



*Karen Reibetanz...  
Work is Love Made Visible by Betty Banks*

Dr. Karen Reibetanz is someone you notice when she walks into a room. Her meticulous style always includes matching shoes and tasteful jewelry. She is smart, well educated and the Executive Director and CEO for FocusCorp, an organization that provides a variety of services for people with disabilities, including, transportation, horticultural therapy, pre-vocational skills, music therapy, and transitional services for people returning to their communities, a service that Karen is passionate about because this service allows people to live in their home communities if they have the funding for proper supports.



"That funding is shrinking, she says. "Some counties do not have the money that will allow people to function on a daily basis. Fewer resources tend to make parents fearful and they are reluctant for their children to participate in these services", she adds.

When disabled people come for services, they are met with comfortable surroundings, people who really care about them and opportunities to become part of the larger community.

Karen believes strongly in inclusion. It is interesting how this became a value for her. Her parents came here from Germany and settled in Wisconsin. She

talks about her father who believed in fairness and reaching out to others. Karen was raised in Manitowoc which is a mainly white environment and she never came into contact with people of color until coming to the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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The first African American woman to live in a residence hall on this campus lived in Chadbourne Hall on the same floor with Karen. "This was a bigger deal for parents than it was for students. She and I soon realized what we had in common and we became friends," she went on to say. Her commitment to inclusiveness carries over in her leadership style. She works hard at this.

She also gives much credit to Milton Graham who is a co-founder of Focuscorp and is in charge of personnel. "We want people on our staff who will thrive in an environment of diversity," she adds. And, when you walk into this agency, you are immediately struck by the esthetics. Wall hangings and pictures that depict different races and cultures are tastefully presented.

Her interest in disabilities became clear when she pursued her education at the University of Wisconsin that took

her all the way to a doctorate in speech and language therapy and mental retardation. "I knew I wanted to stay in this field after completing an internship at St. Colletta's School, she goes on to say. The field continues to benefit from her knowledge and passion.

Karen enjoys another role she plays in this community. She is chair of the Town of Madison Community Services Committee, a position that she got after serving on the Parks Commission for the Town. "I was asked to look at funding requests that the Commission received and after awhile I suggested that a separate committee be formed and I became the chair," she said. Eventually, this committee morphed into a five member group who make funding decisions for agencies that provide activities for youth in the Town of Madison and South Madison.

This particular group of people, under the capable leadership of Reibetanz are thoughtful about the decisions they make. She guides discussions that really get to the heart of what makes the difference in the lives of youth. Committee member and NAACP President Linda Hoskins, often says that she enjoys the work of this committee because there is such open discussion and members respect all opinions. This is echoed by others on the committee.

Karen surrounds herself with friends of many persuasions. It is just how she lives her life. For many their everyday lives do not include others who are different from them. This is not so, for Dr. Karen Reibetanz. She lives her values and is comfortable reaching out across many different boundaries. Focuscorp and this community are beneficiaries of her lifelong commitment to her vision for the inclusion of everyone who strive for a decent quality of life.

**The Spray Park is Back!** by Jessica Strong  
Parks AASPIRE Intern

A popular hangout spot last summer among community members in the Madison area, the City of Madison's first spray park is back for another summer of wet and wild fun! As a way to revitalize the Cypress/Magnolia neighborhood, the spray park's success last summer proved to be a stepping stone in bringing community members and city officials together in order to push criminal activity out of the neighborhood.

Because the facility is free and located in an area with an abundance of families, the spray park has also functioned as an alternative to the Goodman Pool. Although, there are scholarships available to families, safe transportation to the pool remains an issue. Many of the children who reside in this neighborhood may not have a safe way to get to the pool due to Park Street's constant traffic flow.

This summer, patrons will notice two new features that have been added to the park; last spring, the lively artwork of Melanie Kehoss was welded on to the fences that border the park. The artwork titled "1-2-3 Go!" features brightly orange silhouettes of children and families in various forms of play. Kehoss was selected by the Madison Arts Commission to head the project.

Also enhancing the beauty of the park is the blossoming rain garden located in the southwest corner of the spray park. According to City of Madison Landscape Architect Bill Bauer, the success of the rain garden is due to the "heavy winter, and frequent spring rains [along] with dozens of volunteer hours spent weeding and mulching." This summer, stop by the Spray Park to get a glimpse of the beautiful artwork, admire the flourishing garden, and of course to cool off.

**Cypress SprayPark, 902 Magnolia Lane, Daily hours 11:00a.m.-7:00p.m., Free Admission**

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**CAC Starts New Financial Case Management Program for Allied Residents** by Anneke Mohr, Building Bridges Caseworker

**Community Action Coalition for South Central WI, Inc. (CAC)** has launched a new Financial Literacy Case Management Program called Building Bridges to work with people in the Allied Drive area to gain control of their finances. We will also assist in finding housing for those who will be displaced by the redevelopment project.

We are able to work with people to develop budgets and money management skills, repair credit, mediate with landlords on past due rent, provide referrals to other community resources, and asses eligibility for the new housing units or home ownership opportunities.

With the support of United Way of Dane County, CAC has partnered with the City

of Madison, Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA), Madison Gas and Electric (MG&E), the Financial Education Center (FEC) and Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative (WWBIC) to help residents take it a step further so that once bills are current, future bills can be controlled by reducing utility and other costs, increasing income, and looking at the option of home ownership.

Anneke Mohr, CAC's Building Bridges Program Caseworker, will be working with Allied residents over the summer to get the program off the ground. The first focus of Building Bridges will be to work with residents of the buildings set for demolition.

As time goes on, CAC hopes to continue working with other residents in the area. Joanne Morton is CAC's new Coordinator of Asset Development and she will be available to provide more in depth training in financial literacy.

**If you would like more information on money management or would like to learn more about the Building Bridges program through CAC, please stop by the MAP office at 4633 A Verona Rd (behind Walgreens) or call Anneke Mohr at 608-246-4730 x233. Se habla espanol!**

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