

LMC to honor four alums

BENTON TOWN-
SHIP — Lake Michigan Harbor and Cindy Reuss College will honor four of Stevensville. The Alumni Achievement Award is presented to an alumnus(a) who attended LMC within the past 15 years and demonstrated significant achievement and distinguished themselves in their career, education or community such that they would be role models to LMC students.

The Clarence Beckwith Distinguished Alumni Award will be presented to Gloria Ender of Stevensville. Named for LMC's first president, the award is given to alumni who have achieved significant success in their personal and professional endeavors.

Two Alumni Achievement Awards will be presented to

Melanie Owen of Benton Harbor and Cindy Reuss of Stevensville. The Alumni Achievement Award is presented to an alumnus(a) who attended LMC within the past 15 years and demonstrated significant achievement and distinguished themselves in their career, education or community such that they would be role models to LMC students.

The Alumni Service Award will be presented to Rick Smiedendorf of Berrien Springs. This award is given to alumni who have

See **ALUMS**, page A8

ALUMS

From page A1

made important contributions, personally or professionally, to the community or Lake Michigan College.

Ender is a successful business owner with an international customer base, but she is still able to donate time and energy to many causes around Southwest Michigan, including being an LMC friend and supporter.



ENDER

Ender was born in Guadalajara, Mexico. When she was 6, her parents brought her brother and five sisters to Michigan in order for their children to have better educational opportunities. After graduating from Saugatuck High School, Ender attended LMC, where she studied art and earned an associate degree with honors.

In 1988, while also working as an elementary school bilingual teacher at Sylvester Elementary in Berrien Springs, Ender and her husband, Erik, started Freedom Finishing. Freedom Finishing electro- and powder-coats 100,000 parts a day for companies that include

GM, Ford, Whirlpool and Herman Miller. Ender became the 100 percent owner and CEO in 2005.

Ender is a board member for the Southwest Michigan Tri-County Manufacturing Coalition, the LMC Foundation, Cornerstone Alliance Women's Business Center, Business Alliance Support Group and Berrien Community Foundation.

Ender lives in Stevensville with her husband and four rescue dogs. She has a daughter, Liz, who will attend LMC this fall.

Melanie Owen developed, co-owns and manages Lazy Ballerina Winery, the only women-owned winery in Southwest Michigan. The winery will celebrate its two-year anniversary in June, and the business continues to grow, opening an additional tasting room in Bridgman this summer.



OWEN

Owen earned a certificate in hospitality management from LMC after graduating from Coloma High School. She took a job as a flight attendant for Northwest Airlines after college, and enjoyed traveling the world. She returned to Southwest Michigan after realizing how much she loves the area. Southwest Michigan is

home to Owen's large extended family, including her cousin, Lauren Kniebes, the co-owner of Lazy Ballerina Winery. The two were exposed to winemaking by their grandmother, Juanita Kniebes, and they named two of their wines for Grandma Nita, who died a few years ago. The cousins use grapes from the family farm now run by Lauren's father, Robin Kniebes.

She is a member of several organizations, including the LMC Hospitality Advisory Board, Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Michigan Tourist Council, Michigan Grape and Wine Council, and Lake Michigan Shore Wine Trail Association. Owen has a bachelor of business administration from Siena Heights University.

Owen lives in Benton Harbor with her husband, Jason Hayes.

Cindy Reuss said she considers LMC part of the fabric of who she is. And, having been a student, staff member, administrator, instructor, consultant and volunteer at the college, she is part of the LMC's fabric, the college reported.

Reuss came to LMC as a non-traditional student after her employer of 14 years told her that the only way she would get ahead. She credits William Sprunk, her first English professor,

with convincing her to continue, using a turn of phrase that she would later use to inspire her own students: "I want you to allow me to believe in you until you can believe in yourself."

Though her associate degree was her "favorite degree," she didn't stop there, LMC reported. She earned a bachelor of applied science from Siena Heights and a saster of arts from Western Michigan University.

While furthering her education, Reuss was working full-time for LMC. For 11 years she held positions in the Marketing Department, then the LMC Foundation, and then Student Services, where she was director of enrollment services. She left LMC and served five years as dean of enrollment services at Muskegon Community College, and she retired last year.

After her retirement, Reuss returned to LMC. She played a critical volunteer role in the recent LMC millage campaign, and she serves as enrollment management consultant.

Reuss lives in Stevensville with her husband, Dale. Reuss' daughter, Angie Greene Ott, and her husband Joe have two children. Her other



REUSS

daughter, Kirsten Klupp, is married to Michael, and her son Aaron Greene lives in New Orleans.

Rick Smiedendorf retired from his position as police sergeant for the city of St. Joseph in 2009 after 30 years. More than seven years later, he hasn't left the profession, which he refers to as not just a job, but his vocation. He is the school/community resource officer for the Berrien Springs-Oronoko Township Police Department, where he is responsible for maintaining good relationships with the students in 12 school buildings, totaling 3,000 students and teachers, and various community groups.

Smiedendorf decided to become a police officer when he was in seventh grade. He attended LMC, earning an associate of applied science in criminal justice. He also earned a bachelor of science degree from Western Michigan University in 1979.

At LMC, he was a member of the Student Senate, and in 1977 he received a student service award for his work with the college administration.

In St. Joseph, he was twice named Officer of the Year, and in 2008, Crime Prevention Practitioner of the Year. In 2014 he was awarded Outstanding Youth/School Officer of the Year by the Crime Prevention

Association of Michigan. He serves on the boards of the Crime Prevention Association of Michigan and the LMC Alumni Association and is a member of the National Association of School Resource Officers.

He has also volunteered as a cub master and den leader for the Cub Scouts, and he is a former adult leader, committee member and merit badge counselor for Boy Scout Troop 623.

Smiedendorf says that his proudest accomplishment has been raising his family. He has three children: Joel in St. Joseph, Jeremy in Chelsea and Michelle in Union, Ky. He has two granddaughters, an 8-year-old and a 4-month-old.

To nominate an individual for future LMC alumni awards, contact Rita Whise, manager, Advancement Programs and Stewardship at 927-6278, or by email at rwhise@lakemichigancollege.edu.

Nominations can be made online at www.lakemichigancollege.edu/nomination. Nominees must have earned at least 30 credit hours at LMC or at one of its predecessors. Upon nomination, an application will be sent to the candidate.



SMIEDENDORF