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University Marketing and Communications

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EMBERY SAYS KEY TO PRESERVING OUR NATURAL WORLD IS EDUCATION

CHARLESTON -- Joan Embery, who has dedicated most of her adult life to promoting animal and environmental issues throughout the world, Sunday told Eastern Illinois University graduates that never has society been in such a critical position of determining the fate of so many species of animals and the well-being of our natural world.

The goodwill ambassador of the Zoological Society of San Diego told more than 300 Eastern summer graduates assembled in Lantz Gymnasium, "Our work is cut out for us, and the key is education."

"I know that my ability to communicate, interpret and influence may help to determine the future of many species of animals," she added.

Embery was at Eastern to accept an honorary doctor of public service degree in recognition of her efforts to educate the public about preserving our natural habitat. She is the first graduate of Eastern's Board of Governors Bachelor of Arts nontraditional degree program to receive such an honor.

She reflected on her educational experience at Eastern, saying it

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helped her to evaluate her accomplishments and to focus on her future with a new enthusiasm.

After earning a Board of Governors degree from Eastern in 1986, she has been a strong university supporter and a spokesperson for this nontraditional degree program.

Respected as an authority on rare, exotic and domestic animals, Embery has earned the admiration of millions of Americans who first came to know her through her many appearances on "The Tonight Show" and other popular shows.

Embery told of her first appearance on "The Tonight Show." "As I walked down the halls of NBC looking for my dressing room, I noticed all the stars' names on the doors. I was impressed. I found my room at the end of the hall -- it was the largest dressing room of all. On the door was a star -- beneath it was the name Carol -- the elephant. I soon knew my place -- spokesperson for the animals. Any illusions of self-importance disappeared."

She went on to say that her entire career has been a learning experience triggered by a passion for animals. She likened a zoo to a university -- both are multi-faceted.

As goodwill ambassador for the Zoological Society of San Diego, which includes the San Diego Zoo and the San Diego Animal Park, Embery said she works among some of the best educated and most respected representatives of many disciplines. She noted that more than five million visitors, or students, as she

prefers to call them, visit the San Diego Zoo annually, while some 120 million people visit zoos nationally -- more than all professional sports combined. "We have a chance to get them on our team," she commented.

Embery ended her speech by quoting Baba Dioum: "In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught."