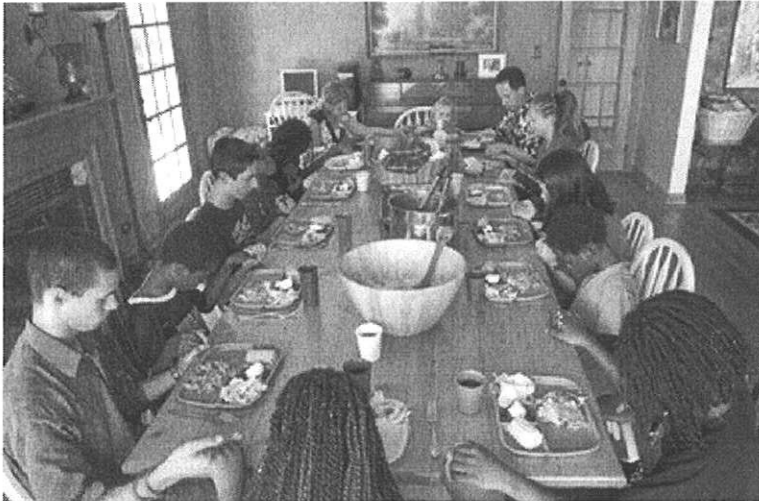




Walden University award will help Hillsboro mother of 14 fund education, missionary work (Washington County updates)

By **Andrew Then, The Oregonian**

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Linda Sheppard (top left) gathers with her husband and 14 children for dinner in their Hillsboro home. Holding hands around the banquet-sized table for the blessing of their meal is a family tradition.

Michal Thompson / Hillsboro Argus

Linda Sheppard found out in mid-November she'll have another \$7,500 to devote to her research and mission work overseas.

The Hillsboro mother of 14, whose **family was profiled in The Oregonian in July**, was one of five recipients of **Walden University's annual Scholars of Change award**. Sheppard is pursuing her Ph.D. in psychology through the online school.

Award recipients took home \$7,500. The school donated an additional \$2,500 to a charity of Sheppard's choice, **The Chance to Dream**, which supports education in Guatemala.

Sheppard said the award money helps her research into families in distressed communities. The mission is close to Sheppard's heart. A dozen of Sheppard's children were adopted, including five from Haiti. "How can we restore countries, restore cultures, restore the community so we can keep families together," she said.

Sheppard said ultimately she'd like "to give back to the countries that my kids are from" and learn how to keep children with their birth parents if possible.

Sheppard, often with her family, travels for mission work throughout the year. She has trips scheduled out as far as 2014. Haiti, in particular, is an important destination. She's been there more than 30 times, including a trip this fall.

Her family had a busy year as well. Fourteen-year-old Julia finished her chemotherapy treatments; Melissa, 8, underwent successful surgery on her hand; and Maliya, 17, pursued missionary work in Hawaii.

Sheppard hopes to bring her entire family to Haiti for three months next fall for missionary work.

Of her large and diverse family, she said it's been another action-packed year. "Everyone is doing well," she said. "That's a huge blessing."

More

More updates on a few of the local stories we reported this year in the Community News section of The Oregonian.

-- **Andrew Theen**

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