



Lifetime Achievement Award

Program Manager: Carol Blaeuer

Location: Dover, DE

Affiliation: Delaware Business Industry Education Alliance

Profile:

Carol first got involved with CHOICES as an administrator supporting delivery of the program. When her manager moved on, she became the CHOICES Program Manager, and has built the BIE CHOICES program to now serve every 8th grade student in Delaware's public schools. As a result of Carol's leadership the program now serves 295 classrooms – nearly 8,000 students each year – and has engaged close to 140 volunteer presenters from a wide range of employers across the state, both from the business and government sectors.

In addition, Carol has been a presenter in her own right, filling in to personally deliver CHOICES in the rare times when one of her dedicated presenters fell ill or had a flat tire. Even in retirement she now comes back to present CHOICES in the schools, and also to help train new presenters.

Carol strongly believes in CHOICES. She feels that “by planting the seed that education equals opportunity into the minds of young people today, we will enhance the possibility that these young adults will grow up into responsible, productive, employable adults – a win-win situation for current and future generations.”

She adds, “Educators have commented on the impact they have observed in the classroom as a result of students hearing CHOICES’ important message from a local business professional. Students say they are more aware that they are in control of their future, and are more focused on using self-discipline to reach their goals.

“BIE is in the business of creating partnerships between educators and business. Bringing business professionals into the classroom is the foundation for such partnerships. CHOICES is requested by educators each year, who look forward to interacting with the presenters.

“CHOICES has now been presented in Delaware schools for 20 years. The word-of-mouth from volunteers getting personal value and reward from being a CHOICES presenter has increased our awareness, and hence our ability to recruit business professionals to continue delivering this program to future generations of students.”



Lifetime Achievement Award

Program Manager: Hal Wochholz

Location: Sun Lakes, Arizona

Affiliation: Boeing and Sun Lakes Rotary Clubs

Profile:

Hal came to CHOICES when it was sponsored by McDonald Douglas in Arizona, before MD became part of the Boeing Company. Hal's first presentation was at Shepard Junior High School in Mesa, AZ during the 1992-1993 academic year. Hal made many more CHOICES presentations while he was an engineer at McDonald Douglas and Boeing, and upon his retirement became the CHOICES program manager in the area, working primarily with Rotary Clubs there to sponsor the workshop. But he kept on presenting as well, and has logged approximately 250 presentations to date!

Hal has some very personal reasons for doing CHOICES. He writes: "I threw away my high school education!!!! – took no math after ninth grade algebra. I went to Purdue University to play football in the fall of 1949, but I received only 15 points out of 100 on my math entrance exam. I didn't make the team and I was going to get drafted in March 1951 for the Korean War.

"I enlisted in the US Navy on January 9, 1951 and got into electronics. I liked it and asked a contract engineer to whom I was assigned, 'Dave, what does it take to be an engineer?' He said 'You have to like math!' I told him my sorry math story and he said 'That is no excuse; you have a CHOICE (honestly he said that); go to night school at the University of Tennessee at Memphis (we were stationed 20 miles from Memphis).' So for a year two marines, another sailor, and I went to night school and got past the first year of engineering college math. After my discharge in May, 1955 I went to Michigan State University and received a BSEE/MSEE in June of 1959.

"I say to the kids 'I am here to see to it that you don't mess up like I did! YOU MAY NOT GET A SECOND CHANCE LIKE I DID! I recovered and had a wonderful 40 plus years of aerospace engineering only because that engineer challenged me! I am challenging you to make the most out of your four high school years! Get yourself qualified for the career you choose, not the career to which you are limited!'"



Certificate of Incredible Achievement

Presenter: Finn Waaramaa

Location: Phoenix, AZ

Affiliation: Boeing Company and Boeing Rotary Club

Years as Presenter: 18

Classes Served: 197

Profile:

Finn started his career as a CHOICES presenter in the fall of 1994 at one of Mesa, Arizona's junior high schools, and he hasn't looked back since. The way he sees it, "I've heard positive comments over the years from the counseling staff and teachers, and have wanted to continue with a program they support."

In the early years Finn would review student comments and came to believe that many were benefiting from the material. He also felt that he was reinforcing what was already being said by the teachers, and this gave him a second reason to continue.

When Finn talks with students about time management, he refers to Steven Covey's approach. He reflects, "The majority of students that write down a goal that they want to pursue raise their hand when asked if they will commit time to achieving their selected goal. As with all of us – when we really want something, we find the time!"



Certificate of Incredible Achievement

Presenter: Pam Hall
Location: Lexington, NC
Affiliation: Lexington Telephone Company
Years as Presenter: 19
Classes Served: 129

Profile:

Pam started presenting CHOICES in 1989, the second year that Lexington Telephone Company adopted CHOICES. Over the ensuing 19 years she has delivered CHOICES to 129 classes, starting with Lexington Senior High School and most recently at South Davidson.

Pam says, “Speaking in front of groups wasn't something I did. The company asked for volunteers. It was different and challenging, so I decided to give it a try. Being a CHOICES presenter turned out to be a very rewarding experience for me. To my surprise, I found it very enjoyable sharing with students and listening to them as they shared their dreams and goals for the future.

“It also helped me in my personal life. After just a few presentations, I realized how important my own school decision was and how it affected my life. I began sharing it with the students at the end of my presentations and demonstrating it. I explained that even though I had never used shorthand in my job, I couldn't have applied for a position in another department of the company without it, and wouldn't have gotten normal day hours and weekends off. I told them I doubted I would have stayed with the company, working the odd hours and weekends I originally had in my first position, since I had small children.

“Sharing all this with the students has seemed to really get their attention, especially when I tell them how long I've been with the company, and that I retired at age 48 and now have my free time. I hope to help them understand how important school decisions are and the effect they will have on their future. I enjoy CHOICES. It is time well spent. I've seen it as an opportunity to help others and the community. Students have seen me at ball games, at school or other places and ask if I remember them in my CHOICES classes. They usually tell me about something they've gotten from the seminar that helped them. I've also received letters telling me how CHOICES gave them perspective and direction when they didn't really know what to expect or do. Some have even thought of dropping out of school, but the CHOICES program had changed their minds.”



Certificate of Incredible Achievement

Presenter: Bruce Clarkson
Location: Duncan, British Columbia
Affiliation: Island Savings Credit Union
Years as Presenter: 10
Classes Served: 120

Profile:

Bruce's first CHOICES presentation was at Quamichan Middle School in Duncan, B.C. in 1997. A mere 120 classes and 10 years later, Bruce and his co-worker Tracy Bowen are as committed as ever to bringing the CHOICES message to teens in the Cowichan Region. They have taken a leadership role in the training and recruitment of new presenters, and have been ambassadors for the program in their community.

Bruce expresses his beliefs about education very directly. "The world is becoming more and more competitive and without education the students of today will have few choices. I believe I have reached many young adults and given them a life altering experience. Why for so long? See the foregoing. It means the opportunity to make a positive effect on the present and future lives of these young adults.

"CHOICES touches many aspects – not only staying in school, but the concept of life long learning. It touches on poverty, it touches on single parenthood, it touches on family relationships, and it touches on human potential. The most recurring story is when young people approach you after the presentation, and often in the streets years later, and tell you what a significant effect this has had on their lives."



Certificate of Incredible Achievement

Presenter: Lois Raske

Location: Seattle, WA

Affiliation: Qwest Communications (formerly U S WEST); Alaska Airlines; currently a preschool teacher and “free agent” presenter in Seattle area

Years as Presenter: 24

Classes Served: 100+

Profile:

Lois was one of the original presenters that joined Gary Frizzell when he needed his fellow employees' help after his CHOICES “debut” at Seattle’s Cleveland High School. Lois started her career as a presenter at Interlake High School in nearby Bellevue, WA in 1984, one year before CHOICES Education Group was even formed. She has delivered more than 100 presentations (she has lost count!) throughout the greater Seattle area, representing U S WEST, Alaska Airlines, and more recently, as a caring and concerned community member. Lois is also featured in our current CHOICES introductory and demonstration DVD!

Lois feels very strongly about CHOICES: “There are so many students that fall through the cracks in our school system, many of whom do not understand the long term results of their decisions. As someone outside of the teacher/parent box, there is always a possibility that these students might find what I had to say valid. If just one student stays in school because of what they hear from us as CHOICES presenters, then we have done a good job.

“I initially wanted to save everyone in the class, but that is just not possible, so I became content with the reality that helping just a few make decisions that would make their lives better was worth it. It is a great program, and I have never had second thoughts about being involved. As someone who is now starting their third career as a preschool teacher, I hope to take the knowledge that I learned through CHOICES into my classroom of 4-5 year olds and make a difference there.”



Certificate of Incredible Achievement

Presenter: Nancy Ward

Location: Dover, DE

Affiliation: Delaware Business Industry Education Alliance

Years as Presenter: 24

Classes Served: 100+

Profile:

Nancy became a CHOICES presenter when Diamond State Telephone Company (now Verizon Communications) first adopted CHOICES in 1986. Nancy's first school was Central Middle School in Dover, and she hasn't stopped since. In 21 years she has logged over 100 classes, most recently at "Because We Care" Alternative Discipline Middle School, also in Dover.

Nancy says she approaches every class "with enthusiasm, and the knowledge that the CHOICES program can, and does, make an impression on the students. Above all else I let them know that I really do care about them, and their ultimate decisions about education, careers and family. I may not reach every child, but I always do my best!"

In 1998 Nancy, who is the owner of J & J Ceramic Studios, sat on a gubernatorial-appointed statewide committee dealing with the Delaware Welfare to Work initiative, and one of the members was an executive with Greenwood Trust/NOVA (now Discover Bank). Nancy persuaded him that Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) funds from the bank would be well-used and invaluable to the CHOICES program. Discover Bank has now funded CHOICES for ten years running, and remains a strong partner with the Delaware BIE.



Certificate of Incredible Achievement

Program Manager: Jerry Kress
Location: Norwalk, California
Affiliation: Norwalk Rotary Club
Years as Presenter: 24
Classes Served: 100+

Profile:

Jerry and the Norwalk Rotary Club started delivering CHOICES in 1992, and they haven't looked back since, serving schools in La Mirada, Norwalk & Bellflower, CA for the last 15 years. Jerry's presenters include current and former Norwalk Rotary Club members. His team is so committed that even when they retire or move, they just won't quit delivering CHOICES! One has retired and two have moved on to other Rotary Clubs, but they still come back to present CHOICES each year with Norwalk Rotary Club. Jerry's team even includes the 75-year-old former mayor of Norwalk, who himself has delivered CHOICES to over 40 classes in the last eleven years.

Jerry has served over 100 classes as a presenter, and has experienced many interesting interactions with his CHOICES kids. Here are some highlights:

“One of my favorite stories was encountering one of the kids who had been in one of my classes, a few months later, where he was working as bus boy at a coffee shop. He was excited to see me and was telling my wife all about the class. In the middle of his conversation with her, he stopped and looked at me and said, ‘I'm not going to be doing this all my life. This is just for right now.’ I guess we reached that kid!

“Then there was the girl who, when I asked the question, ‘What does self-discipline mean to you?’ rolled up her pant leg and showed me her electronic monitoring anklet installed by her parole officer.

“I have on several occasions seen some of my kids three years later at the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards camps – with the blue and yellow CHOICES key chain still on their backpacks.

“One of my favorite facts about one of my presenters, Lew McCullough, is that he walks into the classroom with a toilet brush in his hand. He tells the kids that if they don't get a good education, this will be their tool to earn a living.”



Certificate of Incredible Achievement

Presenter: Tracy Bowen
Location: Duncan, BC
Affiliation: Island Savings Credit Union
Years as Presenter: 10
Classes Served: 100

Profile:

Tracy began life as a CHOICES presenter when Island Savings Credit Union first started delivering CHOICES. Her first school was Quamichan Middle School in Duncan, B.C. in 1997.

Now, 10 years later and with more than 100 presentations to her credit, Tracy and her co-worker Bruce Clarkson are as committed as ever to bringing the CHOICES message to teens in the Cowichan Region. They have taken a leadership role in the training and recruitment of new presenters, and have been ambassadors for the program in their community.

Tracy shares these simple but very true words about why she presents CHOICES: “I do the presentations because I like to interact with the students. They have such great responses to the program that you actually learn something from them. Even if you reach a few of the students with the program it is so worth it. I get so much joy from the program.”