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Four to be Inducted as Lifetime Members of EIU Foundation

Oct-12-2009

Four individuals -- all with ties to the Coles County area -- have been chosen as honorary lifetime members of the Eastern Illinois University Foundation.

Former Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar and his wife, Brenda; Richard A. Lumpkin; and Burnham Neal will be inducted into this Foundation class this weekend when the Foundation gathers for its annual meeting.

Lifetime membership is bestowed upon individuals who have demonstrated exceptional and significant support for the university. Previous recipients include Harold Marker, Lou Hencken, Jan Tarble and Ivan "Ike" Kennard.

Jim and Brenda Edgar, EIU alumni who received degrees in 1968 and 1998, respectively, have been, and continue to be, strong and loyal alumni of EIU, donating their time, financial gifts and support to EIU. Mr. Edgar's political involvement began at EIU when he served as student body president. He later served as Illinois' 38th governor after spending more than 30 years in state government, including terms as state representative and secretary of state.

In addition to donating a number of papers and artifacts from their tenure in state government to EIU, the Edgars also created the Edgar Lecture Series with a gift of \$150,000, which allows EIU to annually host two speakers who focus primarily on state government and current issues in state government and their historical implications. They also created the Brenda Edgar Scholarship for Women, which is awarded to adult female parents over the age of 25 who are returning to school after having had a significant break in education due to life events.

Richard A. Lumpkin serves Consolidated Communications Inc. as chairman -- the latest in a long line of roles he's held in the communication field since 1963. He served in various positions, including chairman, chief executive officer, president and treasurer, for Illinois Consolidated Telephone Co. (1963-1997), then became vice chairman of McLeodUSA, which acquired ICC in 1997. Consolidated Communications Inc. acquired McLeodUSA in 2002.

Although not an alumnus, Lumpkin has supported Eastern Illinois University for more than 40 years, beginning with a gift in 1964 that established the Lumpkin Foundation Fund. Financial support from this fund and subsequent ones has benefited the EIU School of Business and what is now known as the Lumpkin College of Business and Applied Sciences greatly. Gifts also were made to other areas of the university, including EIU athletics, Eastern's human performance lab, the Hadwiger Communications Laboratory and the fine arts.

In 1997, the EIU Foundation named its annual philanthropy awards after **Burnham Neal** and his wife, Nancy, in recognition of their leadership, gifts and steadfast dedication to the university. (Mrs. Neal passed away in December 2006.) Burnham Neal, owner of Neal Tire and Ben Tire Distributors, based in Toledo, Ill., has donated numerous dollars to the EIU Foundation. The Neal Welcome Center -- the building in which the Foundation is housed -- bears his name.

Neal has also donated to area middle schools, high schools and Lake Land College, and contributes to multiple scholarship funds annually. He also supports Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center, located in Coles County.