

## **CNR Alumni Spotlight**

### **Rosa Puleo Napoleone, SAS '75**



As she accepted the CNR Legacy Award at the Mercy College Trustees' Scholarship Gala in May, Rosa Puleo Napoleone, SAS '75, movingly described the lasting impact of her four years as an undergraduate at the College of New Rochelle.

"CNR was indeed a special place, affording me with an excellent, well-rounded education, invaluable life lessons, and many dear friends. Principles such as maintaining a sense of integrity, life-long learning and Serviam – 'I will serve'- became ingrained and provided me with a compass for the years that followed commencement."

Serviam has indeed characterized every part of Rosa's personal and professional life.

Her service to her alma mater has been unwavering and effective since her graduation 47 years ago. For her own class of 1975, she was class president and fund agent; and for the larger Alumni Association, she was a board member for many years and president for two terms (2009-2015). Then when the College was facing closure, she volunteered for three years in the Office of Alumni Engagement, working alongside Marlene Tutera, SAS. '71. She now co-chairs with Marlene the CNR Legacy Council, working in partnership with Mercy College which has been so welcoming and supportive of the CNR alumni community. Her classmates and other alums of all four schools and many graduation years who have worked with Rosa admire and respect her quiet inner strength and determination, her energy and ability to get things done, her integrity, humility and her inspirational loyalty to CNR, as well as her family and friends.

Nancy Harkins, another active alum from the Class of '75, offered high praise for Rosa and her service to CNR.

"Rosa and I met at freshman orientation, were roommates for two years, and I am so grateful for our lifelong friendship. I have seen firsthand Rosa's dedication to CNR over the years including as class president, director of the alumni board, and president of the Alumni Association. When CNR faced closure, she volunteered her time and expertise in the Office of Alumni Engagement. Her fellow alums recognize and appreciate that her enduring commitment continues, ensuring CNR's legacy lives on through Mercy College and within each of us."

Marlene Tutera, SAS '71, who now co-chairs the CNR Legacy Council with Rosa and

was the first recipient of the Mercy College Trustees' CNR Legacy Award in 2020, also paid tribute to her long-time friend.

"I first met Rosa almost 50 years ago at the College of New Rochelle. She was a student and I was a staff member. Throughout all those years our relationship has changed and grown. It is clear to me that in addition to our love and loyalty for CNR , we share so many common bonds. I've always looked to Rosa for leadership, friendship, and partnership. Working together on so many projects I have found her ability to listen, her honesty and integrity have made all of our time together so valuable. Whether on student projects, alumni issues and at the very worst time the crisis at the College, we have always looked to each other for support. As we continue forward, it is our friendship that I value the most."

Those same qualities were evident during her distinguished 38-year career at New York Life.

Several weeks after Rosa Napoleone graduated with a bachelor's degree from the College of New Rochelle in May, 1975, she started a training program at New York Life Insurance Company. She would spend the next 38 years of her life, there, rising in the rapidly-evolving Information Technology department to the position of vice president.

Rosa credits her CNR education with giving her "confidence – the ability to do things, to adapt, to learn." Working in a career field not then heavily populated by women and always changing with new technological advances and challenges, Rosa said CNR had taught her to be "open to new assignments." A double major in math and Italian, ("math was my great passion and Italian was a nice thing to do") her math courses gave her "strong analytical skills and critical thinking."

She said that another key part of her CNR education – the personal relationships with classmates, her work as a Resident Assistant and member of the Resident Staff, as well as her involvement in many student activities -was just as instrumental as her academic work in shaping her future, both professionally and personally.

"It was such a technical career," she noted. "I always tried to keep in mind the people. I nurtured people to bring out their hidden talents."

The many hours she quietly gave to mentor and nurture colleagues didn't go unnoticed or unappreciated. Rosa didn't want a large retirement party from New York Life in 2013, because "I don't like to be the center of attention." She said the many notes she received from those she had helped throughout her career "meant the most."

She continues to share her IT expertise – serving as an adviser to KnowledgeConnect, a group of executives from member companies sharing information on current topics including information security and working remotely during the worldwide pandemic.

Summing up how her well-rounded CNR education helped her in the business world, she said, "I felt a real sense of integrity. It guided me certainly in business. Whenever

challenged, I stood my ground. Whether you call it Serviam, I was always serving them in ways not so obvious.”

The impact of her CNR education on both her personal and professional life has been life-changing. She met her husband, George, early on in her career at New York Life and they were married in 1980 - where else but at CNR’s Holy Family Chapel. Rosa and George raised their son, Michael, in Valhalla where they also have actively served their parish, Holy Name of Jesus; the Valhalla Lions Club, and Hawthorne Boy Scout Troop 1, among many organizations.

Praising the support of her husband and son, Rosa said, “George, and later Michael, came to realize that CNR is in my DNA and it became intuitive for them to expect, and full-heartedly support, my involvement with CNR.

Rosa was particularly grateful that the CNR Legacy Award was presented at the Mercy College Trustees’ Scholarship Gala because she knows first-hand the importance of tuition assistance. When she was a student at St. Barnabas High School in the Bronx, Rosa and her parents decided she would commute to a nearby college (be a “day hop” as they were called then) from their Bronx home. When they toured CNR’s New Rochelle campus on a Sunday afternoon, they were impressed with not only its physical beauty, but the level of student engagement even on a weekend. Shortly after, Rosa learned she had been awarded a tuition scholarship to CNR. Her father insisted that she use the family money for room and board so that she could experience all that the college had to offer its students.

Since entering CNR as a freshman in the fall of 1971, Rosa has consistently given back – sharing her talents, loyalty and commitment to CNR. Now she continues to work tirelessly, in the rich spirit of Serviam, to keep the CNR legacy alive.

When accepting the Trustees CNR Legacy Award, Rosa concluded, “My efforts over the years have been driven from my desire to ‘pay it forward’ in return for the wonderful education I received and for the scholarships that made all of that possible. The fact that I am being honored here at the scholarship gala makes it all the more meaningful to me.”

- Pat Keegan Abels SAS '73  
CNR Alumni Communications Committee