

Educating Everyone

SDP Client Spotlight: Middle Tree

Have you ever looked at a process or system and seen something so blatantly wrong with it that you couldn't help but wish you could change it? It's a familiar experience, but this month's Client Spotlight has taken that wish a step further by making it their mission to actually enact change in that system. For this issue, we sat down with Patricia Deehring, Deputy Director and CFO of Middle Tree. Having just celebrated the organization's third birthday, Middle Tree is making massive waves by providing high-quality, affordable education to make a difference in our community.

From Seedling to Sapling

Middle Tree was founded in 2015 as the brainchild of Joseph "Joe" Atman, Director and Chairman of the nonprofit. After receiving his doctorate degree in Sacred Theology, Atman decided to put his passion for people to work by opening a nonprofit to bring supplemental education to the community without the usual astronomical costs.

Atman initially brought on his close friend Patricia Deehring to manage Middle Tree's blog and share why she believed in the organization. However, with her clever ideas, Master's degree in cultural anthropology, financial background, and experience as a high school English teacher, Deehring only wrote a few blogs before advancing to her present role as Deputy Director and CFO.

Together with the rest of their team of incredibly bright educators, Middle Tree has become the "punk rock" of the supplemental education world, disrupting the space by filling in many of the gaps left by traditional teaching methods. Deehring explains,

"The way the education system is set up is innately incorrect for how most people learn," with too much of a focus on tests, workbooks, and college as the only path to success. "Not everyone is college-bound, but that doesn't mean they're not built for something incredible."

Bearing Fruit and Branching Out

Middle Tree takes away this "one size fits all" teaching model and replaces it with a unique, tailored experience for each student. Instead of using workbooks or pre-packaged curriculum, Middle Tree leverages its 1:3 tutor-to-student ratio to get to know each student and teach them according to their own personal learning style. On top of that, Middle Tree relieves the pressure of time-crunched learning by throwing out the clock and giving visitors all access.

The idea is to let people come whenever they want, stay however long they want, and do what they need to do – and it's clearly working! Starting with only 6 students their first summer, Middle Tree has now grown to 170 students, with about 80 members coming in every day. Though ecstatic and humbled by the tremendous success of the program thus far, the dreamers behind Middle Tree are far from content.

Deehring shares her hopes for the future of Middle Tree:

"I see Middle Tree as this great incubator. Our hope is to be able to educate everyone and give people what they need to grow the way that will make them the very best version of themselves – helping them to be them instead of doing what everyone else says success looks like."

Though still in the very early incubation stages, Deehring shares that the next step is to build up their adult education programs. *"We could have students on the tutoring side or in SAT prep while their parents are working on their books at night and learning valuable tools that will help them pay for that kid's college if that's what he or she wants to do."*

Don't Miss the Forest...

When asked why Middle Tree chose to partner with Southland Data Processing, Deehring explains, *"We really saw the value in partnering with someone local."* The team at Middle Tree hopes to get in front of as many businesses in the community as possible and potentially begin growing partnerships, especially for future adult education programs. *"In order to make these things happen it would really involve bringing the entire community together as a community initiative."*

Join in the SHADE

Do you have school-age children or know someone who does? SDP and Middle Tree would like to invite you to try out Middle Tree's Summer SHADE program. For PreK - 8th Grade, the program incorporates a hands-on, learning-by-doing program (e.g. learning about aerodynamics and then flying kites, or studying art history and then painting with those techniques). Meanwhile, older students will be getting ready for the ACT/SAT tests or receiving spot-subject tutoring to get ahead in any subject they choose. All programs are incredibly flexible to accommodate schedules, and superbly priced.

**Sign up for the most affordable
educational summer program ever
created!**

Middle Tree's mission over the summer is the same as it is during the school year: make education available by making it affordable. Created and run BY teachers FOR students.

 **Join Us Today!**

SDP Client Spotlights: Celebrating Our Clients

Every month, we highlight one of our amazing clients with our SDP Client Spotlight. Here at Southland Data Processing, we're in the people business, and strive to always put our clients first. If you or your organization is interested in becoming our next Client Spotlight, please contact us at SeeMore@sdppayroll.com and we'd love to hear your story!