

Eight to be honored at Macalester Reunion in June

St. Paul, Minn. – What do a University of Minnesota attorney, the founder and CEO of the country’s largest solar hot water provider, the director of the Minnesota Math and Science Academy, the Class of 1965’s 50th Reunion co-chair, a couple—a former USAID official and his spouse, an ESL teacher, a university’s Dean of Libraries Emeritus, and a bagpiper and building fundraiser, have in common? They are all Macalester alumni who will be honored at Reunion 2015, June 5-7.

“These alumni, like alumni before them, have all achieved a certain status in their lives which reflect what they learned at Macalester,” said Gabrielle Lawrence, Director of Alumni Relations. “I’m proud of them and proud to be among their ranks.”

Here are the eight awardees:

James and Susan Graham ’65, Arlington, Va., Charles J. Turck Global Citizen Award which honors the legacy of Charles J. Turck, president of Macalester College from 1939 to 1958. Lawyer, educator, social activist, internationalist, and churchman, President Turck championed internationalism throughout his tenure. This award recognizes an alumnus who has advanced the internationalist spirit and lived up to the exhortation, “to be a worthy son or daughter of Macalester, you must listen to your hopes and not your fears.”

Susan and James Graham arrived at Macalester in the early 1960s eager to see the world. They married two days before graduation and then spent more than 20 years in Africa, exemplifying the spirit of global citizenship in their work. After earning her teacher’s certification, Susan joined Jim in Uganda, where he was already in graduate school thanks to a Macalester scholarship. A few years later, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) offered him a job. The first assignment of Jim’s 35-year USAID career sent the family to the Congo. Over the next three decades, they lived in Mali, Sudan, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tunisia. Jim developed, implemented, and analyzed projects in collaboration with local officials. Susan taught English as a Second Language in Mali. In Rwanda, she worked on an AIDS research project, and in Kenya, she revitalized a blood bank’s system. Back in the U.S. in the 1990s, Jim managed USAID’s Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment, a 20-year project to preserve the Congo River basin’s ecosystem. Today, the Grahams volunteer near their Arlington, Va., home. Susan earned a master’s degree in linguistics and continues to teach ESL. They learned how to sail in Khartoum and now race on the Potomac River. They’re working on their Spanish proficiency and recently stayed with a host family in Guatemala—the latest chapter in their international travel, but far from a surprising development for the lifelong learners with a passion for global citizenship.

Shelley Carthen Watson ’82, Shoreview, Minn., Catharine Lealtad Service to Society Award is given to an alumnus or alumna of color who has used his or her education to distinguish themselves in service to



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community.

Shelley Carthen Watson had actually committed to attending another school when a well-timed packet of admissions materials from Macalester changed her mind—and, she now says, her life.

Once on campus, the San Bernardino, Calif., native threw herself into forensics, residential life (as RA and hall director), student government, minority programs, and, of course, into her triple major of sociology, political science, and law and society. After graduation she earned a law degree from Northwestern University and then spent several years at the Minneapolis law firm of Robins Kaplan Miller and Ciresi, ultimately earning a partnership. Fifteen years ago she moved to the University of Minnesota's Office of the General Counsel, where she has worked ever since, providing counsel and training in labor relations and employment issues as well as defending the university in collective bargaining and other matters. At Macalester, she has served on the Board of Trustees, a presidential search committee, and the Alumni Board. She regularly serves as a host parent for the Alumni of Color Host Family Program. She's happy to volunteer for Macalester, says Carthen Watson, because her experience here was "transforming," turning her into a top-notch speaker, writer, thinker, and global citizen, and giving her lifelong friends. Her dream is that others will share that experience. "I want other students of color to have the gift of a Macalester education, to help produce the next generation" of outstanding African American alumni.

This year marks the 100th anniversary that Dr. Catharine Deaver Lealtad (<http://www.macalester.edu/multiculturallife/lealtadsuzuki/about/>), Macalester College's first African American graduate, earned a double major degree in chemistry and history with highest honors in 1915. She was accepted into Cornell University's medical school, but left shortly after her arrival due to the racial prejudice at Cornell. She went on to study medicine in Lyon, France, where she received her medical degree from the University of Paris in 1933, specializing in pediatrics. She created an endowed scholarship at Macalester in 1983 and is the only person to receive two honorary degrees from the college. Dr. Lealtad passed away in 1989.

Zachary Axelrod '06, Washington, D.C., Young Alumni Award recognizes alumni who have graduated in the past 15 years. This award pays tribute to those who are making an effective contribution to the community in which they live, or moving forward rapidly in their career, and living the kind of unselfish, caring life for which their Macalester education prepared them.

Nine years after he graduated from Macalester, Zach Axelrod '06 is the founder and CEO of the country's largest solar hot water provider. His rapidly growing business, writes his nominator, is a "clean energy success story" - and his work is changing the field of renewable energy.

Axelrod's passion for that field formed well before he arrived at Macalester. In high school, he identified his future industry at a time when renewable energy was just emerging. "I thought renewable energy would make sense during my lifetime," he said, "and whenever that happened, I knew I wanted to be part of it." After majoring in economics, Axelrod worked in the U.S. Trade Representatives Office in Washington, D.C., then at an energy-consulting firm before joining an energy start-up. The start-up failed, but working with colleagues who believed they could change the world defined his next step: starting his own company. Axelrod founded Skyline Innovations in 2009 and began installing solar hot water systems in low-income and affordable housing, in the process reducing utility bills, recycling old systems, and creating hundreds of green jobs. Skyline - recently renamed Nextility - focuses on small businesses, spreading clean energy practices while saving each client money. Nextility expanded its offerings recently, and the company's growth accelerated: Axelrod expects customer accounts to grow from 800 to 5,000 by the end of the year. In the midst of overseeing 60 employees, Axelrod is an active alum, serving as an Annual Fund class agent and Reunion committee member. He returns to campus regularly to speak to economics classes. He's also hired

eight Mac alumni at Nextility and helped more than a dozen land employment. Throughout his company's rapid growth, writes the classmate who nominated him, "Zach has remained humble, kind, and of service to his fellow alumni and community."

David Bloom '65, Seattle, Wash., *Alumni Service Award* *recognizes an alumnus whose significant service and consistent loyalty to the college has set an outstanding example of volunteerism.*

In the last 16 months, the Class of 1965's 50th Reunion co-chair, David Bloom, has driven more than 10,000 miles around the United States to meet face-to-face with his classmates - all in the spirit of encouraging them to attend Reunion. The Mac-themed travel all started with a nudge from Bloom's classmate Ruth Lippin. While visiting the Twin Cities last winter, he considered taking a roundabout route back to his Seattle home. Lippin suggested that he visit classmates along the way. With a Class of 1965 National Alumni Tour magnet on his car, Bloom embarked on a seven-week road trip—first to Florida, then west through Texas and southern California. Mac's Alumni Relations Office connected him with classmates along the route, and he compiled a narrative about each alum he visited. By the time he finished a second road trip later in the year, he'd visited more than 40 classmates. "We were all on this little campus in St. Paul in the 1960s, and now we're all over the country, contributing to communities in our own ways," said Bloom, whose passion for social justice led him to a career in ministry, community organizing, and teaching. "I saw the Macalester spirit in the lives of the classmates I visited." "David's inspirational work has enriched an already strong and cohesive class culture," says Director of Alumni Relations Gabrielle Lawrence. "He lives Macalester values."

*The following will receive the **Distinguished Citizen Award** that recognizes alumni who have exercised leadership in civic, social, religious and professional activities. It is given because the Alumni Association, the Board of Trustees, and the faculty of Macalester believe that a college education should be the training and inspiration for unselfish and effective service to the community, the nation, and the world. Recipients demonstrate a practical acceptance of these obligations in their lives and work.*

Bob Kreischer '65, Oakdale, Minn. Bob Kreischer graduated with a BA in psychology, but little idea how to turn it into a career. Then he went on to San Francisco Theological Seminary, where an education course led him to an unanticipated, but extraordinary career. After teaching in the Bay Area, then Minnesota, Kreischer began to investigate starting his own school. "Children are born with the joy of learning," said Kreischer, "and they continue to be curious—until they get to school." It was challenging, but with the philosophy that "If doors keep opening, we'll keep marching through them," in 1982, he and his then-wife Sandy '66 founded what became the highly regarded Mounds Park Academy (MPA) in Maplewood, Minn. During the 20 years Kreischer served as director, the school grew from 104 students to 650 in K–12, with a budget of \$9.5 million. From the beginning, MPA was committed to the liberal arts, including art, drama, music, physical education and foreign language study. Kreischer was nominated by classmate Bonnie Koch, who taught at MPA for almost 20 years. She recalls that the U.S. Department of Education commended the school for its "challenging academic program balanced by a sense of global responsibility," adding that "Bob's recognition as a gifted educator has extended beyond Mounds Park Academy." Indeed, he has worked with or consulted with numerous charter schools, as well as the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools. He currently serves as director of the Minnesota Math and Science Academy in Woodbury, Minn. The most satisfying aspect of his career, says Kreischer, has always been "the chance and the opportunity to make a difference in kids' lives."

Steve Marquardt '65, Lake Lillian, Minn. For 33 years, Steve Marquardt, South Dakota State University's Dean of Libraries Emeritus, served as a university librarian, expanding and improving access to knowledge. Academic libraries have undergone tremendous technological change, for which Marquardt provided valued

leadership to the university administration, library colleagues, faculty, and students. He also enjoyed a parallel career as a volunteer human rights advocate. In South Dakota, he lobbied his state representative to abolish the death penalty for juveniles, changing a bill-killing tie vote to passage in the House. In 2006, he received the Butler Human Rights Award for his work persuading the Brookings City Council to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Since 1982, Marquardt has been active in Amnesty International, helping to establish local groups, serving as legislative coordinator for South Dakota, then Minnesota, where he now resides with his wife Judy '66. His work on human rights issues included violence and discrimination against women, the closing of the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, prisoners of conscience, and many more. His careers converged in his work with "Freedom," an organization that worked toward the 2010 release of persons imprisoned for operating independent libraries in Cuba. Rhoda Goodrich Moeller and Justice Paul Anderson jointly nominated their classmate, with Anderson noting, "I have frequently referred to Steve as my cultural and moral compass." The lodestar guiding this compass of Marquardt's is the admonition in Luke 4:18 "to proclaim liberty to captives and . . . let the oppressed go free."

Skye K. Richendrfer '80, Mount Vernon, Wash. Skye K. Richendrfer '80 is truly a Scot among Scots. Having started playing the bagpipes at age seven, he naturally gravitated to college at Macalester, where, already an accomplished piper, he joined the pipe band. He proceeded to lead the then student-run pipe band for three years and was instrumental in revitalizing the college's Scottish Country Fair. After graduating from Macalester with a degree in history, Richendrfer played for several years with the world championship Simon Fraser University Pipe Band from British Columbia. But his biggest post-college accomplishment was founding the Skagit Valley Highland Games & Celtic Festival in Mount Vernon, Wash., which is still thriving today. Even while working as mayor of Mount Vernon, Wash., for eight years, Richendrfer's passion for all things Celtic continued to flourish, as he obtained nonprofit status for the Celtic Arts Foundation and became its full-time executive director in 2004. Richendrfer's latest accomplishment is the completion of a \$2 million Celtic event center in Mount Vernon, for which he did the fundraising. The Littlefield Celtic Center will host music and dance performances and workshops, academic presentations, and a host of other celebratory events and activities. "This is a legacy project for me," says Richendrfer. Adds his friend, fellow piper, and nominator James R. Johnson '77, "His remarkable achievement in building an internationally significant and highly effective nonprofit organization clearly warrants Skye's recognition as a Macalester Distinguished Citizen."

View past Macalester alumni award winners here: [macalester.edu/alumni/alumniawards/](http://www.macalester.edu/alumni/alumniawards/)
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Macalester College, founded in 1874, is a national liberal arts college with a full-time enrollment of 2,045 students. Macalester is nationally recognized for its long-standing commitment to academic excellence, internationalism, multiculturalism, and civic engagement. Learn more at [macalester.edu](http://www.macalester.edu)
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