

CEHS Lifetime Achievement Award: Awarded to Stew and Vicki Morrill | CEHS

04/27/2017



The Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services Lifetime Achievement Award is given to those who have provided an outstanding contribution towards education and human services. Stew and Vicki Morrill were recipients of this honor at the CEHS Scholarship and Awards Banquet in the spring of 2017, where Stew Morrill was the keynote speaker. The influence of the Morrills on the lives of countless children and students has had a ripple effect on people throughout our community, our nation, and even around the world.

Education

Almost everyone knows that Stew Morrill is an Aggie legend—with 620 wins, he is the most successful coach in Utah State University history and he will be inducted into the USU Athletics Hall of Fame this fall. He led the USU basketball team to 17 straight winning seasons, including 12 of the top 13 seasons in school history and 4 straight Western Athletic Conference titles.

What fans may not know is that Stew has always carried a strong drive to become an educator. His father worked as a truck driver and wanted something better for his children; Mr. Morrill emphasized college education so firmly that all of his children earned degrees and went on to achieve remarkable success. “His proudest day was when the three of us graduated from college,” said Stew. His brother and sister are both teachers.

Stew received an honorary Doctorate of Education from the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services at USU in 2015. “I believe coaching is teaching,” he said. “The intensity and competitiveness is different, but it’s all about imparting what you know and getting kids to learn and to excel.”

Of all the athletic achievements and wins, Stew and his coaching staff have been most proud of the 95% graduation rate of the players on his teams. Stew always kept a very close watch on his athletes’ academic progress.

“Players are called student athletes—with ‘student’ first. Seeing kids get their degree, knowing they have a way to face the world, is extremely rewarding.” Stew’s desire to see his players get their degrees so they could succeed out in the world illustrates his extraordinary commitment to education.

Human Services

Vicki Morrill was raised on a farm in Montana in a family of 12 children. When they were young, her sisters all played with dolls—but Vicki ran an imaginary orphanage. She had big dreams of taking care of little children. She wanted to make these dreams a reality when she grew up, and in a way, that is exactly what she did. Vicki and Stew Morrill together have now fostered an astounding 90 children. The Morrills have provided transitional care for adoption agencies for children ages 0 to 5 years old, and they have done this in Colorado, Montana, and Utah.

Vicki has been a true gift to these little ones as she mothered them while they were in the process of being adopted. When she started fostering babies and toddlers in the 80s, Vicki never saw where they ended up, as most adoptions were closed—but that process has changed. “When we started helping with open adoptions, I was nervous at first, but it was very healing,” she said. “It felt good to see where our foster children were going; I cried happy tears for each one.”

Vicki and Stew have four biological children. Vicki observed, “Our experience with foster care was good for our children—they got a deeper perspective on the way the world works and how fortunate some are and others are not. And it helped our foster kids to have other children around to make them feel comfortable.”

Vicki’s loving care provided a time of gentle, healing transition for many youngsters, and it helped to set the stage for a new life with their adoptive parents. As Stew articulated so well: “I coached a lot of guys and had an

impact—but what Vicki did had much more impact on children’s lives as well as their adoptive parents.”

Vicki Morrill’s inspiring work with these foster children has changed an untold number of lives—this is the very definition of human service.