

KATHY (Olinger) WILMES

Guiding Others to Success: Kathy Prepares High School Students for their Futures

Graduate: Class of 1985 Occupation: High School Guidance Counselor
By Darianne Cherry, Spring 2010

While dealing with the everyday stress and excitement of being a teenager in high school, Kathy Wilmes had plenty on her plate. When time arrived to decide what she wanted to do in the future, Kathy looked up to Mr. Leinenbach and his career as a high school guidance counselor. Kathy's ability to balance a full-time job, along with volunteering and schoolwork, proved her dedication needed to pursue her career as a counselor. Graduating from Indiana University with a master's degree, Kathy's years in college seemed stressful and crazy, but she cherished every minute.

A 1985 graduate, former cheerleader, and band member, Kathy has many memories from high school. One memory that stood out to her most was her band trip to Florida; she had never vacationed to the ocean before that outing. During her freshman year, the Pine Ridge and Ferdinand students merged -- she loved the experience of meeting many new friends. Kathy also appreciated psychology and sociology classes with Ms. Hendricks.

After high school, Kathy attended college at IU in Bloomington where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree and majored in psychology and sociology; she minored in business. Living far from home was one of her hardest challenges, but also a growing experience. After receiving her bachelor's degree, Kathy completed a Master of Arts degree in counseling and counselor education while working full-time as a home-school coordinator in the Southeast schools. In addition, she worked part-time as an adolescent counselor at "Alternatives" in Jasper.

Now working as a guidance counselor at Heritage Hills High School, Kathy enjoys her busy yet unpredictable days at work. After counseling for sixteen years, she's learned that even if she's made a list of tasks she plans to accomplish, that may not always happen. Depending on the time of year, Kathy spends hectic days guiding and helping students with the following: personal counseling, testing, scheduling, scholarships, career development, crisis intervention, and financial aid.

Living in St. Anthony with her husband, Gregg, and two children, Michael and Leah, Kathy enjoys spending time with her family. Camping, boating, and sports in

the summer are just a few of her family's pastimes. Kathy enjoys staying involved in her church. In her free time, she takes pleasure in reading and scrap booking.

Reflecting back on her high school years, Kathy gives this advice to students, "Take advantage of school functions and opportunities." She believes students should support school teams and attend events. Although teens may not always agree, Kathy feels that we should invite and allow our families to have a major part in our high school experience. Kathy's "guidance" to teens is, "Be part of school! Have fun. Just don't allow for 'too much' fun to distract you from academics, events, and family. Stay focused!"