

## **Kersch leaves after eight healthy years**

*From the Rensselaer, NY, Polytechnic Institute newspaper.*

After eight years of dedication and commitment to the students at Rensselaer, Terri Kersch, health educator in the Student Health Center, will depart on Wednesday, December 12. During her tenure, Kersch brought Relay for Life to campus, coordinated Safe Zone trainings, and helped freshmen navigate the social scene during their student orientation.

She made it her mission to “empower and champion students,” urging them to “against all odds, be true to yourself.”

“We are very sad about her leaving,” said the Student Health Center’s medical director, Dr. Leslie Lawrence, on behalf of the office. “She was such a big resource to our students and had a great rapport with them.”

Before joining Rensselaer in 1999, Kersch was an instructor at Hudson Valley Community College where she taught health and wellness. When she came to Rensselaer, the “captive audience” that she was accustomed to as a teacher did not exist. She said that she had worked hard to develop this by becoming a “seamless” resource available to students through many different avenues.

“As an educator and trainer, Terri created substantive programs with positive outcomes. She will always be remembered for her enthusiasm, unconditional caring for students, effervescent smile, and the red wagon filled with helpful information,” remarked Vice President for Student Life Eddie Ade Knowles.

Dean of Students Mark Smith, who had arrived at Rensselaer around the same time as Kersch, said “We’ve worked very closely over the years. ... She was instrumental in developing the Sexual Assault Response Team and the Good Samaritan Policy.”

Leaving, Kersch said, “was a tough decision to make.” Most of all, she will miss “our students and the enthusiasm of all.”

While Kersch hopes to always be involved in college health, at the moment she has no plans for after she leaves Rensselaer, though she insists she is not retiring. “This is no longer a good fit for me,” Kersch said, “There is no flexibility anymore.”

Kersch stated that she has enjoyed the many aspects of her job and that the interaction with students is most important to her, but she also explained that her time has become strained recently in balancing work with her other campus involvements.

According to Lawrence, the next health educator will have big shoes to fill, with many of Kersch’s initiatives built into the job description as well as a changeover from a part-time to full-time position.

Having had the opportunity to work with many unique individuals and groups over the years, Kersch said she has learned a lot about the students and herself. “I’ve loved working with the athletes,” she said, adding she has “gained a great deal of respect for greeks.”

Kersch also helped run the Training for Intervention Procedures, which is offered to many greeks to help prevent intoxication, underage drinking, and drunk driving. In addition to the TIPS training, she has helped greek houses by holding alcohol seminars and risk management workshops.

“Terri will be greatly missed, but her special mark of ‘Have a Healthy Day!’ has truly changed our world,” Delta Phi fraternity brother James Rajotte ’08 said, alluding to the mantra that always accompanies her e-mails.

“I have been truly impressed by the incredible challenges that students at Rensselaer are accepting,” Kersch admitted.

“Terri Kersch has been an invaluable member of Rensselaer’s Student Health Center. Her contributions as health educator have served to elevate student awareness, as well as the knowledge of other members of the Rensselaer family, about the importance of healthy lifestyles,” Knowles stated. “I will always be indebted to Terri for her unwavering commitment to the improvement of the quality of life for students.”

Lawrence added that he was always impressed by “the ease at which she can relate to students, gain their trust, and get them to open up to her.”

Kersch, who has a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minn. and a master’s degree in health education from Russell Sage College, noted that while she may not be working here anymore, she will be back to visit and to walk in the next Relay for Life.