

5 with ISU ties receive honors

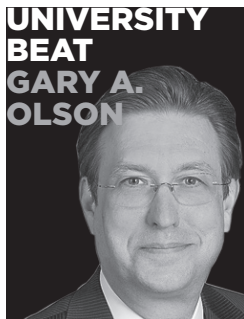
I recently had the pleasure of speaking at the 2009 Idaho Health Care Hero awards ceremony in Boise sponsored by the Idaho Business Review newspaper and co-sponsored by Idaho State University and PacificSource Health Plans.

Now in its fourth year, this statewide competition recognizes 30 health care professionals in 10 categories for their extraordinary commitment to improving the lives of others. Honorees are selected by an independent panel of judges.

As I stood on stage and shook the hand of each honoree, I was touched and inspired by their stories—from the occupational therapist who builds custom wheelchairs for quadriplegics to the 71-year-old nurse so devoted to her patients that she refuses to retire.

I'm especially proud of five of the honorees, all with ties to ISU. They include two professors, a researcher, an ISU graduate, and a student. Two—dental hygiene professor Dr. Linda Boyd, and ISU graduate Karen Donaldson—were selected as the top Health Care Heroes in the categories of Educator and Professional, respectively.

I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you about all five.



Dr. Boyd is based at our ISU-Meridian Health Science Center and serves as director of our online graduate program in dental hygiene. Launched in 2005, the program was one of the first in the nation.

A dental hygienist for nearly 20 years, Dr. Boyd taught at the prestigious Oregon Health and Sciences University

School of Dentistry for five years before coming to ISU. She is able to use her expertise in nutrition and dietetics to teach her dental hygiene students about the special needs of medically compromised patients.

Ms. Donaldson, the founder of Pocatello's EXCEL Weight Loss Solutions, holds bachelor's degrees in dietetics and microbiology from ISU. Drawing on her background in science, fitness and nutrition, she has created a successful business and product line to help clients fight obesity.

Dr. Galen Louis, a finalist in the Educator category, heads ISU's Master of Public Health program. Based at ISU-Meridian, he is able to teach students in both the Treasure Valley and Pocatello, thanks to distance-learning technology that links classrooms electronically.

Many of Dr. Louis' students are working professionals—including physicians, hospital executives, and counselors—who seek

ISU's M.P.H. degree, the only one offered in Idaho. In addition to teaching, Dr. Louis has helped develop programs to curb tobacco use among Idaho teens and improve community services for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Russell Spearman, a senior research associate in ISU-Meridian's Institute of Rural Health and finalist in the Rehabilitation category, was honored for his work to improve support services for the estimated 35,000 Idahoans living with traumatic brain injuries.

The former executive director of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, Spearman believes all people can contribute to society if given the opportunity and necessary support.

Finally, student Laura Bainbridge was awarded the Idaho Business Review's \$1,000 Health Care Heroes scholarship for her exemplary work in ISU-Meridian's fast-track nursing program. When she completes the rigorous 16-month program in May, she plans to pursue a master's degree in nursing.

These five honorees represent the extraordinary work our faculty, students and alumni are doing to improve health care in Idaho. Congratulations to them all.

Gary A. Olson is provost and vice president at Idaho State University.