



News Release
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Bill Austin to Receive the Woodrow Wilson Award in Minneapolis

MINNEAPOLIS – The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars of the Smithsonian Institution will present the **Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship** to **William F. Austin** at a dinner to be held on **December 2, 2009** at the

Radisson Plaza Hotel in Minneapolis.

The Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship is given to those executives who, by their examples and their business practices, have shown a deep concern for the common good beyond the bottom line. These corporate leaders have inherited Woodrow Wilson's commitment to scholarship, public discourse, and the promotion of knowledge both at home and abroad. They work tirelessly in the service of their belief that private firms should be good citizens in their own neighborhoods and in the world at large. They understand that good citizenship can come in many forms, such as promoting renewed growth and vigor in economically disadvantaged towns and neighborhoods, supporting the arts, encouraging ties between different sectors of society, promoting international cooperation and understanding, and improving education at all levels.

Bill Austin is the founder and CEO of **Starkey Laboratories**, a hearing aid manufacturer, based in Eden Prairie Minnesota. Through his commitment to ensuring better hearing help available to all, Austin established the **Starkey Hearing Foundation** in 1984. The Starkey Hearing Foundation started with a simple premise: "Alone we can't do much. But, together we can change the world." Through the efforts of thousands of volunteers and donors, the Starkey Hearing Foundation delivers more than 50,000 hearing aids annually through hearing missions in countries stretching from the U.S. to Vietnam. Since 2000 and through the end of 2009, the Foundation has supplied **375,000** hearing aids to people in need. In addition to giving the gift of hearing, the Foundation promotes hearing health awareness while supporting research and education. "It is an honor to receive such a prestigious award from an organization that has contributed so much to our country and our world," says Bill Austin.

Bill and his wife, **Tani Austin**, just returned from hearing missions in Mozambique, Kenya, Vietnam, Egypt and Mexico. In just six weeks, throughout ten cities and five countries, over 20,000 hearing aids were fit to those in need. The Austin's are scheduled for a return mission to Vietnam before the end of 2009.

Austin is the 3rd CEO from Minnesota to receive the prestigious Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship. Previous Minnesota recipients are; Warren Staley of Cargill and Marilyn Carlson Nelson of the Carlson Companies.

For more information on the Woodrow Wilson Award, visit www.wilsoncenter.org

For more information on the Starkey Foundation, visit www.sotheworldmayhear.org

William F. Austin Chief Executive Officer Starkey Minnesota



William F. ‘Bill’ Austin was born in February 1942. Like his boyhood role model, Dr Albert Schweitzer, Bill Austin decided to become a doctor. To subsidize his studies at the University of Minnesota, he made ear molds for a hearing aid dealer in Minneapolis. Hearing aids at that time were clumsy devices, and the medical community largely overlooked the field. Recognizing an area with growth potential and sensing that he could help more people through business than medicine, Bill Austin discontinued his studies to open a hearing aid shop.

In 1970 Mr. Austin purchased an ear mold company, Starkey Labs, for \$13,000, and consolidated his businesses under the name of Starkey Laboratories, Inc. Improving customer services as well as technology, Mr. Austin allowed people up to 90 days to determine satisfaction with a hearing aid or they could return it for a full refund. By 1973 his company was the world’s largest provider of in-the-ear hearing aids. Today Starkey Laboratories generates nearly \$700 million in annual sales and employs more than 3,700 people in 26 countries worldwide.

As his business continued to prosper, Mr. Austin recounts in 1977 he had an epiphany. While thinking in bed, he realized that his ‘calling is to help disadvantaged people hear.’ Having established the Starkey Hearing Foundation in 1973 to help poor Americans with hearing problems, he soon thereafter took this mission international. Now, Mr. Austin and his foundation go on more than 150 mission trips each year to countries such as Vietnam, Ukraine, and the Dominican Republic, to fit and provide children with hearing aids. Mr. Austin writes:

“It’s important for us to help the children because they’re the future of the world-and if we neglect them, we won’t have a good future. This is a very special thing that we do for them, something they’ll always remember. Our reward is in the faces and smiles of each person as we help them to hear. This is the best work we could ever do, because it’s helping people...and that’s what life is all about. We truly live through what we give-we live on into the future through our gifts back into our community and to humanity.”

A few of the many honors bestowed upon Bill Austin for his philanthropic work are the Albert Schweitzer Leadership Award, the Horatio Alger Award, the National Caring Award from the Caring Institute, the Humanitarian Award from Variety International and now the Woodrow Wilson Award.