2006 Award Recipient

Richard C. Liebich '66

Richard Liebich, the WPI Alumni Association Humanitarian Award was created to honor alumni who have fulfilled the obligation of their education to serve humanity through creative leadership in either public service or voluntary efforts or through a unique humanitarian achievement that has benefited society. Today, that award is being given for the very first time, to you who serves humanity with your leadership abilities and your vision of a new form of philanthropy that ensures success. Your good work has and will continue to achieve permanent, positive social change in communities from your home in New York's Tri-Cities to America in general, with impacts ranging from new medical discoveries to a new cadre of the nation's future scientists, engineers, and leaders.

You serve as a philanthropic role model primarily through your leadership of the Charitable Leadership Foundation, which addresses needs in education and in problems impacting the economically disadvantaged. The Foundation's initiative in medicine and medical research has resulted in the start up of the Ordway Research Institute within the Center for Medical Sciences in Albany. The Foundation practices what is known as "high-engagement funding"-a performance-centered strategy that demands a tremendous investment from the funder, delivering financial and strategic coaching to the not-for-profits on the receiving end of the philanthropic investments. Your ability to provide that coaching has ensured the success of the Foundation's grants.

The list of your contributions is legion. You also serve as Chairman of the Charitable Venture Foundation, which combines entrepreneurial savvy with individual responsibility to effect positive change in upstate New York. You have served as Chair and member of the Empire State College Council. Perhaps your most lasting contribution to the state of our future is Project Lead the Way, which addresses a serious national problem: America is not training the engineers we need to ensure our future growth and health.

You saw both the problem and the potential to create something with lasting impact. As an engineer yourself, and a graduate of WPI, you understood firsthand the rigors of the university engineering curriculum. As a trustee of the Charitable Leadership Foundation you were in a position to make a real difference in the preparedness of K-12 students for university engineering coursework. In the early 90s you began searching for a K-12 pre-engineering program you could replicate and take nationally. In 1999, Project Lead the Way was incorporated as a non-profit company, with you as chair. By 2005, PLTW programs were offered in over 1,000 schools in 42 states and the District of Columbia. These partnerships among public schools, higher education institutions and the private sector increase the quantity and quality of engineers. They expose students to engineering concepts and demonstrate the variety of opportunities available, simultaneously improving teachers' skills and teaching abilities, by
providing advance training in engineering education at 17 colleges and universities affiliated with the project, including Worcester Polytechnic Institute beginning in 2005.

Richard Liebich, the benefits of your wisdom and dedication will be felt for decades to come, in places from your home community, expanding to all the States involved in Project Lead the Way, and finally, across the globe. It is our pride and pleasure to present this inaugural Humanitarian award to you, philanthropist, leader, and man of vision.