

# DCEC BUZZ

## Carolyn's Reflections on 28 Years at DCEC

*To the Parents, Staff  
and Board of Day Care  
for Exceptional  
Children :*

As I retire after 28 years with Day Care for Exceptional Children and 41 years working with children with special needs I want to reflect on the changes, challenges and rewards.

First of all, I want to thank all the staff of Day Care for Exceptional Children who have made the success of our program possible. They are too many to remember individual, but you all know what your contributions have been. We have all seen our frustrations and laughed and sometimes cried together. Two particular staff come to mind as mentors to me years ago.

### *Gratitude*

My first year in this field was with the Des Moines Public School at Slinker (forerunner of Ruby Van Meter) School. I was fresh

out of college, with a degree but no experience and probably no common sense. A wonderful lady with no degree and lots of experience and knowledge guided me through my first months with grace.

Over the years, I have been overwhelmed with some of the most dedicated parents in the world. When most of us spend a few years with very intense

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care of our young children, some of our parents continue that special care for years. An extra thanks to a small group of parents who came together in 1976-77 when we were in serious danger of closing and saved the agency.

Board members also are too numerous to mention. A few of the persons who come to mind because they

were there in some very difficult times for Day Care for Exceptional Children are Nancy Beghtel, Sharla Fredrickson, Sue Glassnapp and Sharon Porter. The whole list of wonderful board members who gave freely of their time is too long to mention, so please know that you are appreciated; from 1974 to our 2003 president, Elizabeth Hendrix.

### *Family*

I owe a great deal to my family who supported me and probably gave up more than I know because of my job. My sons, Mike and Steve, always attempted to stay away from Day Care in their high school days. I think it is ironic that they are both married to women in the health, education and human services field.

My grandchildren, Max and Zoe, have expanded their knowledge about kids with special needs at “Grandma’s Day Care”. My husband, Marion, grew used

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Day Care for  
Exceptional Children  
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### Current Board

#### Issues

- ☺ The Condition of the Playground at Beaver
- ☺ Funding for the Renovation of Beaver Playground
- ☺ Technology Upgrades
- ☺ New Board Members

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## Carolyn's Farewell Letter, (Continued from page 1)

to Day Care needs taking precedent over household plans.

### *Beginnings*

As I look back on the last 41 years, I can't help but to think about some of the profound changes in the field. One of the first that comes to mind is in the whole field of education and makes me feel that I started in the

"A new program was being started by Polk County, the United Cerebral Palsy Association and Easter Seals. It was designed to provide a day program for children.."

19<sup>th</sup> century instead of the 20<sup>th</sup>. As I mentioned, I taught for the Des Moines School District. I started in the Fall of 1961 and quit in April of 1962 because I was pregnant. The baby wasn't due until June, but I had to quit as soon as I started "showing". In reality, I worked quite a while after that and I'm sure it wasn't any secret.

### *Transitions*

My next job was a part-time position at the Easter Seals Center. A new program was being started by Polk County Retarded Citizens (Link), the United Cerebral Palsy Association and Easter Seals. It was designed to provide a day program for children who were classified as "un-educable". As I recall, anyone whose IQ was under 50 was placed in this category and were not allowed to attend public school. For the most part of the years from 1962 to 1969- the "group" was composed of seven children and me! Four of the kids were in wheel chairs, the other three were severely delayed. The causes of the disabili-

ties at that time are gone or nearly so, only to be replaced by others.

Polio, RH Negative Factor, Spinal Bifida without early treatment and Rubella were some of the causes for the conditions of the kids in the program. Raymond Thornton and Tom Eastman were two of the children from this time period and I was honored to have them at my retirement party. Another mentor in my career was Norman Miller who was then the director of the Easter Seals Center. Since I was alone with the kids, Norman and other staff came to my rescue often.

In 1976 the school laws changed to allow a public education for all children. At the same time, we were displaced from the Easter Seals Center. We found a new home in the old Washington Irving School at 16<sup>th</sup> and Forest in Des Moines. The building was huge, old and run down but provided us with space at a very difficult time in our history! One personal plus was access to the regulation gym in the building which my sons enjoyed! Unfortunately, it was on the second floor and not wheel chair accessible - little was in the 1970's. When we moved there, we only had three children for a while.

### *Challenges*

Many community people felt that there was no need for our program because of the availability of a school program for our clients. During this time, there were bitter feelings on the part of many people who, before the new law were unwelcome in the public school system and then overnight were forced to attend public school. We decided to stick it out and see what would happen, well 26 years later we still have a program

and 115 children. I guess there was a need!

In 1984, the furnace in the Washington Irving building completely broke; it had been limping along for some time. We shared the building with several other agencies, but even collectively we didn't have enough money for a new furnace and it didn't seem like putting a new furnace in the building was a smart idea. This was in October and there we were with no heat! We managed to find a location to rent in a matter of days. One of our staff who was on vacation, joked that we tried to move while she was gone and not tell her where we had

"Again, parents came to the rescue and helped to move the center over the weekend and we were back in business on Monday morning."

gone because of the quickness of the move. Again, parents came to the rescue and helped to move the center over the weekend and we were back in business on Monday morning. That building was our center in Beaverdale.

### *Present Day*

Because of our increasing population and the summer program, we soon had a need for more space. We leased property at Calvary Baptist Church and made improvements to unfinished space in their ground floor. Later, space was still inadequate during the summer months. We leased space for the summer-only at Grace Lutheran Church and later at Grace Methodist. In 1997 the building at 24<sup>th</sup> and Woodland in Des Moines became available and was purchased to

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## Staff Focus: Craig Kaufman

Hi! My name is Craig Kaufman and I was hired in January to fill the Social Living Lead Teacher position.

Previously, I've had quite a few odd jobs, such as fence-builder, lighting crew supervisor, sound technician, carpet cleaner, construction worker, and Upward Bound Tutor/Mentor. I still do some of them from time to time.

I graduated from Cascade High School in 1998 and will receive my diploma from Simpson College in May of this year.



I have two brothers, Eric and Ed, and my parents are Mark and Ann. I enjoy doing many things in my free-time including golfing, fishing, hunting, biking, playing guitar, and running sound and music

equipment for plays and concerts.

I am looking forward to the upcoming summer break and the activities that lie ahead both with the Social Living group and the entire Day Care!

### Job Opening!

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Day Care is seeking to hire a

**Substitute Assistant-Teacher**

to start immediately!

Contact Brian at the Beaver Center for more information (274-2831).

## News Briefs

### Beaver Playground

The number-one issue of concern at present is the surfacing on the **Beaver Center Playground**, which has been determined to be worn-out, and Day Care administration is scrambling to secure a replacement. The best estimate for upgrading the Playground so far is **\$77,000+**, most of which is for surfacing. Because of the age of the children, State Regulations will not allow wood-chips for the surfacing, as was used for the **Woodland Playground**. Day Care administ-

-rator **James Cahill** is waiting to hear back from several foundations regarding grants, and the **Fundraising Committee** has staged several successful events for the Playground, the most recent being a raffle at the **Beaverdale Fall Festival**. Anyone who is interested in helping with future fundraising events should contact **Tina Goff** at the Beaver Center (274-2831), or **Shannon Morrow**, head of the parent fund-raising committee.

### Changes in Staff

DCEC has recently hired a new administrator, **James Cahill**, who has taken over for **Carolyn Wissler**. The Woodland Center has had a new lead teacher, **Craig Kaufman**, a new assistant teacher, **Ernesta Martinez**, and a new Food Manager, **Donna Sanford**. **Jenny Brown** has been promoted to Lead Teacher/On-site Director. The Beaver Center now has another part-time assistant teacher—**Becky Dunbar**, and several valuable substitutes.

## What to Watch For...

### March

**3/12-3/14:** Conferences for DMPS Day Care Open

**3/17-3/22:** Spring Break for DMPS Day Care Open

(If you would like your child to attend during conferences and/or

Spring Break and have not reserved a place for them, speak with Jenny or Brian ASAP!)

**3/18:** All-Staff Meeting

**3/20:** Spring Begins (officially)

**3/27:** Board Meeting

### April

**4/6:** Day Light Savings Time Begins. Set Clocks one hour ahead.

**4/20:** Easter

**4/22:** Earth Day

**4/24:** Board Meeting



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TO PROVIDE DAY CARE SERVICES TO PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY CHALLENGED CHILDREN IN ORDER FOR THEM TO REMAIN IN THE FAMILY/HOME SETTING.



## Carolyn's Farewell Letter, Finale

*(continued from page 2)*

replace the year-round space at Calvary Baptist and the summer space at Grace Methodist. No longer did we have to move to a summer location every year for three months, and then back in the fall.

### *Conclusion*

We have survived many other issues from budget cuts, staff shortages, staff and staff's children's deaths, and deaths of our children and their parents. We've celebrated the little things, like a child learning to walk or children graduating to face new challenges; and celebrated with staff for graduations, weddings, births of children and other day to day victories. We have had some of the most dedicated staff around. We learned how to deal with Blood-borne pathogens

and in 1993 - how to run a Day Care center without running water.

Again, thanks to all who have been a part of my life for the last 41 years.

“We’ve celebrated the little things, like a child learning to walk or children graduating to face new challenges...”

Sincere appreciation goes to Mary Wambold who was my right hand person until April of 2002 and to three staff who have been with Day Care for over 10 years - Brian Fett, Jennifer Stark, and Julie Bedard. Brian along with Jenny Brown and Karl Schmidt have been a special help over the last months as I have been in the

retirement process.

With the current staff and Board, Day Care for Exceptional Children should make it another 28 years.

Sincerely, Carolyn Wissler

**OLD Computer Games  
Wanted!**

Day Care has several “vintage” computers for the kids to practice typing and play games on. If you have any **old educational-computer games** that you would like to donate, speak with Karl at the Woodland Center (280-5446)!