

NCS Home

Norman C. Sleezer Youth Home



A Publication of the Norman C. Sleezer Youth Home • Freeport, Illinois

Summer Fall 2008

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world. Anne Frank

Even if Sue Statz had never read Anne Frank's quotation, there is no doubt that her life with us at Sleezer Home was guided by it.

To help improve the lives of kids has been the hallmark of Sue's tenure ... tenure that will sadly end on September 5th. After twenty-six years serving Sleezer Home, Sue and her family have decided to follow a dream to live in the great west – Colorado to be exact.

On a recent visit with Sue, we asked her to share her thoughts on her career, the kids, Sleezer Home and the future.

Like most college students, Sue entered the world of academia not quite sure of her path. Maybe a teacher. Maybe a psychologist. For sure something that involved people. After a few elective classes piqued her curiosity, social services came to focus. Her studies ultimately garnered a Masters Degree in Social Services from the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

After internships at Mendota Mental Health Institute and Dane County Social Services, Sue was hired in 1982 by then Executive Director Ray Hughes to come to Freeport and serve as the Program Coordinator for Sleezer Youth Home for Boys. The first job

that actually paid her!

As Program Coordinator, Sue assumed responsibility for Sleezer's treatment programs for thirteen boys housed in two small adjacent homes on south Adams Avenue.



There were two boys 'units' – one with six and one with seven. New and inexperienced, Sue took on the tasks of supervising the staff, training, treatment, and counseling without the benefit of years in the field. "I was very lucky", she said. "The staff was

already a really good team of players when I got there. They didn't need supervision – they needed somebody who could help share the workload and step in wherever help was needed. They taught me much more about leadership than I ever taught them."

Sleezer's capacity at the time was just 13 with a total annual budget of just under \$350,000. "One of our biggest challenges in those days was tearing down and rebuilding walls, under the watchful eye of the Fire Marshal, to add beds for kids coming in", says Sue.

Over the years, Sue became enmeshed in every aspect of Sleezer's operations. She reports that there was no 'one' job that stood out as more satisfying than any other. "I liked the idea that Sleezer was small enough that no matter what job I had, I was also involved in virtually every other job. I enjoyed being a Supervisor, but I still had the luxury of being actively involved with the kids and their progress and failures.

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Welcome Cara



Cara Williams
Executive Director

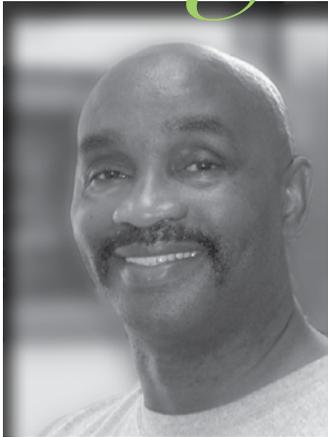
Craig Knaack, President of the Norman C. Sleezer Youth Home Board of Directors, announced that Cara Williams has been named Executive Director effective September 1, 2008.

With a Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology from Illinois State University -- and experience with Sleezer and The Mill in Rockford, Cara is well-prepared and eager to assume the challenges.





NCS Heart & Soul...



David Hawthorne
Case Manager

For over 27 years, David Hawthorne has dedicated his work to at-risk youth.

David and his wife Gwen have five children - ages 15 -30...they're busy parents.

David Hawthorne graduated from Northern Illinois University with a B.A. degree in Interpersonal Communications in May of 1979.

He says, *"I believe that I have been gifted by God to administer to youth. I had difficulty in my teen years, and I was helped by people to turn my life around. I feel that I have an obligation to give back because I have been blessed so greatly, and so many of our children are in need of help."*

David is a member of St. Paul Church of God and Christ in Rockford, IL.

He likes to spend free time with family and also read and write. David has written 5 books of poetry and is currently writing a semi-autobiography about a troubled youth who turns his life around.



Talia Powers
Case Manager

"I enjoy working with adolescents and am happy I get to work in a group setting", says Talia. "Being a Case Manager gives me an opportunity to build relationships with outside resources for Sleezer Youth Home."

As a Case Manager, Talia serves as the liaison between NCS residents and outside resources. A typical day might find her acting in the residents' interest with State agencies, teachers, parents and therapists.

Talia received a B.S. in Human Services and Non-Profit Management in 2006 from Aurora University. This summer she became

a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC) -- a certification that allows her to teach classes on drug and alcohol abuse.

An outdoors person, Talia has a life-long interest in sports (softball is a favorite), relaxing at area parks and enjoying her family.



Walter Hayward
Sports Coordinator

Physical activity makes us whole.

Walter Hayward is responsible for developing and managing our Sports Program.

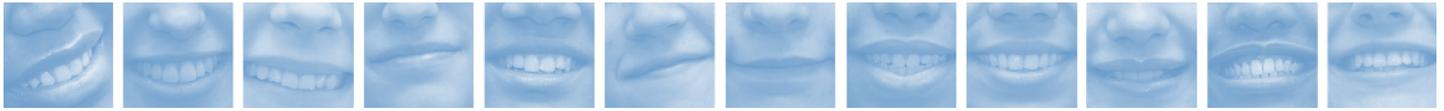
Included is a full range of muscle building, mentally challenging team and individual sports activities. Building teamwork, accomplishing goals, developing physical skills and learning to compete are part and parcel of Walter's work.

So far in 2008, NCS has placed very well in Track and Softball (2nd in region), earned achievement awards in basketball and bowling and was 1st Overall in swimming!

A long time Freeport School District coach, Walter joined NCS just over two years ago.

"It's very satisfying for me to see a young woman go from helpless and hopeless to confident and assured. Sports help them build self-esteem and learn what it feels like to be encouraged."

"I'm proud of the fact that in every event we competed this year, we came home with the Sportsmanship Award!"



Sue Statz cont'd from page 1

I could still play a role in their treatment and life skills."

In 1988, Sue accepted the position of Executive Director – the title she holds until her official departure.

As Executive Director, Sue is responsible for all fiscal and operational aspects of Sleezer Home. Treatment programs and their evolution, hiring staff, creating the treatment environment, dealing with Federal, State and local government agencies and working day-to-day with the residents are all part of her day.

When asked about major changes Sleezer has undergone, Sue is quick to cite the relatively new, completely mortgage-free Sleezer Home campus on Sleezer Drive. *"Support from the community was extraordinary once the need was identified. Fund raisers, bake sales, and donations of every size made this building a reality".*

Further, Sue notes that the growth of Sleezer and the change in makeup has been significant. Today, Sleezer specifically serves only girls – a much-needed shelter in a world filled with problems unique to young women. Licensed for twenty-five residents (average in residence is around 22) with a staff of forty-five professionals and an annual budget of nearly \$2,200,000 is a marked change from the humble beginnings.

The long-term relationship with the Freeport School District 145 also ranks high on Sue's list of positives. *"The school district has always been an integral part of our success. They work hard to understand what we do and help us develop plans and programs that keep kids in school. Their concern about what is best for the kids mirrors our own."*

No career would be complete without challenges – Sue's is no exception. *"Budgets. The ebb and flow of politics, changes in direction by government agencies and more requirements without funding to pay for them is a constant struggle. We have been extremely fortunate to have officials, like Jim Sacia, carry our flag for us. Without understanding people like them, this part of our (Sleezer's) world*

would be very difficult."

The future? *"Sleezer has a strong, critically needed future. Cara Williams as my successor is a perfect choice. She leads a truly caring, highly competent staff whose work has an outcome – the kids are better off because of them".*

Advice for parents based on your almost 30 years of experience with troubled kids? *"First, I hope parents will never need Sleezer Home. To me that indicates that there is family, school, church and peers that provide positive guidance."*



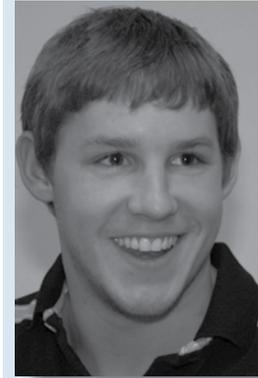
Sue shown with Ray Hughes, her first Supervisor, at a recent Open House honoring Sue for her work with NCS

If I were addressing a room full of parents, I would very likely tell them that 'kids need limits'. Work to be a parent concerned with your children's care, concern and safety and draw lines to ensure that children understand why there are limits. Some parents try very hard to be their kids' friend with the wide limits a friend provides. When it is then necessary to enforce limits that have gotten out-of-hand, kids rebel just like they would to their friends and the friction starts. Being a parent is hard, but every kid wants us to be parents – not their buddies".

This school term, Sue and her husband move to join their daughter in her college town in Colorado. Sue's husband works in a technical field that allows him to work from anywhere in the country – so the move is a natural.

We will miss Sue...but know she'll be improving the world some more.

In Their Own Words...



Pat

There is a genuine smile on 19-year old Pat's face as he recalls Sleezer Home. At 15, he came to NCS 'as a last resort'.

"I was 'messing-up' in school...I didn't have a care in the world...I wasn't doing anything to make myself go forward or look to the future. At the High School, I got in trouble a couple of times – to the extent that my mom was called in. One of the counselors suggested Sleezer".

Pat was enrolled in NCS's Day School program. He had a full range of courses, just like any other student, except that his classroom was on the NCS campus.

"Sleezer changed me. The teachers and counselors made it clear that my future was up to me. I was either going to stay where I was, or sink further, unless I made up my mind to go forward. I realized that I didn't want to go backward – and started to work at changing."

Pat completed the NCS program, returned to FSD145's Alternative School and got his diploma. Since graduation, Pat is working two jobs, moved into his own apartment, pays his own bills and is saving for a new car.

"I made it tough on myself. Mr. Curry at Sleezer really got to me and helped me see where I could go. You have to buckle down if you want to ever get somewhere. You're going to have to get your hands dirty... and go through some things that you won't like. But it's worth it in the end."

We agree.

Norman C. Sleezer Youth Home

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The Norman C. Sleezer Youth Home is dedicated to the memory of Norman 'Chief' Sleezer who was instrumental in the creation of the Home. Mr. Sleezer also helped create what is now known as the Martin Luther King Center.



CREDIBILITY • INTEGRITY • ACHIEVEMENT



United Way of
Northwest Illinois, Inc.

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Lance's Firetruck Keeps On Giving

This bright red antique fire truck put out a lot of fires in it's heyday in Rock City, IL. When Lance Barney bought it at an auction many years ago, it was just so he could have fun with it in parades, hauling kids to the prom and just 'enjoy it'.

Now that the Barney's are 'empty-nesters',

and no longer use the old pumper much, Lance decided to give it to Sleezer Home. Lance has served on the Board of NCS since 1991.

Knowing that Sleezer staff would gratefully accept the gift -- but be stumped

about 'what to do with it', Lance took it upon himself to search for a buyer.

Luckily, Jim Kolf of Madison is a firetruck buff and really wanted old 1946 for his collection.

A price and delivery date were agreed on and in July Jim picked up his 'new' firetruck and drove it home on a modern flatbed trailer.

Best of all, a check was presented to Sleezer for \$5,000!

Words can hardly express our thanks to Lance and Jim.

We are truly grateful.



Lance Barney (L) giving the keys to his 1946 Dodge Pumper to new owner Jim Kolf of Madison, WI

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