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By
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Pitt-Johnstown will present its first-ever Distinguished Alumni Award to U.S. Rep. John Murtha for his service to the region, nation and university.

The award will be presented at a reception in Murtha's honor during homecoming festivities Sept. 26-27.

The new award, established by the Pitt-Johnstown Alumni Association, becomes the highest honor the college bestows on its alumni. It will annually recognize alumni for individual achievements, leadership in their professions, civic service and loyalty to their alma mater.

In announcing the award, UPJ President Jem Spectar said: "Through his exemplary and outstanding record ... Congressman Murtha is clearly a most distinguished alumni. (He) has worked tirelessly on behalf of the people of our region. His life's work has reflected the values and principles of service to the community, care for country and courage in facing challenges."

Murtha, D-Johnstown, graduated from Pitt in 1962, having majored in economics. He also attended the old Johnstown campus — then in a former school in Moxham — for two years.

After graduation, he volunteered to serve in Vietnam, 1966-67, where he received the Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts.

As a congressman, Murtha has been key in bringing in hundreds of millions of federal dollars to the region.

Murtha said he was honored by his selection.

“I attended Pitt-Johnstown when it was commonly referred to as ‘Junior Pitt,’ ”
he said.“And today I’m amazed not only by the campus itself, but by its current
students and the thousands of alumni working throughout our region and nation.

“Pitt-Johnstown is nationally recognized, and I’m proud of the educational,
cultural and economic contributions they make to our community.”

In 1994, Murtha established the John P. and Joyce Murtha
Center for Continuing
Education and Professional Development, which allows students to pursue
graduate degrees.