

Sara Olson, C.O.R.E. Award

CELEBRATING THE OUTSTANDING BY REWARDING EXCELLENCE

The **C.O.R.E.** program promotes Nebraska Wesleyan's core values by recognizing and rewarding staff whose efforts and contributions significantly exceed expectations in demonstrating or promoting one or more of those values: excellence, liberal arts, personal attention to students, diversity, community, and stewardship

Sara Olson receives the C.O.R.E. Award for demonstrating excellence and fostering a sense of community through her communication with internal and external constituents.

Sara's dedication epitomizes the core value of excellence. And the fruits of her work impact the core value of community by ensuring that local, regional and national media have accurate information about who we are and what we stand for as an institution. Whether that means sharing good news about the latest Wesleyan student to take home a Fulbright or being as open as she can with the details surrounding a critical story, the Wesleyan community is stronger for her work.

Sara has been a voice for transparency and openness in the face of unfortunate news. That openness tends to deflate controversy, prevent misunderstanding and speed recovery. So much of Sara's work is about making sure our students and faculty are recognized in the media for their accomplishments. But it's rare that she is noticed, herself. That's fine with Sara. PR directors, she has said, are like basketball officials. You only notice them when they're doing a bad job. That would explain why sometimes Sara seems virtually invisible. But her colleagues see and value her work. During crisis periods, her days have begun as early as 4:30 and have stretched late into many nights. She has foregone planned vacations, and made herself available to reporters and administrators long after most people would have dropped their cell phones off the nearest bridge.

Our institution has faced many public challenges in the past year and a half, and Sara has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to preserve a positive image of our institution. During these times, Sara worked morning, noon, and night (weekends, too). Frequently, she spent her commute home to Seward on the phone with administrators and continued work well into the evening talking with members of the media or advising students. On more than one occasion, Sara put personal plans on hold to attend to pressing issues at work.

Sara's work ethic, knowledge and professionalism exemplify excellence and her ability to collaborate with so many people at Wesleyan fosters a great sense of community for us all. Her work keeps the community-at-large in the loop while representing the University in a positive light. Sara is out in front of the news media on stories, providing information even before being asked by the media. She does not wait to answer questions, but anticipates questions and provides the information either herself or through others. Sara has expanded the placement of stories about the accomplishments

of students and faculty from primarily local media to national media outlets. Sara's outstanding professionalism handling routine stories with the media created the conditions for the media to listen to Sara when difficult situations arose. Several media representatives mentioned to NWU Administrators how helpful Sara was and how unique it was to have someone always ready to take their calls and answer their questions. Sara Olson's outstanding commitment to Nebraska Wesleyan University is celebrated with this Staff Recognition Award.