

Spring 2005

## Junior Achievement Community Award Speech, delivered in Spring 2005

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### ScholarWorks Citation

Lubbers, Arend D., "Junior Achievement Community Award Speech, delivered in Spring 2005" (2005).  
*Presidential Speeches*. 227.  
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## **JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD**

**SPRING 2005**

When I was considered for the Presidency of Grand Valley, Ed Frey was on the committee. He was one of the first people I met in the process that led to my accepting the position. So receiving the Edward J. Frey Award for Community Service elicits from me warm and very personal feelings. When Nancy and I came here in January 1969, I returned to west Michigan, a place where I had roots and important memories of formative experiences during my high school and college years. I suspected then that we would not leave, though one cannot hold firmly to such belief considering the vicissitudes of the modern University Presidency. But it was our good fortune to survive, and as partners in marriage and work, our lives became intertwined with the causes and the people of various communities and enterprises in west Michigan. We more than enjoyed our commitments, we loved them. Such strong feelings engendered in us loyalty to the place where we have lived and worked, and here is where we will remain. If our love of place claimed our service to the extent that Junior Achievement wants to recognize it, I can say only I am pleasantly surprised and humbly grateful.

Service to a community is not so simple as one or two people together performing good acts. Individuals and the good that they do is inextricably tied to and dependent upon others. There can be no exclusive claims. If there is achievement, it is always shared. If there is success, it is never complete. Reinhold Niehbur, a leading 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian who is influential in my life, expressed some thoughts that keep our achievements in perspective. He wrote, "Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; therefore, we are saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful or good makes

complete sense in my immediate context of history; therefore we are saved by faith.

Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we are saved by love.” If Nancy and I have been links in a chain of people advancing the community we love, we want those other links to know we appreciate them. Junior Achievement is a forger of links carrying the chain into the future. The cause of community must be carried on, infused with as much hope, faith and love it can muster.