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Mason, Koldykes receive National Louis inaugural Pioneer Award

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By [Stephen J. Serio](#) January 20, 2012

(Crain's) — National Louis University celebrated its 125th anniversary on Thursday night and used the occasion to present its first Pioneer Awards to leaders in education and business.

Martin "Mike" Koldyke and his wife, Patricia, were cited for their many years of educational advocacy in Chicago. The other Pioneer recipient was Groupon Inc.'s founder and CEO, Andrew Mason.

A retired venture capitalist, Mr. Koldyke is the founder and chairman emeritus of the Academy for Urban School Leadership and founder and chairman emeritus of the Golden Apple Foundation. Ms. Koldyke serves on the board of the Golden Apple Foundation.

Emcee Phil Ponce of WTTW-TV/Channel 11's "Chicago Tonight" introduced the award recipients, and following the requisite recitation of Mr. Mason's accomplishments at Chicago-based Groupon, Mr. Ponce jokingly teased Mr. Mason that, before he gets his next great idea, he should "give us a heads-up so we can buy some stock."

NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY CELEBRATES ITS 125TH ANNIVERSARY



Stephen J. Serio

Chad Peterson of Victory Park Capital and his wife, Megan Peterson.



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Mr. Mason's connection to National Louis? Last September, the Chicago private university offered a Groupon for nearly 60% off a graduate-level course, the first time an academic university used a group coupon.

"They are the real pioneers," Mr. Mason told Crain's after receiving his award. "They approached us with the idea. It's the kind of thing that makes this job great, when someone uses the Groupon model to disrupt and change things."

While the school uses up-to-date technology and marketing to attract prospective students, President Nivine Megahed told the 200 guests that administrators often wonder how National Louis' founder would tackle today's issues. "What would Elizabeth do?" they ask, she said, referring to urban education pioneer and community activist Elizabeth Harrison.

"They are innovators and have been for a long time," said Diana Rauner, event co-chair, speaking of National Louis, which has colleges of education, arts and science, and management and business.

"National Louis University is the best-kept secret in Chicago," added event co-chair Elizabeth Louis.

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