



Team Building is The Key to Leadership

An interview with Colette Anderson

Since 2012, Colette Anderson, MSW, LCSW, has been the Executive Director of the Connecticut Women's Consortium. During her tenure, training has increased exponentially and she has overseen and expanded many projects at the Consortium. "When I think of Colette, the first word that comes to mind is Leadership," said Carol Martin, Executive Director of Trauma Recovery/HAP. "Colette has been exceptional in the way that she has taken on leadership positions and in her dedication to mentoring the women around her."

Colette has been working in behavioral health for nearly forty years. "Throughout my career I've made a habit of taking graduate students and younger co-workers under my wing to mentor them on setting career goals and having the courage to pursue higher level positions," Colette says. "So many of these incredibly bright young people just don't see in themselves the valuable skills they bring to the situation. We have a program, called the Yale Leadership program, where we bring in eighteen women for nine months. Yale faculty and others help teach these women how to be better leaders. For me, I'm always looking for ways to help people acquire the skills they need to be stronger contributors to the team."

"To me, leadership is putting together strong teams, where the skills of each member compensate and compliment each other. It is important to recognize individual talents of individuals and be sure those talents match the position they hold. I've interviewed some great people over the years, that I personally liked, but whose skillset did not complement the team."

For me, developing the right team is the key to effective leadership," Colette continued.

Colette's passion is for adapting, introducing, and growing trauma-informed systems. She spearheads multiple groups and initiatives across Connecticut to promote trauma-informed, gender-responsive care. She also trains and presents on a number of topics including: trauma, gender, staff care, and healing arts for diverse audiences and agencies. Colette shared, "There was a time when we were taught to avoid having clients directly confront their traumas. The feeling was that they might lose their ability to cope and lead independent lives. What we've found is exactly the opposite. Through EMDR and other trauma treatment practices we are now improving the quality of people's lives. Through our trauma-informed systems, we focus on creating an environment where clients feel safe. And that safe environment is one of the keys to helping clients make progress and get past the trauma."

Connecticut Women's Consortium and Trauma Recovery/HAP have had a productive partnership for some time now. The Connecticut Women's Consortium, primarily funded by the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), provides space and support for EMDR to hold trainings. In exchange, Trauma Recovery/HAP provides free seats at the training for social workers from DMHAS. Colette concluded, "Our collaboration with Trauma Recovery/HAP continues to help us expand the capacity for EMDR therapies in Connecticut. We work closely with DMHAS to implement evidence based treatment models and trauma-informed treatment environments."

Prior to working at the Connecticut Women's Consortium, Colette worked at Connecticut Valley Hospital, Connecticut Mental Health Center, and was the Chief Executive Officer at the Western Connecticut Mental Health Network. She has a Master's of Social Work degree from the University of Connecticut.

Carol Martin added, "Colette's dedication to helping trauma victims and creating trauma-informed environments made her an easy choice to receive one of our first Humanitarian Hero Awards. Colette's leadership, vision and hard work are making a meaningful difference in people's lives. It is a pleasure and inspiration to work with her."