

Distinguished Alumni Award: John Hobart Friedhoff, class of 1976



The University High School Alumni Association honors John Hobart Friedhoff, class of 1976, as the 2012 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient for his contributions to his profession and civic service.

With over twenty years of experience, Friedhoff serves various multinational charitable organizations and has done so for most of his professional life. As a student of Latin American military governments, he recognized the value of participating civil institutions focusing on bilateral relations between the United States and Latin American countries. To that end he served as president of the Brazilian American Chamber of Commerce of Florida and was on its Board of Directors for over 15 years. He continues to serve on its Board of Advisors today. He was also elected as Vice President of the Central American USA Chamber of Commerce and served on its Board of

Directors for over 10 years.

Currently, he serves on the Board of Trustees of The Pan American Agricultural School (also known as Zamorano University) located in the Yeguaré Valley in Honduras where he also serves on its Executive Committee and Chair of its Legal Committee.

Friedhoff has also served on the boards of a bank dedicated to international commerce and the Florida Brazil Institute. He has expanded his geographic reach by serving on the Board of Advisors for the International Business Program of the Lazarski University School of Commerce and Law in Warsaw, Poland. Friedhoff worked in the human rights organization, Amnesty International, appealing to governments for the release of political prisoners and later worked with the Nicaraguan Bar Association in Exile in efforts towards freeing a political prisoner from the Revolutionary Government.

Fluent in Portuguese and Spanish, Friedhoff attributes his interest and capabilities in Latin America to Metcalf Laboratory School Spanish teacher, Francisco Morales. His interest in Brazil is specifically credited to Eileen Kanzler, his U.S. History and Foreign Relations teacher, and the American Field Service (AFS) sponsor at University High School. Friedhoff was an AFS student to Brazil during the summer of 1975, just before his senior year at U-High.

While Metcalf and U-High launched his facility in Spanish and interest in Latin America, Friedhoff is self-taught in Portuguese. He believes his ability to learn on his own derives from the inspiration and advice he received from many U-High teachers. The guidance from his father, a professor at ISU and mother, a teacher in the public school system, also inspired him to learn on his own.

After graduating from U-High, he enrolled in Carleton College in 1976. After his first year, he took a leave of absence from Carleton College to return to Brazil for 10 months to further his studies of Brazil and Portuguese. Upon graduating from Carleton, where he majored in international relations, Friedhoff returned to Brazil to open an import-export company. While a splendid learning opportunity, he realized it was not the career he desired.

His passion to contribute to U.S./Latin American relations drove him to return to the U.S. and study law at the University of Miami under the nationwide expert in U.S. Latin American law, Keith Rosenn. He received his J.D. in 1985. Friedhoff worked for a Brazilian law firm, furthering his knowledge of that country and its laws, and ultimately began his practice in Miami where he represents numerous foreign individuals and corporations investing in the USA as well as corporations investing in Latin America. Friedhoff works for several Latin American banks, including the preeminent micro-finance bank in the Western Hemisphere. He is presently working in the conceptual stages for various television programs targeted for nationwide broadcast about Central and South America.

Friedhoff's work has been the subject of many articles in Brazilian periodicals and has been published widely in Portuguese on matters relating to foreign investment in the United States. He has traveled through every state in Brazil except for three, including a three day trip down the Amazon River and numerous thirty-five hour bus rides along the ocean coast of Brazil. He continues to travel the region frequently.

While at U-High, he was also the Student Senate President, a member of the International Thespian Society, a four-year letterman in tennis, Boys' State participant, photographer for the Clarion and Clarionette, winner of the U.S. Senate Youth Fellowship, and National Honor Society member. Friedhoff resides in Miami, Florida, with his wife, Carolina, and his two children, Robert and Carolyn.