



Bouquets of kudos for our reigning workforce champion

By Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC

This is long overdue, but since Valentine's Day falls in February, and since the holiday is all about things we love, I'm taking the opportunity to let you know about someone who is deserving of our admiration.

Each year we are challenged to find the one workforce professional who goes above and beyond to champion our mission. This individual receives the Workforce Professional Champion Award at the annual Workforce Professional Development Summit along with champions from the 23 other regions in the CareerSource Florida network.

This is definitely a big deal; we're talking upwards of 900 front-line and leadership professionals as well as a slew of dignitaries representing the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Florida Workforce Development Association, the Governor's Office and CareerSource Florida.



I am more than pleased to let you know that our reigning Workforce Professional Champion is a job readiness coach who works at our Citrus County career center in Lecanto.

Deborah "Debbie" Letterman has been with CareerSource CLM since the fall of 2011 – back when we were still known as Workforce Connection. As a job readiness coach, Debbie provides encouragement and professional counseling to a wide range of candidates who walk through our doors.

That's what she does; it's how she does it that makes Debbie such a standout. I'll let Kathleen Woodring, our executive vice president, explain: "Debbie's co-workers refer to her work area as the 'Sunshine Suite' because she brings so much sunshine into the workplace."

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So Debbie has a sunny disposition. Beyond that, she has serious chops. For one thing, she volunteered to become a Certified Professional Resume Writer which is one of our programs to enhance candidate services. She is also a Certified Motivational Career Coach. Both certifications are gold standards in our industry and by no means easy to achieve.

Debbie consistently cross-trains and frequently provides presentations to educational and business partners. Moreover, she was instrumental in bringing a front-line perspective to the table when our region revamped our service delivery process to meet the mandates of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

On her own initiative, Debbie assists in the Resource Room area covering when her co-workers are out or if the room becomes busy.

Significantly, and not surprisingly, she is a champion of customer service. Since the inception of our Net Promoter process, Debbie has not received a single detractor from her customers and 90 percent give her a rating of 9 or 10.

As Kathleen points out, "Debbie is compassionate and takes the time to listen to the individuals she meets with and allows them to describe the goals they wish to achieve. She is supportive but also challenges the individuals to work hard and accomplish their goals."

Representative of customer comments she receives, Debbie is described as "professional, friendly and knowledgeable" and "genuinely interested in assisting me..."

And then there is this from a teacher who felt "extremely overwhelmed" after making the decision to change careers after 18 years in the classroom:

"I honestly thought it would be simple to segue into another position as prior to that I had worked in the nonprofit setting. A LOT has changed since the days I would send out my basic resume with a personal cover letter. My Job Coach, Debbie Letterman, has helped me by giving me an overview of how technology has changed the way one finds a new position. Also, in less than one week she has provided me with an astonishing number of tools and resources."

I love that: "Astonishing."

I am astonished every day by what workforce champions like Debbie can do for candidates and businesses. My hope is that, as we progress into this bright new year, you allow yourself to be astonished, too.

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