

Awards Honor Department's Top Volunteers

Neill G. Krost intended to pay only one visit to the 250 children at the Abomey orphanage, located four hours from his office at the U.S. Embassy in Cotonou, Benin. Once there, however, he said he became overwhelmed.

"My heart was opened up, and I made a commitment" to help the orphanage, he said during a recent ceremony where he was honored as one of five Department employees or family members worldwide who engaged in significant volunteerism.

Krost organized a Christmas charity drive that delivered a large truckload of clothing, books, toys and furniture to the orphanage. He also convinced the mayor of Abomey to supply the orphanage with electricity and water, and provided the orphanage with a new dining room, thanks to the ambassador's Self-Help Program.

For this, Krost was one of those chosen to receive the Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad, sponsored by the American Associates of the Foreign Service Worldwide. He and the four other 2007 SOSA winners each received a certificate and a \$2,500 check from AAFSW at a December ceremony at Main State.

Keynote speaker Deputy Secretary John Negroponte said the honorees answered the President's call for volunteerism and



Above: Neill G. Krost, left, receives his award from Deputy Secretary John Negroponte. **Below:** Award winner Alison M. Padget addresses the awards ceremony audience.



"inspired others in their communities."

The honorees included Alison M. Padget, a family member in Beijing who is a volunteer nutrition program coordinator, also for an orphanage. She oversees ordering and transport of infant formula to the orphanage and weighs and measures the babies, trains the staff in sanitation and formula preparation, and alerts doctors to children needing attention. She also helped secure a \$10,000 pharmaceutical company grant for corrective surgeries.

Dennis E. Nice was recognized for his efforts during a three-year assignment in Zagreb, Croatia, where he helped the American International School of Zagreb identify a site for a new facility and formed a multicultural team of architects, engineers, investors and lawyers to plan the location and construction of the school. He also established a financial aid policy for the school and helped it pay off a loan two years in advance, saving thousands of dollars.

Paul A. Sabatine worked to further the education of street children and the employment of destitute women in Dhaka, Bangladesh. As chairman of the board of a school for street children, he had the school building renovated to include a computer lab and made provisions to offer vaccinations and medical care. His management and promotion of the sale of hand-crafts made by a cooperative of marginalized women helped triple the cooperative's income.

The fifth honoree, Maria Regina Barros Pontes, is a family member who aided rural residents in a poverty-ridden town about 20 miles outside of Managua, Nicaragua. In 2006, she began visiting the town weekly to teach women to make baskets from newspaper. She also asked galleries and craft fairs in Managua to serve as sales outlets, and persuaded the town's mayor to give the cooperative space in the public market and restore an old building as its headquarters.