Rhonda Frederick MPA ’03

Rhonda Frederick devotes her career to ensuring that those with special needs reach their full potentials. As president and chief executive officer of People Inc., Frederick advocates for her more than 12,000 clients and their families.

She joined Western New York’s leading not-for-profit health and human services agency in 1980, starting in a group home and working her way up through the ranks. Today, she is a mentor to nearly 4,000 employees and embodies the same passion, determination and enthusiasm she had when she joined People Inc. nearly 40 years ago.

Frederick was named chief operating officer in 2002 and under her watchful eye the agency saw improved outcomes, achieved operational excellence and expanded into independent senior housing. Frederick was also at the forefront of the agency’s commitment to person-centered solutions to improve the quality of life for individuals receiving support and services. Her efforts resulted in the agency receiving the coveted, national Person-Centered Excellence Accreditation from The Council on Quality and Leadership. In recognition of her dedication and success, Frederick became the agency’s president and chief executive officer in 2014.

A staunch supporter of making a difference in the community, Frederick serves on several boards including Amherst Meals on Wheels and the Buffalo Niagara Partnership. She fosters collaboration among agencies that support people with developmental disabilities and gives them a single voice in Albany through her service as president of the Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York. Frederick also serves as a certified ombudsman for the New York State Department of Health.

The recipient of countless awards and honors, Frederick received the Dr. Evan Calkins Meritorious Service Award from the Network in Aging of Western New York in 2003 for significant contributions to her field. Business First ranked her number six on its 2017 Power 100 Women list, a winner of its Health Care 50 award in 2014 and a Woman of Influence in 2009. LeadingAge NY named Frederick Professional of the Year in 2016.

For her dedication to advocacy and empowerment for those with special needs, Canisius College is proud to name Rhonda Frederick, from the graduate Class of 2003, a Distinguished Alumna.
Mary F. Roberts ’77

Mary F. Roberts studied accounting at Canisius College so it seems fitting that, today, she oversees one of Buffalo’s greatest assets.

As executive director of the Frank Lloyd Wright Darwin Martin House, Roberts manages the comprehensive restoration of the architectural masterpiece recognized around the world. Wright designed the residential estate in the early 1900s for Darwin Martin, a wealthy industrialist in Buffalo. Scholars consider the North Buffalo house to be one of the architect’s greatest achievements.

Roberts became involved with the Darwin Martin House in 1996. She and her husband, Tom, volunteered as tour guides. When a part-time position for an assistant director of finance opened up a few years later, Roberts saw it as an ideal opportunity to combine her two great interests: accounting and architecture. The organization later appointed Roberts director of finance just as it was about to undertake a restoration of the Jewett Parkway complex. She was named executive director in 2006.

Under Roberts’ leadership, the Martin House has raised approximately $50 million for the restoration of more than six major phases of renovation. Her efforts ensured that one of Frank Lloyd Wright’s most exquisite contributions to Buffalo architecture endured. Moreover, the restored home, which holds National Landmark status, has become a standout among the many revitalization efforts taking place across the city.

To help further Buffalo’s revitalization efforts, Roberts serves on the boards of directors for the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy and the Buffalo Niagara Partnership. She is also a member and chair-elect of Visit Buffalo Niagara, the region’s tourism agency.

For her vision of a 21st century Buffalo and for turning an architectural heritage into an engine for reinvention, Canisius College is proud to name Mary Roberts, from the Class of 1977, a Distinguished Alumna.
Intelligence plus character equals the true goal of higher education, in the eyes of Francis J. Felser.

Named president and chief executive officer of Bryant & Stratton College in 2015, Felser has since used his platform to execute a strategic plan that provides students of the private career college with a customized educational approach and arms them with the hard and soft skills necessary for their successful employment.

His holistic blueprint couples academic theory with real-world, career-related applications available to all of Bryant & Stratton's 14,000 students spread out across 19 campuses, nationwide. It also teaches students life skills – the important intangibles such as critical thinking, interpersonal skills, problem solving, teamwork and time management.

A dynamic leader with a heart for student success, Felser’s tenure at Bryant & Stratton is evidence of his dedication to higher education.

Over the course of his 25-plus year career, he served in several leadership positions including as chief academic officer, and executive vice president and chief administrative officer. Among his many accomplishments, Felser expanded Bryant & Stratton's digital learning approach and led the institution's transition from a nationally accredited college focused on skills-based training to a regionally accredited college that develops career-ready graduates.

Felser helps to ensure the institutional accountability, improvement and innovation of accredited higher education institutions throughout the Northeast, as a commissioner of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. In his role as a trustee for the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Felser performs similar peer evaluations and regional accreditations of public and private secondary and elementary schools.

For his advocacy of a higher education that prepares students for both their professions and life pursuits and for always measuring his success by the growth of others, Canisius College is proud to name Francis J. Felser, from the Class of 1981, a Distinguished Alumnus.
Canisius College Citation

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Walter D. Webdale ’57

Known as a pioneer in the field of urban renewal, Walter D. Webdale has been in the affordable housing business for more than 50 years.

Webdale was just 22 years old when he and his brother tackled their first housing project. With money they borrowed from their grandmother, the duo purchased and redeveloped an old stone barn in Western New York into three townhouses. The rest is history.

Today, as president and chief executive officer of AHC Inc., a nonprofit developer of affordable housing based in Arlington, VA, Webdale takes a holistic approach in providing housing for low- and moderate-income families. He takes pride in helping residents build stable and productive lives by offering high-quality homes and life-changing educational programs.

Under Webdale’s tutelage since 1999, AHC Inc. more than tripled its multifamily housing portfolio to 7,000 plus units at 50 properties. AHC’s award-winning resident services program is credited for reaching 3,000 children, teens, adults and seniors each year through onsite education programs and activities.

Prior to AHC, Webdale became the first director of the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development in 1974. During his 25-year tenure, the agency received national recognition as an innovator and leader in affordable housing.

Webdale began his career as director of urban renewal and director of the housing authority in Batavia, NY in 1963. He directed the redevelopment of the Glen Cove, NY business district and the revitalization of the Hudson riverfront in Yonkers, NY before joining the New York State Urban Development Corporation as director of projects for the Westchester County Office in 1971.

Webdale received several awards for his community service, including the prestigious President’s Choice Award from the Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers (HAND) in 2015 for lifetime achievement. In 2017, he was named to the AHOME Housing Hall of Fame.

In recognition of his excellence and leadership in the affordable housing industry coupled with his passionate commitment to community advocacy, Canisius College is proud to name Walter D. Webdale, from the Class of 1957, a Distinguished Alumnus.

NOVEMBER 18, 2017

JOHN J. HURLEY
PRESIDENT, CANISIUS COLLEGE
Ashli S. Dreher ’95

Innovator. Miracle-worker. Angel. These are just a few of the words parents use to describe special education teacher Ashli S. Dreher. Even though she's a certified school administrator, Dreher is happiest in the classroom.

Dreher teaches Lew-Port High School’s most severely handicapped students. She pours her heart and soul into her work by creating unique programming that achieves incredible results with students, particularly in the area of literacy. Even children whose parents were told they would never read achieve success with Dreher.

Her focus on community and volunteerism is what makes her a sterling example of what happens when an exceptional educator and concerned parents work together on behalf of students. Dreher engages parents and other family members to help students develop life skills. Her invaluable guidance continues outside the classroom as she places her special needs children in internships with local businesses to better prepare them for the workplace.

A dissertation-level student at the University of Rochester’s Margaret Warner School of Education and Human Development, Dreher is a role model for aspiring and current teachers. She has published multiple articles and has spoken at statewide conferences on the topics of transition, parental involvement, educational reform and student preparation for future pathways. Dreher also develops, hosts and helps produce Inside the Classroom, an award-winning educational television program which broadcasts on several stations throughout New York State.

Dreher is the recipient of multiple awards and fellowships, including a Fund for Teachers Fellowship in 2016 to travel to Australia and the United Kingdom, as well as a National Education Global Trust Fellowship in 2015 to visit schools in Peru. Earlier this year, Dreher was inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame. She is the first educator from the Buffalo Niagara region to achieve this prestigious honor.

For her excellence in teaching, exceptional scholarship and tireless efforts on behalf of her students, Canisius College is proud to name Ashli S. Dreher, from the Class of 1995, a Distinguished Alumna.
Michael J. Edbauer MBA ’12, DO

An innovator in the field of medical management and health care consulting, Michael J. Edbauer, DO, firmly believes that efficiency and cost-effectiveness are compatible with superior patient care.

As president and chief executive officer of Catholic Medical Partners (CMP), Dr. Edbauer helps to reshape the model of medical care in Western New York. The first physician to run CMP since it was formed in 1996, Dr. Edbauer oversees a network of more than 1,000 physicians and five institutional member hospitals. He leads the organization’s clinical and quality improvement agenda and is critical to CMP’s many successes.

Dr. Edbauer joined CMP in 2006 as chief medical officer and was named president and chief executive officer in 2016. He is credited with helping the group’s physicians and the system better respond to the ongoing transformation of how health care is delivered. CMP supported members’ clinical practices, which led to the adoption of electronic health records and participation in an accountable care organization that lowered spending on Medicare patients. Under his direction, CMP also achieved accreditation from the National Committee for Quality Assurance in disease management of coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure and diabetes.

In 2010, he established Trinity Medical WNY, PC, a group of board-certified physicians dedicated to providing people of all ages with the highest quality of compassionate primary medical care.

Dr. Edbauer stood out early as a rising star in the Buffalo Niagara medical profession. He was just 39 when his performance as chief operating officer and medical director of Promedicus Health Group earned him a place on Business First’s annual “40 Under Forty” roster.

For his exemplary work in the field of medical management and for his dedication to superior patient care, Canisius College is proud to name Dr. Michael J. Edbauer, from the graduate Class of 2012, a Distinguished Alumnus.