

Lakeland University was awarded a Ceil De Prey Peace Award on January 14 during Ebenezer United Church of Christ's Martin Luther King service in Sheboygan.

Lakeland is the 10th winner of the award and the first of 2024. The award is named for Sheboygan, Wis., peace activist Ceil De Prey and honors individuals and organizations whose work, volunteerism and advocacy contribute to peace, a stronger democracy and a better, more inclusive world for future generations.

Lakeland was honored for "its commitment to academic excellence, diversity and respect, service and stewardship, integrity and responsibility, and faith and religious expression. These are values which need to be present and nurtured for all of humanity to thrive and to life peacefully."

Lakeland was also recognized for securing office space at Jake's, A Lakeland Community, for Veterans for Peace and Friends of Peace Park Sheboygan. De Prey had a vision for those two organizations to work closer together, and their new homes at Jake's help make that happen.

Lakeland President Beth Borgen said the award speaks to the institution's history of removing barriers and creating opportunities for students.

1. Lakeland was the first in the state to diversify its faculty at a time when a black professor was not allowed to live in Sheboygan.
2. In the late 90s and early 2000s, Lakeland partnered with USAID to offer educational opportunity for aspiring teachers from Malawi, Africa. More than 70 students from Malawi received their education degree from Lakeland and returned home to train teachers. "The reach of this program is exponential," Borgen said.
3. Recently, Lakeland raised money to create scholarships to encourage students of color to pursue careers in education. "Lakeland's first Kohler Teaching Scholar graduated in December and is already contributing locally to the development of our youth," Borgen said.
4. In 2023, Lakeland launched a Life & Career Studies Program, a four-year residential college experience designed for students with intellectual disabilities. "They are learning how to follow their passions, engage in professional work and independently live," Borgen said.

"We are very honored to be recognized with the Ceil De Prey Peace Award," Borgen said.

The award was created by Kohler resident Darryl Gumm, who also created the website BeAnInstrumentOfPeace.com, which is designed to help everyone discover how they can help bring about peace.

"Lakeland has been a leader for decades in many areas before anybody put a DEI label on it," Gumm said. "That's something I've admired about Lakeland. I know a lot of people who have graduated from Lakeland and what they've contributed to our community has been phenomenal."

The award, which was initially given in 2022, celebrates the life of De Prey, who moved to Sheboygan from Milwaukee in 1994. Throughout her life, she advocated for peace and worked to improve the lives of those around her as a medical researcher and community volunteer.

For many years, First Congregational United Church of Christ of Sheboygan served what it called [Ceil's Meals](#), which brought together area residents from all walks of life to share meals. De Prey died in November of 2023.

Artist and teacher Lybra Ray Olbrantz created the artwork for Lakeland's award.