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HAPPY 80TH BIRTHDAY, DR. FIFIELD!

July 20, 2012 by JoLynne Lyon

Dr. Marvin Fifield, during the center's early days.

It is fitting that during the CPD’s 40th Anniversary year, one of its pillars is celebrating a milestone of his own. We've done a separate post on the CPD History Channel blog about Dr. Marvin Fifield's contributions to the disability community. Here, voices from around the CPD remember his contributions to us.

He turns 80 next week.

"Can Marv really be celebrating his 80th birthday the same year as the CPD’s 40th? The CPD certainly owes him for this anniversary."

"What stands out in my mind is not so much particular incidents as a concept--Marv’s skill, character, and compassion. Sure there are memorable events. Like the annual Division Christmas parties at his home. He would come through a door dressed as Santa with Fritz the dog-reindeer at his side."

"Marv was ever-patient with all of us at the ECC/DCHP/CPD. He steered us through legislative requests, directors’ meetings, and federal reviews. He objectively analyzed what we did right and what we didn’t, and through it all brought humor and compassion in big and small acts. I remember him helping a COCA member whose van lift failed in the parking lot on a miserable snowy night after a late, late meeting--using only family-friendly language, it should be noted. And though he modeled 'If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all' (Thumper, Snow White, 1937) we understood when it was time to do something in a different way. Thanks, Marv."

--Sarah Rule, former director of the CPD and campus liaison for the Post-Secondary Education, Employment and Research project.
“Marv’s professional accomplishments are the stuff of legends, but it’s his sincere concern for people that made it an honor and a pleasure to work for him. No matter what pressures were in place, there was always that impish grin and chuckle to lighten the situation. He was a wonderful boss and is an incredible person. Happy Birthday, Marv!”

--Kelly Smith, Information Specialist at the CPD

“It was my pleasure to work as a secretary for Dr. Marvin Fifield for four years after high school and then again for 10 years after my children were grown. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to work with him. He is respected by many as a great leader, but I will always respect him for the kind and thoughtful person he is. I consider him one of my dearest friends.”

--Sharon Weston, Assistant to the Director at the CPD

“When the CPD was younger, it was smaller, which allowed people to know most other people that worked at the Center. Because of our small size we were able to have Christmas parties outside of the Center at some venue. These were always fun events. Marv was always willing to join the frivolity. I remember him telling jokes while enjoying time with colleagues. I can tell many stories but I’ll save those for later.”

--Mark Innocenti, director, Research and Evaluation division at the CPD

“To my most admired professional mentor—Marv Fifield. I’m grateful that the 20 years of my adult life have overlapped with his. I’ve learned so much about my chosen career, how to work with people, ways to build programs, methods for getting things done in challenging economic times, and strategies for improving my personal abilities and capacities. Marv taught me early on that for every 10 good ideas, maybe one will pan out—maybe one will blossom into a great program. So, plant every good idea, move it along and maybe you’ll be lucky. Thanks Marv for your great leadership. Most importantly, I appreciate your consistent and encouraging friendship. May you enjoy many more years of health and happiness; may you “putter” with confidence!”

--Marty Blair, Associate Director of the Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education at the CPD

“It has been my great honor to have a career that runs in the same circles as that of my father. I’ve grown to relish being introduced as Marv’s son, and to appreciate the varied and profound things he has done that have influenced the disability community. I’ve also grown to admire the way he approached complicated, polarizing, and challenging tasks. He usually played a role in the background, drafting language, shaping an agenda, writing minutes, and communicating with policy makers and power brokers. He has always been the last one to claim any influence or significant role in achieving important milestones, but those who have worked with him closely know the key role he has played over and over.

“Everyone who has ever worked at the CPD or has received services here, has been touched by his work.”

--Bryce Fifield, current CPD Director
Happy 80th, Dr. Fifield!