

Spirit of Service Award
2013 Honorees

Patricia George Decio

Community Honoree (posthumously)

Pat Decio devoted her life to her family, church, and community. She approached her many commitments as she approached life – with enthusiasm, compassion, integrity, Christian values, and delightful flair. Her generosity in sharing her gifts of time, talent, and treasure greatly enriched every committee and board on which she served. She was happiest working hands-on to help others. A strong supporter of special education, Pat was an active volunteer for over 16 years for Aux Chandelles, now part of the Association for the Disabled of Elkhart County (ADEC). She was recognized by ADEC on their Wall of Fame and received their Outstanding Kindness Award twice. Pat gave many hours to the Elkhart General Hospital Auxiliary, Elkhart Community Day Care, and the Urban League. She was a life member of the NAACP and received the Elkhart chapter's 2004 Community Service Award. Pat helped to bring the Women's Care Center to Elkhart. A plaque at the center sums up Pat's profound contribution to the center's success: "We would not be serving so many women and babies today if it were not for the vision and faith of this wonderful woman." At the University of Notre Dame, Pat served on advisory councils for the Snite Museum of Art and for the performing arts. As a member of the Saint Mary's College Board of Regents from 1981-1987, Pat served as chair of the Committee on Student Life. Her understanding of young people and her ability to listen as well as lead served the College well during a time in which many challenging contemporary issues were discussed. Saint Mary's conferred an honorary degree on Pat in 1996 in recognition of her demonstrated concern and commitment to making her community and world a better place. Saint Mary's proudly pays tribute to the life and service of Patricia George Decio with the prestigious spirit of Service award for all the ways she exemplifies the mission of Saint Mary's College to prepare women for roles of leadership and action.

Sister Mary Turgi, CSC

Sisters of the Holy Cross Honoree

Sister Mary Turgi, CSC, holds a degree in mathematics from Saint Mary's College, a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Illinois, and a master's in Women's Studies from the University of Cincinnati. She taught mathematics at Saint Mary's and served on the Campus Ministry team as social ministries coordinator from 1980-1991. Sister Mary has been active in social justice and systemic change initiatives for most of her life as a Sister of the Holy Cross. As the current director of the Holy Cross International Justice Office, Sister Mary works with the Sisters, Priests, and Brothers of Holy Cross in eight countries on four continents to develop a well-informed and unified Holy Cross voice on the critical justice issues of our time. Most recently, the office has focused on ecological and economic issues, particularly the need for a new ecological economics that would ensure planetary as well as personal and social well-being. One facet of ecological economics is building thriving, resilient local communities, which is the work of the Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc. (NNN) in South Bend. As a long-time neighborhood resident and NNN board member, Sister Mary is involved in planning events and programs that are engaging and empowering residents to increase pride in the neighborhood. A grant from the Sisters of the Holy Cross Ministry with the Poor Fund helped to fund educational brochures, develop a leadership program, and create a resident-driven website. Sister Mary is currently helping to steer a Near Northwest "Quality of Life Planning Process" that will result in a Master Plan for comprehensively revitalizing the entire area.

Maeva Alexander '13

Student Honoree

Maeva Alexander graduated in May 2013 with a major in communicative disorders and a minor in intercultural studies. Her career goal is to serve at-risk students as a speech pathologist. Although her hometown is Tucker, Georgia, Maeva immediately took advantage of the many opportunities offered by the Office for Civic and Social Engagement (OCSE) to get involved in the Michiana community. As a first-year student, she immersed herself in the College Academy of Tutoring (CAT) program which places Saint Mary's students as tutors and mentors in local schools with a high percentage of disadvantaged students. Maeva received the 2012 Patricia Arch Green/CAT Scholar Award and was named student director of the CAT Scholar

program during her senior year, devoting more than 800 hours to the program throughout her four years at Saint Mary's. During her junior year, Maeva studied abroad in South Africa. She was a recipient of the highly selective Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship sponsored by the U.S. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs for students in non-traditional study abroad destinations. As a senior, Maeva received the Jane J. Warner Scholarship which was established in Jane's honor following the inaugural Down the Avenue event in 2002. This scholarship and the four other scholarships established in honor of each Spirit of Service community honoree are awarded annually to students who are actively involved in volunteer service to the Michiana community. In her letter of appreciation, Maeva wrote: "Over the few years of my involvement in the South Bend community, I have learned how important it is to have advocates for the community...community service is a way for students and community members to come together from a variety of backgrounds to solve problems and achieve a common goal."