

College of Public Affairs and Community Service Alumni Award for Excellence in Public Service 2006 Recipients

Carlos Barrientos graduated from the Goodrich Scholarship Program with a bachelor of general studies degree in 1977. While a student, Barrientos began working at WOWT-Channel 6. Following graduation, he became a WOWT full-time photographer and covered various news-making events, including fires, papal and presidential visits, and numerous natural disasters. He retired in 2004. He now contributes his skills and talents to Ixim, a Catholic-based organization that operates bi-yearly missions to Guatemala to assist with rural medical needs, children's educational needs and causes of women.

Connie Benjamin earned a bachelor of social work degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a gerontology specialization from UNO in 1975. She has served as the Nebraska director of the American Association of Retired Persons since November 2000. Prior to that, she served as executive director of the YWCA of Lincoln, deputy director of the Nebraska Department on Aging and as an adult protective services specialist for the Nebraska Department of Social Services.

Chuck Hagel earned a bachelor of general studies degree from UNO in 1971. Elected to the U.S. Senate for the first time in 1996, Hagel is now serving his second term and is the senior U.S. senator for Nebraska. His substantial participation in civic, educational and charitable organizations has included serving on the board of directors of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, serving as chairman of the 10th Anniversary Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, and serving as a member of the board of directors and national advisory committee of the Friends of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Terri S. Harder earned a bachelor of science in criminal justice degree from UNO in 1981 and graduated summa cum laude. She received her law degree from the University of Nebraska College of Law in 1985. She joined the law firm of Jacobsen, Orr, Nelson, Wright, Harder and Lindstrom in Kearney, Neb., in 1985 and had a general practice of law with that firm for 14 years. In 1999, Gov. Mike Johanns appointed her to the District Bench for the Tenth Judicial District, which includes Adams, Franklin, Harlan, Kearney, Phelps and Webster counties in Nebraska.

Kim Kern earned a bachelor's degree from Midland Lutheran College in 1984 and a master of social work degree from UNO in 1986. The assistant director for social work at Mary Lanning Behavioral Services since 2003, she is responsible for assisting in the management of three outpatient psychiatric clinics, a 26-bed adult inpatient unit, an emergency community support program, on-call crisis services and the geriatric outreach program.

Pat Kern earned a bachelor of social work degree from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., in 1983 and a master of social work degree from UNO in 1985. The director of social services at Mary Lanning Memorial Hospital in Hastings, Neb., since 1987, he is responsible for staff supervision, hospital-wide discharge planning and case management. In this role, he provides social work services to acute care medical units, the emergency room and the rehabilitation, hospice and dialysis units of the hospital.

Ann O'Connor earned a master of public administration degree from UNO in 1994. She is currently vice president for Nebraska community services at Heartland Family Service. She is responsible for the operation of many of the agency's centers and programs, including two children's emergency centers, the Solomon Girls Center, neighborhood emergency services in North Omaha and Sarpy County, the North Omaha Resource Center, the Career Clothing Closet, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, domestic abuse services in Sarpy and Cass County, Intensive Family Preservation, and school and family enrichment programs.

Douglas Russell, M.D., graduated from the Goodrich Scholarship Program with a bachelor of science degree in chemistry in 1987. He found his vocation and his wife, Anne, at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) College of Medicine. He and partner Steve Freeman, M.D., founded Oakview Internal Medicine, where they enjoy a successful medical practice. Dr. Russell also is a teaching faculty volunteer at UNMC, Clarkson College and Creighton University Medical Center for medical students, nurse practitioners and other students, and is also a volunteer practitioner at Creighton.