

It is my honor today to introduce a recipient of our Distinguished Community Service Award, Mark Hare. This award, as it says, is meant to honor service to the community and in the true Warren Wilson style, by community we mean world. It would be difficult to find someone who that would apply to more than Mark Hare.

Mark was a 1987 graduate with a degree in Environmental Studies. Among his Warren Wilson involvements were Amnesty International, Habitat for Humanity and the Big Brother Program.

He went on to earn an MS in Forestry from Michigan State University. From 1987-1990 he worked as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Natural Resource Program in the Dominican Republic. After 5 years in various teaching and research positions in the Michigan State Forestry program, he first came to Haiti for a year as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1997. From 1998 to 2004 he lived and worked at the Ebenezer Center in Nicaragua where he served as a specialist in community development, soil management and agroforestry.

He returned to Haiti in 2004 where he now serves with the Mouvman Peyizan Papay, or Farmer's Movement of Papaye, a grassroots movement that organizes the small farmers in order to improve their living conditions. MPP involves thousands of community groups and about 20 farming cooperatives throughout Haiti. Mark's work with MPP is to reinforce their agricultural work including the diversification and integration of small animal production with vegetables and other crops in the small areas surrounding family homes.

When the massive earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010 resulting in more than 200,000 lives lost and more than a million people homeless, and the world rushed to Haiti's door to help, Mark, his wife Jenny and their family were already there developing and implementing plans to help rural families both in the short and long term, just as they had been doing for years.

Due to his continuing work in Haiti, Mark was unable to join us today. However, accepting on his behalf is his sister, herself an alumna, Carol Hare.