

**Alumni advocate**

## ***Spencer is key to growth of, maintaining school spirit***

If you're a UW-L alum who's kept close ties to the university, you more than likely know Janie Spencer.

Spencer, executive director of the UW-L Alumni Association since 1998, has done much to foster lifelong relationships between the university and its more than 60,000 alumni. Among her accomplishments: a more than 400 percent increase in association memberships since she returned to her alma mater.

Spencer, who earned a bachelor's in psychology in '85 and a master's of education in professional development in '86, was working at Gundersen Lutheran in La Crosse when the association was looking for a new executive director. After reviewing the job responsibilities, she liked the challenge. "I applied, interviewed and got the job," explains Spencer. "And here I am 10 years later and still loving it."

Over that decade, Spencer has strived to get more departments involved with alumni programming. And, she's implemented programs to create awareness about alumni among current students.

"We want them to know what the Alumni Association is and that it's a lifetime connection to the university," explains Spencer. "These students are our future alums and our future leaders."

Among the new programs Spencer has initiated for students: Freshmen Send-Offs in numerous Midwestern cities; the Move-In Day Ice Cream Social, and the Etiquette Dinners. She's helped expand alumni clubs in Tokyo and Taipei, along with campus organizations such as ROTC, Silver Eagles, theater and Residence Life. And, she re-energized a membership committee that brought

in a record number of memberships, increasing members by more than 400 percent. "I'm very proud we've grown our membership to where it is — but, we've got a lot more to do," she says.

Spencer is deeply humbled by receiving the 2007 Academic Staff Excellence Award from her peers. She's quick to give credit for the association's growth in the past decade to colleagues and the alumni with whom she gets a chance to work.

"I don't view any of my work success as simply my accomplishments," she says. "Instead, I attribute them to a great team of coworkers and alumni."

She says a group of committed alumni who serve on the association's board of directors, along with its strong committees, is key. "This group is by far the best volunteer board I have ever worked with," she explains. "They are such a committed, passionate group.

They're committed and dedicated to the university and want to see its continued success as we move ahead."

The association plans to move forward. The association conducted an attitude survey and recently approved a new strategic plan. "We've positioned our organization for future success," notes Spencer.

That fast-paced atmosphere is what drives her. "Having the opportunity to work with alumni all over the world, students while they are here and caring faculty and staff is very rewarding," she says. "I love what I do."



### **The Janie Spencer file**

- Executive director of the UW-L Alumni Association since 1998.
- Campus service: Homecoming, Joint Minority Affairs Committee, L-Club, various search and screen committees.
- Community service: Valley View Rotary, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Gundersen Lutheran Partners, PEO Chapter D.C.
- Earned two degrees from UW-L: bachelor's in psychology, 1985; master's of professional development, 1986.