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The Florida Bar Presents First Amendment Foundation President Barbara Petersen with Susan Spencer-Wendel Award for Lifetime Achievement

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TALLAHASSEE – First Amendment Foundation President Barbara Petersen received the Susan Spencer-Wendel Award for Lifetime Achievement Monday evening for her contributions in support of a free press and Floridians’ right of access to government information.

Spencer-Wendel was a longtime Palm Beach Post courts reporter who died in 2014 from ALS. She received a lifetime achievement award from The Florida Bar in 2012 and numerous media awards throughout her career.

Petersen accepted the award at the Reporters’ Workshop dinner in Tallahassee Monday, October 28.

“It’s a tremendous honor to be recognized by those I admire most – journalists and the attorneys who represent and protect them,” said Petersen. “The First Amendment is under assault unlike anything I’ve seen in my lifetime. It’s critical to our democracy, to our fundamental desire for a free and fair society, that we support and protect a free and independent press, that we demand access to information that allows us to oversee our government and hold it accountable for its actions. “

The Susan Spencer-Wendel Award for Lifetime Achievement recognizes a Florida journalist or a supporter of Florida journalism who helped to educate Floridians on the system of law and justice in the state.

The inaugural award was presented in 2015 to longtime St. Petersburg Times (now the Tampa Bay Times) columnist Martin Dyckman. In 2016, the award was presented posthumously to veteran journalist Julie Kay, who covered the courts and law in Florida for nearly 30 years including at the Daily Business Review.

The award was presented to Petersen on Monday by Dwayne Robinson, chair of The Florida Bar’s Media & Communications Law Committee, which created the award and selects the winners. The committee also oversees the Reporters’ Workshop, a two-day event held annually in the fall for 24 print, TV, radio and online journalists new to the courts and legal beats or new to Florida. Workshop sessions are held at the Florida Supreme Court.

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