

Outstanding staff members honored with inaugural Witmer & Meliora awards

WITMER AWARD Catherine Farrell

By June Avignone
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If all the world is a stage, albeit a chaotic one, then Catherine Farrell, the quintessential administrative assistant known as “Katie” to all who admire her warmth and efficiency, makes at least a small piece of it run smoothly for the University’s International Theatre Program. More than 50 University administrators, students, and faculty members nominated Farrell for the Witmer Award with testimonial letters praising her “huge heart” and ability “to calm everyone down” while juggling the intense, fluctuating administrative demands of a stress-filled theatrical environment. The theatre program presents four full productions and a series of smaller events annually, in addition to providing students with classes ranging from playwriting to technical theater.

Nigel Maister, the artistic director of the theater, says Farrell has been the “backbone” of the active program since she joined the staff five years ago, handling everything from the details concerning a constantly rotating roster of faculty, students, and artists to the details of budgeting and production.

“Katie Farrell has done a superlative job managing the very complex demands of the International Theatre Program and the needs of our students, faculty, staff, and guest artists,” says Maister. “She is not only an enthusiastic cheerleader, outstanding problem solver, and the hub of our administrative universe, but she also provides a deeply caring and nurturing environment within which to work.”

With what Maister calls her “overall zest for life,” Farrell does it all, from preparing food for hungry students and staff on Saturday “tech” mornings to developing comprehensive “welcome packets” for guest artists and adjunct faculty that cut down on bureaucratic confusion.

Farrell previously worked at the Medical Center for 10 years as an administrative assistant for the Hematology/Oncology

Unit’s Hemostasis and Thrombosis Program, the General Medicine Unit, and for Ambulatory Medicine, where colleagues nominating her for the Witmer Award recalled her “can-do” attitude as being infectious among the staff and faculty.

As one student summed up Farrell’s work at the University: “I truly get the feeling that Katie cares for ... my well being and is always ready to offer a hug, an ear, or her help.”



Catherine Farrell

WITMER AWARD Lisa Norwood

By Jonathan Sherwood
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In March, Lisa Norwood celebrated her 20th year of inspiring students, faculty, and staff members with her compassion, creativity, and “can-do” attitude at the University.

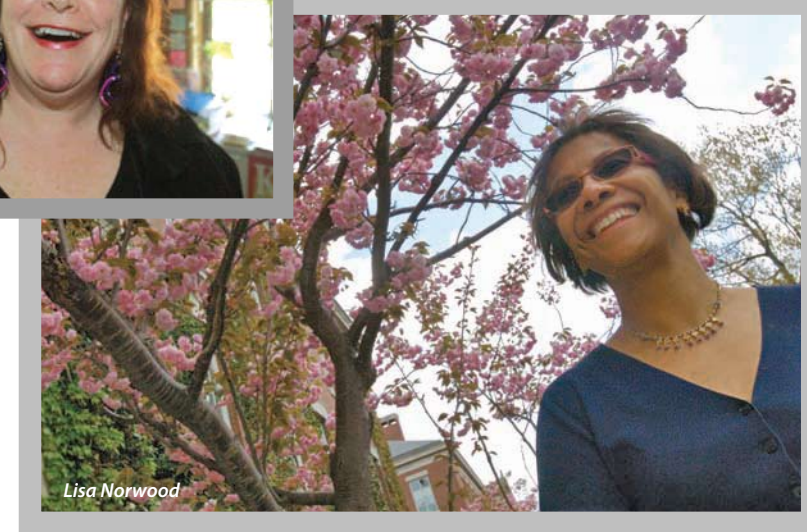
From her beginnings as an academic advisor fresh from Rochester’s graduating Class of 1986, Norwood worked at several positions throughout the University before assuming her current role as assistant dean for engineering undergraduate studies. Along the way she made such an impression on so many people that she will receive the Witmer Award to recognize her contributions to the University.

As director of the University’s Women in Science and Engineering (UR WISE) program—one of the many hats she wears—Norwood is passionate about attracting young women into the engineering fields.

In 1999, Norwood helped start a daylong workshop to assist Girl Scouts of Genesee Valley (GSGV) members with earning their Science in Action

badges, and to encourage the girls to pursue their interest in science. What started as an event for 20 girls now brings in 200 from the surrounding communities every year. In 2005, the GSGV recognized Norwood’s impact on young women with their Women of Influence Award, calling her “an exemplary role model for today’s girls.”

“Lisa is always willing to volunteer her personal time to promote engineering to pre-college students, whether it’s by attending career fairs, making



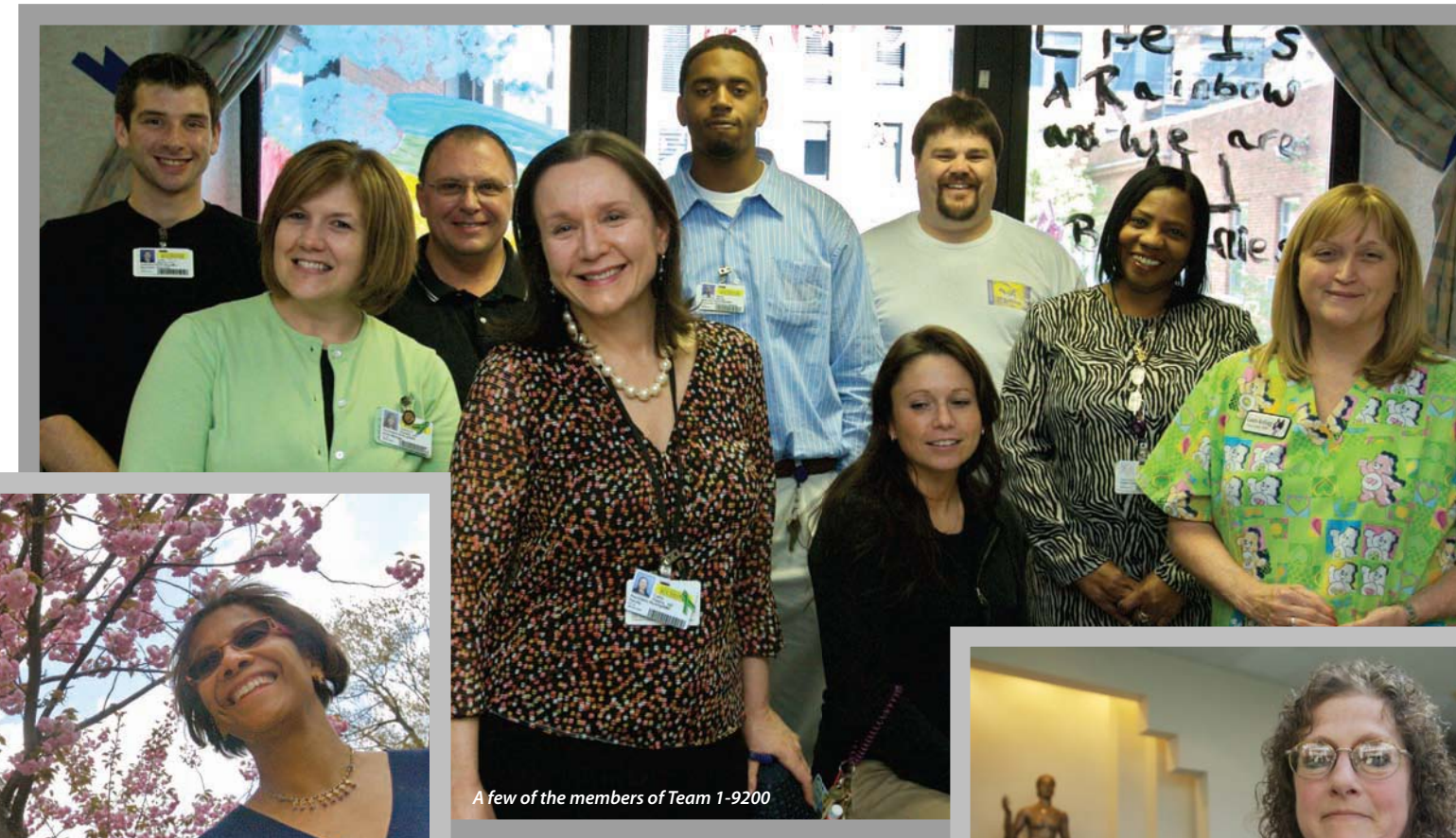
Lisa Norwood

classroom visits, or hosting school groups on campus,” says Kevin Parker, dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and Norwood’s immediate supervisor. “In fact, she keeps a storage closet full of old appliances so the kids can take them apart to see how they work.”

In 2002, Norwood was instrumental in the University’s partnering with the community group Baden Street Settlement to show 26 Rochester City School high school students the wonders of science and technology. She also brought the FIRST LEGO League Tournament to Rochester. The tournament attracts more than 500 middle school students to campus each December to compete in a giant Lego-based engineering challenge.

“I am amazed at all of her

contributions to campus life, to outreach programs, and to community,” says Alfred Clark Jr., former chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering’s Undergraduate Committee. “Lisa is always there with her knowledge, her people skills,



A few of the members of Team 1-9200

The change has delivered positive results. Patient and family satisfaction scores are above

and her caring concern to help a student,” says Alfred. “No faculty advisor could possibly ask for better support.”

MELIORA AWARD Child psychiatry team

By Michael Wentzel
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In 2007, the physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, activities therapists, and teachers who care for children ages five to 12 admitted to the Medical Center with acute psychiatric illness made more than a minor change in the way they treat patients.

The group, known as Team 1-9200, adopted a new philosophy—“kids do well if they can”—that transformed their approach to patients and method of treatment. The team’s efforts won them a Meliora

Award. “This was a true cultural change,” says Joanne Bartlett, senior nurse manager in Child and Adolescent Inpatient Psychiatry. “We changed the way we think about children with challenging behaviors.”

the mean. Comments from patients and families show they trust the staff, have confidence in the model, and would recommend the unit.

“Nursing satisfaction and retention is high. Interdisciplinary collaboration and family partnership flourish,” Bartlett says. “Most importantly, the children that we care for truly improve.”

In 2007, the unit served 224 children, many with serious trauma histories. Most are admitted for severe out-of-control behavior at home or school. The children and their families have significant social, emotional, and behavioral needs. The average length of stay on the unit is 11 days.

In the past, the team followed a traditional behavior modification model with rewards and consequences. But the team

determined that not only was the traditional model ineffective, it also left families feeling uninvolved. So beginning in December 2006, the team implemented a cognitive-behavioral model known as Collaborative Problem Solving that was devel-

The new treatment model increased visiting hours. Family members are encouraged to assist their children with daily care. If a parent wants to stay the night, a bed is provided. The team also has initiated a unique program, weekly family educa-

The result has been greater appreciation for our patients, their families, and each other.”

MELIORA AWARD Joanne Neu

By Katina Antoniadou
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Although the word “humble” doesn’t appear among the many positive adjectives attributed to Joanne Neu in the nominating materials for her Meliora Award, the word certainly suits her.

“I honestly didn’t do anything special,” she insists. “I just love this job so much. I love this job; I really do.”

In the relatively short time



Kathy Metz

she’s worked at the Memorial Art Gallery as banquet houseperson, Neu has made a big impression on employees and board members, as their nomination letters demonstrate. The testimonials praise her for her dedication, attention to detail, “fabulous organizational skills,” and much more.

With tasks that include “lift[ing] a lot of furniture” and setting up for and breaking down after events that range from small breakfast meetings to major gallery events, Neu’s job is nothing like her previous University position—she used to drive a shuttle bus.

And she likes it that way. “I like to move,” she says. “I was getting very tired of sitting and driving—and I’ve lost 30 pounds since starting working here.”

Neu’s willingness to go the extra mile—and her 26 years of experience in the restaurant business—have earned her a nickname. “I jokingly call Joanne ‘Martha Stewart’

because she is a strong believer in the phrase, ‘Presentation is everything,’ and it is apparent in everything that she does, from covering tables with linen for meetings or adding a handmade centerpiece to the admission desk or meeting table,” wrote Debora McDell-Hernandez, the gallery’s coordinator of community programs and outreach.

That pride in presentation extends to Neu’s own character; staff say she has a cheerful personality and is always willing to help out.

As Joseph Carney, director of gallery advancement, wrote, “She is attentive, thoughtful, and ready to roll up her sleeves

to do whatever is necessary, whether it’s setting up chairs or tables or assisting a patron who is in need.”

Neu hopes to be doing just that for quite a while. She enjoys working amidst the beautiful art and architecture of the gallery, and says she “can’t say enough about” her coworkers. “This is where I plan on retiring from.”

MELIORA AWARD Kathy Metz

By Sharon Dickman
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Ask Kathy Metz for help, say her colleagues, and you are guaranteed to walk away happy.

Her direct and collaborative manner has made the small Interlibrary Loan office she manages particularly responsive to requests for materials not quite at the borrower’s fingertips in libraries around the University.

“Research is stronger at Rochester as a result of the extraordinarily effective service

Kathy and her unit provide,” wrote Stanley Wilder, associate dean for technology services for River Campus Libraries and one of Metz’s nominators for a Meliora Award.

In her 27th year at Rush Rhees Library, Metz was assigned to manage an off-site warehouse storing more than 150,000 documents. Now, 2 ½ years later, she’s organized all aspects of the operation near Cobbs Hill Park, and her unit has created a bonus service that delivers materials directly to faculty members’ offices. Behind the scenes in the rented facility, she’s sometimes cleaned up indoor leaks and even caught curious animals that have found their way into the building.

Metz first joined the library staff when a friend told her about the job opening, and says she immediately took to the atmosphere and her coworkers. “There are a lot of opportunities to use your imagination and try new things,” she explains. “I took on additional work and tried to run with it,” she says. She says she feels that the positive energy rubs off on students working and studying there.

She still thrives on a challenge. Beginning June 1, Metz will become director of access services, meaning interlibrary loan, circulation, reserves, stacks, mail services, and the off-site warehouse. And she’s plotted her next innovation: scanning requested library materials at the warehouse to save time for borrowers and stress on books.

“These lesser-used materials have value and it’s my job to protect them,” Metz says. “I love managing that collection.”

For more information on the Witmer and Meliora awards, including how the recipients are chosen and what benefits are attached to these honors, visit www.rochester.edu/president/memos/2008/staff_wards.html.