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2007

# Extraordinary Community Service (2007)

Mark Harmon

Meshia Thomas

Margaret Ann Atkins

Charles Wurl

Engineers Without Borders

*See next page for additional authors*

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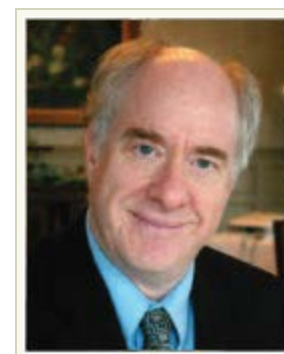
Mark Harmon, Meshia Thomas, Margaret Ann Atkins, Charles Wurl, Engineers Without Borders, Love United Gospel Choir, and Public Relations Student Society of America


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## Extraordinary Community Service

The university recognizes faculty, staff, students, and organizations that make an exemplary contribution to the community.

Dr. Mark Harmon, associate professor of journalism, has made extraordinary contributions to community life in East Tennessee. He recently was elected a Knox County commissioner and serves on the Intergovernmental Committee, Board of Zoning Appeals, as vice chair of the Cable TV Committee, and was nominated by Mayor Mike Ragsdale to serve on the Ethics Committee. He also is a "Big Brother" in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, and he volunteers his time as a speech and debate coach for Knoxville College. He is creator and host of the public affairs radio program *Left Turn*.



Meshia Thomas, a Community Relations Unit officer for the University of Tennessee Police Department, helps students build self-confidence, empowerment, and self-defense through her coordination of the Rape Aggression Defense Program. She also facilitates programs addressing sexual assault, domestic violence, personal safety, and workplace violence. In addition, she is a member of the Hate Crimes Working Group of Knox County, the National Association of Forensic Counselors, and the NAACP. Thomas also was honored as a Remarkable Woman of East Tennessee by the YMCA and WBIR-TV.



Margaret Ann Atkins is a senior in biochemistry and molecular biology from Nashville. In preparation for a medical career, she has had a neonatology internship in Dublin, Ireland, and volunteered at several children's



hospitals in Tennessee. She also donates her time at the medical clinic at Sarah Moore Greene Magnet Technology School and at Sam E. Hill Preschool, where she has been working specifically with a "non-organic failure to thrive" student and has made an amazing impact on that child's life. Her volunteerism has not affected her studies; a 4.0 student, her curriculum includes four semesters of independent research and 25 credits of honors courses.



Charles Wurl, a doctoral student in history from Miami, gives his time as head coach for the Bearden Rugby Club, a co-ed group of high school students. He requires that all students submit report cards to him, and any students whose grade-point averages fall below a C are barred from practice and games, and must sign up for tutoring and improve their grades before returning to the team. He also began a community service project for the team. Parents have called Wurl an "inspiration to our kids," noting the time and energy he gives to the teens. He has accomplished this while maintaining excellent grades in his graduate program, which focuses on the changing views of masculinity in 20th-century America, particularly in response to the Vietnam War and upheavals of the 1960s.



Engineers Without Borders partners with disadvantaged communities to improve their quality of life through environmentally and economically sustainable engineering projects. EWB raised more than \$13,000 to design and implement a groundwater storage and distribution system for two rural communities in the Dominican Republic. They are currently working on designing and funding a rainwater catchment project in the mountains of Guatemala. Locally, the group volunteers at events such as EarthFest, Engineer's Day, and campus-wide student events to promote and raise awareness of critical health, environmental, and social justice issues in third-world areas.

Love United Gospel Choir celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. The choir's 100 student members serve the campus and local community by ministering through song. They have shared their gospel music with audiences in Tennessee, Alabama, Illinois, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and beyond. This year, they will tour Mississippi,

Louisiana, and Alabama to do community service and a benefit concert in each state for hurricane relief.

The Public Relations Student Society Of America is participating in a national public education campaign for the National Family Caregivers Association. As part of the campaign, they coordinated "Celebration for Caregivers" in collaboration with CAC Knoxville Office on Aging. The event drew UT students and local organizations to provide caregivers with socialization, health, and education opportunities. They also are planning computer training workshops, health screenings, and respite for caregivers. Though their work is part of a national competition, it has become personal, and members have worked through winter break, late nights and weekends.

