



Wednesday, January 16, 2002

Vulaj leads annual fund-raising efforts

By *Jennifer Charney*, OU Staff Writer

For Julie Vulaj it was an easy decision to join the Oakland University staff as director of annual giving. She was already familiar with OU as a Rochester resident, knew several colleagues who work here, and was attracted to the university's reputation for excellence in educational fund raising.

Vulaj (pronounced "Voo-lye") came to Oakland after five years of fund raising, alumni relations and marketing at Walsh College in Troy. Before that, she spent almost 10 years at Ameritech working in human resources, product development and marketing.

When Vulaj arrived at OU last October, she hit the ground running.

"Because the last quarter of the year is a crucial time for people to make charitable contributions, we had to move quickly so alumni and friends could donate to the university," she said.

To assist in reaching as many OU supporters as possible, she hired Eclipse Outsource Services, a firm specializing in educational telemarketing.

"Thus far, I am very pleased with the results. Outsourcing the Telefund has enabled more alumni to be called and has freed my time to work on other important fund-raising efforts, such as the **All-University Fund Drive**, **Keeper of the Dream Banquet**, **President's Club**, Corporate Associates Program and hiring an assistant director.

Vulaj credits her enthusiasm for fund raising to those who taught her that the most important part of this business is establishing and maintaining relationships. With OU having almost 60,000 alumni, she has the daunting task of figuring out how to contact each and every one of them.

"There is a method to the madness," she said. "Developing good plans and using a variety of strategies is crucial. There isn't only one successful way of keeping our alumni in touch with the university. Plus, once they can hear and see what the university has accomplished, it's just a matter of time before they are willing to donate their time and/or money."

The **President's Club** is one successful vehicle that involves alumni and friends with the university. Membership offers donors the opportunity to become more involved with university programs and offers many benefits, including library access, discounts for **Meadow Brook Hall** and **Meadow Brook Theatre**, and access to **Katke-Cousins and R&S Sharf golf courses**. Alumni and friends' contributions to the President's Club enable important funding for OU programs and facilities. Another successful program, the Keeper of the Dream Banquet, makes it possible for some of the university's finest students to receive scholarships.

OU is fortunate to be surrounded by so many Fortune 500 companies, many in Automation Alley, Vulaj said.

"The university has wonderful relationships with them and within the community. This helps my fund-raising efforts immensely," she said.

Vulaj's goals include increasing the number and size of gifts to OU, developing stronger partnerships with corporate friends and community groups, and spending time with faculty and staff to help them understand the important role they play in fund raising.

"For our donors, I am simply here to serve as the conduit for them to make annual contributions," she said. "While it might seem simple, people want to be asked to donate. They often don't know how to go about making gifts. I'm happy to be here to help make this possible."

Vulaj has a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from Madonna University and a Master of Science degree in management from Walsh College. When she's not working, she's taking care of her 11-month old daughter, Dana, and spending time with her husband, Lee, an executive chef in Royal Oak.

She can be reached at John Dodge House at (248) 370-3700, extension 1693, or by e-mailing vulaj@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, January 16, 2002

Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, January 16, 2002

Article Start Date: Monday, January 23, 2006