De Meo carries on tradition of teaching chemistry

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De Mia carries on teaching of teaching chemistry

Chemistry is one of those areas of science that people find difficult – even some to the point of fearing it. Yet, there are those chemistry professors who exude such enthusiasm into the subject that it made not only easy to understand, but actually exciting. One such professor is Cristina De Meo, an associate professor of chemistry at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. De Meo was born in Catania, Sicily, Italy. She obtained her master’s degree in bioorganic chemistry at the University of Catania and her doctorate in organic chemistry at the University of Bologna. She has been a chemistry department colleague and collaborators for many years, working on cancer treatment methods with those she learned from her native Italy. She, in turn, comes from a long line of teachers. Her father and two of her grandparents were teachers. De Meo said, “I always knew being a teacher because at that time in Sicily not many women had an education. “De Meo said. “She was a high school teacher, but she was not very common at that time particularly in the south of Italy. My mother never wanted to be a teacher because her family was not wealthy. “Then by the time I was deciding to do a PhD, the desire of having a career was because it can be applied to everything. Organic is very exciting, and carbohydrates – which my expertise is – is a core topic of Aldemaro Romero College Talk science in this field today.” In her work at SLUE, De Meo can often be found in her lab surrounded by the sounds produced by vacuum pumps. When asked what makes a good teacher, she answered with hesitation. “What I think is the main point is to let students know that you care for them and I think this is what I try to show them from the first lecture,” she said. “Like, for example, I write my syllabus in a personal way, I introduce reflective one by one in the first lecture and by the end of the semester I know each name of my students. Probably I won’t remember all of them in one year but I really try to show them that they are not number, but they are human beings and I care for them.” De Meo teaches up to 150 students per semester, mostly by a subject considered to be the “tough one” in a new organic chemistry. “It is not because it is difficult, it is because students haven’t received the enthusiasm into the subject that it is made. “They have done that general chemistry, so they have, as we say in Italy ‘they have felt the magic when you are cooking, and you put some flour on top of your food, but they haven’t been trained with a little bit of hard work and working with instructors, students can earn a good grade. So I think if you read the textbook, it will have problems.”

The Children’s Museum plans birthday bash

For the Intelligencer

The Children’s Museum of Edwardsville will celebrate its 9th birthday bash on Saturday, February 3, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. It features the celebration of a complete month-long event with activities and crafts, and will be an educational event for ages 4-12.

Children’s Museum’s director said the birthday bash is being held to celebrate the museum. “It’s our birthday bash for the children and we have others with us.”

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Christine Brewer Sings Strauss, Powell Hall, St. Louis, 8 p.m.

Kim Masse & The Solid Senders, Wildey Theatre, Edwardsville, 8 p.m.

Rare Earth, Wildey Theatre, Edwardsville, 8 p.m.

Shan Lu/SUlle Photo

The activities that I am doing in my organic chemistry class are coming from my educational background,” said De Meo. “In Italy every course since middle school, maybe even elementary school, is real. So if you do not write, unless you are able to. I always say to the students, ‘If you call me one day, you don’t know when, and you call me, I don’t know why, then they can ask you anything. In college we do not do it anymore, because after a couple of months you have a test. I think the faculty is from this committee, and some other people that are trained and they can do it formal, they can start with formal tests. Some tests we might not be the best, but in teaching science is talking in science. So sometimes during a test I have a question mark or a pointer or a PowerPoint presentation to give them the skill of talking science.”

Be a teacher because you care in the classroom. “I think is the main point is to let students know that you care for them and I think this is what I try to show them from the first lecture,” she said. “I like, for example, I write my syllabus in a personal way, I introduce descriptive one by one in the first lecture and by the end of the semester I know each name of my students. Probably I won’t remember all of them in one year but I really try to show them that they are not number, but they are human beings and I care for them.”

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Saturday, January 14


Kim Masse & The Solid Senders, Wildey Theatre, Edwardsville, 8 p.m.

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