



For Immediate Release:

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Stephanie Odegard awarded the 2008 Twin Cities International Citizen Award

New York, NY February 2008 - Stephanie Odegard has been selected to receive the 2008 Twin Cities International Citizen Award presented by the International Leadership Institute of Minneapolis. The Twin Cities International Citizens Award honors individuals and corporations whose work has contributed significantly to international understanding, cooperation, friendship and development.

Although Stephanie Odegard has personally garnered numerous accolades and awards that acknowledge her design talents, commitment to social progress and philanthropic accountability, this award is especially meaningful to her because, *"it is the first time I will be honored in such a way, in the city I consider my home, my birthplace, Minneapolis"*.

STEPHANIE ODEGARD

Odegard Inc. was founded in 1987 with a mission to marry the interests of the upscale designer carpet market with the age-old tradition of hand knotted carpet weaving, but Stephanie Odegard's personal mission began years earlier in Minneapolis. After graduating from the University of Minnesota, working in management at Dayton Hudson, and starting her own business, Stephanie joined the Peace Corps. During her first assignment in Fiji she began what would become her life's work, assisting local artisans by developing and marketing their traditional crafts. Her passion grew through assignments in Jamaica with the U.N. Industrial Development Organization and in Nepal with the World Bank. Throughout these global consultancies Stephanie's conviction remained constant: fair labor practices not only foster cultural pride and sustainable income but also bring stability to a society.

On an assignment in Nepal under the auspices of UNDP and the World Bank, Stephanie Odegard was working to determine a way of expanding the wool and rug industries to offer indigenous communities a better quality of life. Although not intending to start a carpet venture of her own, the people, materials, and skill she encountered while there added up to business inspiration. *"By the time I left, I had discovered the best suppliers and a quality of hand-knotted Tibetan carpet that no one had made or even thought of for commercial purposes before."*

Through Odegard's design and marketing, privately owned production facilities in South Asia have helped restore indigenous communities both economically and socially. With pioneering designs and environmentally sustainable business practices, Odegard has introduced a new genre of hand knotted rugs - a product that invigorates the luxury market, supports weaving communities and raises awareness and respect for the legacy of textile and carpet weaving.

Education is key to Odegard's commitment toward improving opportunities for the Nepalese community. Odegard acts on this commitment through a partnership with the RugMark® Foundation, a global nonprofit organization dedicated to ending illegal child labor in South Asia's carpet industry. RugMark independently certifies that each Odegard carpet has been manufactured without the use of child labor. Stephanie is a Director of RugMark USA, and Odegard, Inc. has been its largest industry contributor since 1997. Educational programs funded by RugMark have helped over 3,000 children through rehabilitation, daycare, literacy, formal schooling and vocational training. *"Lack of education perpetuates poverty. Those with an education have a greater degree of participation in and control over the world around them. This is how social development takes root and how lasting change is created."*

THE TWIN CITIES INTERNATIONAL CITIZEN AWARDS

The 2008 Twin Cities International Citizen Awards recognition dinner and gala will be held on April 23, 2008 at the Minneapolis Club from 5 – 9 PM. The event will also include a Silent Auction supporting International Leadership Institute international projects.

The International Citizen Awards recognize the depth and breadth of the Twin Cities' international connections, concerns and commitments in business and trade, research and human rights, agriculture and technology, the arts and medicine, education and journalism, and in hospitality and humanitarian relief. The International Leadership Institute is a Minnesota non-profit organization providing resources to communities, locally and globally, in transition. Their mission is to provide partnerships in infrastructure, rule of law, and educational development projects throughout the world that focus on people and nations in transition. The Institute works to facilitate interaction in world affairs and foster intercultural communication between Minnesotans, international organizations and people in other countries.

This event serves as a catalyst for communicating among Twin Cities' international organizations and businesses. It provides an opportunity to showcase the international involvement of the Twin Cities area, inspires Twin Citians to enter into international opportunities available in our community, and sustains the work of the International Leadership Institute. Sponsors include - Twin Cities Business Magazine, Fredrickson and Byron, Thomas Auto Mall, South African Consulate General Chicago, Igbanugo Partners Int'l Law Firm PLLC, Wells Fargo, Faegre & Benson, and ILLI's TCICA Host Committee.

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