

Darienite awarded for helping scholar refugees

Klemens von Klemperer escaped Nazi Germany and later became one of the most preeminent scholars on German resistance to Hitler. His rise in academia was supported by the Institute of International Education, an organization that helps scholars in troubled countries find refuge to continue their studies.

His story inspired his daughter-in-law, Darien resident Alison von Klemperer, to join forces with the Institute's Scholar Rescue Fund. Her efforts landed her an award for extraordinary service at a special luncheon in New York on Sept. 23.

Von Klemperer was recognized for her work in helping threatened scholars who have come to the United States with support from the Scholar Rescue Fund for short-term academic fellowships to continue their academic work in safety.

"It's a wonderful organization," she said. "It really helps people who are persecuted or tortured around the world teach in universities. It's a wonderful opportunity for people whose opinions are suppressed to be heard."

Upon presenting the award to Von Klemperer, the Institute's Chairman, Dr. Henry Jarecki, said her work has been exemplary. "The commitment of volunteers and donors like Alison von Klemperer to the principles of academic freedom and

safe haven makes the work of the SRF possible," Jarecki said. "And it brings hope for a brighter, safer future to so many who have endured the harrowing consequences of a violent, repressive past."

Von Klemperer has also contributed to her alma mater, Carleton College in Northfield, Minn., to ensure that Carleton would have the necessary funds to provide an academic "safe haven" to a rescue fund scholar. Additionally, she set up a special fund to provide scholars and their families with essential household items, such as winter clothing and educational supplies.

"It has been an honor to work with the Scholar Rescue Fund, and to support persecuted scholars from around the world already on campuses in the United States," von Klemperer said. "I am pleased that Carleton College will join the network of higher education institutions working with IIE to provide safe havens for scholars. Carleton's tranquil setting and academic intensity will be a welcome haven for a new refugee scholar."

With a relatively small staff and limited resources, the Scholar Rescue Fund relies heavily on a community of organizations and volunteers who help to provide a range of support to its grant recipients. Scholars often reach their host universities having suffered traumatic experiences in their home countries.

Von Klemperer is also an



The Institute of International Education President and CEO Allan E. Goodman, left, and Chairman Thomas S. Johnson presented Alison von Klemperer with the 2011 award for extraordinary service for her commitment to helping refugee scholars through the Institute's Scholar Rescue Fund.

active board member and volunteer with other international and educational organizations, serving on the Darien Community Association's academic lecture series, and performing committee work for her alma mater Carleton College and The Johns Hopkins University, Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, where she earned her Master's degree.

She further developed her international interests and expertise in a professional career that included working as a consultant to the Soros Open

Society Institute's projects in harm reduction in the Central Asian Republics, directing new business for Europe and the NIS at the International Executive Service Corps in Stamford and serving as assistant director for international trade at The Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

Von Klemperer's connection to the Institute of International Education runs through her husband's family. Her father-in-law, Professor Klemens von Klemperer, was born in Berlin of an Austrian

family of Jewish background. He studied in Vienna until 1938 when the Nazi regime seized his family possessions and he was forced to emigrate to the United States.

The non-profit Institute of

International Education also benefited from the work of von Klemperer's sister, who led the Institute's counseling division for 20 years. Lily von Klemperer is known in the international education field as one of the founders of the study abroad profession during the mid-20th Century.

After realizing these remarkable family connections, Alison von Klemperer began to contribute significant time and energy to the Scholar Rescue Fund and the scholars undertaking their fellowships at host institutions in the United States.

She met with researchers and professors to understand their concerns and offered advice and personal and professional contacts to help these threatened scholars through the difficult transition in a new country.

Since 2002, the Fund has received more than 3,000 requests for assistance from scholars in 102 countries, and has awarded fellowships to 417 scholars from 45 countries and placed them at institutions in 40 countries around the world.

More information: ScholarRescueFund.org or iie.org