Indiana University Northwest held its 22nd Annual Gala Celebration at Merrillville’s Avalon Manor on Nov. 8, continuing its recent tradition of showing thanks to donors, alumni and other supporters with a fun evening of great food, fine wine and the terrific camaraderie of the IU Northwest community.

IU President Michael McRobbie and First Lady Laurie Burns McRobbie joined IU Northwest Chancellor Bruce Bergland and wife Cynthia Owen-Bergland in welcoming the 300-plus guests who attended the event. Bergland explained that, beginning last year, the Gala’s focus had shifted from fundraising to donor recognition. He pledged that this tradition would continue into the future.

“I love this event, the way it is developing tonight. It feels as though you are enjoying yourselves,” Bergland said during his brief formal remarks. “The whole point here is for us to say to you, ‘Thank you, thank you, thank you,’ for your generosity.”

McRobbie, in his first formal IU Northwest event since taking office in July, said the evening’s strong show of support for IU Northwest bolstered his belief that IU’s greatest strength as a university is its people.

“Nights like this bring forth my belief that people are the true heart of Indiana University,” the president said. “I’ve said on many occasions, as someone who comes from overseas, that American higher education is the best in the world. And it’s the best in the world because of the selfless and loyal dedication people have toward their alma maters. This is especially true at IU, where the affection, the support and the esteem of our alumni make such a dramatic difference.

“I’d like to express my gratitude to all of you for everything that you have done and continue to do for this campus and for IU as a whole,” McRobbie said.

Bergland noted that IU Northwest received more than $750,000 in private support during the past year, funds that he said provided more than 190 scholarships for IU Northwest students and contributed to other important campus efforts.

“The support you provide is so significant to us,” the Chancellor said.
In Spring 2006, researchers at Indiana University Northwest, Purdue University Calumet and Ivy Tech Community College surveyed approximately 1,000 Northwest Indiana students collectively from the three schools about the relationship between their work lives and their education. The goal was to learn whether work responsibilities make students more or less likely to complete their degrees.

The statistics generated by that study were sufficiently interesting to warrant a more in-depth research initiative, spearheaded by IU Bloomington’s School of Education and funded by a $621,000 Lumina grant, that will delve into the reasons behind the apparent trends uncovered by the initial survey.

Despite the conventional wisdom that would suggest students who work should have a more difficult time earning a degree, results of the 2006 survey showed that working students do not consider their jobs to be an obstacle to completing their education.

“Probably the most interesting thing we learned from it was that the students themselves do not view their work as being problematic,” said IU Northwest Associate Professor of Psychology Mary Ann Fischer, Ph.D., who was involved in the initial survey. “And their parents respect them for working. This is a part of the country with a very strong work ethic. To not work and go to school, I think, seems to some students like an unacceptable position.”

Working students in Northwest Indiana make up a significant portion of what Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Don Hossler, Ph.D., director of the Project on Academic Success at IU Bloomington, calls the “mobile working student” population. Mobile students, according to Hossler, are those who tend to move their academic careers between IU Northwest, Purdue Calumet and Ivy Tech.

Hossler and his Bloomington research team will lead the two-year study on Northwest Indiana’s mobile-student population. The goal is to obtain qualitative data on mobile students through focus groups and in-depth interviews with the students themselves, as well as with faculty, advisers and administrators at the local campuses.

“We’re going to be doing some database analysis, but the primary focus of this study is going to be talking to the students, talking to faculty, talking to administrators, (and) getting some sense of the complexity of student lives, how they go about making decisions about how much they work and what kinds of jobs they take, and how those influence their ability to successfully move through the system,” Hossler said.

Fischer said most similar studies have concentrated on residential students.

“In general, the population of commuter students, community-college students, working students, has been neglected,” she explained. “That population, we just don’t know much about them.”

What IU Northwest officials did learn from the initial survey is that students here work a lot. Twenty-five percent of them are working 40 hours per week and 17 percent of them have more than one job.
Award-winning volunteer: ‘IU is part of me’

Jennifer McIntosh-Elkins receives President’s Award for service to alma mater

Indiana University Northwest alumna Jennifer McIntosh-Elkins believes in higher education, and she believes in IU.

“IU is a part of me,” said Elkins, who was chosen to receive the 2007 IU President’s Award for Volunteer Service this month for her years of volunteer effort on behalf of IU. “My friends joke that my blood doesn’t run red and white, it actually runs cream and crimson. It’s just a part of who I am. I grew up there, and it’s important to me that others have the same opportunities I had.”

Although Elkins, who graduated from IU Northwest with a bachelor’s degree in Spanish and organizational communication in 1991 and an M.B.A. in 1998, now works as the coordinator of Help Desk Services and the IT Fellows Program at Valparaiso University, she remains a steadfast supporter of her alma mater and former employer. Elkins worked at IU Northwest from 1993 through 1997, serving as everything from senior account clerk in the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships to senior library assistant to Webmaster. It was Elkins who designed the university’s first Web site.

Elkins said officials at VU encourage their employees’ involvement with their alma maters.

“They support us being involved in higher ed, and they support partnerships,” Elkins said “In fact, when I came on board, one of the things I talked about in my negotiations was my service to IU. They fully supported it. They allow me to do whatever I need to do in that realm.”

Elkins’ volunteer service to IU Northwest actually began during her student years. She was president of the Student Government Association in 1990-91, after holding the vice president and public relations positions in previous years. She was also vice chair and founding member of the All University Student Association, for which she helped write the charter, and she served during her senior year as a committee member of the State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana.

It was also in 1991 that Elkins began her association with Hoosiers for Higher Education, the grassroots advocacy organization sponsored by the IU Alumni Association. Elkins joined the very first HHE delegation that traveled to Indianapolis to lobby state lawmakers on behalf of higher education funding, and she has served as an HHE member and community chair ever since. It was also Elkins, formerly of Lowell, who pushed to have the HHE bus make a stop in south Lake County to save HHE supporters there from an extra trip north, a practice that has continued each year.

Elkins identified IU Northwest’s former chancellor, Peggy Elliott, and College of Arts and Sciences Dean Dorothy Ige as two important role models during her years on campus.

“Peggy Elliott and Dr. Ige would be the two who stood out and really served as my mentors and my coaches, and instilled in me the love of higher ed,” she said. Elkins also acknowledged IU Northwest Librarian Nick Rosselli for teaching her Web technology when, as an employee, she transferred to the library from the financial aid office. That knowledge formed the basis for what would become a successful career for Elkins in IT.

After leaving IU Northwest 10 years ago, Elkins remained heavily involved in the university. She was a longtime member of the IU Northwest Alumni Association and served as vice president in 2000-01 and president in 2001-02. Elkins also served as a member-at-large of the IU Executive Council from 2002 through 2005. Other past volunteer activities have included: working as an English as Second Language instructor at Hammond Gavit High School, where Elkins taught English to Spanish-speaking students through the use of sign language; authoring two original children’s stories for Opportunity Enterprises and Porter Hospital; and assisting with disaster relief efforts following Hurricane Andrew, for which she won a Salvation Army Volunteer Award in 1993.

But Elkins said that her greatest volunteer role - that of adoptive parent — began just about 17 months ago. It was July 2006 when Elkins and her husband, Robert Elkins, adopted their three children: Olivia, age 15; Tylor, age 14; and Michelle, age 12. The transition from two-person household to five-member family required considerable effort and adjustment for everyone involved, and Elkins has scaled back her volunteer commitments to devote more time to her family.

That, Elkins said, is why her President’s Award came as such a surprise. “I am still in shock,” said Elkins, who moved from Lowell to Valparaiso to accommodate her larger family. “Because I had been so heavily involved up until the adoption. Once the adoption occurred, I kind of stepped back, although I remained involved with HHE and a few other events. But taking care of three kids and their respective pets … I didn’t have time for much else for a while.”

Still, although her life’s path has taken her away from IU Northwest in many respects, Elkins said her commitment to her IU family would always remain strong.

“I will always be involved in some way, shape or form,” Elkins said. “Right now, I’ve stepped back a little bit, but that’s not due to anything other than time constraints. I still go to HHE every year. I still stay in contact with [IU Northwest Alumni Director] Paulette LaFata-Johnson to see what’s going on, and to see what I can be involved in and how I can help.”

Likewise, Elkins said that her commitment to higher education will never falter. After spending a number of years in the private sector, Elkins realized that her time spent volunteering for higher education was an indicator of her true interests.

“I got outsourced twice,” Elkins said. “And the second time I got outsourced, I looked at what I did voluntarily. And what I did voluntarily was higher ed. Since I wasn’t being paid to do that, I thought finding a job in that field might not be a bad idea, since that’s what I enjoy doing.”

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University honors scholarship winners, donors

(Above) IU Northwest Chancellor Bruce Bergland presents John Diederich, president of Chase Bank – Northwest Region, with a plaque recognizing Chase’s contribution to education through the Chase Scholarship and Chase Fellows programs. The university honored Chase and the program’s scholarship recipients with a luncheon Aug. 24. (Below) Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Kwesi Aggrey chats with Herbert Presidential Scholar Marissa Carrillo during a recognition luncheon on Oct. 26. Carrillo’s fellow Herbert Scholar, Katelyn Stanfield (not pictured), also attended, along with the students’ parents, Chancellor Bergland and others. (Photos by Christopher Sheid)

(Above) IU Northwest donor Marjorie Mills, who supports the Kenneth A. and Marjorie A. Mills Scholarship for students majoring in the social sciences and the Kathleen M. Mills Hill Memorial Scholarship for students majoring in communication or fine arts, speaks with scholarship recipient Sarah Holt during an Oct. 16 luncheon honoring Mills and the scholars her donations support. Mills was also a significant contributor to the IU Northwest Shadows and Echoes Sculpture Garden. (Left) At the Chase luncheon, Chase Fellow recipient Farheen Sultana talks about what the scholarship has meant to her education. (Below) James Dye, who supports the James W. and Betty Dye Half Tuition and Non-Traditional Student Scholarships, addresses his scholarship recipients during an Oct. 9 recognition luncheon. (Photos by Christopher Sheid)
CETL listens to communities during session

On Nov. 20, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Indiana University Northwest hosted approximately 20 members of the Northwest Indiana community for a program that was designed to promote interface between the university and the regional population it seeks to serve.

“Listening to Communities” is an initiative, funded by the Indiana Campus Compact (ICC), that aims to gather information from the community about what needs it would like to see IU Northwest fill in terms of education or outreach programs.

The idea, according to CETL Executive Director Charlotte Reed, Ph.D., is to make the university’s outside constituents part of the process of program development early on, so that service programs and other outreach efforts better reflect the needs and interests of the people and organizations that are intended to benefit from them.

“We saw this as an opportunity to ask your opinion before we plan programs, instead of putting a program in place and then coming to you and asking you how you like it,” Reed said. “We hope that by the end of this you will feel like it was a good use of your time.”

CRE continues outreach with arts, NPI events

It’s been a busy autumn for the Center for Regional Excellence (CRE) at Indiana University Northwest. On Sept. 28, the CRE hosted the second annual South Shore Regional Arts Summit at IU Northwest, an event that brought together approximately 75 artists, art patrons and non-profit personnel for a celebration of artistic achievement.

On Nov. 1, the CRE’s Non-Profit Institute, which it manages with funding from Lake Area United Way, held its second annual Open House and Resource Fair, which featured nearly 80 exhibitors and drew more than 300 community and campus members. NPI has become a lynchpin of support and assistance to the Northwest Indiana non-profit community, as demonstrated by that community’s turnout for the open house and assorted workshops during the semester.

CRE Executive Director Debbie Thomas, Ph.D., said these and other CRE events have brought the campus greater exposure to important external constituencies.

“What’s very powerful, for me, isn’t just that we have brought more than 400 people to campus this fall, but that we’ve brought a cross-section of Northwest Indiana residents to the university,” she said. “What I see happening is that, instead of just seeing IU Northwest as a physical entity that is closed to them, people now see it as a place that is open to them. Everything we do is about outreach and engagement.”
Biology prof’s fascination with nature endures

As a youth, IU Northwest Associate Professor of Biology Spencer Cortwright, Ph.D., didn’t see himself as a naturalist. But an incident involving a beer can and a possibly alcoholic slug helped awaken him to the wonders of the natural world.

“When I was 10 years old, one of the agenda items I put on my summer schedule was to start a beer-can collection,” Cortwright said during his Nov. 16 lunchtime keynote address for the College of Arts and Sciences 2007 Research Conference. “The local forest preserve was one place I would go to look for beer cans. I looked out and saw three big piles of garbage off in the distance. Today that would repel me to no end. But back then they looked like Egyptian pyramids. I wanted to go get beer cans from them.”

“I picked up three cans for my collection, then I picked up one and saw this slimy creature hanging out of the opening of the beer can,” he recalled. “I dumped out the rest of the cans, just in case there were some of those in the bag. And I left the pyramids of garbage and went elsewhere looking for beer cans.”

The creature, of course, was a slug.

“Slugs love beer,” he said. “They’re beer-aholics. They will drown themselves in beer. Of course, that experience with nature was seared into my memory. I’ve had many, many moments like that since then.”

Cortwright said the natural world has universal appeal.

“There’s some patch of nature for just about everyone,” he said.

Yellow-eyed penguins star in COAS keynote

By any measure, the yellow-eyed penguins of New Zealand are hardy creatures.

Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering William Cooper, Ph.D., of the University of California at Irvine, emphasized this fact during his Nov. 15 evening keynote presentation about the birds for the College of Arts and Sciences 2007 Research Conference. Cooper, who is also a nature photographer, spent time in New Zealand photographing this most rare of penguin species and learning more about its tough life in the wild.

For this striking bird, the trials of nature begin in the egg, which is much sturdier than many bird eggs. Cooper learned this by trying to break an egg that had failed to mature.

“We actually ended up stamping on it (to break it),” Cooper said. “The eggs are so strong. The question is ... how on earth do those little chicks get out of those eggs?”

Once the chicks hatch, Cooper said, the adult penguins alternate babysitting duties with grocery shopping. To bring home enough food, the penguins must swim out to sea between 10 and 12 kilometers before diving 100 meters to catch the sea life that comprises their diet. They make this dive up to 300 times before returning, he said.

Cooper showed video of the adult penguins feeding their young via regurgitation.

“(The adult) will not start regurgitating until the chicks actually call for the food,” Cooper explained. “That initiates the regurgitation response.

“A good biologist would know what genus and species that was,” he added as the penguin on the screen regurgitated part of its fishy meal. ‘I’m not a very good biologist, so I would just say that it’s fish or squid.’

Cooper said he’d traveled to New Zealand to photograph butterflies, only to find that cold weather had spoiled his plans.

“It was so bloody cold down there that there were no butterflies,” he said.

Fortune 500 exec: ‘It’s never too late’ for success

It may be hard to believe now, but Lake Station native and The Sherwin-Williams Company President and COO John Morikis says that he wasn’t really the most-likely-to-succeed type in high school. Superseding thoughts of success in the business world were more youthful concerns.

“Truthfully, I was not one who was really thinking about success,” Morikis said during his Nov. 8 keynote presentation at IU Northwest, which came as part of the Passport to Success Business Expo. “I was really involved in athletics, and I was really involved with my girlfriend, and now wife, and that was what I was all about. So when I started my college career at Saint Joseph’s College, I would say that I was a little behind the curve.”

Morikis played football and studied business at Saint Joe’s. Some tough family circumstances convinced him that it was time to take his education seriously.

“It was make it or break it,” Morikis said. “I said, ‘I’m going to go there and I am going to work hard, because I need to come out of there with a good education.’ For those of you who are students, the message I give is this: It’s never too late to come around and say, ‘I’m going to make a difference.’ Because I was that student.”

Now, Morikis is president and operations chief for a Fortune 500 company worth almost $8 billion.
Speakers at the 2007 Data Mining Conference in Las Vegas in October. Their presentation was titled “Future Applications of Data Mining in the Retail Industry.” The conference was organized by the SAS Institute. Bandyopadhyay and Kini, along with Julie Wolfe, adjunct faculty member in the School of Business and Economics, published a paper titled “A Critical Review of Online Affiliate Models” in the Journal of Academy of Business and Economics.

Vernon Smith, Ph.D., associate professor of educational leadership, received the Outstanding Service Award in Education from Indiana Dabney University on Nov. 11, 2007. Smith, a state representative in the Indiana Legislature, received the award during the university’s graduation ceremony. On Nov. 13, at an event in Indianapolis, Smith was awarded “Legislator of the Year” honors by Mental Health America of Indiana and the Indiana Minority Health Coalition.

Saleem Rasheed, Ph.D., assistant professor of education, and Janice Grskovic, Ph.D., associate professor of education, recently gave a presentation at the Conference of the Council for Children With Behavioral Disorders in Dallas. The presentation, titled “The Essence of Functional Behavioral Assessment,” was intended to provide participants with a better understanding of the hypothesized function of behaviors exhibited by students in the classroom, and to show them how to develop skills in developing a behavior intervention plan based on that function. The two presenters provided examples of the relationship between hypothesized functions and the development of relevant behavior intervention plans, and then facilitated an activity for participants to master the skill.

Julie Peller, Ph.D., assistant professor of chemistry, co-authored the article “Free-Radical-Induced Oxidative and Reductive Degradation of Sulfuric Drugs in Water: Absolute Kinetics and Efficiencies of Hydroxyl Radical and Hydrated Electron Reactions,” which was accepted for publication by the Journal of Physical Chemistry. Other authors included Stephen P. Mezyk, Thomas Neubauer and William J. Cooper. Peller also co-authored, with Mezyk and Cooper, “Bisphenol A Reactions with the Hydroxyl Radical: Diverse Pathways Determined between Deionized Water and Tertiary Treated Wastewater Solutions,” which was accepted in Research on Chemical Intermediates, October 2007.

Alan Barr, Ph.D., professor of English, recently had published an article on David Copperfield: “Matters of Class and the Middle-Class Artist in David Copperfield,” in the Dickens Studies Annual.

IU Northwest set for AQIP evaluation visit in March

Indiana University Northwest will undergo a comprehensive evaluation visit on March 26 – 28, 2008 by a team representing The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

The Higher Learning Commission is one of six accrediting agencies in the United States that provides institutional accreditation on a regional basis. Institutional accreditation evaluates an entire institution and accredits it as a whole. Other agencies provide accreditation for specific programs.

Accreditation is voluntary. The Commission accredits approximately 1,100 institutions of higher education in a 19-state region. The Commission is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

For the past year and a half, IU Northwest has been engaged in a process of self-study, addressing the Commission’s requirements and criteria for accreditation. The evaluation team will visit the institution to gather evidence that the self-study is thorough and accurate. The team will recommend to the Commission a continuing status for the college; following a review process, the Commission itself will take the final action.

The public is invited to submit comments regarding the college. Comments may be mailed to: Public Comment on Indiana University Northwest, The Higher Learning Commission, 30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, Illinois 60602.

Comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution or its academic programs. Written, signed comments must be received by February 26, 2008. The Commission cannot guarantee that comments received after the due date will be considered. Comments should include the name, address and telephone number of the person providing the comments. Comments will not be treated as confidential.

Note: Individuals with a specific dispute or grievance with an institution should request the separate Policy on Complaints document from the Commission office. The Higher Learning Commission cannot settle disputes between institutions and individuals. Complaints will not be considered third-party comments.
December Calendar of Events

Thursday, Dec. 6
Diversity Awareness Video Series – 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., Savannah Center 203/204. This monthly series of video presentations and open discussions continues in December with a program on Arab-American heritage.

Sunday, Dec. 9
Elmhurst College Jazz Band – 2:30 p.m. in Tamarack Hall Theatre. The Elmhurst College Jazz Band will perform holiday favorites and other tunes in this one-day-only performance. This outstanding ensemble has performed in 17 nations and earned raves from top jazz artists. Tickets are $10. Call the box office at (219) 980-6808 for advance tickets.

Tuesday, Dec. 11
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Public Hearings – 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. in the Savannah Center Auditorium. The EPA will host two public hearings regarding its objection to the state of Indiana’s draft wastewater-discharge permit for U.S. Steel Gary Works. The public is invited to attend either of these forums and provide oral or written opinions on the objections raised by the EPA to the draft permit. The agency’s objections must be resolved before the permit can be issued.

Wednesday, Dec. 12
IU Northwest Annual Holiday Gathering – 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., Savannah Gymnasium. IU Northwest faculty and staff will gather to celebrate the holiday season with good food, great conversation and seasonal music provided by the Emerson Concert Choir.

Friday, Dec. 14
“The Urban Nutcracker” – 7 p.m. at Tamarack Hall Theatre, The Emerson School for Visual and Performing Arts and Emerson Dance Alliance will present this hip, stylish update of the classic holiday standard. Tickets are $10 for adults and $5 for students. Additional show on Saturday, Dec. 15.

Sunday, Dec. 16
Emerson Concert Choir (Free Performance) – 2:30 p.m. in Tamarack Hall Theatre. The Emerson Concert Choir, which has won numerous awards from the Indiana State School Music Association, will bring its distinctive and professional sound to IU Northwest for an afternoon of uplifting seasonal vocals. All are welcome to attend this free holiday event.

Monday, Dec. 17
Spring Semester New Student Orientation – 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. in the Hawthorn Hall lobby. New students enrolled for Spring Semester 2008 will come to learn about campus life and classes in advance of the new semester.

Monday, Dec. 24
Winter Break begins – Campus closed for the holidays. Re-opens Jan. 2.