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Barbara Plampin honored with Paul H. Douglas Award

On Friday, December 5, at its annual Holiday Open House, the Save the Dunes [Council] announced the 2014 recipient of the Paul H. Douglas Award - the group's highest honor.

The Douglas Award is named for the inestimable Senator Paul Douglas without whom there would be no Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Save the Dunes bestows this honor on individuals who demonstrate outstanding service to the cause of preserving and protecting the Indiana Dunes.

Barbara Plampin, a pre-eminent botanist in the Indiana dunes region, is the recipient of this year's award.

Plampin has been a tireless advocate for natural land preservation throughout northwest Indiana. She is also cherished as a gifted educator, eager to share her knowledge with others.

Plampin is one of that rare breed of plant enthusiasts who make notable discoveries and contributions to the scientific literature by virtue of their enthusiasm, field-learned expertise, and sheer doggedness. If the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore or the Indiana Department of Natural Resources wants to find a rare plant species, they will probably ask Barbara Plampin for her help. And she usually finds what she's looking for.

Plampin moved to the Dunes in 1988, after retiring from the faculty of the Illinois Institute of Technology, where she taught English. It was here that a lifelong fascination with botany became the focus of her life. Local Dunes botanists like Lois Howes, Emma Pitcher, and Noel Pavlovic (recipient of last year's Douglas Award) became her mentors, and she reached out to such luminaries as Floyd Swink at the Morton Arboretum. It wasn't long before Barbara became recognized as an expert in her own right.

Plampin's commitment to environmental education is also notable. She has been conducting nature walks for Shirley Heinze Land Trust for a quarter century, and also for the Field Museum, The Nature Conservancy, and other groups. She delivers illustrated lectures for Duneland audiences and has conducted courses on basic botany for the general public. She continues to take on numerous special research projects for the National Lakeshore. And she will forever be remembered as the leading "plant detective" of the Indiana Dunes.

"Today Barbara joins an impressive list of people recognized for their outstanding service to the cause of preserving and protecting the Indiana Dunes," said Nicole Barker, Executive Director of Save the Dunes. "Through this award we express our heartfelt gratitude for Barbara's years of commitment to our Indiana dunes," she added.

For more information about the annual Douglas Award, go to <http://savedunes.org/about/paul-h-douglas-award/>.