following are the accomplishments of the Outstanding Young Alumni Award winners:

- Fredrick graduated with a journalism degree and was part of the University's first National Student Advertising Competition team to advance to the national-level contest. He is now the creative director at Bader Rutter and Associates in Milwaukee and is responsible for leading a creative team that works with Fortune 500 clients. His creative work has been recognized nationally, recently winning two first-place awards in the BtoB Best Creative Awards. Prior to Bader Rutter, he worked as a copywriter and creative director at several Milwaukee-area advertising agencies, including Hoffman York, Curro and Celtic.
- After graduating with a degree in journalism and radio/TV/film, Kraus worked for various radio stations until she joined the CNN/ Turner Broadcasting team. She currently works for CNN as the senior promotion placement coordinator for on-air promotion. Her role is to strategically place promos for the CNN brand and all CNN programs on its television networks. While at CNN, she won the DuPont – Columbia University Award for coverage of the tsunami disaster in South Asia, and two Peabody Awards, one for coverage of Hurricane Katrina and the other for coverage of the 2008 Presidential campaigns and debates.
- When Lee-Held was 5 years old, she suffered a terrible accident that left her legally blind, but that didn't stop her from earning a degree in family and consumer education from UW-Stevens Point and a master's in educational leadership from UW Oshkosh. She currently teaches at Perry Tipler Middle School in Oshkosh and works as an advocate for people with disabilities. She is an adviser for the Governor's Advisory Council for the Education of Blind and Visually Impaired Children, a National Federation of the Blind board member and a CESA 6 representative for the Wisconsin Family and Consumer Education Organization. In 2010, Lee-Held was named the National Blind Educator of the Year by the National Federation of the Blind.

The public is invited to attend the awards reception and dinner. Please contact the Alumni Relations office at (920) 424-3449 or email [alumni@uwosh.edu](mailto:alumni@uwosh.edu) for information.

Read more:

- [More UWO alumni awards information](#)
- [Homecoming 2011](#)