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Unity House of Cayuga County Inc. Executive Director Joyce Williams To Leave Agency in April 2009



Joyce Williams, Executive Director, Unity House of Cayuga County Inc.

AUBURN – Joyce Williams, whose tenure as Executive Director at Unity House of Cayuga County Inc. (Unity House) from November 1997 to present witnessed the consistent expansion of the organization’s residential, rehabilitative, and employment services and programs, consequent growth of its direct support workforce from 200 to 300 employees, and a nearly 250% increase in its annual budget, announced today her resignation from the agency effective April 3, 2009.

“I have informed Unity House’s Board of Directors and our entire Unity House staff of my decision to resign from this wonderful agency in order for my husband and me to follow through on our plans to relocate to North Carolina and be closer to family,” said Williams, who joined Unity House in 1989 and assumed the position of assistant executive director in May 1993. “Although we are very, very excited about moving to North Carolina and starting that next phase of our lives, deciding to leave Unity House and the best employees and consumers and families in the world was the hardest choice I have ever made.”

Williams informed Unity House Board President Karen Merritt and the agency’s other 14 Board members of her decision at the organization’s January 2008 monthly Board meeting. Since then, she has taken time to tell her senior management, management, and direct care line staff of her plans to leave the 31 year-old agency.

Echoing the sentiment of the Board upon learning of Williams’ decision, Merritt said she regretfully accepted Williams’ resignation and that she and the Board would be challenged to replace Williams with someone as capable and unique in her approach to housing, rehabilitating, and employing individuals with developmental disabilities, mental health illnesses, and those recovering from chemical dependencies.

“To say that Joyce will be sorely missed is the understatement of the century, as far as I’m concerned,” Merritt said. “She’s been the ultimate human services agency executive director, both with her individual abilities and with her unique capacity to assemble and get the most from talented, dedicated managers and direct care staff. It’s no coincidence that in her time as assistant executive director and as executive director Unity House has grown exponentially and will continue to grow after she leaves us. The agency and community are losing a remarkable person.”

Merritt said she and the Board of Directors appreciated and accepted Williams’ long-term notice to resign, in that it would afford them ample time to develop and oversee a plan of succession for Williams’ position.

“The Board of Directors has established an Executive Director Search Committee to manage the process of recruiting and finding Joyce’s successor,” she said. “We are tentatively

planning on having the successful candidate for this all-important position in place by the start of 2009 and then spend three months with Joyce observing, understanding, and learning as much as possible about the agency's operations before officially assuming the role of executive director.”

Unity House provides temporary and permanent housing, rehabilitative, and employment services and programs in six Central New York counties to more than 700 individuals a day with developmental disabilities, mental health illnesses, and those recovering from chemical dependencies.