

Leck and Schmidt to be Inducted into SWOSU Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame

04.01.2016

Thomas J. Leck of Hockessin (DE) and Terri Schmidt of Washington, D.C., are being inducted into Southwestern Oklahoma State University's Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame during 2016 graduation ceremonies on the Weatherford campus.

Leck, who just retired after a 36-year career at DuPont Company, holds 47 U.S. Patents, and Schmidt is currently the acting director of the Office of Resource Access and Partnership (ORAP) for the Indian Health Service (IHS).

Both Leck and Schmidt will be honored by SWOSU President Randy Beutler at the SWOSU Convocation May 7 on the Weatherford campus. The ceremony begins at 10 a.m. at Milam Stadium.

"SWOSU has produced many individuals of distinction and accomplishment," said Garrett King, chair of the SWOSU Distinguished Alumni Selection Committee. "In recognizing Terri Schmidt and Thomas Leck, we are honoring two of SWOSU's finest graduates and representatives of the values for which our institution has come to stand. Terri and Thomas have both made great strides in their respective vocations and are contributing positively to their communities. We heartily congratulate them on this much-deserved recognition."

Thomas J. Leck can be described as a scientist and inventor who loves to travel and explore. During his long career at DuPont, he worked on polymers, gases and liquids and earned the 47 patents with more patents still pending. In recent years, Leck has enjoyed the opportunity to travel around the world and speak at academic, industrial and governmental conferences about refrigeration, air conditioning and global climate change. Much of his scientific work involved the chemistry of the element Fluorine and using fluorine chemistry to develop products that will significantly reduce the impact of cooling on net carbon emissions, thereby reducing the potential for climate change.

Leck grew up on a farm near Calumet (OK) and attended Calumet Public Schools, before going to SWOSU, where he graduated in 1974. He majored in chemistry and minored in physics and mathematics. He went to the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and did research work at the University of Colorado, in support of his doctoral dissertation on atmospheric chemistry. His thesis work was on the depletion of stratospheric ozone by breakdown products of refrigerant gas and similar halogenated compounds.

His interest and publications on environmental chemistry and refrigerants led to employment performing chemical research for DuPont. He worked in research laboratories and manufacturing support at locations for DuPont in West Virginia, Texas and Delaware. Prior to retirement in 2015, he was the global market development leader for air conditioning refrigerants. In this capacity he traveled around the world to work with manufacturers, academic groups and policy makers in places including China, Japan, Korea, France, Germany, Sweden, Qatar and the United States. Leck is still

doing some chemical consulting work, but mostly he and his wife, Cecelia, are spending more time with his two children and grandchildren.

Terri Schmidt leads the ORAP for the Indian Health Service, which The IHS, which is the principal federal health care advocate and provider for American Indians and Alaska Natives. Schmidt is Arapaho and a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma.

As acting ORAP director, Schmidt is responsible for providing direction and leadership in the areas of contract care, business office/third-party collections and partnerships with other agencies/organizations. The office deals with over \$1.9 billion in collections, contract care funds, and agency agreements. It concentrates on supplementing funds provided by the IHS with other federal, state, and private sector resources and to enhance federal and tribal access to those resources.

Schmidt has a broad array of management experience, and her career progression includes both direct clinical care and service unit leadership experience. She began her IHS career as a staff nurse in 1989 and through the years she served as the chief nurse executive, acting Contract Health Services supervisor, public health nurse, and chief executive officer for the Clinton Service Unit in the Oklahoma City Area IHS. In 2007, during her tenure as CEO, she partnered with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes on the design, building and move from the Clinton Indian Hospital to the Clinton Indian Health Center.

In 2008, Schmidt became the Area Contract Health Service Officer for the Oklahoma City Area. In 2010, she moved to IHS headquarters to work as a management analyst for ORAP. From October 2011 to December 2014, she served as the director of the Division of Contract Care in ORAP.

She most recently served from December 2014 to January 2016 as acting director of the IHS Office of Management Services. In this role Schmidt provided senior advisory services to the IHS director and senior management staff in the areas of grants, acquisitions and management policy. She ensured the agency policies for these administrative functions were consistent with applicable regulations and directives.

Schmidt has received numerous awards during her professional career, including an IHS Director's Award for personal dedication, commitment and accomplishments toward the mission of the Indian Health Service. She and her husband, Bob, have three children and four grandchildren. She graduated from Weatherford High School and was awarded a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from SWOSU.