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Five alumni to receive awards from UIS

By **CHRIS DETTRO**

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The director of the national Marine Corps museum is among five University of Illinois Springfield graduates who will be honored by the school's alumni association Friday.

Lin Ezell, a 1974 UIS graduate, director of the National Museum of the Marine Corps, will receive the Alumni Achievement Award. The award is the highest honor bestowed upon graduates of the University and is given to those who have attained distinction and success in their profession or life's work.

"I was very surprised, but I think that's a common theme among most recipients," said Ezell, who is active on the Alumni Advisory Council. "I was very shocked when I got the call.

"I've had an embarrassment of riches in my career and I think we all look back to our roots in education for those successes," said Ezell, who originally is from Lewistown.

Ezell, who graduated with a degree in English, worked at NASA in Houston for 10 years, and then went on to work for the Smithsonian for 21 years before becoming the director of the National Museum of the Marine Corps, which opened in 2006.

The museum has been one of the targets of five recent sniper shootings at military-related sites in the Washington, D.C. area. The shootings occurred at the Pentagon, the museum and recruiting sites and so far have been at night or in the early morning hours when the buildings were mostly empty.

There have been no injuries.

"It's not the kind of recognition you want or expect," Ezell said. "They don't teach you that in museum directors' school."

She said investigators "have been great" and are seeking the shooter, who they believe may have a grievance against the Marine Corps.

"We hope they find him and that he gets the help he needs," Ezell said.

"We're easy to get to — just off Interstate 95," she said. "Unfortunately, that also makes us an accessible target."

Other UIS graduates will be honored in the areas of distinguished service, humanitarianism and loyalty at the UIS Alumni Awards Dinner at 6 p.m. Friday at the Public Affairs Center Sangamon Auditorium Lobby.

This year's dinner celebrates the 40th anniversary of the campus, and the program includes special remarks from University of Illinois President Michael Hogan.

Other award recipients

Also being honored are:

*Janice Spears, who holds a bachelor's and two master's degrees from UIS, will receive the Loyalty Award for exceptional alumni service.

Spears started volunteering at UIS after returning to Springfield after a career in education. She helps welcome back students each fall at the Chancellor's Picnic; has provided volunteer leadership to groups such as the College of Education and Human Services Alumni Council and the UIS Alumni SAGE Society, a group of alumni, friends and faculty of UIS and its predecessor, Sangamon State University, who are over 50 years old. She also volunteers time to WUIS' "Alumni on the Air Day".

Spears was a school administrator for 16 years and an elementary school teacher.

*Tim Schweizer, who obtained his MBA in 1985, also will receive the Loyalty Award.

Schweizer, a public service administrator with the state Department of Natural Resources, is better known as a radio sports reporter.

He has served on the Campus Alumni Advisory Board for the alumni association and on the board of Friends of Brookens Library, and helps with spring and fall membership campaigns at WUIS.

"I was surprised when they notified me, and I am deeply humbled and pleased to accept," Schweizer said.

*Retired UIS faculty member Judith Everson will receive the Distinguished Service Award, which goes to those who have demonstrated exceptional commitment and service to the university.

Everson was a charter faculty member of Sangamon State University and retired in 2001 after 31 years of teaching English, history and public speaking.

She participates in the UIS Alumni SAGE Society. She currently works on the Lifelong Learning Committee of SAGE, which is responsible for organizing classes and lunch programs.

*Francie Staggs, who holds bachelor's (1981) and master's degrees (1991) in history from UIS, will receive the Alumni Humanitarian

Award, which recognizes alumni who have made "great contributions of leadership and service to improve the lives of others."

Organizations Staggs has volunteered for include the Springfield Overflow Shelter, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, the Old State Capitol Foundation, the Elijah Iles House, and the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution.

For more information on the dinner and the award recipients, contact the Office of UIS Alumni Relations/UI Alumni Association at 206-7395 or email alumni@uis.edu.

Chris Dettro can be reached at 788-1510.

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