

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

Campus News Archive

Campus News, Newsletters, and Events

5-1-2012

Margaret Kuchenreuther receives Outstanding Community Service Award

University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news

Recommended Citation

University Relations, "Margaret Kuchenreuther receives Outstanding Community Service Award" (2012). *Campus News Archive*. 409.

https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news/409

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Campus News, Newsletters, and Events at University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. It has been accepted for inclusion in Campus News Archive by an authorized administrator of University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. For more information, please contact skulann@morris.umn.edu.

Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Margaret Kuchenreuther receives Outstanding Community Service Award

Summary: She is the only faculty member in the University of Minnesota system to receive the 2012 University of Minnesota Outstanding Community Service Award.

(May 1, 2012)-Margaret Kuchenreuther, associate professor of biology, is the only faculty member in the University of Minnesota system to receive the 2012 University of Minnesota Outstanding Community Service Award (OCSA). She is also the first Morris faculty member to receive the award.

Established in 1999, the OCSA honors community outreach and service activities of the University of Minnesota community and recognizes members of the University community who have devoted their time and talent to make substantial, enduring contributions to the community and to improving public life and the well being of society.

I feel very honored and humbled [to receive this award]," says Kuchenreuther, "In truth, I was reluctant to allow myself to be nominated for this award, because so few of the contributions discussed in my dossier are efforts undertaken by myself, alone. Instead, they are accomplishments made possible by the concerted efforts of many, many dedicated people—of which I am only one."

The nomination committee chose Kuchenreuther for the award as "a classic example of a fully engaged citizen-scientist, and a great champion of preservation and biodiversity in the prairie biome." Her community service activities align with the mission and vision of the University of Minnesota, Morris as a leader in sustainable energy and green living. "The unifying theme in Kuchenreuther's engagement activities is an advocacy for the protection of local habitats, and the diversification and perennialization of local agriculture. The consequences of moving in this direction are better water quality, soil conservation, carbon sequestration, wildlife and pollinator habitat, and local food security," said K's nominators.

Kuchenreuther played a pivotal role in the local foods/healthy eating initiative in the Morris community. Soon after arriving in Morris in 1991, she committed her time to Pomme de Terre Foods, a local food co-op. While involved with the co-op, Kuchenreuther has seen it become a mainstay in the local foods movement. The co-op is a partner in the Pride of the Prairie, a collaborative effort with the purpose to promote the production and use of locally grown food and develop a regional food system in western Minnesota. With Kuchenreuther's involvement, Pomme de Terre Foods also collaborated with the Morris Healthy Eating Initiative. Established in 2009, the Morris Healthy Eating Initiative aims to make fresh produce and healthy foods more accessible on the University of Minnesota, Morris campus, in the Morris community, and in Stevens county.

Kuchenreuther's largest on-going public service commitment is with the City of Morris Planning Commission. She has been a commissioner since 1997, and chair since 2006. As part of her service to the Planning Commission, Kuchenreuther called on her scholarly background as a botanist to argue for the removal of ash trees from the landscaping plan of the new Morris Area Elementary School—before the emerald ash borer was reported in Minnesota. She also successfully persuaded the Commission to insist on dark-sky compliant lighting in all new development plans

to protect the public's right to enjoy the night sky and the University's ability to use its telescope for teaching and research. Kuchenreuther is also the author of an ordinance allowing natural landscaping within the city limits. She says of her work, "My focus on the Planning Commission has always been the need for the city to plan—to do things in an intentional way, rather than in ways that are just expedient. Our new zoning map reflects this approach and I hope it will guide future housing and business development in an intelligent way."

For the future, Kuchenreuther hopes the Morris community will become an increasingly attractive and sustainable community. She cites the demand for affordable, single-family, housing, including rentals. As part of the solution to meet the demand, she would like to see the Green, Affordable Neighborhood Plan implemented on the old elementary school property. It features an innovative and aesthetically pleasing design for a variety of energy efficient and affordable housing types that would especially appeal to young families, retired people, and newcomers to Morris. Kuchenreuther acknowledges that moving forward is difficult, due to a lack of funding. "We need to partner with private interests who have the capital necessary to kick start revitalization," she says.

In addition to her involvement with the local foods/healthy eating initiative and her commitment to the City of Morris Planning Commission, Kuchenreuther is a member of the *Design Morris!* Coordinating Committee, the West Central Research and Outreach Horticulture Advisory Board, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Scientific and Natural Areas. She also leads interpretive talks at local natural areas, appears on Pioneer Public Television to share her botanical expertise, and conducts tours of her "lakescaped" backyard.

Kuchenreuther brings her community service acumen to her research and the classroom. She has always been more interested in applied questions than in theoretical ones. As a result, her research has focused on the management of native plant communities. She says, "I try to generate data that can help natural resource managers make informed decisions." Connections with the DNR and the City of Morris and networking with a variety of non-profit environmental advocacy groups provide connections to people and issues that make Kuchenreuther a better teacher and resource for her students interested in natural resource conservation and planning. "It allows me to use many real world examples in my teaching," she says.

Kuchenreuther received her B.A. in biological sciences from the University of Northern Iowa in 1978, her M.S. in botany from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, and her Ph.D. in botany from the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 1991.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.