

The Honor Award is given to members who have made outstanding contributions to the field of health, physical education, recreation or dance in the state of Iowa. The recipient must be an IAHPERD member and have at least 10 years of experience as a teacher, supervisor, administrator or combination of the same in the field of health, physical education, recreation, and/or dance. They must have provided at least 10 years of contributions to IAHPERD through distinctive leadership and meritorious service.

Valerie has been an IAHPERD member for several decades, first joining in 1975. She was a physical education teacher and coach for WACO schools for 7 years, was self employed for 3 years as a speaker and coach for businesses to provide fitness activities to employees, 4 years as a private exercise coach, worked at Mount Pleasant Recreation for 9 years, and currently she teaches, advises, and leads future physical education professionals at Iowa Wesleyan University where she has made a significant impact for over 23 years.

Her professional contributions to IAHPERD have included writing several articles for the journal, presenting at multiple conventions, serving on numerous committees, member of legislative council for many years, executive board member, and was our President from 2008-2010. She helped organize and plan the 2009 state convention in Ames, IA. When it comes to conventions, this is where most of us would agree that Valerie has contributed and displayed her distinctive leadership because she has not just attended numerous state and national conventions but she makes it a point to bring a group of her students along with her. These are future quality physical education professionals we need. She stated, "I do this to motivate and inspire them to become motivational teachers and become members of IAHPERD." Beyond her impact on these future professional members of IAHPERD, Valerie wrote and won a PEP grant for IAHPERD in 2009 in which the grant served 79 different school districts with functional fitness equipment. She then assisted and facilitated the writing and won three separate PEP grants for schools in Iowa.

A statement supporting her nomination for this award was, "I value her as an excellent resource for all teachers and students as do many other Physical Educators in the state. She is an exemplary leader and example for all educators."

When I asked Valerie if there was anything she would like me to share she sent me the following message...

*I have dearly loved IAHPERD and the friends I have made through this wonderful organization. I have made files filled with handouts from convention sessions that I use for classes they are named: Deb Stephenson, Jan Grenko, Luann Swanson, Margaret Bueter, Debby Deardon, Bob Nutgrass, Lori Smith, Jen Schnell, Rick Schupbach, Kari Bullis, Gary Sanders, Rip Marstons,*

*Karen Nagel, Ann Griffin, and many more. These educators and more have provided me with expertise to pass on to my students. My students know many of you by name, but not by face. During classes, I actually talk about you to my students. They know – this is a Deb Stephenson dance or a Jan Grenko activity. They know about the great PE program Luann Swanson developed at Pekin. They know my Iowa City teacher friends – because I tell them specific activities performed in their class or techniques used for classroom management. At one convention John Baker was so kind to sit with some of my students at lunch and showed them on his computer how he uses videos for assessment. I still talk about his assessments in my elementary methods class. At the Minneapolis convention we ate dinner with Tara Stemsrud, and she told us about classroom happenings including management and assessment. I believe “YOU” the teachers who are in the gym everyday are the best teachers for college students. I can teach the words of a book, but you live the experiences every day. Observations and student teaching with you - are the opportunities and experiences to impact our future physical educators. Thank you for taking time to have these students in your gym or classroom.*

*A big thank you to all who have answered my questions I email throughout the year for advice, activities, your middle and high school syllabi, gym rules you use, questions my students have, and much more. But, my biggest thank you goes out to my husband, Stan, for supporting me because it is an honor to have you by my side each and every day.*

*Lastly, I hope each of you loves your job as much as I do. We have so much responsibility and accountability to and for our students which we demonstrate through love, and yet being firm – but warm. I hope each of you continues to attend conventions and please, encourage your colleagues to attend. IAHPERD has done more for me than I have for it. Go IAHPERD!!!*

Valerie, thank you for your distinctive leadership and meritorious service. Please join me in congratulating our 2016 Honor Award winner, Valerie Unkrich.