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# Mary Beth Welch



EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO THRIVE | EST. 1968

**PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT YOUR ROLE AT PEACE, INC.**

**WELCH:** I'm the director of family services. We have six family resource centers. My role is to support my staff - they're frontline, their challenges are immense on a daily basis. Anything I can do to support them is the reason I'm here. What I also bring is - we're a nonprofit organization, not a charity. To stay in business we have to run like a business. We have to be sensible with our budget and pursue grants. One thing I do is I have my staff provide me with a weekly activity report each Friday, a summary of what they did during the week - not to grade them or to micromanage, but so I can be aware of what they are doing. Knowing what they are doing, I can support them.

**WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO MAKE PEACE, INC. PART OF YOUR LIFE?**

**WELCH:** When I interviewed at PEACE, Inc., it was the reception from those who interviewed me and them sharing why they enjoy working at PEACE, Inc. - people who were not just here for one year, but they all had longevity. Their testimonials.

**PLEASE SHARE A MEMORABLE MOMENT IN YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE.**

**WELCH:** The day after Rasheada Caldwell's son was murdered. She reports to me. I am very close with all my staff. Rasheada and I talked about being mothers often. We would tell each other we are always mothers. I had been worried about my daughter. She's back now - in the United States. At the time, my daughter was in England. I was worried about keeping my daughter safe across an ocean and Rasheada's son was murdered in their own driveway. So, Rasheada and I had talked about my worrying about my daughter - that was Monday. Then, the next day that Tuesday, while getting ready for work I had the news on. I heard a young, black male was shot to death. When they mentioned the address, I knew where Rasheada lived. I called her. There was no answer. Charles Rivers called me and told me it was Rasheada's son who was shot and told me where Rasheada was. I went. The number of people at her house was incredible. Her front lawn was full of people. Many of them I knew - our volunteers and employees, and Rasheada saw me. We embraced and we cried. To have that relationship with people you work with ... It wasn't just a coworker who lost a son. We felt - you know.

**TELL US SOMETHING WE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO LEARN ABOUT YOU.**

**WELCH:** I really wanted to be a school teacher. Back then in the 70s and 80s, no teachers were being hired because there was an abundance of teachers. My father said to me, "You're going into business and that's going to be it." Being the obedient, Irish Catholic girl I am, that's what I did. I went to LeMoyne College and got a job in finance, at Carrier Corporation. Then, I was laid off. I said, "Now, I'm going to do what I want to." I was in my 50s. When I worked at Carrier, I thought I was going to retire there - great money, great benefits. I'm not bitter or anything - they paid for my MBA and set the path for my younger daughter's career via her college internships, but it wasn't what I wanted to do. I was on the diversity committee, volunteer committee, employee satisfaction team. I liked all of that stuff - the involvement. When I went to Carrier in 1987, they were still one of the largest employers in the area. They used to have clambakes, parties, and events for the staff. Things started to diminish over time and we put together the employee satisfaction team. In the end, people only wanted to be thanked. I think that simplicity is one of the things you see at the PEACE, Inc. centers. The volunteers are there being who they are, being thanked for who they are and what they do - it's that same simpler mindset that "thank you" can come in a very simple package.

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**WHO IS THE PULSE OF PEACE, INC.?**

**WELCH:** The volunteers. Miss Janie (Edwards) and Miss Dorothy (Russell) are at Rasheada Caldwell’s center, at Eastside Family Resource Center. I was talking to Rasheada one day. This was after her son was murdered. I told her she had great staff and volunteers at the center, that her staff and volunteers do a great job, and that she should go home because the staff and volunteers - Miss Janie and Miss Dorothy - will take care of the center. Rasheada said Miss Janie and Miss Dorothy weren’t at the center - they were at her house, cooking and cleaning. The volunteers are like family. They’ll do anything for anybody. Each family resource center has two employees, but when you go to them there is a room of people working - to the point of whiteboards with their names. You don’t want the pulse of PEACE, Inc. You want the pulse of the community. We are here for the community.

**HAVE YOU CHANGED AS AN INDIVIDUAL AS A RESULT OF WORKING AT PEACE, INC.?**

**WELCH:** Now I’m not the only woman, but I’m the only white person often. When I worked at Carrier, diversity was more gender-based - males and females. I was often the only woman in a room of white males. I had taken private jets, on occasion, owned by the company to meetings. Now, I’m at the Southside Family Resource Center - often as the only white person in the room. A success story I share is about a former Dannemora inmate - who had been incarcerated for 20-some odd years - who came to Southside. Within a week, the staff had gotten him a job. With our re-entry program I never ask what the charges are. I see the individual and where they are. You meet people where they are. Do the next right thing. When I’m in the centers, I don’t see color, I don’t see criminal backgrounds. It’s a strength I bring to this position.

**PLEASE TALK ABOUT ONE OTHER THING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE.**

**WELCH:** My day starts everyday caring for my body and my mind with physical workout and with prayer and meditation - daily readings. I keep a journal that has snippets of words of wisdom that I collect. One of my favorites is “Survive we have, Survive we will.” I think that is so important for people who come through our centers. They have and they will.