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## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## IU Kokomo director Marilyn Skinner receives Sagamore of the Wabash

**KOKOMO, Ind.** — Marilyn Skinner receives the highest honor given by the state of Indiana, the Sagamore of the Wabash, recognizing her decades of service to children.

Skinner, director of Indiana University Kokomo’s Center for Early Childhood Education, was “humbled” to receive the award.

“I don’t feel like I’ve done anything extraordinary, I just do what I do,” Skinner said. “I love to help people. I’ve been so fortunate in terms of my own life, having doors opened for me, and having a good education. I really have appreciated that.

“That’s why when I see someone who needs help or encouragement, or a little bit of hope, I provide it so they can be successful in their lives.”

Interim Chancellor Susan Sciame-Giesecke was one of several community leaders who nominated Skinner for the award, which was given by Gov. Mike Pence and presented by State Rep. Mike Karickhoff.

“Marilyn is most deserving of this award, as a long-time advocate for children,” Sciame-Giesecke said. “She has tireless energy as a servant leader, who continues to make our community a better place.”

As director of the early childhood education center, Skinner leads efforts to ensure all Howard County children begin kindergarten prepared to succeed. She’s been an advocate for young children since beginning her career as a teacher at Kokomo’s Bon Air Elementary School, nearly 50 years ago.

She moved from the classroom to administration, where she had the distinction of being the first woman to serve as assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent in the Kokomo school system.

Skinner, 75, jokes about how she has “failed retirement” several times. After she retired from Kokomo schools, she worked part-time for Head Start, and then supervised student teachers for three universities, before deciding it was time to “really retire.”

She came out of retirement again nearly nine years ago, to serve as director of the early childhood center when it first opened, funded with a \$1.5 million Lilly Endowment grant. Her careful planning has allowed the center to continue its work, still using the original grant money.

The Kokomo community also benefits from her efforts. She led the 2013 United Way of Howard County campaign as chairperson, and surpassed the \$1.8 million fundraising goal. Skinner also volunteers extensively, and has held leadership positions in Altrusa, Rotary Club, and Partners in Education.

The Indiana Commission for Women honored her a trailblazer for women with its Torchbearer Award, and she also received the Indiana Women of Achievement Award for Distinction in Early Childhood Education from the College of Sciences and Humanities at Ball State University.

Skinner said, though, her greatest sense of achievement is not from these kinds of awards and honors.

“My success is seeing the students I had in school succeed,” she said. “I see a lot of them in the community who have gone on to have successful lives. They have good jobs, and are active and give back in the community. I see the young children who have participated in programs at the early childhood education center, and are now successful in school. That makes me proud.”

*Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.*

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