

Taking care of business

Hills resident's background pays off for Radcliff job

BY LEONARD FOGER
STAFF WRITER

Noreen Thomas learned early the importance of meeting the needs of customers.

Working in her parents' retail and service businesses as early as 11, she learned how to handle and relate to customers.

Some 33 years later, she is doing the same thing in her new position as dean of college centers for Schoolcraft College.

Specifically, she will direct the Radcliff Center, on the Garden City/Westland boundary, for the 10,000-plus students who use the building seven days a week for various educational purposes.

Thomas, a Farmington Hills resident whose promotion was announced by the college's administration Wednesday night, succeeds Edwyna Danby, who headed the center for several years before passing away six weeks ago.

Thomas, promoted from Schoolcraft's associate dean for educational services, talked about Radcliff and its future during an interview in her office Thursday morning.

No changes are planned for the center since she and Danby were "in tune with each other" philosophically and in their approach of meeting the college's mission statement and goals for the center, on Radcliff, just south of Ford and east of Wildwood.

"We will build on what we started," she said.

If she does anything different, it will be more activities in "community outreach and getting closer to the programs, making sure we're delivering the quality that



Noreen Thomas

we strive to achieve," she said.

Her management style would be to "generate enthusiasm among the staff and the community," Thomas said. Hopefully, the enthusiasm "will be contagious and snowball."

Thomas is no stranger to Radcliff.

As Schoolcraft's purchasing director about 10 years ago, she was project manager for the move from a smaller satellite center in Garden City to Radcliff.

In that role, she was in charge of the planning of the massive moving of equipment and materials to the new location.

The center, a former junior high school, has more than 10,000 students in its classrooms between 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. weekdays as well as parts of Saturday and Sunday, part of the "weekend college" initiated two years ago.

With her background in her parents' business in Buffalo, N.Y., and later in education,

Noreen Thomas received her bachelor's degree in management from Daemen College, in Amherst, N.Y., and her master's degree in educational leadership from Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti. She is married and the mother of two sons.

Thomas learned the relationship of business and education.

"My dad taught me the intuitive parts (of the business) — meeting customers' needs. That's what we have been here at Schoolcraft," Thomas said.

In various positions since joining the college staff as a business department cashier in 1978, Thomas was involved as project manager for the Radcliff move as well as being purchasing director and assistant dean of continuing education.

In the latter post, Thomas' efforts led to a 75 percent increase in enrollment and initiated several professional certification programs in continuing education. Under her direction, the department administered 1,000 courses serving 14,000 pupils a year.

She also handled financial operations, enrollment objectives and developed and implemented programming, including a needs assessment, marketing and delivering of educational services.

Outside of her Schoolcraft responsibilities, Thomas has been a leader in various areas, including winner of national awards and

president of the Michigan Community Colleges Community Services Association in 1991.

The Livonia fire department honored her for her work in fire

education programs that it named her an honorary fire chief last year.

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emen College, in Amherst, N.Y., and her master's degree in educational leadership from Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti. She is married and the mother of two sons.

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