



**Wharton County
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SERVING A CRUCIAL ROLE

WCJC Human Services graduate helps abused children as forensic interviewer

BAY CITY, TEXAS – Working with abused children requires a delicate balance of compassion and objectivity – qualities that Wharton County Junior College graduate Brittany Wisch has developed over the course of her life.

“Whether it’s fostering abandoned animals or helping kids, I feel like I’ve always been drawn toward advocating for others,” said Wisch, a West Columbia native. “It’s always been my hope that I can help out in some small way.”

As a forensic interviewer for The Crisis Center – which provides services for abused women and children in Matagorda and Wharton counties – Wisch spends her days talking with children who have oftentimes endured unspeakable acts of violence or abuse. Her job is to help determine whether or not abuse has occurred and, if so, provide evidence that can later be used in criminal prosecution.

Sound like a tough job? It is, says Eugene Davis, The Crisis Center’s executive director and Wisch’s boss.

“Not everyone can do it,” Davis said. “You have to have a sense of concern for the child while remaining objective in order to elicit the necessary information. The forensic interviewer is a key individual who serves a crucial role.”

Wisch started the job in January after obtaining her associate degree in human services from WCJC in 2015. Her eyes were quickly opened.

“I had no idea what some children have to go through,” she said.

Davis said Wisch possesses the necessary personality and education to do the job – and do it well.

“Brittany has an understanding of what needs to take place,” Davis said. “She’s a quick learner who never fails to take the initiative.”

Wisch credits WCJC – and, specifically, Human Services Program Director Victoria Schultz – with providing a good foundation on which to build her skills.

“I felt pretty comfortable coming into this job,” Wisch said. “My human services classes directly applied to my work.”

Wisch noted that Schultz’s classes prepared her for additional education as well. She will obtain a bachelor’s in psychology from the University of Houston-Victoria this summer and intends to pursue her master’s degree.

Program graduates typically major in human services, psychology, social work, sociology and criminal justice.

Schultz said one of her highest goals is to ensure program graduates are well equipped for what they will face in the job market or at a four-year university.

“I really strive to challenge my students because I know what reality is,” she said. “We have a well-rounded program.”

The human services program offers a one-year certificate option (38 semester credit hours) and a two-year associate degree (60 credit hours). Courses include conducting patient interviews, developing treatment plans and handling crisis intervention. Graduates pursue careers in fields like social work, child welfare, criminal justice, family services and mental health.

Students pursuing an associate degree in human services are required to complete a practicum or clinical at an area hospital, counseling center or state department. Schultz has arrangements with 17 different practice sites in order to provide students with wide-ranging field experience.

Wisch completed her practicums at Texana in Wharton and the Wharton County juvenile and adult probation departments. One of the department’s administrators encouraged her to apply for The Crisis Center job.

“A lot of people told me not to do it because it would be so hard,” Wisch said. “I really didn’t think I would be so drawn to forensics but I have really found it fascinating.”

Schultz is not surprised that Wisch has stepped up to the plate in such a challenging career. During her time at WCJC, Wisch was named the Outstanding Student in Human Services and also won the Pelican Grace Award, an accolade created by Schultz to recognize students who excel in the classroom and community.

In addition, Schultz asked Wisch to co-author a paper that will be presented at this year’s National Organization for Human Services conference.

“She’s an exceptional student and has been a great mentor for so many others,” Schultz said.

For more information on the WCJC Human Services Program, visit: www.wcjc.edu

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