

UWO set the stage for alumna's nonprofit success

by **Tim Holdsworth - Tuesday, July 30, 2013**

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Improving communities and expanding the horizons of others through her work at multiple nonprofit agencies has earned University of Wisconsin Oshkosh alumna Sandy (Lopas) Nadeau '76, MSE '82 a 2013 Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Award.

"Success involves taking your passion and making it dynamic," said Nadeau, executive director for the St. Cloud Symphony Orchestra (SCSO) in St. Cloud, Minn.

Involved in music all her life, Nadeau has done just that, transforming the SCSO from a financially and artistically struggling organization to one that is financially sound and is nationally recognized and connected to the community.

Nadeau has initiated and written grants to support many events and programs that have built community outreach with area schools, including "Classics for Kids." The program brings every fourth-grader from the three area school districts to St. Cloud State University (SCSU) to see and hear a program that teaches how exciting symphonic music and its instruments can be.

She has also secured several operational and artistic grants, including ones from the National Endowment for the Arts.

"This directly led to our ability to present unique arts opportunities for Central Minnesota, including national exposure in 2008 with *Oceans*," said Mark Springer, a SCSO board member and dean of the College of Liberal Arts & School of the Arts at SCSU.

A dance concert in the round, *Oceans* was created by modern dance pioneer Merce Cunningham and his longtime partner, composer John Cage. Andrew Culver, a student of Cage's, later composed the music for *Oceans* based on Cage's direction. The SCSO accompanied this Midwest premiere event.

Nadeau counts the event as one of her greatest professional successes.

"A special stage was built for the event in a working quarry in Central Minnesota and the performance was reviewed by the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Washington Post*, said Nadeau. "The best moment for me was sitting in the empty performance venue, next to Culver as he explained the music during dress rehearsal, while Cunningham sat nearby, too impressed with the musicians to leave."

"As the Orchestra nears its 40-year anniversary, it has never been as professional, as well-run, as fiscally and musically sound, as well-attended as it has been since we hired Sandy," said SCSO board member Jane Schulzetenberg. "And I figure UW Oshkosh played a major role in readying her for the task at hand."

“UW Oshkosh gave me the foundation to build a career. It was a place that taught me how to think, how to be creative and how to problem solve,” said Nadeau, who earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology and a master’s degree in community/agency counseling from UWO, graduating summa cum laude both times.

These skills have served her well throughout her career in nonprofit work, which, in addition to her time at the SCSO, has included directing the Exchange Club Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse for the Boys and Girls Club of Oshkosh, serving as executive director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving for the State of Wisconsin where she worked with legislators to lower the legal alcohol limit to 0.08, raising funds to build a day care center, a housing project and a school for low-income families as executive director of development for St. Clair of Assisi in Colorado.

Nadeau and nine other UWO alumni award winners will be honored at a banquet during Homecoming weekend, October 11–12. They will attend a reception, dinner and awards program in Reeve Memorial Ballroom on Friday, and will have the opportunity to watch the Homecoming football game from the press box at Oshkosh Sports Complex on Saturday. Award winners will be escorted onto the field during halftime by Chancellor Richard Wells for recognition.

The Alumni Awards Dinner will begin at 5 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 11 in Reeve Memorial Union. Reserve your spot at the event by calling (920) 424-3349 or sending an email to alumni@uwosh.edu. Tickets are \$30 per person.

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