Mary Luebke, department chair of communications at St. Louis Community College-Florissant Valley was named the 38th annual David L. Underwood Memorial Lecture Award recipient.

David L. Underwood was known for his love of education. He was deeply concerned with the welfare of students and staff alike. His dedication went beyond office hours—and he tirelessly gave of his time and talents to further the educational mission at Florissant Valley.

Recipients of the Underwood Memorial Lecture Award demonstrate that same dedication and commitment. Chosen by a committee of peers, recipients exhibit excellence in instruction and a genuine, humanistic concern for students, faculty, staff—and all of education.

“I am astounded to be chosen and truly humbled to be in the company of the previous winners,” Luebke said.

She would have loved to dance for Bob Fosse and wanted to be a comedian like Carol Burnett, but ended up coming to Florissant Valley as a student at age 31. Luebke received her associate degree in organizational communications from St. Louis Community College. She then left to pursue her B.A. in deaf theatre and her M.S. in theatre at Lindenwood College. After graduating, she worked at various organizations before coming back full circle to Florissant Valley as a professor. “It’s really difficult to leave Florissant Valley because it is such a great place,” she said. “People just keep coming back!”

Luebke held numerous positions during her time away from Florissant Valley. Some of which include vice-chairperson for the Services to the Disabled Fair St. Louis; adjunct faculty for Washington University; director for Communicate Plus; and certified industrial trainer for McDonnell Douglas/Boeing’s VIP program.

She serves on the board for Missouri State Board of Certification, Central Institute for the Deaf, ESCO Corporation, U.S. National Park Service and St. Louis County Police Department.
Luebke is a member of the Conference of Interpreter Trainers, Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Missouri Association of the Deaf, American Association for Theater Accessibility and the National Association of the Deaf.

In addition, Luebke is a certified interpreter with numerous state and national organizations and has directed an array of deaf theatre productions.

Luebke has always been a catalyst for advancement.

Although it is not completely clear where and when signers started interpreting at concerts, Luebke is said to be the first person to do it in St. Louis. Luebke says she interpreted John Denver’s music at the Veiled Prophet Fair in 1981 and deaf people loved it.

Known for her hugs on campus, Luebke has been married for 34 years and has three grown daughters, three sons-in-law and seven grandchildren.

She has advocated for deafness and deaf people for the past 35 years and impacted many lives in the process. She received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for her work on behalf of deaf people.

“I have to say that I couldn't think of a more deserving individual,” said Dr. Joe Worth, acting vice president of student affairs and 36th Underwood Award recipient. “The integrity and courage with which she lives her life is something to behold indeed.”