



Midge Wilson helps low-income families through the Bay Area Women's and Children's Center

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Special to *The Examiner*

Joseph Schell/Special to The Examiner

Midge Wilson is the executive director of the Bay Area Women's and Children's Center in San Francisco, which just celebrated its 30th anniversary. The center provides assistance to low-income women, children and families.



Who has had the biggest influence on you in your life?

My father had the biggest influence on my life. He was a doctor, an obstetrician, and when he was 46, with no warning, he had a major stroke. Life changed on a dime. For the next 32 years, he was paralyzed on his entire right side and [he lost most of his speaking ability]. Despite that, he taught himself to drive and walk again and to write with his left hand. He never lost his love for life or his sense of humor despite what life had dealt him. Before he died, he had a CT scan of his brain, and the doctors were stunned. They said that so much of his brain had been destroyed by his stroke all of those years earlier that they couldn't believe he was anything more than a vegetable.

Where do you find inspiration?

I've always been a "glass half-full" kind of person, so I've always found it easy to be inspired by all kinds of people just about every day. Some are people who walk through the center's door for services, and I am blown away by their perseverance and wisdom. Others I work with and others are people I read about. I'm a big one on grabbing onto life lessons and thinking through how I can be more effective, or more the person I want to be, by learning from others. I do it all of the time. It is energizing and renewing.

How did you come to found BAWCC?

After I finished graduate school in Chicago, I moved to S.F. and my first job was with an organization on the edge of the Tenderloin. I spent my lunch hours walking around the neighborhood, and I saw that there were many women and a growing number of children, but almost no services for them. There were so many unmet needs. So, I wrote my first-ever grant proposal to start a center for them, and I got the grant. That was 30 years ago.

Tell us about BAWCC.

We opened our doors at BAWCC smack in the heart of the Tenderloin 30 years ago [in March]. From the day we opened, it was very important to us that we kept an equal balance of doing half direct services, and half advocacy, policy work and planning. The way we have always operated is summarized by five words: listen, stats, stories, launch and lead.

What are some of BAWCC's success stories?

BAWCC has what many would consider very big successes. Those include our conceptualizing, initiating, and leading the work to build five playgrounds, a recreation center and a 400-student elementary school [Tenderloin Community School] with an on-site family center. Also, we have given more than 250 Tenderloin youth money to help them with their college expenses.

Read more at the San Francisco Examiner:

<http://www.sfexaminer.com/local/credo/2011/05/midge-wilson-helps-low-income-families-through-bay-area-women-s-and-children-s-c#ixzz1XHwPs0Vn>