

UAA Alumni Awards for 2015

The USAID Alumni Association (UAA) launched in 2014 the first annual “**Alumni of the Year**” Awards. The UAA Executive Committee intends to make this a regular feature of its annual program of activities. The awards are a way to honor USAID alumni who have made unusual and significant contributions since leaving USAID. Rather than the usual lifetime achievement awards, the UAA alumni awards focus on **innovative and inspiring post-retirement service and contributions to communities overseas or in the US**. These awards celebrate new paths taken by outstanding alumni who may have built on their USAID experience and skills but who have chosen to work in different arenas, with different partner organizations, or on their own. Recipients will also have shown passion for new activities and made significant and lasting contributions.

For the 2015 nominations cycle, the UAA Awards Committee launched the search for outstanding alumni service in the UAA newsletter and on the UAA website beginning this past April, calling for UAA members to nominate others or to self-nominate. As was the case last year, the 2015 Awards Committee was challenged by the excellent nominations that it reviewed. The winners of the 2015 UAA Alumni Awards were announced at the AGM.

The 2015 award recipients were: Judy Gilmore and Bette Cook. A summary of each the 2015 winning nominations follow:

Judith Gilmore: After retiring from USAID in 2006, Judy Gilmore has concentrated on issues of human rights and conflict resolution. Judy trained to become a mediator and joined the Board of the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) and Mediators Beyond Borders (MBB). Mediation has been the perfect second career for her. It keeps her in touch with people’s daily lives and struggles and she says that “it has taught me enormous empathy and listening skills.” Judy began in community mediation, branched out to the DC and MD court systems, the federal government, Montgomery County Human Rights and the State Attorney’s Office, and most recently to the DC Office of Police Complaints. Her cases range from small claims, custody disputes, employment discrimination, and misdemeanors to police/community relationships and restorative justice. Judy calculates she has mediated close to 1,000 cases since 2006.

Bette Cook: Since retiring from USAID in 2012, Bette has devoted increased amount of time to volunteering for the American Red Cross. As a Red Cross volunteer, Bette currently serves as Station Chair, the lead volunteer position at Fort Belvoir and Quantico Marine Corps Base. She works with 400 volunteers to provide important and needed services to Armed Forces personnel and their families, both active duty and retirees. Bette has said that the most rewarding work she does as a volunteer is with the Fort Belvoir Hospital, which is part of the Walter Reed Medical system. Fort Belvoir has a facility for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress care; a warrior transition unit that houses those returning from overseas who require medical care; and a Fisher House for families to reside while the service member is being treated. Bette chose to devote one day each week to work at the hospital’s physical therapy clinic because it is the second busiest clinic and provided the best opportunity for interaction with the wounded warriors. For example, over 11,000 patients were referred to the clinic last year.