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The Rev. Dennis Blaney, left, and Sandra Furman, right, accept the Notre Dame Club of Northwest Indiana's Award of the Year from Club President Jana Lacera, at the annual Universal Notre Dame Night banquet held in Schererville. This year's two recipients are integral to the success of Sharing Meadows, a LaPorte County community for other-abled adults.

AWARD SHARED BY CARING DUO

Sharing Meadows leader and camp director are honored by Notre Dame Club of Northwest Indiana

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Sandra Furman of Sharing Meadows turned the tables on the members of the Notre Dame Club of Northwest Indiana as she rose to accept the club's 2010 ND Award of the Year along with the Rev. Dennis Blaney during the recent Universal Notre Dame Night banquet.

After thanking the club "for thinking that what I'm privileged and love to do is deserving of an award," the Sharing Meadows camp director lauded the club for "remembering to look forward and stretch out your hand to the next generation of Notre Dame students" by sponsoring a ND Summer Service Project that sends one or two current students as volunteers to the Sharing Meadows summer camp for the past several years in exchange for a scholarship.

"You are the ones to be commended," said Furman.

Furman's heartfelt speech to about 60 guests at The Patrician Banquet Center in Schererville reflects the passion she and the Blaney, president of SHARE Foundation, have for their work at Sharing Meadows, a 185-acre community in LaPorte County that provides a tranquil place for other-abled adults to live, work and relax in peace and dignity.

The foundation is supported a not-for-profit Christian organization that serves

is funded by private donations and fundraising. Sharing Meadows hosts week-long summer camp experiences throughout the summer for adults who may, or may not, later become year-round residents of one of four villages in the community. Staffed in part by volunteers, the summer camp has provided a rich educational experience for its ND student counselors, said Club President Jana Lacera.

"It has been a wonderful place for our Summer Service Project students, who are embraced by the staff and live and work in such a caring place," said Lacera. "We are happy to be able to support this endeavor!"

Blaney, who established Sharing Meadows as a Diocese of Gary priest, is now retired and living full-time at the LaPorte County enclave. He spoke of a summer camp "like others, but also unique" in accepting his award.

He told of a totally dependent camper who worried because he had no skills or talents to share with his fellow campers. "You have a great smile, give your love through that smile," Blaney recalled telling the young man, whose eventual funeral service was filled with people who had received that gift.

"That's what we do at our camp," Blaney added, "try to get other-abled people to be able to grow spiritually and individually."

The banquet also welcomed Thomas J. Harvey, director of the University of Notre Dame's Master of Nonprofit Administration program, as its guest speaker, and conducted an election of 2010-11 officers that saw Lacera retained as president along with First Vice President Michael Skurka, Second Vice President Harry Howisen, Treasurer Dan O'Brien and Chaplain the Rev. Joseph Murphy.