OU Faculty & Staff are invited to submit a letter of nomination for the FERN L. HOLLAND AWARD & $1000 SCHOLARSHIP

Fern L. Holland, 1970-2004
University of Oklahoma, 1992

The Fern L. Holland Award is a $1,000 cash award recognizing a full-time undergraduate woman bearing the same spirit of Fern Holland, a desire to make a significant difference in the world around us in areas such as democracy, human rights, women’s issues or leadership.

The award, sponsored by Student Affairs and Delta Gamma Fraternity, honors Fern Holland, a 1992 University of Oklahoma graduate, who was the first civilian killed in Iraq in 2004. Fern was an active student while at OU, involved on campus and in Delta Gamma Fraternity and the OU Panhellenic Association.

AWARD PROCESS:
Faculty and staff are asked to submit a letter of nomination for a current, full-time female student bearing the same spirit as Fern Holland, a desire to make a difference in the world around us via efforts impacting democracy, human rights, women’s issues or leadership.

Letters of nomination should be submitted by 4 p.m., Friday, February 2, 2018 to:
Becky Barker, Director
The University of Oklahoma
Leadership Development and Volunteerism
900 Asp Ave., OMU 253
Norman, OK 73019
OR via e-mail: rreed@ou.edu
OR fax: 405.325.5248

Selection process:
1. All women nominated will receive an e-mail notifying them of their nomination and congratulating them on their nomination.

2. All nominations will be reviewed by a selection committee and finalists will be selected. Finalists will be contacted and asked to submit a brief personal statement describing their personal vision and goals, as well as an unofficial transcript.

3. A recipient will be selected by the committee upon review of the materials submitted by the finalists. The selection committee also reserves the right to invite finalists for a personal interview.

4. The recipient will be recognized at the Campus Awards Program held during the spring.

Recipient recognition:
- Name on permanent plaque in the Oklahoma Memorial Union
- $1,000 cash award, sponsored by the Division of Student Affairs and Delta Gamma Fraternity
- Copy of Fern Holland’s story from Sooner Magazine and Oklahoma Today Magazine
- Recognition gift for recipient

QUESTIONS?
Contact Becky Barker, Director, Leadership Development & Volunteerism at rreed@ou.edu or (405) 325-4020.
Fern L. Holland Award/Scholarship

A $1,000 cash award recognizing a full-time undergraduate woman making an extraordinary difference in areas such as democracy, human rights, women’s issues or leadership.

Fern L. Holland, 1970-2004
University of Oklahoma, 1992

Fern Holland died on March 9th, 2004 while working for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq. She was killed by forces violently opposed to the ideals of freedom and democracy for the Iraqi people. Fern, an Oklahoma native who grew up believing that one person could make a difference in the world, knew that her work placed her at extreme risk. It was a risk she was willing to assume in order to bring some measure of hope and equality to the people of Iraq.

She was convinced that through simple acts of human kindness and understanding, it is possible to make the world a better place in which to live. Fern’s work and sacrifice on behalf of others did not begin in Iraq. It began long before in the children’s hospitals of Russia and South Africa where she worked as a volunteer following her graduation from the University of Oklahoma. Upon her return to the United States, she entered law school at the University of Tulsa, graduating with honors in 1996. In 1999, having demonstrated exceptional ability as a lawyer, she left a lucrative position with her law firm to enter the Peace Corps. She chose as her assignment the country of Namibia in her beloved Africa. Here she helped to build schools and bring AIDS education to the most isolated areas of this southwest African nation. In 2002, she traveled to the African nation of Guinea on behalf of the American Refugee Committee. There, she implemented solutions for dealing with widespread human rights abuses then occurring in Guinean refugee camps.

In July, 2003, Fern was hired by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to investigate human rights abuses under the Sadaam Hussein regime. She was part of that agency’s Abuse Prevention Unit whose purpose is to protect victims of abuse occurring during times of war or conflict. At the conclusion of her tour with USAID, she was retained by the Coalition Provisional Authority to help Iraqis establish a democratic form of government. In this capacity, her efforts began to center around the new role of Iraqi women in a culture in which they had historically been denied meaningful participation.

Working tirelessly on behalf of women’s rights, Fern established and implemented the concept of women’s centers to which Iraqi women could come to learn about democracy and the role envisioned for them in a representative form of government. She was instrumental in securing equality and participation for women in the Iraqi interim constitution. And always, she stood as a friend to anyone in need of help. It was because of her work on behalf of the Iraqi people that Fern was targeted for assassination. On March 9th, 2004, on the road between Karbala and Al Hillah, Fern, her friend and Iraqi counterpart, Salwa Ali Oushami, and CPA press liaison Robert Zangas were murdered by elements of an extremist group whose members view the ideals of democracy and equal opportunity as a threat. She was the first civilian to die in Iraq.

Fern is mourned by all those whose lives she touched. In towns and villages thousands of miles from her home, she will be remembered as one who brought light where there had been only darkness, and hope to people who had known only despair. The need and suffering which drew her to those far away places still exists. The Fern L. Holland Charitable Foundation was founded to continue the work which she so selflessly undertook and for which she gave her life.

While Fern’s accomplishments are indeed extraordinary, she was a successful, yet normal college student of the late 1980s and early 1990s. She was an outstanding leader, serving as Rush Chair for Delta Gamma and Secretary for the Panhellenic Association. She served the University as a volunteer for the student counseling hotline. She was also an athlete, running daily and playing every sorority intramural game she could. Happy hour at Classic 50s was a common visit for Fern, to get just one more strawberry slush! The evenings would frequently find Fern at Brother’s, listening to acoustic guitar groups (her favorite was Wakeland). In her free time, Fern doodled, journaled, and read philosophy.

Fern has been honored in numerous ways by many colleagues and was named as the Person of the Week on ABC World News Tonight on March 12, 2004. She was selected as the Oklahoman of the Year by Oklahoma Today Magazine and the OU Alumni Club from Tulsa has also named a scholarship in her honor. The Fern L. Holland Award is being sponsored by the University of Oklahoma Division of Student Affairs and Delta Gamma Fraternity. The award will be presented at the Campus Awards Program each spring to a full-time undergraduate woman bearing the same spirit as Fern, a desire to make a difference in the world around us.