

# HONORING A QUARTER CENTURY OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE

It was a career that Kathleen Woodring never saw coming, yet one that rewarded her every day for 25 years.

After stints at Walt Disney World, where she met her husband Mac, and with the Census Bureau and as director of an early childhood center in Pennsylvania, Kathleen found herself in Ocala and looking for work. She answered an ad in 1995 for an entry level job with the Withlacoochee Private Industry Council – the forerunner of the current local workforce board – that Kathleen said had nothing to do with her fine arts degree.

But that hardly mattered, because Kathleen threw herself into addressing the needs in our



communities with her trademark “roll-up-your-sleeves” Midwestern work ethic, good humor and ability to build effective community relationships.

Over the years, she has held many titles with this organization, including Associate Director of Workforce Initiatives, Vice President of Planning and Development, Chief Operating Officer and, finally, as Executive Vice President, a role in which she oversaw operations, administration and support for a variety of departments including IT, Finance, Human Resources, and, I am happy to say, Communications.

That ended shortly before the close of 2020 when Kathleen retired.

Parenthetically, Kathleen and I both shared Midwestern sensibility and grit – she hailed from Minnesota while I spent a decade in the Black Hills of South Dakota. We bonded over the knowledge that potluck casseroles were referred to as a “hotdish,” *dontcha know*. We also shared a deep and abiding understanding of just how wonderful and simultaneously miserable those long, cold winters up north could be. *Uff-da*.

And in looks and temperament, our mixed terriers – her Bubba and my Jackson – appear to have been separated at birth.

During her tenure with what is now CareerSource CLM, Kathleen earned her master’s degree, was instrumental in spearheading the wildly successful Phoenix Rising YouthBuild program, chaired the Chief Operating Officer’s workgroup of the Florida Workforce Development Association and for four years, in a row, chaired the planning committee for FWDA’s annual Workforce Professional Development Summit developing programs that have provided training and technical assistance to more than 700 workforce professionals each year.

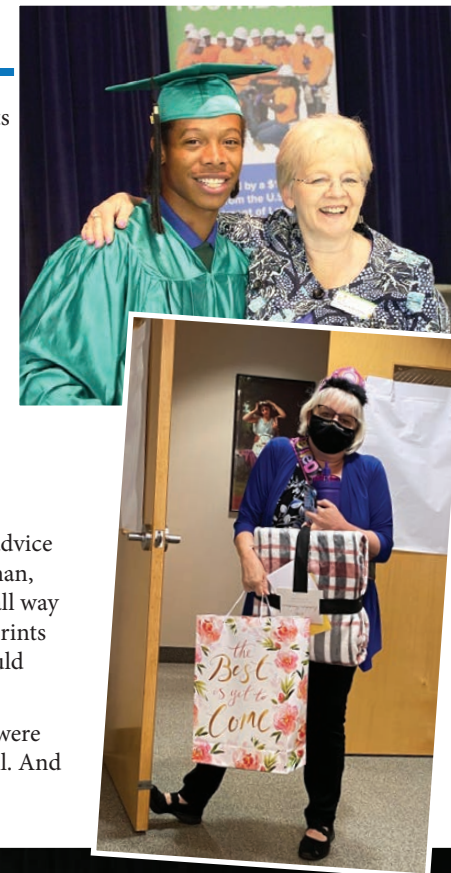
Beyond that, Kathleen had proven herself to be a true community champion, representing CareerSource CLM by serving on the boards of the Marion County Early Learning Coalition, Marion County Homeless Council, United Way of Marion County, the Transportation and Coordinating Board for Levy and Marion counties, Success By 6 Leadership Council, Engage in Education’s Leadership Council, Ocala Chamber of Commerce, and as member of the advisory team for the creation of Marion Technical Institute.

There’s more, but you get the idea.

In 2017, Kathleen’s professional achievements and dedication to building community partnerships were honored by the Florida Economic Development Council which named her the “Toni Jennings Workforce Development Professional of the Year.” The award recognized Kathleen for “setting a new standard in ... helping 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.”

That legacy may not be something Kathleen anticipated back when she started, but it is deservedly earned. Once, when asked what advice she’d give others as a successful businesswoman, Kathleen said, “Make a difference in any small way that you can for our community. Leave footprints where you go. When we leave, someone should know that we were here.”

Well, Kathleen, we definitely know that you were here; you left some pretty big footprints to fill. And we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.



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