



CenturyCollege

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[Nancy Livingston](#)

Public Relations

651-779-3222

Fax 651-779-3470

[Century College](#)

3300 Century Avenue North

White Bear Lake, MN 55110

Century College Alum Gives Firsthand Info about Century to Job Seekers

Century College alum Staci Wittner, an employment guidance counselor for Ramsey County at the Workforce Solutions center in North St. Paul, finds herself frequently talking about her alma mater when clients express a desire for higher education.

“High school felt very restrictive and smothering to me, but I instantly loved Century College (the former Lakewood Community College),” said Wittner, who attended Century in the early 1990s and then went on to graduate from the University of Minnesota debt-free with a degree in family and social science. “I learned more there in one year than I learned in high school in four. I have recommended Century to many clients, and I have four or five there now. It’s a good place to figure out what you want to do with your life.”

Wittner, a resident of Lino Lakes, said many of her clients who receive government assistance have one thing in common: they are so busy trying to survive the day - the moment - that they have no real plan for the future. “I encourage them to find their passion and make a plan,” said Wittner. “Education is key to making those plans become reality. If they don’t have a GED (high school equivalency degree), I push

them to get that. There is absolutely no doubt that you need at least a GED if you are going to get a job with a living wage.”

Wittner said the fields of healthcare, manufacturing and K-12 education seem to be the most promising for her clients. But before the job search can even begin, her clients have to figure out how to deal with three fundamental things: child care, mental health issues and earning their GED.

“My job makes me feel like a very wealthy person,” said Wittner. “Frankly, I don’t know how a single mom with one child survives on \$437 a month when her rent is \$550. I can advocate for people, but I can’t solve all their problems. I see horrible things - things that break my heart. I see good things, too, and I make good things happen. But my biggest thing is the children. There are children who are suffering through no fault of their own. If I ran the world, I would make it a more equitable place – especially for children.”

Wittner said she has harnessed her rebellious streak to become a strong advocate for the under-privileged. Century College, she said, is a community asset because it holds out hope for people who are determined to rise above their circumstances. “It gives people a chance, and that is a wonderful thing,” she said.



Photo: Century Alum Stacy Wittner of Workforce Solutions