



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

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LSSI Honors ‘True Friends’ — Bruce Weber and Homer Drew — at 25th Annual Amicus Certus Award Dinner

Known in the world of college basketball, colleagues and friends Homer Drew and Bruce Weber were honored on October 28 by Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) at its 25th Annual Amicus Certus (“True Friend”) Award Dinner in Chicago. The two, men’s head basketball coaches at Valparaiso University and at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, respectively, were recognized by LSSI for their commitment to their players, which they have demonstrated by mentoring and encouraging them to complete their college educations and to pursue meaningful and productive lives.

The event, entitled “A Masked Ball,” took place at the Westin Chicago River North Hotel and was hosted by the Women’s Network of LSSI. More than 350 guests attended the award dinner, which annually recognizes organizations or individuals who have made significant contributions to the human community.

“I got into coaching because I love working with kids,” Weber said during his acceptance speech. “The most important thing you can do in life is to serve somebody.” He noted that LSSI will be celebrating its 140th anniversary next year – adding that the University of Illinois was founded the same year, 1867. He told the audience, “I applaud you – I applaud LSSI. I hope I can continue to make a difference – not only winning games.”

Weber also pointed to his colleague Homer Drew as “truly a friend [to me], as well as a friend to basketball. He stands for what is good.”

Drew responded that “[Bruce] is truly one of the great people. It’s been a thrill for me to have him as a friend.” To the dinner guests, he said, “You people are the key. You are passing on [the importance of] helping others who need help or may be less fortunate. You people have enriched many people’s lives.”

“It was a great pleasure to recognize Coaches Drew and Weber with our Amicus Certus, or ‘True Friend,’ Award,” says the Rev. Dr. Frederick Aigner, LSSI president. “Both men are winners,

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and yet have not placed winning above decency, fair play and individual development. I am proud of their accomplishments, and the manner in which they achieved them. I believe that, quietly, they make our world a better place. I have a sense that their influence, while widely felt, is in fact far wider than they believe or we can know.”

Johnny “Red” Kerr, former NBA player and coach who now works as a broadcaster for the Chicago Bulls, served as the perfect master of ceremonies, blending humor and reflections on basketball, and sharing some stories about Drew and Weber. He also put a special zing into the silent auction and raffle, which he conducted with Helaine Baldwin, 2006 Amicus Certus chairperson, at his side.

The event raised approximately \$200,000 for two of LSSI's Chicago-based youth programs: Steps to Life, which helps foster children make the transition to adulthood and independence, and Project H.O.P.E., which focuses on helping youth with serious emotional problems make the transition to adulthood.

Crystal, a participant in Steps to Life for the last five years, gave one of the most moving presentations of the evening, saying, “[Steps to Life] has made me into a teen leader.” She noted that the group has made a significant impact on her life, building her belief in herself and enabling her to mentor other youth served by the program. “Without this group, we may not achieve our true potential,” she said. In addition, Xavier, another Steps to Life participant and high school senior who, along with Crystal, was thrilled to be in photos taken with the coaches and Kerr, said, “I will remember this evening for the rest of my life.”

The event's 25th anniversary was celebrated during the evening, with a special presentation that ran throughout the dinner, which included photos and memories from the first 24 Amicus Certus Award Dinners. Two previous Amicus Certus honorees were in attendance, including the Rev. Donald M. Hallberg, president for the Foundation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and former LSSI president, and Orion Samuelson, WGN agricultural broadcaster.

Former Amicus Certus honorees include Paul Simon, former U.S. Senator from Illinois; Anne M. Burke, Chicago Special Olympics founder; The Retirement Research Foundation; and The Erickson Institute. Last year, Rotary International received the award for its efforts in eradicating polio worldwide.

Founded in 1867, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and provides a variety of services for people in need throughout the state at more than 89 locations.

For more about LSSI, call 847/635-4600 or visit www.LSSI.org.

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