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The University of Dayton

News Release

UD PROGRAM DIRECTOR WINS ERIN RITCHEY SPIRIT AWARD

DAYTON, Ohio, March 14, 1990--Marilyn Bishop, director of the Ministry with Handicapped People program at the University of Dayton, has been named the first recipient of the Erin Ritchey Spirit award. The award is given by the Kenneth Ritchey family and Ohio Public Images, a statewide organization devoted to positive portrayal of people with disabilities.

The Spirit award recognizes an individual, other than teachers, in the field of mental retardation and developmental disabilities. Established by her family, the award honors Erin Ritchey, a girl who had developmental handicaps. The daughter of the superintendent of the Montgomery County Board of Mental Retardation, she was 7 years old when she was killed in a traffic accident in 1988. A bronze plaque of Erin and a \$75 award were presented to Bishop on Feb. 23.

Bishop, a resident of Beavercreek, is the founder of two faith-sharing groups for people with disabilities--Faith in Action and Faith and Light. The groups meet monthly for spiritual enrichment, social interaction, mutual support and outreach to churches and local communities. Bishop also encourages people with disabilities to form Disability Task Forces to promote active participation in church services, and there are now five task forces active in Dayton churches.

"It was an absolutely wonderful experience to see what the people who nominated me for this award had to say about the impact of Faith in Action and Faith and Light on their lives," said Bishop. "Considering what they had to say, I won whether I actually received the award or not."

In 1989 Bishop organized a spiritual retreat for 35 people with hearing impairments, a course at UD on Ministry with Disabled People, a symposium with six national leaders in the field of integration of people with disabilities, and a conference on integration of children with disabilities into the regular classroom.

The University of Dayton Ministry with Handicapped People is a program of the Office for Ministry and Religious Education Services (MORES). For more information, contact the MORES office at (513) 229-4325.