

## Kees Rovers receives the 'White Foot' award in Nuenen

*[The 'White Foot' is an local award presented annually to a person who has contributed significantly to the community of Nuenen– Trans.]*

by our correspondent Harrie van der Wielen

**NUENEN – With all his success and fame, both nationally and internationally, for his initiative for the immensely fast glass fiber network 'Ons Net' in Nuenen, it was almost inevitable that Kees Rovers (61) would receive the 'White Foot' award 2006.**

Yesterday afternoon, in the Park in Nuenen, Rovers received the award from the mayor of Nuenen, Willem Ligtvoet, of 'Dwèrsklippel met het wit voetje' *[Local award connected to the carnival– Trans.]*

Although 'Ons Net' is his most recent project, Kees Rovers always played a prominent part in the Nuenen community. He was the driving force behind several important projects for Nuenen, such as getting the Tour de France to go through Nuenen, the show surrounding the farewell to the old lime tree in the heart of the village, and the restoration of the Clemens church.

"I would have preferred to have posthumously transferred this award to an inhabitant of Nuenen from some fifty years ago: the priest Jos de Vries from Gerwen *[one of the villages forming part of the municipality of Nuenen – Trans.]*", says Rovers. "But the former Carnival Princes told me that they are responsible for the nominations." Jos de Vries, a farmer's son, was born in Gerwen in 1831. In 1853 he left for Kentucky, USA, as a 21-year old priest-pioneer, to help build the first Christian community in the then newly established diocese of Louisville. Rovers' fascination with this enterprising inhabitant of Nuenen started when he read a passage in the book "Memorial of Nuenen" by pastor Frenken.

Jos de Vries is apparently still honored as a hero in Kentucky, as one of the 'founding fathers' of that community. He is buried under the main altar of the modest replica of the Cologne Cathedral, which he helped build, in Bowling Green. "Thanks to 'Ons Net', Nuenen can make a direct connection to the parish of Jos de Vries, who, at that time, as a courageous inhabitant of Nuenen, had to travel to the other side of the world to make such a connection", Rovers smiles. He is reflecting on an educational project for Nuenen on the life and works of Jos de Vries.

A sense of community and club life are vital inspirations to Kees Rovers. In his lectures, both nationally and abroad, he always uses the example of Van Gogh's "Home Weaver". In 1885, four hundred weavers in Nuenen worked from their studios at home as home weavers. That was some eighty percent of the working population. "It is no more than a century ago that we made the disastrous choice to divide our lives into living in residential towns, working at industrial premises, shopping at shopping malls and spending our free time in recreational parks", says Rovers. "The computer and the internet can give us back a modern form of working from our homes, leaving behind us many problems of social isolation and mobility", as Rovers explains his driving force.



