

Susan Miller - 2006 AWARD WINNER – WINONA CAMPUS

The Minnesota Southeast Technical Outstanding Alumnus Award, Winona campus, was conferred upon Susan Miller at the college's graduation ceremony, Thursday, May 11, 2006. Sue, a 1971 graduate of the LPN program, has spent her adult life touching the lives of others. Her lifetime goal of helping others to help themselves lead happy and productive lives was recognized in this award for her outstanding personal and professional achievement and service to others.

As a single parent and nontraditional student in the late 1960s, Sue took the opportunity to better both their lives by pursuing a post-secondary degree. She sought a career with a shorter educational program, desired direct entry into a strong job market, and wanted the opportunity to apply her "crazy for people" skills.

At the then Winona Technical Institute, she discovered the LPN program where professionally trained, friendly, and supportive faculty and a wonderful community of learners surrounded her. Sue stated, "Faculty members Jane Kohner, Alice Taylor, and Betty Darby were there for us. We weren't just a number. I found my niche at this home-away-from-home." Juggling family, school, and work schedules wasn't easy. With the support of the faculty, staff, and students, she completed the program.

After graduation, Sue worked for ten years in the medical/surgical area in hospitals and the geriatrics department of nursing homes in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Jacksonville, Florida. She realized great joy as she applied her nursing skills and love for people as an LPN.

While in Jacksonville, Sue and Jerry Miller (who is serving his second term as mayor of Winona) were married. After they returned to Winona, they began raising a family that included three sons. Sue's strong background in sewing and interest in design led to an additional career—the design and sale of high fashion ladies apparel and unique band costumes for men. She also sandwiched in a career in real estate.

When her three sons began school, Sue added "volunteer extraordinaire" to her list of accomplishments. She served in various volunteer capacities at her children's schools that included PTA, member of junior high and high school booster clubs, and nine years in the planning and conducting of junior/senior proms. She is especially proud of her nine-year involvement with Crazy About Basketball (CAB). Sue has been the driving force behind fund raising for youth programs.

Her dedication to serving others is her guiding light. Sue is deeply involved in Winona area community and civic organizations. For over ten years, she has served as a chamber of commerce ambassador, is a member of Land Stewardship, and the Chautauqua Club. She demonstrates her support of Winona State University athletics through membership and active involvement in the WSU Warrior Club.

Sue has worked tirelessly to assist those from diverse social and cultural backgrounds to feel welcome in the community and achieve their goals. She is particularly sensitive to the needs and goals of single mothers and was involved in the creation of the first resident's council at the Winona Thurley Homes.

In her "down time," she is "dorm mom" to six to eight college women, owns a hobby farm on the outskirts of Winona, bear hunts with a bow and arrow, and enjoys spending time with family—especially her three grandchildren: Grace (4 ½), Jacob (3), and Charlie (ten months).

By sharing and giving of her time and talent, Sue passes on the values she acquired at Southeast Technical. "My experience at Southeast Technical provided me with specialized training important to my professional and personal success," she emphasized. Sue offers the following advice to students and alumni, "Give back to others with your skills, talents, time, and treasure, if you can." She continued, "I thank God every day for the good things people have done for me. I, in turn, try to give back in as many ways as I can. I want people to appreciate life as I do."

Touching the lives of others is her legacy.