January 7, 2008

Dear Awards and Recognition Committee:

Please accept this nomination for Erin Sandonato, Valdosta State University, for the Humanitarian Recognition Award 2008. Over the past semester Erin has been faced with multiple crisis situations ranging from a student death, a student with a miscarriage, multiple bomb threats, and last fall there was a flood that destroyed three apartments. Needless to say, if it were not for her determination these situations would not have been resolved as smoothly as they were.

The first crisis that Erin dealt with was the flooding of three apartments. The flood occurred a week after classes finished for the Fall Semester. It was literally raining in the second and first floor apartments, with two to three inches of water under the carpet on the third floor. The worst part of this situation was that no one knew how to turn off the water. Once the water was turned off and an initial survey of the damage was done, Erin immediately began trying to figure out how to best salvage the items that could be saved, and contact the eight students and one staff member that had been displaced. Through Erin’s leadership during this occurrence all of the residents were able to move into new dry apartments before they had to return for Spring classes. This by far has been the easiest crisis that Erin has been faced with in the building that she oversees.

During Fall 2007 on the first night of class Erin received a call that there was a strange odor coming from a student’s apartment, and this student had not been seen by her friends since she arrived back on campus. This caused Erin to jump into action immediately and proceeded to the student’s apartment. Expecting the worst case scenario that the student might be dead, she contacted the other senior staff members to come help control the crowd and handle any other questions that might occur. Fortunately, the student was alive (barely) and was transported to the hospital. She had been 7 months pregnant and had a miscarriage causing her to pass out. In this situation, Erin remained calm while helping move the resident’s three roommates to other rooms for the night as well as coordinating with the campus police while they did they investigation to see if foul play was involved. The student did leave the University for the semester, and Erin was very helpful to the student and her mother as they worked to get her belongings packed and moved.

A few weeks after the miscarriage event, another of Erin’s residents was in the hospital for what was believed to be meningitis. The student had been in Erin’s leadership class the year before, and had many friends that also lived in her building. Unfortunately, after being in the hospital for a week the student lost her battle with the unknown illness and passed away. During this situation, Erin was the rock for her residents to lean on. She helped the student’s friends plan a campus-wide candlelight vigil and helped coordinate a fundraising effort to help defray the cost for the family.

Finally, in October Erin’s building was on the receiving end of two bomb threats. The first bomb threat came at 3 AM and the residents were displaced until 7 AM. The second bomb threat came a week later at 10 PM and displaced the residents until 2 AM. During the bomb threats Erin’s determination to keep everyone informed and safe was apparent. Since the events she has talked to the police on several occasions to help set-up protocol in the future for bomb threats, and how to ensure that all of the residents are safe if the situation were to happen again.

On top of these four major crisis events, there are probably other smaller crisis events that Erin has dealt with. In each event Erin displayed her determination to ensure that the students involved were in the best care possible, and always wanted to make sure the general population was aware of the information that they needed to know. I can’t think of a person more deserving of the 2008 Humanitarian Recognition Award than Erin Sandonato of Valdosta State University.

Sincerely,

Brett Logan

Residence Education Coordinator

Valdosta State University