

News Release

Five Individuals Honored with Torch & Shield Award at University of Minnesota Crookston

By Corby Kemmer, Elizabeth Tollefson on Monday, October 29, 2007

CROOKSTON, Minn. (October 29, 2007) – The Torch & Shield Award, the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the University of Minnesota Crookston, was presented to Cindy Bigger, Jon Evert, Robert Jones, Ph.D., Ardell Knudsvig and Senator Keith Langseth, during a special recognition on Oct. 23, 2007, in Bede Ballroom on the campus.

The Torch & Shield Award recognizes individuals who have provided leadership and who have aided in the development of UMC, the Northwest Research and Outreach Center (NWROC) and University of Minnesota Extension.

"Each one of these committed individuals has invested in the success of our students, our campus and our mission of education, research, outreach and public engagement in northwestern Minnesota," UMC Chancellor Charles H. Casey said. "Over the years, they put community ahead of personal recognition and have served as exemplary leaders. They are very deserving of this honor – as seen by their dedication, collaboration and unique contributions."

NWROC Head Larry Smith also notes the strategic role each has played in moving organizational initiatives forward. "The Torch & Shield Award is an important opportunity for us to recognize individuals who have contributed in a significant way. Their dedication has proven instrumental in our development and our success."



Back row (l to r): Chancellor Casey, Robert Jones, Ph.D., Head of the NWROC Larry Smith, Director of Development & Alumni Relations Corby Kemmer. Front row: Ardell Knudsvig, Cindy Bigger and Jon Evert.

Cindy Bigger, Alexandria, Minn., a 1979 graduate of the U of M Crookston, is a Regional Extension Educator and an associate professor for University of Minnesota Extension. The focus of her work is in leadership and civic engagement. During her 26-year career she has served in three Minnesota counties working primarily in 4-H youth development and leadership education. She also has a consulting business, Bigger Associates. For the past two years, Bigger has been a member of the U of M, Crookston Alumni Association board and currently serves as its vice president. She was the 2006 commencement speaker, a longtime donor, as well as serving on search committees and in many other volunteer capacities. Her father, Sam Bigger, received the Torch & Shield award in 1981.

Jon Evert, Moorhead, Minn., serves as a coordinator of Rural Life Outreach of Northwest Minnesota and as a Clay County, Minn., Commissioner. For several years, he has been a member of the All Campus Advisory Council at the U of M Crookston. Evert has been a member of the Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership since its beginning in 1998 and served as chairman for six years. His service has included the Statewide Coordinating Committee which he currently chairs. As a six-year member of the Citizens Advisory Committee for the University of Minnesota Extension, Evert is the immediate past-chair. He is an avid supporter of the Crookston campus and promoted it across northwest Minnesota and the state.

Evert and his wife, Phyllis, are the parents of four grown children and they have two grandchildren. The Evert's also celebrated the marriage of their son, David, on October 27, 2007.

Robert Jones, Ph.D., Wayzata, Minn., works closely with the U of M Crookston as the senior vice president for system academic administration. In his role as senior vice president, Jones has day-to-day management responsibility for the coordinate campuses at Crookston, Duluth, Morris and Rochester. He began his career at the University of Minnesota as a professor of agronomy and plant genetics. For the past 19 years, he has held administrative positions. His current leadership role has given him responsibilities that include, but are not limited to, public engagement and outreach; international programs; PreK-12 and other youth and family programs; urban initiatives; equity and diversity; legislative relations; and the Extension Service's and Agricultural Research and Outreach Centers' research and service programs throughout the state. He has been a visiting professor and featured speaker in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa, and served as an academic and scientific consultant for Archbishop Tutu's South African Education Program.

Ardell Knudsvig, Crookston, Minn., is the director of the Student Outreach Project for Applied Science and Technology at the U of M Crookston and a crop health specialist for the northwest district of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Knudsvig was a science teacher at Crookston High School from 1976 until his retirement in 1998. He was named Crookston Teacher of the Year three times and believed in challenging students through encouragement, commitment and working together, something he still adheres to in his current role where he coordinates U of M Crookston faculty and students to assist in teaching of high school students in areas of science and technology.

Knudsvig and his wife, Sandy, reside in Crookston. They are the parents of four children.

Senator Keith Langseth, Glyndon, Minn., is currently one of the longest-serving senators in the Minnesota Legislature. Over the years, Senator Langseth has chaired many committees and authored many pieces of legislation in support of education. He believes strongly in investing in the future of our state. Senator Langseth currently serves as the chairperson of the Senate's Capital Investment Committee, which is responsible for putting together the major bonding bill in odd-numbered years which funds Minnesota's infrastructure. This biennial bill funds millions of dollars for the University to build and renovate facilities statewide. In 2007, Senator Langseth was named Legislator of the Year by Politics in Minnesota.



Chancellor Casey presented Senator Keith Langseth and his wife, Lorraine, with the Torch & Shield Award during homecoming in early October.

Senator Langseth and his wife, Lorraine, live on their family's dairy farm in Glyndon, Minn. They have three children and eight grandchildren who also live in rural Clay County.

There have been 205 community leaders recognized since 1966 when the Torch and Shield Recognition was initiated by U of M, Crookston Founding Provost, Stanley Sahlstrom. To view all past Torch and Shield Recipients, visit u of M Crookston website.

The University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC) delivers more than 25 applied-science undergraduate degree programs and 50 concentrations, including online degrees, in agriculture; arts, humanities and social sciences; business; math, science and technology; and natural resources. Invent yourself at the University of Minnesota Crookston – become a leader, innovate through technology and research and secure the career you want. To learn more, visit www.UMCrookston.edu.

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