

Retired Executive Director Most Proud of Transforming Young Lives

Carol Clinton has retired from Lake Worth West Community Center after 12 years as executive director.

She reflects on how she helped started most of the programs offered by our Center and what she has enjoyed most about her job over the years.

What I've loved most is watching the children grow up from toddlers to teenagers and then heading off to college. For many, going off to college was a milestone for their families with them being the first to attend a college. It's so nice that we as a center played a big role in that and helped these young people make the right decisions about staying in school, graduating, going to college and then starting out in their careers.

I loved it when our "kids" came back to visit. Many of them are so tall now and they have to bend down to give me a hug! They tell us how we helped shape their lives. For me, it's a deep feeling of pride knowing how we helped transform their lives and make them productive citizens.

One of the ways our center has made so much impact in the community was being part of the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County's BRIDGES program. As one of 10 BRIDGES sites in the county, Lake Worth West Community Center has been addressing the sentinel outcomes in the program (promoting healthy births, reducing child abuse and neglect, and preparing children for kindergarten) and putting a significant emphasis on early childhood literacy. Since most of our families are immigrants from Central and South America, we created many workshops, seminars and other events to acclimate

them to their new community. We offered programming to help parents become better parents and understand how to make their children succeed in school. We also focused on helping our families get to know other families so they could adjust better to their new lives here.

We've had many other partners in achieving our objectives. In addition to the Children's Services Council, we've also worked closely with the School District of Palm Beach County to educate parents about the importance of getting their children to read and attend school regularly. These are both critical in keeping children on grade level and making sure they will graduate on time.

In all my jobs, I've worked with staffs to help families break the cycle of poverty. The work often involved helping people make the right choices and having options to better their lives.

I'm grateful to have been part of changing many lives over the years.

As I said, nothing has warmed my heart more than seeing our young people grow up to become successful and productive individuals. I've always encouraged my staffs to be there for our youth – and it's paid off.