

## Defiance College Fall 2014 Award Recipients

# Alumni Awards

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*Six Defiance College alumni were recognized during this year's Homecoming for their outstanding professional achievements.*

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*By Michele Tinker, Director of Annual Giving  
layout by Kevin Arriola, 2014*

### Dr. Harry Miller '59

This year's recipient of the Alumni Citation for Academic Excellence is Dr. Harry Miller, Class of 1959. Dr. Miller has had a long and distinguished history with Defiance College, as student and professor.

Miller's college experience coincided with the development and launch of the Russian satellite, Sputnik, and science was very much in the national forefront. He graduated from Defiance College in 1959 with a Bachelor of Science in education, comprehensive science, and went on to receive the prestigious National Science Foundation Fellowship to complete research. His specialization was nuclear physics, and he earned his Ph.D. in 1963 from Ohio State University. The following fall, he returned to his alma mater to begin his 34-year career as a college professor.

It was while he was a student at Defiance College that he married his high school sweetheart. Gloria attended Defiance College as well, earning a teaching certification for elementary education.

Harry's dedication to his profession was quite evident over the years and extended well past campus. During the summers of 1967 and 1968, he worked as physicist with the U.S. Army Missile Command at Redstone Arsenal in Alabama. On sabbatical in 1969 and 1970, he was a resident associate in the physics division at Argonne National Laboratory, Argonne, Ill.

In 1987, Dr. Miller took a leave and traveled to Malaysia where he participated in the Malaysian Cooperative Education Program of State University of New York, and Gloria accompanied him. It was the trip of a lifetime, he remembers, and provided them with the opportunity to visit 13 different countries – including Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, New Zealand, Australia and even Russia.

At Defiance College, Dr. Miller served on numerous

college committees, including teacher education, economic welfare, service learning and learning resources. He was a diligent teacher, always willing to give his time to students. Outside the classroom, he also gave assistance to students as a mentor the last two years of his career. Upon his retirement in 1997, he was honored with the title of Professor Emeritus. Since then, Harry has funded an endowed scholarship at the College to honor the memory of Eddie Pullen, a former student who died of cystic fibrosis.

Harry and Gloria have made their home in Port Orange, Fla. They enjoy spending time with their children and grandchildren. Even now, Harry is always the professor, as a photo shows him working through the physics of a zip line with the grandkids. In 2013, the Millers traveled via motorhome from Florida to Banff and Jasper National Parks in Canada and back, picking up family members in South Carolina and Idaho who joined them on the journey.

In addition to this Alumni Citation for Academic Excellence, Dr. Miller was recognized at the Presidential Brunch for remembering Defiance College in his estate plans.

### Beverly Nolt '74

Beverly Nolt's career experience ranges from the oil rigs in Texas to medical facilities in Uganda and Botswana, and she is one of this year's Alumni Achievement Award recipients.

By the start of her senior year at Orrville (Ohio) High School, Bev had narrowed her college choices until an admissions counselor from Defiance College visited her school, altering her selection process. Bev was intrigued by Defiance's "four-one-four" program – offering a January winter term sandwiched between fall and spring semesters. A subsequent visit to the DC campus proved a positive experience and sealed



*President Gordon (far left) with honored alumni (left to right) Elaine Gard, Lesa Swisher Shouse, Ray Santiago, Beverly Nolt, Dr. Harry Miller, and David Gynn.*

her decision. “Everyone was so friendly,” Bev recalls.

Her original intent was a major in elementary education, but classes with Professor Jim Birk and Dr. Bernie Mikula coupled with her initial winter term to Big Bend, Texas, prompted a switch to Natural Systems Studies. This led to a job in the east Texas oil patch as a drilling fluids technologist/ mud engineer. While working on the rigs, a job listing for a venereal disease investigator grabbed her attention though she initially thought it a hoax. She applied, landed the local position, and is now beginning her 36th year in public health – spanning local, state, national, and international arenas.

Twenty years after graduation, at a reunion of Southwest and Alaska Field Studies participants in Cincinnati, she and another DC alumna who had taken the 1973 Big Bend Winter Term reconnected and in 1996, Bev and Bob Witzerman '75 were married.

After 22 years with local and state health departments in Texas, Bev joined the U.S. Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention in Atlanta in 2000. She has held a number of positions within the organization, beginning in the Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Branch, training STD supervisors and managers throughout the country. Other jobs included multi-year stints in international operations – Office of the

Director, Adolescent School Health, and Women’s Reproductive Health prior to joining the HIV/AIDS Global Health Program (GAP).

In 2009, without any prior visits to Africa, she accepted a three-month assignment in Namibia, working with HIV/STD programs and construction projects for HIV testing and treatment. Three months became seven, after which she was offered a permanent

post as Global AIDS Program Deputy Director for Botswana. Bev and Bob discussed the opportunity, packed up their dog and cat, and spent two years in what she describes as “an unforgettable experience and a wonderful country.”

Bev is very satisfied with the work, much of it funded within the President’s Emergency Program for AIDS Relief started by President George W. Bush. This initiative was created to connect and coordinate agencies which had not previously worked together, including CDC, USAID, Peace

*“I am proud to be an alumna of The Defiance College. My DC experience and its positive effects cannot be overly exaggerated or emphasized. The field opportunities, particularly winter term(s) and off-campus semesters, provided benchmarks for challenges, teamwork, and real-time direction for future endeavors.” - Beverly Nolt*

Corps, and Department of Defense, to cooperate in the prevention, testing, and treatment of HIV/AIDS. Bev's job focuses on management and operations to ensure U.S. funds are spent responsibly. It can be challenging and trying but she also finds it very rewarding particularly when agencies come together to reduce and prevent "mother to child" transmission of HIV.

"One of the things I am proud of was being part of a small team who investigated and broke up a Botswana cartel which had been stealing U.S. funds for several years," she relates. After returning from Botswana, Bev became CDC's Deputy Director at Large for the world's newest country, Republic of South Sudan, and has made numerous trips there until last December's unrest forced operations to be moved to Entebbe, Uganda, for the short term. As result, she spent much of the past summer in Port au Prince, Haiti, supplying operational support.

On Sept. 4, Bev accepted a new position as CDC's East Africa Team Lead in the Country Strategy and Management Branch. She will manage a team providing support to Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan.

## David Gynn '65

Defiance College is pleased to recognize David Gynn '65 with the 2014 Alumni Achievement Award.

When David entered Defiance College, he planned to major in business, and hadn't considered teaching. However, he was encouraged to go into business education to double his chance of getting a job after graduation. He remembers thinking, "I'll teach for a couple years and then go into business." The "couple years" turned into a couple decades and resulted in Dave receiving many recognitions for his outstanding work, including being the first Ohioan named National Business Teacher of the Year.

David attributes much of his success to the solid foundation he received at Defiance under the direction of Garnett Smith '51, who was then associate professor of business education.

Smith encouraged her students to attend Ohio Business Teachers Association meetings, and twice David went to the state conventions. "I am thankful to her for getting me started in OBTA," he said. "She made me realize the need to be a professional, as well as an educator."

*"Being the first in my family to earn a college education has changed my life. The small personal approach at Defiance could not be duplicated elsewhere. My DC education was my ticket to unlimited opportunities."*

*- David Gynn*

David went on to serve as president and secretary of the OBTA throughout his years of association with the organization.

He earned a Master of Education from Kent State University and has done additional post-graduate work at the University of Cincinnati and the University of Akron. The majority of David's teaching career was spent as cooperative education coordinator in Ashtabula and Kent, where he taught and assisted and supported his students at their co-op jobs.

In addition to being named National Business Teacher of the Year in 1987, Gynn was also recognized as 1985 Ohio Business Teacher of the Year and 1990 Vocational Educator of the Year in Ohio.

David retired from teaching in 1990, and entered his business career, first as a vice president of the Telecommunity Credit Union and then as the business manager of his United Methodist Church. He also served for several years as volunteer coordinator at Coleman Professional Services before going into retirement full time.

David was very active in Kiwanis for many years, serving in local and state leadership positions and is now a volunteer advocate for Ohio AARP. He is also currently a member of the Board of Education for the Biomed Science Academy, a STEM school that is the fifth highest rated school in Ohio.

"Being the first in my family to earn a college education has changed my life. The small personal approach at Defiance could not be duplicated elsewhere. My DC education was my ticket to unlimited opportunities," David says.

David and his wife, Patricia, reside in Kent, and have two grown sons, and grandchildren. The Gynns have just returned from the "trip of a lifetime," three weeks touring the United Kingdom, with David's sister and brother-in-law who are also DC alums, Barbara and Bruce Fisher, classes of 1966 and 1965 respectively.

## Lesia Swisher Shouse '04

Lesia Swisher Shouse '04 is the 2014 Young Alumni Service Award recipient.

As a student at Defiance College, Lesia was a service leader and president and trip coordinator for the college's chapter of Habitat for Humanity. She earned her bachelor of arts in communications and public relations and continued her education at Bowling Green State University, working with the Office of Service Learning as a graduate assistant. Lisa achieved her Master of Arts in College Student Personnel and worked at Owens Community College and then at the BGSU Career Center, first as advisor and then as assistant director/career center liaison to the college of business.

Lesia is currently the director of the Career Center at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg.

Throughout her college days and her professional life, Lesia has been involved in community service through a wide range of agencies, and has acquired a long list of recognitions to her name, including the National City Bank Champion Peer to Peer award in 2006, Leader of Promise: 100 Women of Influence in Girl Scouts of Western Ohio in 2012, and BGSU Outstanding Community Service Award 2009, to name just a few.

Lesia and her husband, Reggie '04, have also been two of

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**- Lesa Swisher Shouse**

the founding members of the Young Alumni Giving Circle, a group whose members each pledge to give \$1,000 in their first ten years after graduation in support of a DC scholarship.

Now residing and working in Florida, Lesa continues to be involved in service. “After moving to St. Petersburg, I didn’t know anyone and I felt I was missing service in my life, so I joined the Junior League. It’s a great way to get to know people in the area, the history and the needs of the community.” Lesa especially appreciates the JL’s focus on school readiness for children.

At the Career Center, Lesa promotes service in the career development of students by helping them choose volunteer opportunities that will help build their resumes to attain their career goals.

Lesla said she is honored to receive this recognition from a place that means so much to her. “I wouldn’t be where I am today without DC. It showed me a career that I did not even know existed and helped me see all the opportunities that were available to help other students.”

Lesla and Reggie live in St. Petersburg, Fla.

## Ray Santiago '71

Ray Santiago '71 is being recognized with the 2014 Schaffler Legacy Award for his dedicated work and advocacy for human rights and social justice causes.

Ray’s parents emigrated from Puerto Rico to Spanish Harlem in New York City. His father worked as a laborer; his mother worked in a sweatshop until she was disabled by an injury. He and his siblings were educated through the NYC public school system. As the first of his family to attend college, Ray participated in a college-readiness program, which is where he learned about Defiance College.

Professor Jeffrey Weaner announced that Ray was selected for this year’s Schaffler Legacy Award because from the start, Ray got involved in social activism. “He took the purpose of Schaffler and really has worked to advance humanity and achieve social justice,” Weaner said.

In addition to his studies and being a resident hall assistant, Ray found time to work as a volunteer juvenile probation officer, participate in Leadership Training and Community Organization for Spanish Speaking of Northwest Ohio, and be involved with the Center for the Study and Advancement of Non-white Cultures, the Atlantic-Pacific Streets Neighborhood Council and Phi Alpha Theta. Ray was also a Schaffler Scholar in Social Work and was awarded the

Pilgrim Medal.

In the early 70’s, Ray joined the Toledo-based Farm Labor Organizing Committee and Farm Labor Research Project. FLOC helped migrant workers organize and negotiate contracts with farmers and food processors.

Being an advocate has been Ray’s lifelong work. The list of the many labor and community advocacy organizations Ray has been involved with is long, and includes serving as:

- ◆ Founder and resource developer/advocate for the Teh-Luh-Lah Center for Education and Healing in Chimayo, New Mexico, an inter-generational, multicultural summer camp
- ◆ Founding member of the Southern Partners Fund, supporting progressive social change and community organizing in nine southeastern states
- ◆ Advisor to Fundamentals of Sports, a bridge program for inner-city youth
- ◆ Past board member of the La Pena Cultural Center, Berkeley, Calif.
- ◆ Staff member at the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization

Currently, Ray is the development officer for the Amherst, Mass.-based Peace Development Fund, a public foundation providing grants, training and resources in partnership with communities, trainers and donors who share PDF’s vision for social change.

He is married to Dr. Margaret Reeves, senior staff scientist with the Pesticide Action Network of Northwest America. Ray and Margaret have a 13-year-old daughter, Tatiana, and the family lives in Oakland, Calif.

## Elaine Kopke Gard '72

Elaine Kopke Gard '72 is this year’s recipient of the Schaffler Award in Christian Education. The award is given in recognition of her lifelong service to local churches in Christian education and faith formation. The Rev. Dr. Marian Plant '73, professor of religious and ministry studies, clearly remembers Elaine from their college days. “She was a role model for me,” Dr. Plant recalls.

Originally from the Cleveland area, Elaine majored in religion and Christian education, and she received the Schaffler Scholar in Christian Education Award at Defiance College.

Throughout her career, Elaine has been active in Christian education on the local church level. She served as a consultant to the Cooperative Christian Education Project with four UCC churches in the Greater Dayton area and as director of Christian Education and Youth at Trinity UCC in Miamisburg and Fairborn. She has directed children’s choirs and chaired mission and outreach committees within those churches.

Elaine has served in leadership capacities at the Association and the Ohio Conference level of the United Church of Christ as well. She became a Commissioned Worker in 1978 and a Commissioned Minister of Education in 1986. She has served six years as a member of the Laity Leadership Department with the Southwest Ohio Association, including two years as the department chair. She has served on the

Southwest Ohio Association Council, along with participating in or chairing various other Association committees on Christian Education. After moving to Newark, Ohio, she was a member of the Central Southeast Ohio Association Council from 2002-2005, and the 2004 moderator of the association. Since 2008, Elaine has been active with St. John's UCC in Newark, helping with Christian Education, special events, children's programming and women's programming. As chair of mission and outreach, she was able to dramatically increase mission giving and involvement.

She has been co-chair of St. John's Bethlehem marketplace, a biennial walk-through of Bethlehem involving up to three hundred cast members and volunteers. This project has raised several thousand dollars for the local food pantry.

"It has been my pleasure, my honor to try to do my best in what God has asked of me," Elaine said.

She is married to John, attorney and trust officer at Park National Bank, and they reside in Newark. They have two adult daughters and three grandchildren.

## Marsalek named Dean of Students

Lisa Marsalek, previously the assistant dean of students and director of career development, has been named dean of students, succeeding Dr. Ken Wetstein who was named vice president for institutional advancement.

"I am very pleased that we have someone of the high caliber of Lisa Marsalek ready to step in as our new dean of students," said President Mark C. Gordon. "She has already proven herself to be an innovative and creative administrator, and I am very pleased that she has agreed to take on added responsibilities."

Marsalek has 20 years of experience in student affairs. Before coming to Defiance, she worked at The Ohio State University, Case Western Reserve University, and the University of Toledo.

She earned a master of arts in higher education and student affairs, a master of labor and human resources and a bachelor of science in psychology, all from OSU. A northwest Ohio native, she graduated from Holgate High School.

Marsalek is a member of Zonta Club of Defiance and serves on the boards of Autism Model School, Toledo, and Harbor, Inc. She and her husband, Dan, are the parents of two sons, Nick and T.J.



## Rudy Yovich named Athletic Director; Jodie Holava Assistant Director

The Defiance College athletic program has new leadership. Rudy Yovich was recently named to the position of athletic director, succeeding Jenni Morrison who left for a position at California University of Pennsylvania. In addition, Jodie Holava, head softball coach, has been named

DC's assistant athletic director.

Yovich was the director of athletics at Owens Community College in Toledo since 2011 and was assistant director of athletics at Indiana University-Purdue University in Fort Wayne from 2003 to 2011.

"We are very pleased to be able to have someone with Rudy's experience, knowledge, and energy join our DC family as athletic director," said President Gordon. "Jenni Morrison did a great job in this position over the past four years, and I am confident Rudy will be able to build on that foundation and lead DC athletics to even greater success."

While at Owens, Yovich led an athletic department in which student-athletes improved both academically and athletically. During the 2012-13 season, student-athletes qualified for a record

four national championships with every program qualifying for a regional tournament. The school had five All-Americans, nine Academic All-Americans, and two All-American Academic Teams, first-ever in school history. The school finished that academic year ranked 23rd nationally out of 401 schools in the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics Learfield Director's Cup standings, the school's highest finish ever.

Yovich earned his bachelor's degree at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and an MBA in sports management from Columbia Southern University.

Holava is the all-time wins leader in the history of Defiance's softball program. She arrived at DC in 2006. Under her mentorship, the softball program has won three conference championships and finished among the top three in final standings in NCAA regionals during four of her years as head coach. The program has also excelled academically, earning numerous scholastic honors.

Holava earned her bachelor's degree from Mount Union College and master's degree from Cleveland State University.

"I am extremely pleased that Jodie has agreed to take on these additional responsibilities," said President Gordon. "She has proven herself as a coach, a colleague, a mentor for our student-athletes, and as a leader on campus."