Disability, accessibility awards given at Purdue

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A pair of Purdue University professors, an undergraduate student, a university staff member and a local chapter of a nationwide friendship network were honored today at the 2006 FOCUS awards.

The awards are presented yearly to people who have "made outstanding contributions in the areas of disability, accessibility and diversity," said Alysa Rollock, vice president for human relations at Purdue.

David Schwarte, an assistive technology specialist in the Adaptive Learning Programs Lab at Purdue, was honored for his efforts to ensure that those with disabilities have the technology needed to take tests, perform tasks and function as easily as others.

Schwarte, who lives with a disability himself, said he prefers to stay out of the public eye when he can.

"I am very proud of the times when a student or faculty member is successful because of something I've been able to help them accomplish behind the scenes," Schwarte said.

Others honored were Nicoletta Adamo-Villani and Ronnie Wilbur, faculty members who are collaborating on a computer program meant to help deaf youngsters.

Purdue student Nicolas Widman and the Purdue chapter of the disability friendship network Best Buddies, also received FOCUS awards.

- For more, read the Journal and Courier Thursday.