

FOCUS ON...
...JULIE DARROW

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It's a safe bet that few of us who inhabit the Instruction or Student Services divisions here at the College know much, if anything, about a department known as Workforce Training, located within the Corporate and Community Programs division. I was therefore delighted and intrigued when my random selection process for this Focus feature captured a fellow instructor who happens to call Workforce Training her "home." What better opportunity to make the acquaintance of a delightful colleague and, at the same time, learn about a very valuable function the College performs in the community, about which I knew little?



Julie Darrow

Julie Darrow has been with the College since the mid-eighties, interrupted by a brief stint in private industry. She originally came as a seasoned veteran in the field of nursing, having earned her R.N. degree at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia and having worked her way up to a supervisory position, with staff development responsibilities along the way. That is how she got hooked on teaching. When she first joined the College, Julie provided clinical instruction for the Certified Nurse's Assistant program. Since then her assignments have broadened: these days, she also teaches in the Medical Office Technician program and teaches communication and employment readiness courses to students in other programs as well.

According to Julie, the overriding purpose of all Workforce Training programs is to increase participants' skills and abilities to obtain a position, given what is often a lack of experience, or else a dislocation, in the workforce. Participants are most likely to be homemakers, public assistance recipients, or displaced workers who have been victimized by corporate "downsizing" or some other type of related economic change. They have often been referred to Workforce Training by the Delaware Department of Labor, although some students have come simply by "word of mouth." A Workforce Investment Board oversees the department's programs.

The department's programs consist of twelve-week courses, which require full-time (9:00 - 3:30) attendance. To earn the "Certificate of Completion" which is awarded for each of the programs, participants must not only successfully complete their course work—at a minimum 70 percent level of competency—but must also achieve successful employment of 30 hours or more per week for at least 90 days. With Delaware continuing to be embroiled in the controversies swirling around the twin issues of student competency and teacher accountability, here's an educational program with a proven record of getting results!

Julie believes that her extensive experience in the medical field allows her to bring a realistic perspective to what she teaches her students—about what is expected in the workplace and developing a professional attitude. And while she knows that in order for her students to make it occupationally they will need to develop a fairly standard set of habits and attitudes, she also appreciates that they are adult learners who learn in very different ways. She has therefore learned to incorporate a variety of instructional methods into her repertoire, so that she can more effectively reach them where they are, and help them move toward the kinds of uniformity that

workplaces commonly demand.

Julie's capacity to recognize that adults learn in very different ways, and the consequent importance of using a variety of methods to teach them, was in her view her greatest challenge as an educator. A crucial step toward this awareness was her early realization that "everybody comes from a different place" with regard to perspectives and values; trying not to *impose her values* has been an important learning process. "To help somebody," Julie observes, "you've got to look at things from their perspective, not your perspective." What a valuable lesson for a teacher to learn!

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