



19th Annual Dorothy & Eugene T. Butler Human Rights Award Allen Branum

The City of Brookings will honor Allen Branum as the recipient of the 19th annual Dorothy and Eugene T. Butler Human Rights Award on Thursday, August 30. Dr. Branum is being recognized for quietly and courageously leading SDSU and the Brookings community to become safer and more welcoming spaces for all people.

The Butler Human Rights Award presentation will be held in conjunction with the Human Rights Commission's Youth Ally Awards, ABLE Awards for Accessibility, the Mayor's Sustainability Awards, the Mayor's Awards for Historic Preservation and the Mayor's Generational Leadership Awards at McCrory Gardens Visitor Center on Thursday, August 30 from 5 to 7 pm, with the presentations beginning at 6 pm. The

public is invited to attend. Hors d'oeuvres and refreshments will be served.

Dr. Branum served as Interim Director of Diversity Enhancement at South Dakota State University from 2002-2009. What started as a six-month position, turned into a seven year engagement. Branum brought passion and deep-hearted commitment to this position.

"I think it is safe to say that thousands of people, both students and members of the adult public, have been positively affected by Al's extraordinary human rights work and his efforts to increase cross-cultural understanding" stated Dr. Charles Woodard, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of English. "He persisted in doing what he knew to be right despite the considerable adversity which one predictably faces in a state and region where racist attitudes and behaviors continue to be very strong and discrimination is ongoing. He has done these things for the best possible reason: not for recognition or personal gratification, but out of the goodness of his uncommonly caring heart."

Dr. Branum was instrumental in the success of the Flandreau Indian School-SDSU Success Academy project, the most laudable diversity effort in SDSU's long history. He played an integral role in establishing the faculty development series known as "American Indian tutorials" and he sponsored a faculty exchange program between SDSU and tribal colleges in the state. Branum and his wife, Jan Gordon, attended every Success Academy event every Friday afternoon and evening throughout the school year.

Dr. Branum was endlessly supportive of efforts on behalf of minority students at SDSU. Under his leadership the SDSU Festival of Cultures thrived and participation increased. He supported with his personal commitment, a 2002 event titled "Ethnicity Matters – Rethinking How Black, Hispanic and Indian Students Prepare for and Succeed in College" which brought about a 100 SDSU faculty and staff members together to help them improve their work with diverse students.

Dr. Branum was a professor of psychology at SDSU for 30 years, and continues as an emeritus professor. After retirement in 2009, Al and Jan moved to Saint Paul. Branum has continued to work as an advocate of the oppressed and to increase cross-cultural understanding. He is the board chair for The Foundation for Haiti Zero Charcoal 2020, a nonprofit organization which has contracted with a Haitian company to manufacture kerosene stoves for distribution in Haiti. Branum also serves on the board for the nonprofit Six Degrees Consortium, which promotes cross-cultural understanding through art. He has appeared in the United States and in Morocco with a series of media works entitled "Six Degrees: West to East" created to bridge cultures and contribute to improving relationships between the peoples of the world.

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, Harriet Swedlund, Drs. MaryJo and Richard Lee, Dr. Ruth Harper and Professor Doris Giago.