



What do you look forward to each day as you commute to work?

By Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC

If your first thought is that you'd like to turn around and drive back home, then clearly you do not work at a place like CareerSource Career Levy Marion and you don't have a boss like mine.

My boss is an expert in the field, a tireless champion for the workforce mission, and someone who has more than earned the trust and admiration of her colleagues, peers and subordinates alike, as well professionals in allied fields.

So I'm going to take a little time this month to tell you about Kathleen Woodring, our executive vice president. I'm not doing it to earn brownie points but to underscore the very important fact that when you partner with CareerSource CLM you are working with workforce rock stars.

And it's not just me saying so.

Last month, Woodring was named the state's top workforce development professional by the Florida Economic Development Council. The FEDC, by way of background, is the statewide organization that educates, advocates for and connects Florida's economic stakeholders.

The workforce developer professional of the year award has been given annually since 2007 to recognize the achievements of an outstanding Florida workforce developer who has made a significant impact on workforce development. It is named in honor of its first recipient, former Florida Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings, in recognition of her exceptional leadership in building a strong workforce system to respond to critical workforce needs and advance local, regional and state economic development.

Woodring, who joined CareerSource CLM in 1997, has been involved in workforce development in various roles for nearly three decades. She not only directs workforce program implementation and programming for Citrus, Levy and Marion counties, but has been instrumental in area YouthBuild projects and led the statewide planning effort for the annual Workforce Professional Development Summit for the last three consecutive years.

That summit, by the way, provides system-wide training for more than 800 professionals throughout the 24 CareerSource Florida regions. Just as an aside, I served as the head of a professional association's state conference a couple years ago and I can't imagine repeating that responsibility, let alone taking it on three years in a row. But she did, coordinating everything with CareerSource Florida, Florida Workforce Development Association and the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. And she did it while also chairing FDWA's chief operating officer subgroup.

No detail escaped her attention. How well I recall, as we neared "summit" time, seeing her hunkered over her desk, painstakingly penciling in table assignments for the big recognition luncheon to ensure that everyone could sit with their own region. She had to be something of a logistical Houdini to pull off that magic trick.

But I digress. Ed Peachey, president and chief executive officer of CareerSource Tampa Bay, submitted her nomination, so I'll let him tell you about it:

"Ms. Woodring has set a new standard for excellence in managing relationships with community organizations and partners," Peachey said. "Thanks to her leadership, extraordinary attention to detail and devotion to educating our professionals to be the most innovative and effective in the nation, she has helped create a path to prosperity for thousands of at-risk Citrus, Levy and Marion county residents. Her impact on these communities will be felt for decades to come."

In addition to her dedication to the workforce system, Woodring is deeply invested in our community, serving only numerous civic and community boards, including the Marion County Transportation Disadvantaged board, Early Learning Coalition of Marion County, United Way of Marion County Financial Stability Vision Council and the Marion County Homeless Coalition.

Someone else who can attest to Woodring's bona fides and heart for giving back to the community is Kathy Judkins, deputy director of SECO Energy's civic, charitable and government affairs. Judkins, who recently served as chair of the United Way of Marion County, currently chairs the CareerSource CLM board of directors.


"I can't think of a more deserving person to receive this prestigious award," she told me. "We appreciate Kathleen's unfailing commitment to the workforce mission. Her unprecedented leadership and

accomplishments as chair of the annual summit is a worthy acknowledgement."

Woodring wasn't the only one recognized by the FDEC, and she was certainly in good company – other honorees included Florida Gov. Rick Scott as the 2017 Business Ambassador and the Eunice Sullivan Economic Development Professional of the Year went to Crystal Sircy, executive vice president of the Orlando Economic Partnership.

But here's something that stands out: In the 10-year history of the Toni Jennings Florida Workforce Development Professional award, there has been only one organization to have two recipients, and that organization is CareerSource CLM – our CEO Rusty Skinner received the award in 2013.

For her part, Woodring said, "As workforce professionals we work every day to keep our promises with our job seekers, business and our economic development partners."

That's the kind of leadership that makes our team eager to get to work each day. That's the kind of leadership our team strives to put to work for you each day. 

Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC, communications manager at CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, is accredited in public relations, a certified public relations counselor and a Florida Certified Workforce Professional. Please contact her at (352) 291-9559, (800) 434-5627, ext. 1234 or lbyrnes@careersourceclm.com.
