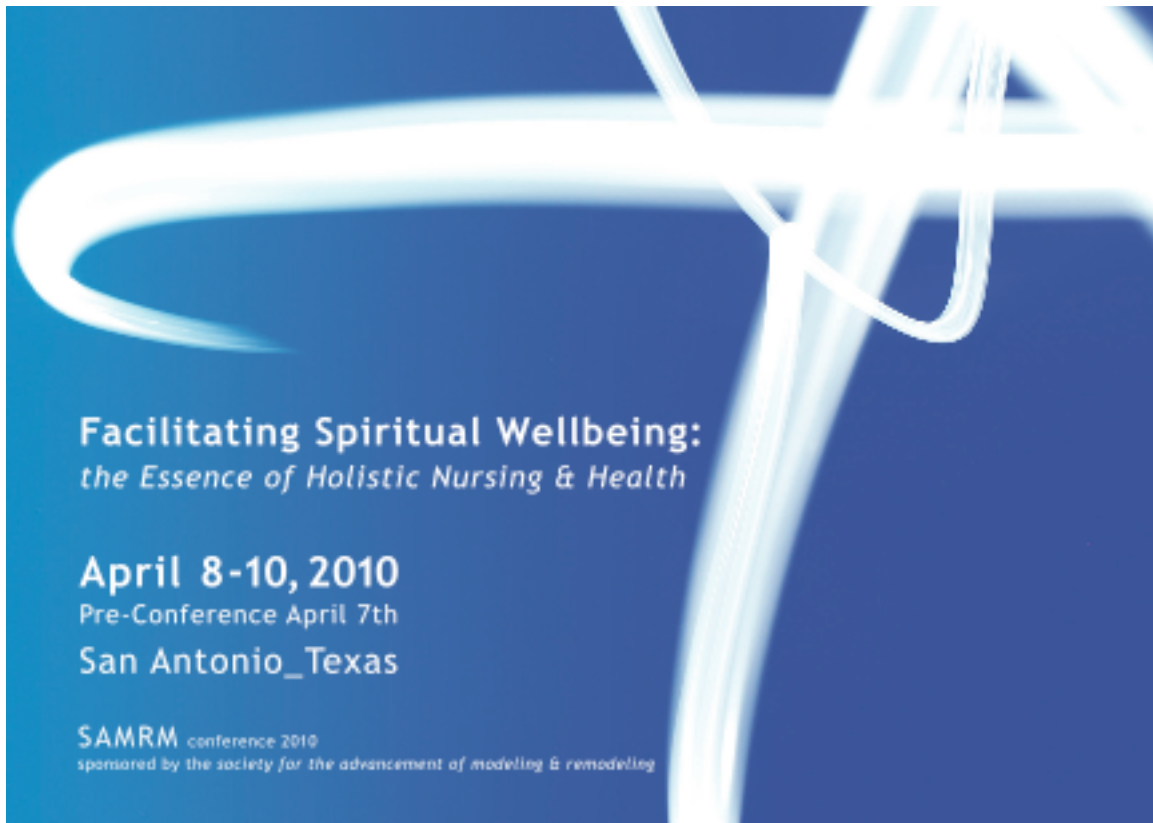

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RIKI SCHEELA, ONE OF OUR OWN RECOGNIZED

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BSU Today - News & Updates

Nursing professor wins Wellstone Social Justice Award

BEMIDJI, Minn. - Dr. Rochelle "Riki" Scheela, professor of nursing at Bemidji State University, has been awarded the Paul and Sheila Wellstone Social Justice Award by the Minnesota Nurses Association.

Scheela will receive the award on Sunday, Oct. 12, in conjunction with the Minnesota Nurses Association's 2008 annual convention in Duluth, Minn.

"This is such a great honor to me for several reasons," Scheela said. "Work with sex offenders is not always valued or respected, so having my work and research recognized in the context of social justice is so affirming.

"In my experience, the vast majority of sex offenders have been abused themselves, are remorseful for what they have done and don't want to ever hurt anyone again," Scheela said. "For those who have successfully completed treatment at Upper Mississippi Mental Health Center, less than five percent reoffend. Research demonstrates similar statistics elsewhere in the state and across the nation. Working with sex offenders contributes to the welfare of offenders and to the safety of victims and the community."

The Paul and Sheila Wellstone Social Justice Award honors the nurse, elected official or community leader who demonstrates a lifetime achievement of working to better the lives of others by increasing their access to quality health care. According to the Minnesota Nurses Association, the recipient of the award is one who: speaks out courageously and consistently for others, as the Wellstones did during their careers in politics and activism. offers an unwavering voice on behalf of those who have none; a voice that is clear and undiminished by political tides; and exemplifies the words of Paul Wellstone when he said, "we should never separate the lives we live from the words we speak."

Scheela joined the Bemidji State University faculty in 1983, and served as chair of the Department of Nursing from 1999 to 2007. She also has worked in the sexual abuse treatment program at Bemidji's Upper Mississippi Mental Health Center since 1984.

She has become an internationally-rekknowned expert on sexual abuse and sex offenders, giving dozens of presentations around the world. She has focused her work on the treatment of male sex offenders and has done extensive research on sex abuse in Vietnam. As part of this research, she spent nine months on sabbatical in Vietnam and adopted six "shoeshine boys" into her family, providing them with meals and clothing and interacting with them on a daily basis. Her research and experience have led her to develop a multi-disciplinary course on sexual abuse.

Scheela has been a member of the Minnesota Nurses Association since 1970, and also holds memberships in the National League for Nursing, the American Holistic Nurses' Association, the American Psychiatric Nurses Association and the American Association of Colleagues of Nursing. She is also a member of numerous international nursing organizations and is on the executive board of the Minnesota Association of Colleges of Nursing.

Scheela earned her bachelor of arts in nursing from the College of St. Catherine, earned master's degrees at the College of St. Thomas and the University of Minnesota and was awarded her Ph.D. in nursing from the University of Texas in 1991. She holds licensure as a registered nurse from the Minnesota Board of Nursing.

Nominations for the Wellstone Social Justice Award may be made by individual members or member groups of the Minnesota Nurses Association. The award, which made its debut in 2003, was developed to honor Senator Paul Wellstone and his wife Sheila, who died in Oct. 2002. The Wellstones had a long-standing relationship with the Minnesota Nurses Association and often spoke eloquently on behalf of nurses and the nursing profession.

"Dr. Scheela has demonstrated a lifetime of respectful interactions with her clients and co-workers," said Dr. Jeanine Gangeness, associate professor of nursing at Bemidji State who nominated Scheela for the award. "She has an extraordinary capacity to forgive and care for all individuals regardless of their history or current condition. The Paul and Sheila Wellstone Social Justice Award is given to individuals who have an 'unwavering voice on behalf of those who have none;' there are few individuals that fit this description as well as Dr. Riki Scheela."

"I have tremendous admiration for who Paul and Sheila Wellstone were as people, what they stood for and the important work they did," Scheela said. "To be associated with them in some small way is a tremendous honor and very humbling."
