

1995 Student Awards

St. Ignatius Loyola Medal:

James A. Sulzer

When Jim Sulzer serves food to the homeless as a volunteer at Prospect House, he thanks God for the shelter that provides a safety net. When he looks into the eyes of those standing in line for a hot meal, he feels kinship. "I have always felt an obligation to help the needy because I have so much and am in a position to give," he said.

Jim has been a soup kitchen volunteer since freshman year. As a resident advisor on the service floor in Regis Hall last year and Claver Hall this year, he has organized frequent trips with floor mates to serve food at Prospect House in Bridgeport.

He will receive at commencement in May the Saint Ignatius Loyola Medal from the Alumni Association for maximizing opportunities for intellectual, emotional and social growth during his undergraduate career. Jim is recognized by how modestly and diligently he works at projects that benefit others. He truly embodies the Jesuit spirit in everything he does.

A double major in politics and accounting, Jim carries a 3.76 grade point average and is president of the Jesuit honor society Alpha Sigma Nu, co-chair of the Great Hunger Cleanup which raises money for the homeless and hungry, a member of the Accounting Club, circulation director for the student newspaper *The Mirror*, and retreat director for Campus Ministry. He also initiated and directs the Alternative Rides program which shuttles students to the campus from the beach on weekend nights.

In addition, he has been a tutor at Harding High School in Bridgeport, student senator and director of academics for F.U.S.A., peer counselor, Eucharistic minister and Mission Volunteer to Jamaica.

Jim's faith and concern for others was never lost in the myriad of activities facing him each day. Instead, he was able to combine excellence in scholarship, extensive University involvement and outreach to the poor with humility, humor and caring.

While in Jamaica, Jim stayed with a family of seven in a ramshackle dwelling, and helped paint an orphanage and tend to abandoned elderly which he called "humbling." "I learned not to take things for granted so much, and to always remember the experience and take it wherever I go and apply it to whatever I do." Jim has accepted a position after graduation with the firm Arthur Andersen and said he will continue his commitment to social service work.

Student Achievement Award:

Lyra O. Espineli

As director of student activities, Jeanne DiMuzio has worked closely with Lyra since she arrived on campus and said, "Lyra's drive for perfection and high standards in programming have provided Fairfield with some of its best events. This fall as chairperson of the Filipino Intercollegiate Network Dialogue (FIND), Lyra led a three-day conference that drew over 400 students from 47 New England colleges. The conference became a model for cooperative programming." Her accomplishments

demonstrate that Lyra has clearly followed the advice her mother once gave her, “Do your best and enjoy what you are doing.”

Lyra distinguished herself and the University through the conference, but in fact, she has held many offices on campus including two terms as president of the Asian Students Association (ASA). Starting as a freshman, Lyra was elected by other students to become a hall governor in Resident Hall government, served as a Big Sister for Horizons Weekend and as a student tutor for Upward Bound. She went on to serve as vice president and later president of ASA, was a founding member of the AHANA Student Council, a three-term senator for the Inter-Residence Hall Government, a tour guide and then the first intern in the Office of Admission, a student facilitator for Head Start and a member of the Student Leaders Advisory Council. Her whirlwind of activities continued right through her senior year, when in her second term as president of ASA, she brought the Dialogue to Fairfield, coordinated numerous trips, helped increase budgets for multicultural student organizations and guide younger ASA officers in marking the Chinese New Year with an Asian dinner for 215 guests. In addition, she added to her busy schedule by becoming an intern in the Psychology Department.

But it was the FIND weekend that attracted considerable attention and was a coup for Fairfield since the Dialogue was previously held at much larger universities. Explaining her hours and hours of work and efforts in raising money for the event, she said, “I felt it would be valuable, not only for the Filipino-American students but to make the faculty and students aware of the outside world.”

Born in the Philippines, Lyra came to the United States at the age of 3. She still understands her native Tamal language and maintains pride in her heritage. “We are a people rich in love and respect and we are proud of who we are. We come from a beautiful country of more than 7,000 islands and over 100 languages.” While her mother and late father were both physicians, she wants others to realize that Filipino-Americans are also entering the arts and education and, as a psychology major, she plans a career in higher education. “I love doing student activities,” she explained.

**Student Achievement Award:
Erica Lyn French**

Erica French has demonstrated a commitment to the Fairfield University community and to the community at large by undertaking two comprehensive programs involving important issues of our time and implementing them with sensitivity and caring. “She demonstrates faith in action which is at the core of the Jesuit ideal of men and women for others,” said one of her fellow students.

While at the National Association of Campus Activities Conference in the fall of her sophomore year, Erica attended a session on “How to Bring the AIDS Quilt to Campus.” “It was very moving,” she recalled recently. “I felt it was something we needed to bring here to campus.”

Mustering support from faculty, administration, staff, students and alumni, she succeeded in bring 2,500 people to view the AIDS Memorial Quilt Project, displayed in the Barone Campus Center, organized a team of volunteers and raised nearly \$15,000 to cover expenses and still make sizable donations to the Stewart B. McKinney Foundation and Bread & Roses, a guest house for men and women with AIDS. This ambitious

project took over 12 months, involved all facets of the University and reached out to the community at large. Most rewarding of all, were hundreds of people who said the experience of the project had changed how they viewed AIDS and the people who suffer from AIDS.

When the Fairfield University Student Association was seeking a way to embrace the Fairfield University community's commitment to multiculturalism, Erica, in her role as vice president of student life, met with the Office of Multicultural Relations to see if the Martin Luther King, Jr. observance could be expanded to a four-day conference. Working with Dorothy Mosaka, a grad assistant in the Office of Multicultural Relations, and again drawing on all segments of the University community, she succeeded in coordinating an impressive and versatile program that included a lecture by Dr. Charles V. Willie, professor of sociology at Harvard and a classmate of Dr. King, a multicultural banquet, the Avodah Dance Ensemble of Jewish and African-American dancers, and an interdenominational prayer service with local religious leaders.

Among her other activities, Erica serves as president of CHOICE, a program for seniors committed to contributing a year to volunteer work; is a member of the Campus Ministry Council and a tour guide for Admissions; has been a volunteer at Prospect House and Merton House; founded the Student Health Advisory Council; completed two trips to Ecuador in the Mission Volunteer Program, and was director of community and alumni relations for FUSA.

An economics major, Erica has applied to the Jesuit Volunteer Corps program in Ecuador and eventually plans to do graduate work in international economic policy.

The William J. Kramer '60 Humanitarian Award: Christopher M. Pilkerton

Serving the community both abroad, in Jamaica's impoverished slums, and at home, as a member of Fairfield's town council, and president of the Fairfield University Student Association, Christopher Pilkerton has set a new standard for community relations.

A double major in communications and politics, in 1993 Chris was one of three who made history as the first university students ever elected to the Town of Fairfield's Representative Town Meeting Council (RTM). Chris became an important bridge between the town and the University. His contributions earned him a spot on "USA Today's All-American Academic team," and he was featured on the cover of "Student Leader" magazine.

Chris's brainchild "The Hindsight Project," an education outreach program between Fairfield University and the Town of Fairfield, created opportunities for high school students to learn from the experiences of college students. Over 100 Fairfield University students participated in the project, assisting students at Fairfield High School, as well as Notre Dame High School in Fairfield, through tutoring, peer counseling, intramural recreational activities and college seminars for seniors.

In addition to his work with the RTM, Chris has also been actively involved with the community as a Prospect House Shelter volunteer, serving meals to the needy, and as a peer tutor in the Bridgeport School system. As president of F.U.S.A., he sensitively

dealt with the tragic death of a student, and promoted greater racial understanding on campus.

Chris also spent two weeks in Jamaica as part of the Mission Volunteer Program. At the Alpha Boys School, he helped construct a new activities room. He also spent time feeding and bathing convalescents at Mother Theresa's Home for the Dying.

Following graduation, Chris, a dean's list student and member of Pi Sigma Alpha, the politics honor society, plans to pursue a career in consulting. His advice to other students is to get involved and take risks.

"Being involved in politics both in the community and on the campus has helped me understand that change can happen, it just takes a lot of hard work. The key to change is communication. There are people out there willing to help, but they can't help you until they know what you need. It's up to the individual to make his or her opinion and feelings known."