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## Veteran organization honors Downey for community service

campus-news

*September 23, 2011*

**KOKOMO, Ind.** – When Christina Downey, Indiana University Kokomo assistant professor of psychology, assigned her General Psychology students to meet with and interview local veterans, she knew it was going to be a rewarding experience. She just didn't realize how rewarding.



(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/iukokomo/6175473967/>)

Christina Downey

This summer, the Indiana Disabled American Veterans presented Downey with the 2011 Community Service Award - one of its highest honors for civilians - in recognition of the curriculum she created.

"We are very impressed with Dr. Downey's accomplishments and service to Indiana's veterans and their families," said DAV State Adjutant Michael Whelihan. "Her dedication underscores the purpose of our yearly award and typifies the caliber of the individuals we have chosen to receive it."

Although she is uncertain what inspired her to begin the research project, Downey said she knew she wanted to engage students with members of the community. After gaining permission from the local veteran organizations, Downey proceeded to design the curriculum for the General Psychology course she taught in fall 2009. From the very beginning, the project proved to be successful, compelling Downey to continue the program.

"Howard County Veterans Service Officer Bob Ladd and Howard County DAV Commander Jerry Fivecoate were so supportive and interested in having veterans participate in the project," said Downey. "I give them all the credit for this program's success because without their assistance, this wouldn't have been possible. It was a collaborative process. To see the level of emotions the students' straight-forward questions brought out was impressive, and I walked away also emotionally moved."

Downey, humbled by the honor, said she was unaware Ladd had even nominated her for the award.

“I was stunned,” said Downey. “Bob and I had been meeting off and on, talking about the project and interviews, but he never said a thing to me about nominating me. I was flabbergasted when I found out that not only was I nominated, but that the state DAV approved the nomination. It actually left me speechless, which is amazing in itself!”

Ladd noted the DAV presents one Community Service Award per year to either an individual or group for making a positive difference in the lives of veterans.







“The veterans just loved participating in the project,” said Ladd. “We’ve heard nothing but positive comments. We had one veteran who never used to want to talk about his experiences, but he loved participating in this project and now is interested in speaking to groups. It means a lot to us veterans when someone without a military background wants to talk with us and learn more about our experiences.”

As a participant in both of the sessions, Fivecoate said students were very respectful in their interviews and genuinely interested.

“Basically the project had a dual purpose – for students to learn what life was like in the military and how we veterans adjusted when we came home,” said Fivecoate. “After the past two years, veterans are looking forward to participating in the program again this year, and now we have more veterans who want to share their stories. We just greatly appreciate what Christina has done for our veterans.”

Downey also plans to submit for publication an article examining some of the students’ research results.

*Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.*

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