

JANE LaCHAPELLE McCARTY UNITY IN DIVERSITY AWARD
Presented by the Rev. Roger Bertschausen on behalf of
Toward Community: Unity in Diversity
to Robert Pedersen
January 15, 2007
Lawrence University Memorial Chapel
Appleton, Wisconsin

Each year at the Martin Luther King service, Toward Community has the honor of presenting the Jane LaChapelle McCarty Unity in Diversity Award. The award, named for one of the founders of Toward Community who died a few years ago, recognizes an individual who has made great strides in bringing different people in our community together. The award celebrates an individual who, like Jane, has made a significant and positive difference in our community.

This year's nominees are each deserving of this recognition: Diane Doersch, Henry Golde, Jeff Kuepper, Ruth Mansukhani, and Bob Pedersen. For the work he has done individually and with the organization he so creatively leads, we are honored to present this year's Jane LaChapelle McCarty Unity in Diversity Award to Bob Pedersen.

Bob passionately believes that EVERY person in our community is important and valuable. This belief is an important part of the rich heritage of Goodwill Industries, a fact which no doubt helped lead Bob to his work there. As President and Chief Executive Officer of Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin, Bob has led his organization to do this work in such a visionary, deep and committed way that it has truly changed our community for the better. Bob did not need to see in this belief a mandate to get into the challenging area of youth work, let alone the controversial work of serving gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth; certainly many who profess belief in the importance and value of everyone has avoided such an inclusive understanding of "everyone." But not Bob. Thankfully he has interpreted this belief in a very broad and inclusive way.

One word that comes to mind as I contemplate Bob's contributions is "visionary." He is a visionary, and he also supports other people's visions. This combination has led him and Goodwill Industries to help powerful dreams become real and vital: the American Indian Center, Fox Cities Rotary Multicultural Center, Harmony Café, and the GLBT Partnership, for example. Goodwill has supported these and other diversity efforts in many ways: sometimes with cash contributions, free office space, capacity building assistance or full-blown program development. It is not a stretch to say that some of these organizations might not exist but for Goodwill's crucial support; certainly none of them would be making nearly the same impact on our community without the support of Goodwill Industries.

Other words also come to mind to describe Bob. He is creative and innovative, never afraid to think outside the box. He has tremendous personal integrity. He brings together a rare combination of appreciating the difference multi-million dollar organizations like Goodwill can make and the difference grassroots efforts of small groups of people can make. He has a keen sense of timing—he knows just when a gesture of support will nudge a dream into reality. In spite of Goodwill's size and power, he also appreciates collaboration. He knew, for example, that in order to live up to its

potential, the Fox Cities Rotary Multicultural Center needed to be given birth by a collaboration of individuals and organizations rather than by Goodwill alone.

There is one last quality of Bob I want to lift up. He's not just a visionary and a big picture thinker (though he does these things exceptionally well). He also is good in the trenches. I had the privilege of watching him work last fall for an issue about which he felt deeply passionate: the defeat of the constitutional amendment on civil union and marriage. He dug into this work with great energy and enthusiasm, making phone calls and knocking on doors and hosting gatherings to galvanize support for the amendment's defeat. In a different way, he once again put his belief that EVERY person in our community is important and valuable into action.

It is a privilege to present this award to you, Bob. Thank you for your profound contributions to our community.