

AU to Award Honorary Degree to Eileen Stevens

4/13/99

Alfred, NY -- A woman who has had a profound effect on Alfred University over the past two decades will receive an honorary Doctor of Law degree at the May 15 commencement ceremonies, scheduled for 10 a.m. May 15 in McLane Center on the AU campus. "Awarding an honorary degree to Eileen Stevens will be a bittersweet occasion for both Mrs. Stevens and the University," said AU President Edward G. Coll, Jr. Stevens' son, Chuck Stenzel, died as a result of an alcohol overdose suffered when he was pledging Klan Alpine in February 1978. "That event has haunted both Mrs. Stevens and Alfred University for more than 20 years," said Coll. "I believe, and the Board of Trustees agreed, that it was time for a reconciliation." The board voted at its February meeting to bestow the honorary degree on Mrs. Stevens. "Since her son's death, Mrs. Stevens has embarked on a remarkable crusade to call attention to hazing, and to get it stopped, on our college campuses," said Coll. "Through the Committee to Halt Useless College Killings (CHUCK), she has been successful in getting anti-hazing laws passed in 39 states, and in raising people's awareness of the tragedies that can occur as a result of hazing." As colleges and universities, as well as the public, began to understand the magnitude of the problem, Eileen Stevens' efforts have certainly meant that other young peoples' lives have been saved," said Coll. "I am so honored that Alfred University has chosen to recognize my work in this way," said Stevens. In the 20 years since she founded CHUCK, Stevens has lectured at more than 600 campuses nationwide and has been a frequent speaker at national fraternity conventions, conferences and regional meetings. She has testified at legislative hearings in several states as they prepared to pass anti-hazing laws. When she began her campaign, only three states had anti-hazing laws on the books. She has been a guest on numerous television talk shows and her work has been featured in several magazines. A book, Broken Pledges by Hank Nuwer, prominently featured her work, and an NBC made-for-television movie about her life and work has been produced. Stevens has received awards from the National Interfraternity Conference, as well as from individual national fraternities and sororities. Newsday has honored her for her efforts; the New York Daily News named her its Woman of the Year in 1993; the Red Cross presented her with its Clara Barton Humanitarian Award, and she also received the prestigious national Jefferson Award for Humanitarian Service. "My campus appearances are very gratifying," Stevens told Arnold Abrams in a Newsday feature on her work. Students "listen in silence, and then I see them react. It's as if a light bulb is going on. They have no idea how potentially dangerous hazing is." Stevens lives in Sayville, NY, with her husband Roy. She has three grown children.