Lea Plarski, Florissant Valley athletic director, received the David L. Underwood Memorial Lecture Award on Wednesday, August 19 in the Terry M. Fischer Theatre.

With an almost capacity crowd of friends and staff alike, Plarski gave her lecture entitled "How to Play the Game." It was full of analogies of her early childhood in a small town in Kansas. Sound familiar to you? "The Wizard of Oz" was a major theme in the lecture that explained what it was like in the early days of women's sports. The women in the crowd seemed to know exactly what she was talking about as they continually gave her vocal affirmation.

Plarski, who was obviously nervous about the situation, started the lecture by stating "I trust all of you had a good night." That would be the first of many times when she got the audience laughing. Though she was trying to keep the mood light, she began talking about her experiences abroad as an ambassador of the United States, while with the U.S. women's basketball team.

She spoke of the countries that she thought hated the U.S. and of the ones who were in awe. One of the examples she gave was going into Bosnia before war broke out in that tattered country. "We met the nicest people there," Plarski said.

"When we made it back to the states, we all wondered what happened to those people."

She also spoke of the recent bombings of the U.S. Embassy in Kenya and Tanzania. "We may be a powerful country, but that proves how vulnerable we are," Plarski stated.

It is apparent that Plarski has a deep admiration for Florissant Valley and all those who have anything to do with it. She especially had heartwarming things to say about all the people she works with every day in the Physical Education department.

It wasn't just the staff and faculty that she was grateful for. She also expressed how thrilled she was about teaching, and watching students become the things they want to be.

She gave many examples of students who have overcome obstacles in their lives to be their best.
"The Valley," as Plarski calls it, is the place she wants to be, and a place in which she can call home. "I've been lucky enough to have a great administration, great coaches and great opportunities," Plarski said in an interview before the lecture.

Plarski was introduced to the audience by Mary Seager, reading professor, a prior winner of the award. She exclaimed that "because of Lea, girls will no longer have to play by girls rules any longer."

Before the lecture, Bertram Ward played two classical piano pieces.

After Plarski was done with her lecture, Donna Spaulding, communication/theatre, appropriately sang "Somewhere over the Rainbow" from "The Wizard of Oz."