

16th Annual Dorothy & Eugene T. Butler Human Rights Award MaryJo & Richard Lee

The City of Brookings will honor MaryJo & Richard (Dick) Lee as the recipients of the 16th annual Dorothy and Eugene T. Butler Human Rights Award on Thursday, October 29, 2015. The Lees are being recognized for their work as friends and allies of American Indians and for their work with other minorities underrepresented in higher education.

The Butler Human Rights Award presentation will be held in conjunction with the ABLE Awards for Accessibility and the Mayor's Awards for Historic Preservation at the South Dakota State University Performing Arts Center, 1601 11th Street, on Thursday, October 29th from 5 to 7 p.m., with the presentations beginning at 6 p.m. The public is invited to attend. Hors d'oeuvres and refreshments will be served.



Dick Lee was head of the SDSU Department of Journalism and Mass Communication for 24 years. MaryJo Lee, a clinical sociologist, has worked for SDSU for 29 years in a number of roles including diversity coordinator for the College of Engineering and coordinator of the Flandreau Indian School-SDSU Success Academy.

MaryJo was a cofounder as well as coordinator of the FIS-SDSU Success Academy, a college preparatory program for American Indian high school students. During its 12-year history, the program involved 2,250 American Indian high school students and extended their vision of education beyond high school. FIS-SDSU Success Academy engaged approximately 300 SDSU faculty and staff preparing workshops for American Indian students, and more than 4,000 SDSU students were also participants.

"It was a remarkable program," said Charles Woodard, Distinguished Professor of English at SDSU and a Butler Award recipient. "One that will have far-reaching effects in the lives of everyone who was privileged to participate."

The FIS-SDSU Success Academy program is a model for preparing, recruiting and retaining underrepresented students in higher education. MaryJo has spoken about FIS-SDSU Success Academy at conferences in the U.S. and abroad. Her book, *Success Academy: How Native American Students Prepare for College (and How Colleges Can Prepare for Them)*, is used by others seeking to repeat the program's success.

"Success academy was the premier diversity program at SDSU because it directly engaged faculty members and students with American Indian people," said Allen Branum, who was the university's director for diversity enhancement during most of the FIS-SDSU Success Academy years. "No amount of classroom diversity training can compare with personally getting to know American Indian individuals and learning from them their hopes, dreams, issues and rich cultural heritage."

During Dick's time as journalism department head, he and his faculty won numerous awards for their efforts in diversity. The department won a Robert F. Kennedy Award for its publication on South Dakota tribal colleges. The department established working relationships with American Indian journalists, recruited students from reservations and took SDSU student reporters and photographers, both Indian and non-Indian, to reservations to cover issues.

Dick and MaryJo represented SDSU as exchange professors at Yunnan Normal University in Kunming, Peoples Republic of China, during the spring semester of 1991. They returned to YNU and Kunming in 1997 for MaryJo to do her doctoral research on Chinese ethnic minority education. She has written two books on race, ethnicity and education in addition to the Success Academy book.

Harriet Swedlund, former South Dakota World Affairs Council director and Butler recipient, said: "The Lees formed personal friendships and demonstrated American human rights values to YNU faculty and students that exist to this day. The Lees produced a slide program "Images of China" which was presented to many audiences. The program gave a new, insider view of Chinese culture and people that broadened the world-view of folks at SDSU, in Brookings and around the state. The Lees provided invaluable guidance on preparing other faculty to engage in the exchange program."

"Educating people at the University and in the community about how diversity enriches our lives was in its infancy when Dick and MaryJo began their work," said Mary Perpich, SDSU journalism professor emerita.

"The Lees have demonstrated their concern for diverse people," said Doris Giago, an Oglala Lakota and a SDSU journalism professor emerita. She continued, "From the student with autism, to the young man in the wheelchair, to non-traditional students, to the single mom with a sick child at home, or to the international student with limited English skills, Dick and MaryJo helped them not only to survive but to thrive at SDSU. These students were treated with dignity and respect. Through these brief examples of their humanity and the generosity of spirit, the Lees have gained the respect from all who had the honor to know and work with them."

The Lees have lived in Brookings for more than 30 years. They have two grown children: Thomas and his wife, Tammy Jo Eckhart, live in Bloomington, Indiana. Douglas lives in Brookings.

The Dorothy and Eugene T. Butler Human Rights Award is named after the Butlers, in recognition of their lifelong advocacy in human rights issues on the local, regional, national and international levels. The annual award recognizes significant volunteer efforts on behalf of human rights. Previous honorees, in addition to Dorothy and Eugene T. Butler, Jr., are Dr. Philip and Winnie Baker, First United Methodist Church, the Rev. Carl Kline, the Rev. Scott Miller and Lisa Wolff, Margaret Denton, Dr. Steve Marquardt, Lawrence Novotny, Dr. Charles Woodard, Dr. Geoffrey Grant, Dr. Timothy Nichols, Scott Nagy, Dr. Ann Marie Bahr, Phyllis Cole-Dai and Harriet Swedlund.