

St. Norbert College

Digital Commons @ St. Norbert College

Alumni Award Bios

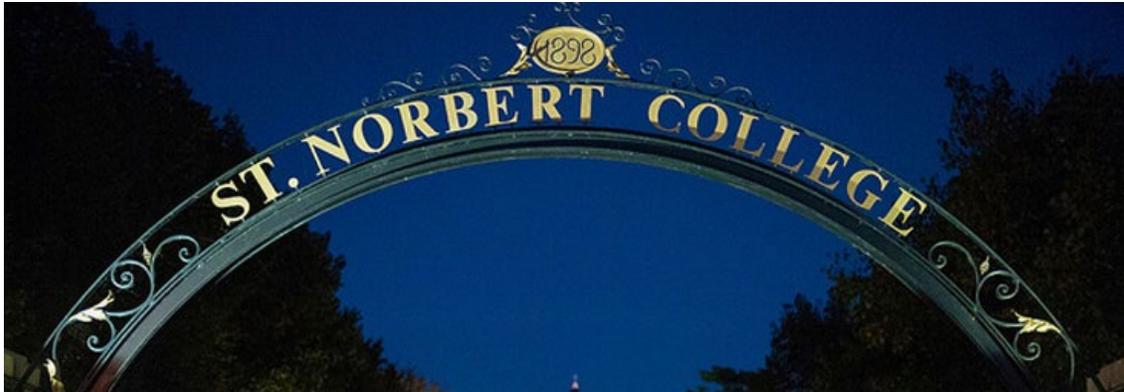
Alumni Relations

2011

Carol Ehlinger Ritter & Thomas J. Ritter : Alma Mater Award

St. Norbert College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.snc.edu/alumniawardbios>



The office of alumni and parent relations is your gateway back to SNC. Allow us to help you stay connected to campus and to your fellow alums.

Alumni

- [Events & Reunions](#)
- [Behind the Arch](#)
- [Benefits and Services](#)
- [Get Involved](#)
- [Give to SNC](#)
- [Alumni Awards](#)
 - [Past Recipients](#)
- [Knight Lights](#)
- [Alumni-Owned Businesses Network](#)
- [Alumni Board](#)
- [Student Alumni Ambassadors](#)
- [Staff](#)

2011 Alma Mater Award



Carol Ehlinger Ritter, M.D. '77 & Thomas J. Ritter, D.D.S. '78

[View Tom and Carol's acceptance speech](#)

As a general dentist and an OB/GYN respectively, Drs. Tom and Carol Ehlinger Ritter '78 have the means to spend their leisure time in any number of indulgent pursuits. Instead, they've chosen to travel to some of the most desperate places on earth: Haiti, before and after the earthquake; the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina; Sri Lanka after the tsunami; Honduras after Hurricane Mitch; and the oil-fouled parishes of Louisiana. There, they've devoted their skills and passion to improving the lives of others.

About eight years ago, the Ritters traveled to Bosnia with the Air Force, working with Bosnians and Serbs who set aside their grievances to bring medical aid to a war-ravaged populace. During their trip, Carol treated one woman who had lost her husband and sons in the war; even her wedding band had been taken from her. Spontaneously, Carol gave the woman hers. This is not an atypical story about the Ritters – indeed, this was not the only ring Carol has given away.

Throughout their lives together, the Ritters have provided compassionate aid to victims of the

aforementioned natural disasters and others – Tom removing teeth in the broiling sun and training local dentists, and Carol delivering babies long into the night after a full day of clinical care. Time and again, they have gone where most would be loath to go, leaving comfortable lives behind to help others simply survive.

In 2010, the Ritters were in Haiti, helping to set up a makeshift hospital just days after that country’s devastating earthquake. Amid the chaos, they worked to rescue their friend and interpreter from the ruins of Port-au-Prince, secured a medical visa and transported her to the United States prior to the due date of her high-risk pregnancy.

The Ritters’ vision and commitment extend beyond urgent care to providing people with the means to help themselves. Since the quake, Tom has been working tirelessly with Haitians to keep their lone dental school open and stocked with supplies. Carol works to bring women’s healthcare to places in the country where none existed before. She also meets with village elders to advocate for women’s rights within Haitian society.

Closer to home, the Ritters produced a documentary titled “If the Bough Breaks,” sounding the alarm about the issue of highly qualified physicians (including Carol herself) being driven from obstetrical practice by the medical liability crisis.

Harking back to their college days, Tom reflects on the way St. Norbert College provided them with a safe and supportive environment in which to discover the world and themselves – an experience he likens to a salon of old, where people would gather to discuss and debate ideas. They were inspired by the Norbertine example of selfless service. As Tom says, “So, after you’ve mastered your profession, expanded your mind, found God, attained bliss, or whatever ... what do you do with the rest of your day?” To the Ritters, the answer seems to be universal across all religious and spiritual traditions: “Give back. Serve others selflessly, expecting nothing in return.” There are no better examples of that ethos than the Ritters and while recognition is the last thing they seek, it is something they richly deserve.

St. Norbert College

100 Grant Street
De Pere, WI 54115
920-337-3181
Map & Directions

[Contact Us](#)

[Careers](#)

[Library](#)

[News](#)

[Events](#)

[Box Office](#)

[Undergraduate](#)

[Graduate](#)

[Schneider School of
Business & Economics](#)

