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Barry McDowell : I am USF St. Petersburg

J. M. (Sudsy) Tschiderer

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Responsibility for USF St. Petersburg’s Student Disability Services and Volunteer Services resides with Barry McDowell... and he said wearing both hats are a perfect fit.

McDowell became the first full-time coordinator of these two diverse programs in January 2001 because as USF St. Petersburg grew, it quickly became apparent that a full-time professional was needed to coordinate the needs of students with disabilities.

McDowell has experience with social service agencies such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Inc. and has worked more than 14 years in higher education at Eckerd College as director of campus activities. He said his academic background also aligned well with this role. He earned a bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Gettysburg College, a master’s degree in Student Personnel Administration from Indiana University and a master's degree in Gerontology from USF Tampa.

**Student Disability Services**

Currently, McDowell said that Student Disability Services occupies a greater portion of his day because the "need for services by students is becoming increasingly intensive." McDowell said his department is "ready to prepare and respond." They have expanded the depth of the program by acquiring new adaptive computer programs designed to aid students with visibility impairments and learning disabilities.

Another giant step for the Student Disability Services/Volunteer Services program was its summer move to their new location TER200. The offices are accessible from handicapped parking spaces and offer more privacy for confidential consultations with students. TER200 also features a group meeting area and a comfortable multi-purpose room that is ideal for testing and training students to use equipment.

During the day, McDowell works cooperatively with pertinent campus resources and is also excited about campus plans to develop an Academic Learning Center, which would be staffed by a learning specialist who could provide specific on-site testing and needs evaluations. Additionally, there would be more support services available for those with dyslexia and memory processing impairments.

McDowell said he perceives that “USF St. Petersburg faculty and staff truly support students with disabilities and help to facilitate their academic goals.” He continued, “this is really reflective of the immense support students receive here.”

**Volunteer Services**

While wearing his other hat as Volunteer Services director, McDowell a special place in his heart for this job, which he attributes to his ebullient Irish father who taught his family the importance of lending a helping hand. Because service learning was an integral component of USF St. Petersburg’s Learning Community program, McDowell helped to identify positive service learning experiences for students and for campus members who wanted to give back to their community.

Since its inception, Volunteer Services has facilitated campus participation for projects including monthly blood drives, beach clean-ups, AHA Heart Walk, Meals on Wheels, SPCA Pet Walk, campus food drives and dinners at the Ronald McDonald House. McDowell said his goal for this year is to encourage classes, clubs and departments to participate in a group service project. McDowell is also seeking faculty who recognize the value of service learning and might want to incorporate fieldwork into their class curriculum.

Outside of campus, McDowell participates in various community volunteer activities and is an avid racquetball player. Along with his wife Pam, McDowell enjoys attending his daughters' soccer games to cheer for Brynn, a sophomore at USF Tampa and Carly, a freshman at Lakewood High School.

McDowell can be reached in the Student Disabilities Services/Volunteer Services Office located at TER200 or at
Program assistants Nalini Soni and Lalania Seeders, the office’s first student assistant, can be reached at 3-4837.