

Tuesday, August 26, 2008

OU alumna leads The Family Center

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

OU alumna Debbie Liedel, SEHS '78, has worked in the non-profit sector for nearly 30 years. She recently took over as executive director of The Family Center of Grosse Pointe and Harper Woods, a small organization in Grosse Pointe that offers family-based enrichment to the surrounding community. Liedel is enjoying the challenges that come along with working for a non-profit, as well as making a difference in her community.

The Family Center works with Grosse Pointe Public Schools, Harper Woods Public Schools, St. John Hospitals, Beaumont Hospitals and Health Alliance Plan to bring a variety of topics to the community. They focus on the family from prenatal care through preparing children for colleges. The services are available to those who are caregivers, parents or professionals who work with families or youth in the community.

The organization is primarily run by one person with support staff and community professionals who volunteer their services.

"It's neat to take a grass roots organization that is supported and respected in the community and bring it to the next level," Liedel said.

Liedel served on the formative board and advisory council for The Family Center for eight years before being named to lead the organization.

"There are a lot of different challenges that come along with this job," Liedel said. "I do everything from A to Z. Sometimes I'm the office manager. Some days I'm the insurance person. I do public relations and marketing. That's one of the things I like about non-profit work, I get to build different talents."

Liedel said she was prepared for the challenge by her OU education.

"I've always had an interest in the social service aspect of human relations. OU had a good curriculum that gave me a good foundation to pursue my interest," Liedel said, who also does contractual consulting work for Holy Cross Children's Services.

The Family Center is supported solely through private donations. Liedel said today's economy is challenging, but the community and The Family Center's partners are supportive of the organization and help it succeed. She said families in the community see The Family Center as important.

"The big car and the big house aren't as important anymore. People are trying to reclaim the sense of home," Liedel said, adding that The Family Center programs help them do that. "I like making a connection with the community. Everyone needs education and this community craves enrichment."

For more information on The Family Center, visit [The Family Center](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

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