ANDREA THOMA-HANEY

It was on a bittersweet note that we chose Andrea as the spotlight to finish out the 2012 year. It would have been so nice to have had the opportunity to sit down with her for an interview, rather than having to put this together posthumously. Nevertheless, it seems only appropriate to recognize and highlight the life of an individual who served on a committee that recognizes other classified employees. Andrea began serving on the Classified Connection Employee Recognition Committee in the fall of 2008, volunteering to step in and fill a recently vacated position on the committee. She was a real team player and will be greatly missed.

Andrea passed away on Monday, October 22, 2012. She had been a classified employee on the UW-Whitewater campus for twelve years, working in the Registrar’s Office. Since we could no longer interview Andrea, we reached out to some of her colleagues and they were only too happy to offer their thoughts regarding this special woman with whom they had worked.

Jodi Hare - Registrar
“Andrea started in the Registrar’s Office in September of 2000 as the University Transcript Clerk. The thing that struck me in my initial interview with her was her desire to use her office skills in a way that allowed her to work with and for students. She came to us from an industrial setting and was searching for something more fulfilling. Right away she struck me as someone who would think of things a bit differently. We had interviewed several individuals before Andrea, but after meeting and chatting with Andrea, I knew we had found our new transcript clerk.

Since coming to work at Whitewater twelve years ago, Andrea managed our academic transcript processing, supervised students employees working under her and transitioned to the coordinator of the Registrar’s Office information and services. Andrea’s position often called for patience, as being the front line in an office always does. I received many compliments of her handling of difficult situations and her general helpfulness either on the phone, in person, or via email.

I will miss Andrea and her original way of looking at things. She helped me to see things from a different point of view, always in an amenable way - something that is so often missing in our world these days.”

Dan Edlebeck – former Registrar
“Oftentimes we work with good people but never really get to call them friends. Andrea was an exception. From my first moments working in the Registrar’s Office I felt welcomed by Andrea’s behavior and demeanor. I remember her laugh. Her attitude. A genuine caring for the well-being of others. Her willingness to volunteer for new things, to learn something different. A desire to do good work, and to do good. When she took breaks, her companions were either her sister Michelle or a paperback. When at work, we were all lucky to be her companions. I have many memories of my friend who left us too early. The memories are here to stay.”

Jan Nordin – Veterans Coordinator/Registrar’s Office
“Andrea was a free spirit that never had a bad word to say about anyone she knew. She was always upbeat, fun, and vibrant to be around. She made friends with the students who worked for her, kept in touch with them during vacations and breaks, helped them with their problems and generally was always there for them.”
Andrea loved her Packers; we were to go on another trip to Lambeau because we wanted to see Donald Driver’s mirror ball trophy. The season he was on was the only time she watched Dancing with the Stars. She made sure she voted each time and coerced her husband into watching and voting also. She enjoyed a great variety of music but especially liked Roger Waters; she would sometimes schedule her vacations around when he was going to be in the area so the whole family could go to the concert.

She loved her family most of all and was very proud of her daughter and grandson Cal, her niece and her family, Abby and Max, her husband Jeff, and her sister, Michelle Thoma.”

Pat Waage – Registrar’s Office

“Andrea really liked working with students and related well to all of them. She was really interested in all cultures and this may have evolved from the international students that lived with her parents while in school. She was an avid reader, always with a book in her hand. Sometimes she would have 2 or 3 books that she was reading at the same time. She was an excited grandmother with one grandson to brag about. She helped anyone that asked for assistance. She was just fun to be around at any time because she enjoyed life to its fullest extent.”

Andrea made her home in Jefferson and she leaves behind a loving family: husband, Jeff; daughter, Shannon and her son, Calvin; mother, Virginia; sister, Michelle and her husband, Rob; niece, Emily and her two children, Abby and Max; and her mother-in-law. Her daughter graciously offered some personal information regarding Andrea and some insight into Andrea’s lifestyle outside of the workplace.

As noted previously, Andrea was a lover of books and reading was a favorite pastime of hers. Her favorite books were of the fantasy genre, with the “Harry Potter” series topping her list. She also enjoyed the “Twilight” series and Stephen King novels. Tops on her movie list were “Titanic” and “Hair”. While she did not normally watch movies multiple times, those two movies were exceptions. According to her daughter, Shannon, Andrea absolutely loved listening to Pink Floyd and the group’s lead singer, Roger Waters. “As a family we have gone to Roger Waters concerts several times and she (Andrea) owned all of the CD’s – she had them all on her computer at work and would have them playing softly throughout the day. She also liked oldies and the sound track from “Hair”. Andrea enjoyed being in the great outdoors and being a part of nature. She liked traveling and she liked to go camping. Getting out for a hike or going on a nature walk held a special appeal for her.

Andrea’s family was small – just her parents and the two girls – but they often sponsored foreign exchange students when Andrea and her sister were growing up. It was a wonderful example set for the two children of making a commitment and reaching out to others, welcoming them into a new culture and community. It was an example which Andrea apparently took to heart and incorporated into her own lifestyle and into her work at UW-Whitewater.

As a member of the Employee Recognition Committee, Andrea faithfully attended the monthly meetings, missing very few during her years of service. She was always eager and willing to help with the planning and production of any projects or events sponsored by the committee, offering ideas and a different perspective which helped shaped the final outcome. She came to meetings prepared to infuse a sense of lighthearted whimsy and laughter which could brighten even the greyest of days. Working with Andrea was truly a joy and we will miss her spontaneity and sense of humor. She was a gift and a blessing.