KU News Release

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KU’s Research Achievement Award goes to senior scientist Debra Kamps

LAWRENCE — Debra Kamps, director of the Kansas Center for Autism Research and Training and associate director and senior scientist at the Juniper Gardens Children’s Project, is the 2009 recipient of the University of Kansas Research Achievement Award.

The award is given annually to a full-time KU academic staff researcher working within an academic department or research center. Kamps was recognized at today’s Research and Graduate Studies convocation with a plaque presented by Richard Lariviere, executive vice chancellor and provost. The award includes $10,000 in research funds.

K-CART and Juniper Gardens are two of 13 centers that make up KU’s Life Span Institute. To qualify for the award, the recipient’s research should have "significant influence in his or her field and/or should represent a productive record of important research that has expanded intellectual or societal insights. A substantial portion of the work for which the award is given must have been done at KU."

In his nomination letter, Charles Greenwood, director of Juniper Gardens, wrote, "Dr. Kamps truly exemplifies KU’s expectations of a scholar’s contribution to research, service and teaching. She continues to have a significant impact on her field through her productive record of research."

Tim Lewis of the University of Missouri-Columbia described Kamps as “always searching to do better, answer difficult questions, and serve children, youth and their families by continually improving the knowledge base and shaping the field of special education.”

Another nominator, Bob Algozzine of the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, added, “Her sound scholarship and creative productivity are models for students preparing for careers improving the lives of individuals with disabilities.”

Kamps came to KU in 1974 as a graduate student in special education, a program consistently ranked among the best in the country. After receiving master’s and doctoral degrees at KU, and after two years with the Kansas State Department of Education in special education administration, she joined the staff at Juniper Gardens as a research project principal investigator in 1983.

During the past 25 years, Kamps has been an investigator with the Kansas Mental Retardation Research Center and a courtesy assistant professor in the Department of Applied Behavioral Science and the Department of Special Education. She became associate director of Juniper Gardens in 1994 and founding director of K-CART in 2007.

In addition to her KU duties, Kamps is an associate editor for Behavioral Disorders and the Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions. She has served as principal investigator or project director for nearly 15 grant-funded research projects since 1983, teaches courses in applied behavioral science and special education and is the author or co-author of more than 80 articles and papers.

Past recipients of the Research Achievement Award are David VanderVelde, former director of the Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Laboratory, and Rick Miller, associate scientist in the Exploration Services Section of the Kansas Geological Survey.
The University of Kansas is a major comprehensive research and teaching university. University Relations is the central public relations office for KU's Lawrence campus.

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