

2008 Denise Nicoletti Trustees' Award for Service to Community

Christopher Bartley

The Trustees' Award for Service to Community is presented in memory of Denise Nicoletti, a professor in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department from 1991-2002, whose passion for life and outreach to under-represented groups touched many lives. Among her activities, Denise co-founded Camp Reach, a widely-acclaimed summer program which introduces seventh grade girls to the excitement of engineering and science. The recipient of the 2008 Denise Nicoletti Trustees' Award for Service to Community is Christopher Bartley.



Chris Bartley is entering his seventh season as head coach for men's basketball at WPI. His accomplishments on the court have been impressive. The team, winless the season before his arrival, has now won four straight NEWMAC Championships and has appeared in three consecutive NCAA Division III Tournaments. Last March, WPI basketball player Ryan Cain was chosen from a national pool of finalists to receive the 2007 Jostens Trophy. This award recognizes one student athlete for basketball ability, academic prowess, and community service. Coach Chris Bartley has served as an outstanding role model and mentor to Ryan and his teammates at WPI.

Even more impressive is the impact that Chris has had in the community outside WPI. He serves on the Board of Directors of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass/Metrowest; but his most outstanding contribution is his work as a mentor.

For the past four years, the WPI men's basketball team has been involved with the School Based Mentor Program. Coach Bartley's enthusiasm for the program convinced the entire basketball team to become Big Brothers to boys at Elm Park Community School in Worcester.

Since their first introduction to School Based Mentoring, the WPI students and Coach Bartley have been faithful and enthusiastic Big Brothers. They meet with the children every week, helping with homework, shooting baskets in the gym, or just talking with the students. Coach Bartley has been the driving force behind the tremendous growth in the School Based Mentor Program. The number of mentors from WPI has grown from the 15-member basketball team to 100 members, which now includes the

women's basketball team, two fraternities and two sororities. Chris has also recruited his fellow coaches and basketball teams at Framingham State College and Worcester State College to become Big Brothers.

School Based Mentors are matched with children in the Worcester Public Schools. Many of these students come from incredibly challenging backgrounds, including homelessness, substance abuse, and violence in the home. Having the benefit of one-to-one contact with a mentor every week is a powerful motivator and has made a measurable impact on these children's lives. Research and anecdotal evidence show that the one-to-one mentoring provided by Big Brothers and Big Sisters helps at-risk youth overcome the many challenges that they face.

Not only do the children benefit from having a mentor. According to Coach Bartley, being Big Brothers has helped the basketball team gain maturity and boosted the team's morale. He sees a different side of the team when they are with their Little Brothers. "Guys who seem really tough show a sensitive side when they're with the kids. I've seen a lot of maturity develop in team members since they've been Big Brothers. They understand how they're role models for the younger boys."

For his years of dedication to WPI and particularly for his involvement of young people in social service through the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization, we are proud to honor Christopher Bartley for the 2008 Denise Nicoletti Trustees Award for Service to the Community.