# An iBook in Every Backpack

## UWM alumna Christine Faltz conceived and now directs the Central City Cyberschool

*by Laura L. Hunt*

**i**t was one of those outrageous ideas layered with obstacles: an inner city school where students would have access to technology all the time, woven into every kind of learning they did. A school where the children each had their own laptops to use even when they weren't at school. A school where the computers were all wireless, where chalkboards were replaced by touch-sensitive "smart" boards," and where the students did most of the computer maintenance.

Yeah, right.

Former teacher and UWM alumna Christine Faltz not only conceived such a school, but – with some help from former Milwaukee Housing Authority Director (and fellow alum) Ricardo Diaz, officials at Johnson Controls, and former Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent Howard Fuller – she was largely responsible for turning it into reality.

Faltz was involved in everything from planning the school building to formulating the curriculum to picking out the colorful décor. Diaz was instrumental in bringing the school to Milwaukee's Parklawn neighborhood. Faltz and Diaz were both honored with School of Education Alumni Achievement Awards last year.

The Milwaukee Central City Cyberschool (C³) opened Sept. 5 next to the Parklawn YMCA with 400 students in grades 1-8.

The mission of the cyberschool, a charter school sponsored by the City of Milwaukee, is to serve children whose families otherwise would not have access to technology. The technology, Faltz explains, is a means to an end. The primary goal of C³ is to turn out students who have mastered academics in a computerized environment, giving them the same advantages as students whose families own computers.

"You don't develop the skills for a new workforce from borrowed equipment. The idea of having the technology '24/7' is the only way I could see children really absorbing it," she says. "The lab experience, where a school has a separate room that houses all their computers, doesn't work because they can't integrate it into all of their subjects."

How she found the money and navigated the

*Chalk one up for the optimist. Former high school teacher and UWM alumna Christine Faltz, executive director of the school, dreamed up the concept and then made it happen – with a lot of help from her friends.*