

NEW CHAPTER For Cheryl Thompson Lewis Center spokeswoman to retire

BY RENE DE LA CRUZ ~ STAFF WRITER



APPLE VALLEY * Like an artist working a canvas, Cheryl Thompson has helped paint the portrait of one of the most successful educational institutions in the High Desert. Thompson will lay down her brush as manager of development & media relations this month, and retire after 21 years with the Lewis Center for Educational Research, which operates the Academy for Academic Excellence in Apple Valley.

"After working here for so long, I've seen this place develop into something beautiful," Thompson said. "I'll miss the kids, the staff, the parents, and connecting with everyone in the community."

Thompson said her knowledge and skill level developed along with the school, as she learned



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Rick Piercy,
president and CEO
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for Educational

how to write grants and articles for the school, and plan major events such as the recent Festival of the Arts.

As Thompson spoke, her voice cracked as she expressed her sadness at “leaving everyone and the camaraderie of staff and students,” especially Rick Piercy, president and CEO of the center.

“What impressed me about Cheryl was that she went back to school to get her degree, and then moved up in the organization,” Piercy said. “She’s been such an integral part of what we’ve done. I don’t think we could have done it without her.”

Thompson said she believes it was the right time in her life to retire. Both her husband, Bill, 64, and she are healthy and able to enjoy the next chapter in their lives, Thompson said.

“I’ve been so fortunate to travel all over with my husband while he was a helicopter pilot in the Army, and living in Germany in the early 1970s,” Thompson said. “I look forward to traveling again and having the time to spend on my art, workshops and classes.”

Thompson said she won’t leave her public relations skills on the shelf, as she plans to write grants and help fund development after she’s well rested.

Thompson said she fell in love with the school some 22 years ago when a friend invited her and her 5-year-old son, William, to the Science Technology Center to experience the jet flight simulator.

“I was blown away by the science center and all the technology,” Thompson said. “Next thing you know, my son is enrolled and I’m waist deep in volunteering.”

Thompson, who graduated from Azusa Pacific University and earned her Masters in Education at Chapman University of Orange, said it was an honor to meet so many interesting people in her role as the school’s liaison to the community.

“I’ve met congressmen Jerry Lewis and Paul Cook,” Thompson said. “I even had a chance to meet Dan Goldin, NASA’s longest-serving administrator.”

Thompson said she felt blessed and humbled to have met so many people, which opened her eyes to a broader world view, but more importantly — the young adults who have gone on to accomplish so much.

“Cheryl created such a unique niche here that it would be impossible to teach somebody else all that she knows,” Piercy said. “There is no way we could ever replace her.”

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