

Worthy of honor

Troy University honored three distinguished alumni of the year and one honorary alumnus during halftime festivities of the Homecoming football game on Nov. 4.

Alumni honored were the Hon. William Thigpen, Cassie Sanford and Sammy Carr. This year's Honorary Alumnus of the Year was Dr. James Whiteside.

The Hon. William Thigpen

Troy University alumnus William Thigpen began a leadership role as a member of TROY's basketball team and now continues that role through serving the people of Alabama.

Once a four-year letterman for Trojan basketball, earning the "Most Hustle Award," Thigpen now serves as a State Representative for the 16th District. Thigpen was first elected in 1998 and will begin his third term in March 2007.



Throughout his legislative career, Thigpen has campaigned on issues including education, senior citizens and economic development. He was appointed by the Speaker of the House to represent Alabama at the National Energy Conference and was elected Alabama Legislator of the Year by the Alabama Rural Electric Association in 2006.

Before Thigpen's legislative career, he was a major with the Army National Guard for 25 years, an insurance agent and owner of Thigpen Ford-Mercury. He is also noted as

the founder of the West Alabama Economic Development Board for Fayette, Lamar and Pickens counties.

Although Thigpen and his wife Betty have three children and five grandchildren, this alumnus views TROY as family. "The school was small enough that it was like a family. It seemed like the professors really cared about the success of the students," Thigpen said.

In response to being named a Distinguished Alumnus of the Year, Thigpen said he was very humbled. "This is one of the biggest honors I've ever had, and I will treasure it," he said.

Mr. Sammy Carr

Troy University alumnus Sammy Carr took his personal experiences from TROY

and used them to touch other lives in the education system.

"The teachers were very personable and taught the value of instruction. I appreciated that

later on as a teacher," Carr said.

Since his days at TROY, Carr has spent much of his life continuing to spread his love for learning. Through the years he has been a mathematics teacher for Straughn High School and an assistant principal, mathematics teacher and coach for Luverne High School. Carr also worked as the Federal Programs Coordinator for the Crenshaw County Board of Education. From 1988 to 1995 he served as the Superintendent of Education in Crenshaw County.

Carr has been a very active member in the community, as well. He was a Luverne City Council member for eight years, Kiwanis Club charter member and inaugural president of the Alabama De-

partment of Education's Federal Programs.

As an involved alumnus, Carr was the inaugural president of the TROY Crenshaw County Alumni Association and is currently the Troy University National Alumni Association President.

"I've really grown to love TROY, working with the Association the past 10-12 years," he said.

Carr said that being named Distinguished Alumnus of the Year was one of the greatest honors the University could bestow upon him or any other TROY graduate. "I see this as a final tribute to a good career," he said.

Carr and his wife Pearl reside in Luverne, AL.



Mrs. Cassie Sanford

TROY Alumna of the Year Cassie Sanford acknowledges her education at Troy University as being the basis for her work-related accomplishments.

“I credit TROY for the foundation of the success in my professional career,” Sanford said.

Sanford who graduated with a bachelor’s degree in print journalism and public relations is currently the vice president of marketing and development for Habitat for Humanity of Greater Birmingham.

Throughout her career, Sanford has accomplished much that many young professionals only dream about. Global missions have taken her to Iquitos, Peru, and Siguatepeque, Honduras. Also, in 2005 Sanford was named a Top 40 Under 40 recipient in the Birmingham Business Journal.

This young professional said that she was very fortunate to have hands-on experience while studying at TROY. “The personal attention made it very easy to transition,” Sanford said.

Sanford’s involvement does not stop with her professional career. She is an active member in the community, as well. The alumna is involved in Meals on Wheels, Women’s Exchange, the Junior League of Birmingham and has been on the Gardendale Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors since 2005.

Sanford said that she was excited about being named a Distinguished Alumnus of the Year. “It’s such a privilege. I am very proud to be a TROY graduate,” she said.

The alumna and her husband Kevin reside in Mount Olive, AL.



Dr. James Whiteside

Dr. James Whiteside has received an Honorary Alumni of the Year Award for his dedication to Troy University as full-time team physician.

During the past 10 years (1996-06), Whiteside has used his expertise to heal Trojan athletes and aid in the learning process of the TROY Athletic Training Program.

“I tried to instill a work ethic in athletic training students that is tenable in the business. I hope I was an influence on them to excel,” Whiteside said.

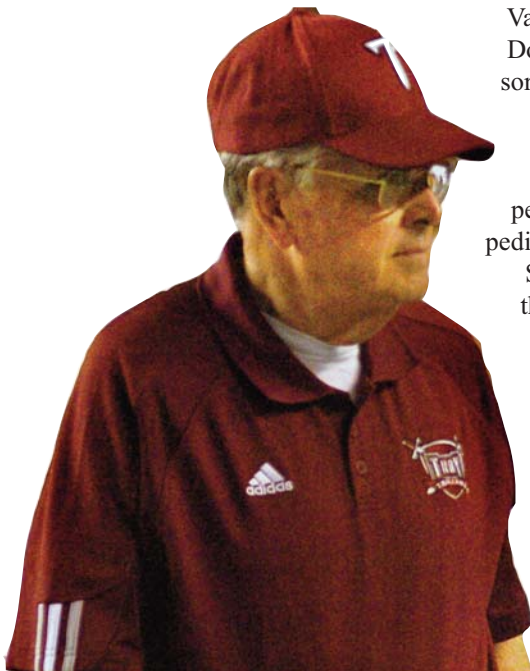
Prior to working with the Trojans, Whiteside spent 13 years with Penn State University as the senior medical team physician. He has also held various pediatric positions including: head of Pediatric Oncology Service at Variety Children’s Hospital, a chief pediatric officer for both Doctors and Baptist Hospitals and a clinical assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Miami’s Medical School.

In addition to pediatric and university athletic care, Whiteside spent some time as the director of medical aspects of sports for the Alabama Sports Medicine and Orthopedic Center.

Some of Whiteside’s earlier awards and honors include: the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine’s 2002 Founders Award, the Southeastern Athletic Trainers’ 2003 Sports Medicine Person of the Year and the Honorary Golden Eagle Award for service to senior citizens.

Even though Whiteside is very accomplished and has been honored with quite a few awards, it seems as though his first priority at TROY was the well-being of his students.

“It’s heartwarming to see so many students later on that have done so well,” he said.



These articles were written by Torie Hardee, a senior print journalism/public relations major from Chiefland, FL. Hardee is a Workshop student in the Office of University Relations.