

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST TO AWARD AN HONORARY DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS DEGREE
AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by Iowa State University to award an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree to George P. Belitsos at Spring 2012 Commencement.

Executive Summary: Iowa State University wishes to recognize Mr. Belitsos for his outstanding advocacy for and service to Iowa's young people and families.

Details on Mr. Belitsos's Accomplishments:

- ◇ In 1971, the Ames/ISU YMCA created an organization to address problems of substance abuse by young people in the Ames community. Mr. Belitsos joined the organization in 1976 as its director and he developed programs, such as the Shelter House and Bustopp, to deal with these issues. In 1976, he led the founding of Youth and Shelter Services (YSS) as an independent non-profit organization. He has been its chief executive officer since its founding.
- ◇ YSS became a model program for providing community-based services to families, children, and especially adolescents. It has grown into a more than \$14 million grant and contract funded enterprise with 270 staff members, 500 volunteers, and 20 interns. It serves more than 7,000 young people and thousands of other family members each year through 20 service centers in central Iowa, including Ames, Boone, Nevada, Marshalltown, Huxley, Webster City, and Des Moines. In 1997, Mr. Belitsos played a lead role in the acquisition and conversion of the former Ames City Hall at Kellogg Avenue and 5th Street, into the Jacobson Youth and Family Center, which now houses YSS.
- ◇ Under Mr. Belitsos' direction, YSS established close ties with Iowa State University. Many ISU faculty, staff, and students have served as YSS volunteers and board members. Hundreds of ISU students have had internships with YSS to enhance their educational programs with real life experiences working with at-risk young people.
- ◇ Mr. Belitsos has served on many state and national organizations addressing youth and family challenges. He is currently a member of the Iowa Child Welfare Advisory Committee and co-chair of the Iowa Child Welfare Permanency Committee. He is a past board member of the National Network for Youth and Iowa Coalition for Children and Family Services. In 1979, he was appointed by Iowa Governor Robert Ray as a delegate to the White House Conference on Families. He has been recognized numerous times for his community service and youth advocacy efforts.
- ◇ ISU described Mr. Belitsos in the following way: "The range of children and families served by YSS includes the homeless, youth aging out of foster care, youth with drug abuse problems, and youth with chronic mental illness and severe behavior problems. Under Mr. Belitsos' guidance, families and youth are given hope and a chance for a brighter future, often after they have given up such hope."