



Sarah Fischer and Elizabeth Baird

categories: [September 2016](#), [Voices](#)

Alumnae receive awards for service, volunteerism

Published: September 12, 2016

Two Iowa State alumnae who have supported the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics in various capacities will receive awards on Oct. 28 for their service and volunteerism in their communities.

Elizabeth Baird is the recipient of the 2016 Carrie Chapman Catt Public Engagement Award and Sarah Fischer was selected to receive the 2016 James A. Hopson Alumni Volunteer Award. Both awards will be presented during the Iowa State Alumni Association's Honors and Awards Ceremony at 1:15 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 28, in Benton Auditorium of the Scheman Building, Iowa State Center. The awards ceremony is open to the public, with a reception following.

Baird and Fischer also will be honored during a private luncheon hosted by the ISU Alumni Association on Oct. 28 and have been invited to be honored guests at the Cyclone football game on Saturday, Oct. 29. Baird also will be recognized at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences dinner and awards ceremony on Thursday, Oct. 27.

The Carrie Chapman Catt Public Engagement Award honors an alum or friend of Iowa State's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences who has demonstrated an outstanding level of involvement with public entities at local, state, national or international levels. Dianne Bystrom, director of the Catt Center, nominated Baird for the award.

"Throughout her professional career, and since her retirement in 2013 from the Iowa Department of Transportation after some 17 years with the state agency, Betty has been active in engaging the public through numerous volunteer activities," Bystrom said. "Betty has given years of service and leadership to the local and state League of Women Voters. Her support of the Catt Center and League of Women Voters as well as years of community service especially qualifies her for an award named after Carrie Chapman Catt."

The Iowa State Alumni Association created the James A. Hopson Alumni Volunteer award in 1999 to recognize graduates who have demonstrated volunteer leadership with the association or alumni-related activities. Awards are granted annually to members of the ISU Alumni Association age 40 and under. Fischer was selected for the award for her work toward revitalizing and restoring the District of Columbia ISU alumni chapter.

“Sarah fosters such a community within our alumni group. She personally visits with each person who attends an event, making introductions and providing individuals with a friendly, Iowa welcome,” wrote nominator, Laura Johnson, a 1999 management information systems graduate. “On a very personal note, I am incredibly grateful to Sarah’s instrumental involvement in revitalizing the ISU Alumni Club of Washington, DC. At a game watch in 2012, I met another member of our alumni community, and we are now happily married. My appreciation for Sarah and the ISU Alumni Club is profound.”

Fischer graduated in 2002 from Iowa State with a bachelor’s degree in political science and English. She later earned a master's degree and Ph.D. in political science from American University, where she currently serves as an adjunct professorial lecturer in the Department of Sociology in the School of Public Affairs. Baird received a bachelor's degree from Iowa State in 1976 with a double major in journalism and mass communication and international studies. She also completed graduate course work in public administration and community and regional planning at Iowa State in 1991-1992.

"It is an honor to have been selected for the Carrie Chapman Catt Public Engagement Award," Baird said. "I have always believed in seeking the common good and the importance of people becoming involved in making 'common good' a reality. The key is finding your passion and letting that passion lead the way to action. Different people will find different issues and different ways to engage, but the process and the results can be astounding," she said.

"I graduated from Iowa State with an understanding of how deeply committed Carrie Chapman Catt was to public service," said Fischer, who was a member and president of the Catt Associates from 2000 to 2003 and an intern at the Catt Center during the 2001-2002 academic year. “I was involved with community service projects at Iowa State, including several through the Catt Center. Since graduating, I have volunteered with organizations no matter where I was – Iowa, Istanbul, Washington, DC – inspired in part by Catt’s example," she said.

Both Baird and Fischer are actively involved in their communities. Baird has dedicated time to engaging citizens in public life since 1982 through her membership in the League of Women Voters of Ames and Story County; the Iowa Democratic Party; the Iowa chapter of the National Women’s Political Caucus; and various local, state and national candidate campaigns. As a founding member and financial supporter of United Way of Story County’s Women with Initiative, Baird also works to help women achieve self-sufficiency and confidence through financial education and mentoring. She has served as a mentor and volunteer with the organization since 2014.

Baird also has served on the advisory board of Ready to Run® Iowa: Campaign Training for Women, which has been presented by the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics every other year since 2007. She has helped create the agenda for the campaign training workshops, gained the support and participation of legislators, and recruited participants. Her efforts have helped train more than 250 Ready to Run® Iowa participants interested in community leadership or elected and appointed political offices.

In addition, Baird has been a hospice volunteer for the Mary Greeley Medical Center since 2014 and served on the board of directors of the YWCA Ames-ISU from 2008 through 2011. Since 2015, she has been involved in the development of the Ames Progressive Alliance. Baird currently serves as a board member and chair of the APA’s Community Solar Committee that has a partnership with the Ames Community Solar

Initiative and supports the development of the community solar project.

Since 2012, Fisher has maintained close contact with the ISU Alumni Association while organizing many events unique to the District of Columbia for alumni members. She has coordinated game watches, gatherings with U.S. senators, a tour of the White House, networking events, and family and service opportunities. Her efforts have helped DC-area Cyclones build camaraderie and connect with other alums. In addition to her work with the alumni club, Fischer is an active volunteer with Friends of the National Zoo, the Cherry Blossom 10-Mile Run and a youth mentoring program.

While a student at Iowa State, Fischer was active with the Catt Center, Honors Program and other campus organizations. As a member and president of the Catt Associates, she helped establish its mentoring program. She was also active in the ISU Honors Program as a leader and student representative and was a member of numerous groups on campus. In 2011, Fischer received the ISU Alumni Association STATEment Maker award – for graduates age 32 and under – for her early personal and professional achievements to make a difference in the lives of those around her in the spirit of Iowa State.

©2016