

2008 BILL RENEKER  
MEMORIAL COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Bill Reneker was President of the Winona Lake Town Council at the time he died in 1993. He had a strong appreciation of our town's spiritual and cultural heritage and a hope for what it could be in the future. From the day he became a member of the Town Council the business of the town of Winona Lake became a high priority in his life.

He had always been involved in sports and believed in being a "team player" on the council striving for what was best for the town. He realized the council alone could not make the Town of Winona Lake into the community he envisioned but wanted to encourage all of its citizens to work together so it could once again become a wonderful place to live. If Bill were to come back today he would be absolutely amazed at the transformation that has taken place.

If I had to pick one word that described Bill it would be "encourager"! And so it seemed only fitting that an annual Bill Reneker Community Service Award be given by our family to an individual, recommended by the town council, who has worked toward the betterment of our community...giving back to it more than he or she takes from it.

In any great community there are many quiet, gifted individuals who work quietly behind the scenes.

The life of this year's honoree has been intertwined with the Town of Winona Lake for the past 28 years. She came to Winona to attend Grace College right after high school. Later after she married her husband they made it their home. She has been involved in capturing the beauty of Winona Lake in a way we can all appreciate. She has served on town committees and has portrayed our community in a positive way.

Let me fill in some more of the details:

She has been in love with art her whole life; in fact her parents knew she was an artist from the first time she started to draw on the wall behind their couch. When she entered school she was involved in its art program and was fortunate to have very encouraging and talented teachers through that time. She continued to study art in college.

She has a continuous passion to explore her world and she has used these experiences to create beautiful and moving expressions of our town through the commemorative July 4<sup>th</sup> posters that many of us have in our homes. She developed the Heritage Trail brochure and was instrumental in organizing the art sculptures that sit along the Greenway. Without her expertise in the process of acquiring the art pieces, the Greenway Art Committee would have been struggling.

She has also just finished a brochure highlighting the "Timeline of Liberty" monument that sits in front of the town hall and she designed the garden in front of the "Timeline of Liberty" artwork. She has done all of these projects for little or no compensation.

How has she been involved indirectly with our town government? She willingly and graciously took 8 years of phone calls at home for her husband when he was on the town council. He says that he couldn't have survived if it wasn't for her support, love and encouragement.

A recent "Art in Action" column of The Time's Union newspaper says, and I quote Darla McCammon of the Lakeland Art Association, "A modern day Georgia O'Keefe lives and offers her art right here in Indiana. Those fortunate enough to have met Jennifer Ortega and to view her work are grateful for the experience. Ortega is often self-effacing about her efforts, but her watercolors are glimpses into brilliance."

We are especially blessed to have Jennifer Ortega living right here in Winona Lake and for the many ways she has enriched our community by sharing her gift of art with all of us.

The 2008 recipient of the Bill Reneker Community Service award is Jennifer Ortega!



Jennifer Ortega (left) with Judy Reneker Burd