

## BARBARA GRIFFITH

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Barbara Griffith had worked for eight years in church summer camps and had been program director for a Y-Teen program in Ohio. She'd raised three children and was well on her way to becoming a grandmother.

That's why, at age 44, she decided to go to college to earn a degree in psychology. She started at Manatee Community College in Bradenton, then attended the honors college of the University of South Florida in Sarasota. Following an additional four years of study, she earned a master's degree at USF. She was 50.

Today, Barbara Griffith is executive director of Growing Together, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to helping children who are involved in substance abuse. She is in charge of both the administrative and the counseling ends of the program, two big jobs.

"Together with my administrative assistant, I create the budget, oversee the financial and clerical aspects, take care of staffing and am responsible for building maintenance," said Griffith. "My program director and I watch over the clinical aspects of the organization."

Griffith and a staff of 23 are helping 54 adolescents get their lives back on track.

"Although we are licensed for a residential program, we keep no clients in-house," said Griffith. "Children move from Phase 1 to Phase 6. Parents of clients provide host homes for children who are in a lower phase than their child. It's a condition of belonging to the program. And we counsel both parents and their children. We're very heavy on family involvement."

Just getting through Phase 1 can take 60 to 120 days, but the system seems to be working. About 14 staff members are former clients trained to be peer counselors. They are supervised by professionals.

Griffith, who says she has always loved "working for kids," was brought into the program just 11 months after its inception in May 1987. She had been recommended by parents who knew her from her practicum work with Life Is For Everyone while she was in school in Sarasota.

"I'm a licensed marriage and family therapist, a licensed mental health counselor, a licensed minister and a certified addiction professor, so I have a lot of things hanging on my wall," said Griffith. "They represent a lot of years of work, but I'm doing something I enjoy. I feel if you're doing something you don't enjoy, you shouldn't be doing it."

Personal: Single; three children-- Donald, 40; Shelly, 37; and Ronald, 35. A five year resident of Lake Worth.

Birthplace: Alliance, Ohio.

Car: 1988 Olds Cutlass.

The best thing about Lake Worth: The people I work with and the winter weather.

The worst thing about Lake Worth: The summer weather. I really hate the humidity.

My greatest asset: My ability to work with people, especially kids.

My biggest weakness: Codependency-- I want to control, take care of and fix everyone.

My greatest accomplishment: Receiving my master's degree in counseling at age 50.

My personal hero: My grandmother. She taught me to laugh, to sing, to love life and to love God.

The best thing about being executive director of Growing Together: Seeing adolescents turn their lives around.

The worst thing about being executive director of Growing Together: Watching an adolescent turn his back on an opportunity to receive help, support and love; and seeing what has happened to families in our society.

My favorite midnight snack: Frozen yogurt.

The last good book I read: Nonfiction--Shame and Pride by Donald Nathanson. Fiction-- The Firm by John Grisham.

The last good movie I saw: The Bear. "I love nature movies."

If I couldn't be executive director of Growing Together, I'd probably . . . : Do some type of volunteer work with families. I believe the family is a God-given privilege that needs a lot of nurturing in today's society.

My personal philosophy: Do all I can do in any given situation to solve -- then let go and be at peace with myself.

Any other words of wisdom: Growing and developing the spiritual side of my life has been the most important aspect of my maturing that has provided consistency for me.

DEBORAH WELKY

- **Memo:** People to Watch

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