

Next Chapter: Diane Widdifield Interview

Diane Widdifield, M.Ed. (school psychologist)

DP: Briefly summarize how you got started at CRG. When? Why?

DW: Julie Steck hired me to join Professional Psychological Services in 1981 or '82. We had met through our mutual work at the Indiana School for the Deaf. She and Ray Kinder were working at PPS then; they had come up through the school psychology doctoral programs. I had been at the School for the Deaf for 13 years at that point and was looking for new challenges. I sent letters to schools and to Julie and she got back to me right away. They were doing evaluations on kids with cochlear implants. Julie said they needed someone who knew sign language. But Julie had also been thinking of launching her own practice, focusing on the emotional and learning needs of kids. As the story is told, one day she and I pushed some furniture across the hall and CRG was born! Ray joined soon thereafter, as did Nancy Lindhjem (another school psychologist at CRG). Julie and Ray had a real vision of what this could be: psychological, medical, and educational services under one roof, staffed by professionals who collaborated to provide integrated services.

DP: How has CRG changed during the time you have worked here? How has it stayed the same?

DW: It has expanded tremendously. Testing has always been CRG's central focus. Individual and family therapy are newer services. Medication management became a newer focus, too, with the hiring of a psychiatrist. In terms of what has always been true of CRG, I would identify the desire to treat the whole person as opposed to, "Here's your report; see you later." We always strive to provide clients with a comprehensive plan of attack to help them at different points in their lives. Our goal is to help clients do better in school, socially, at college, in the workplace...

DP: You have made so many important contributions to CRG over the years. What contributions do you feel proudest of? What you would like your legacy to be here?

DW: Well, I've enjoyed working with kids and doing that work one-to-one in general. I started out as a classroom teacher, you know, but never liked having to impose the discipline. Behavioral problems in one-on-one settings is rare. I have always wanted families to feel like we were on their side. We would do the best we could to support them. Nancy Lindhjem and I got trained and brought career assessments here as a new service. It helps students (and parents) who don't know where they're going to avoid failures.

DP: Compared to other behavioral healthcare practices, do you think CRG is unique in any way?

DW: Collaboration (almost an instant collaboration that occurs here) saves kids and parents time and frustration. CRG's collaborative approach makes the process so much smoother and effective. From intake to testing to therapy to medications to consultation with the schools; it can happen quickly. Parents can be sure that solid and ongoing communication with the

schools and others will play out. Coordinated care; it all happens right here. I think that's a unique and invaluable characteristic to client care.

DP: Not to disrespect the men at CRG, but do you think CRG's culture in any way reflects the impact of its female workforce? If so, how?

DW: For a long time, Ray Kinder was the only man here and I admire him getting through all the estrogen! Nurturing and supporting our clients is a big part of what we do. The men who have joined us have fit well into that mold, too.

DP: As you finalized your plans for retirement, what kinds of emotions did you experience?

DW: I knew there'd be a time when I knew it would be that time. A significant pull on my personal time, which is here with the upcoming birth of my triplet grandchildren... I've loved my career but it was getting harder to balance it with lots of exciting things in my personal life.

DP: What are some of your plans now for this new chapter in your life?

DW: There are a lot of things I said I'd do with more time. December included time with family in both Arizona and California. I volunteer at my church's food pantry and am on the board of its CenterPoint Counseling services. I want to do more cooking and exercise. I want to have time to enjoy and be spontaneous, to enjoy people in my life. And, of course, to enjoy time with my three new grandchildren who will probably be born in January.

DP: Is there anything you'd like to say in this article to the clients and families who come to CRG?

DW: I really have total confidence in the people working here. You couldn't find better people or a better business plan, with its focus on treating the whole child/person. If we can't meet all your needs, we'll help you find people who can. CRG is all about helping you create a plan for "comfortable independence."