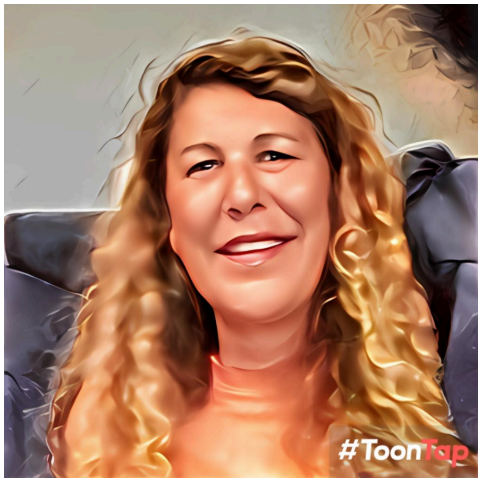
February 2024
Employee Spotlight

Dawn Burroughs,
Youth Advocate Coordinator

Written by Athena Laitinen

How long have you worked at Norris and in what positions?
In August it will be 5 years working at Norris. I started out as an RCS on Spruce Hall, then was promoted to the Lead RCS, after that I switched over to the Youth Wellness and Advocacy Coordinator, but it doesn't stop there! I was then promoted to the Advocacy Supervisor, then a Campus Coordinator, and now a Youth Advocate Coordinator!



What is your favorite Norris memory?
The first rib cook off for sure, staff were competing, there were so many other activities going on like canoeing and kayaking. Even the L.C. came over too, everyone was just having so much fun together which was good for the staff and youth. This event was a little different from others, there was more comradery.

What is your favorite song of all time?
This really depends on my mood or whatever happens to pop in my head, like one that comes to mind is "Rainbow Connection" by Kermit the Frog or "Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah" from the Disney movie "Song of the South." A song that relates to working with youth and reminds me of when I was working with a young girl that ended up passing away from cancer, is "If I die young."

"Rainbow Connection"

"Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah"

What was the last gift that you gave to someone?
In March I took my grandkids on a cruise, we went to Cozumel, Jamaica, and Costa Mia!

What were you like in high school?
Believe it or not I was actually quieter, played sports, music, art, and liked science. I knew people in different groups but typically did my own thing.

If you received enough money to never need to work again, what would you spend your time doing?
My dream is to have a program where we have specialized services for youth like Equine Therapy (horse therapy).

What is your favorite food to prepare (or eat)?
Stir Frys!

When was the last time you traveled somewhere new?
Last year on our cruise we went to the South Caribbean and saw Curacao, Aruba, and Bonaire. Going to the Panama Canal is on my bucket list!

If you had a day of no responsibilities, how would you spend it?
I'd be sitting on a beach next to the ocean, with the sun shining and reading a book/enjoying the nature around me.

What is your most useless talent?
I am a Disney baby so I am very knowledgeable on all things Disney related.

Who would play you in the Lifetime original movie of your teen years?
Personality wise would be Sandra Dee from Grease because I went from quiet to bold! Started out proper and ended up always wearing jeans and cut shirts.

What is the best advice that you have been given from staff when you started working here?
Kevin told me “You have to be okay with not having control and being vulnerable.”

What would be your best advice for new staff at Norris?
I would incorporate Kevin’s advice and also add that we have to remember that our youth live here and we are the visitors. We get to go home so we should help to make the best home possible for our youth while here. Everyday is a new day with new adventures.

What’s the last thing you’ve done that’s worth remembering?
Every year we take the kids and grandkids out fishing/swimming on our boat and it’s my favorite part of the year, it is so relaxing! There is also a cool festival event on the water where there is a band playing and other boats pull up with food and swimming which is a ton of fun too!