

# **SIUE Meridian Society hosts Philanthropy Workshop, invests in SIUE community-based projects**

by Megan Wieser  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** - The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Meridian Society hosted the Women's Philanthropy and Leadership Workshop on Thursday, April 6 in

the Morris University Center. Nearly 120 attendees learned about engaged philanthropy and participated in roundtable discussions on philanthropic areas of focus such as education, poverty, sustainability and disaster relief.

Featured speakers at the event included Chad and Kathie Opel, founders of Edwardsville Neighbors in Need, Gloria Crowder, president of the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Neighborhood Association, and Leah Joyce and Marita LaChapell with Thrivent Financial.

“Most of us learned as children that sharing is a good thing,” said event emcee Kim Vrooman, director of AmeriCorps, SWIC and SIUE Meridian Society member and executive board director. “We didn’t realize we were practicing philanthropy. We just knew that giving to other people or important causes made us feel good.”

Vrooman, who will become president of the Meridian Society as of July 1, encouraged attendees to consider their values, passions and giving goals.

“It is important to be inspired by your own environment in which to give your time, talent and treasure,” she said. “Philanthropy is about thought, care, deliberation, going beyond the expected and becoming involved. It is about bringing your giving in line with your hopes for a better world.”

SIUE Vice Chancellor, Chief Executive Officer of the SIUE Foundation and Meridian Society member Rachel Stack reminded those in attendance about the golden rule.

“This room is full of care and compassion for poverty, sustainability, assisting those facing disaster, and perhaps in this setting, individuals strongly engaged in the importance of education,” Stack said. “This type of dedication and community support is what will continue to enhance SIUE.”

The 2017 Meridian Awards were presented during the event. The awards fund outstanding community outreach programs and projects, which are supported through SIUE departments and services.

These projects underscore SIUE Chancellor Randy Pembroke’s strong emphasis on High Impact Community Engagement Practices (HICEPs). Since 2004, the Meridian Awards have issued more than \$275,300 to 112 SIUE community-based projects.

The 2017 Meridian Award recipients include:

Project Name	SIUE Program + Comm. Partner	Amount Awarded
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Day and Night Citizen Environmental Sciences (DANCES)	SIUE STEM Center and Watershed Nature Center	\$1,183
Hispanic Heritage Month	SIUE Spanish Dept. and Fairmont City Library Center	\$750
Impacting the Health of Patients Diagnosed with Diabetes utilizing Comm. Diabetes Education	SIUE School of Nursing and DEAL-C2, LLC	\$3,250
Sacred Sites Signage	SIUE Dept. of Political Science and East St. Louis 1917 Centennial Commission and Cultural Initiative	\$3,000
“Save the Gardens!” A Faculty-Guided Student Effort Toward an Awareness Campaign	SIUE Dept. of Applied Communication Studies and Dept. of Sociology and The Gardens at SIUE	\$4,500
SIUE East St. Louis Center Campus Garden	SIUE East St. Louis Center and East St. Louis Center, TRIO Head Start	\$3,000
WSIE RDS Encoder	SIUE WSIE Radio and The Sheldon Concert Hall & Galleries	\$2,600
Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia & Digital Archive for Madison County, Illinois	SIUE Dept. of Historical Studies and Madison Co. Regional Office of Education and Madison Co. Historical Society	\$2,000

“As we leave here today, I encourage you to go home and think about the causes you care about most, and the who, what, where, when, why and how of giving,” Vrooman

concluded. “Make a plan that stems from kindness and compassion, and go out and live that plan. What will you do today to give back to those most in need of your benevolence?”

[The SIUE Meridian Society](#) officially launched its philanthropic mission in October 2003 with its first official meeting. It is an organization of women dedicated to supporting a variety of SIUE programs. The Society’s name is based on the fact that the 90th Meridian, exactly one-fourth of the way around the world from the Prime Meridian, runs through the SIUE campus. The Meridian Society educates members on personal finance and philanthropic goals, inspires women to become leaders in supporting SIUE and community causes, enhances understanding and knowledge of women in philanthropy including their charitable support priorities as well as community influence, participates in influencing SIUE and the community via annual Impact Fund Awards, and supports SIUE’s long-term goals for active community engagement and excellent reputation.

[Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#) provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River’s rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of more than 14,000.