

## Phenomenal Indiana Woman: Cherie Sanders

By Shawnta S. Barnes – March 22, 2018



Cherie Sanders began her career with children by supporting preschool students, but today she is a middle school counselor at Chapel Hill 7th/8th Grade Center (CHC) in the MSD of Wayne Township. Although, Cherie's path to become a counselor wasn't direct, every step along the way was preparing her to serve students within the school setting and beyond.

When Cherie began working with preschool students, her family was concerned. With a chuckle, Sanders recalled, "My family thought I didn't like kids, but I did. I was just hard on them." Working with students, even preschoolers, was the spark she needed. Later, Sanders transitioned into a role working as a paraprofessional for SOAR (Students Owning Achievement in Reading) classes at Chapel Hill.

Even though Sanders enjoyed working with middle school students, she wasn't sure she had found her path in life. "I had been praying to God and I was wondering what my purpose was. I was wondering what I was supposed to do," Sanders shared. She realized she was spending more time in the hallway talking to students than working with them in the classroom to improve their reading skills. "Two of my colleagues, Kevin Kendall and Jennifer Schaffer, were in a school counseling program and after some researching and soul searching, I decided to enroll."

After completing the program, Sanders was torn. She loved Chapel Hill, but knew school counseling jobs were hard to obtain. At the end of the 2015-16 school year, she left CHC and took a position as a Family Academic Support Liaison for Hoosier Academies. After winter break, she resigned and returned to CHC to take on a mid-year school counselor vacancy.

As her purpose became clearer, Sanders knew there was more she needed to accomplish and her father was her inspiration. Beaming Sanders shared, "My father, Alvin Sanders, was always very supportive of other people. He always did anything he could to help others." Not knowing the person was not a barrier for Mr. Sanders. Sanders continued, "He would help people stranded at the gas station; he would help people with their tires. His passion was helping kids find direction in life and my parents, who have been married for 31 years, instilled in my sister Whitney and I that we should have a big heart and give to others."

When Cherie was a senior in high school, her dad had his first stroke and was paralyzed on his left side. A couple years ago, he became seriously ill; his health continued to decline until he succumbed to his illness. Sanders reflected, “My sister and I decided to carry on our dad’s legacy and we founded About My Father’s Business, a girls mentoring program.”



With support from their mom, Yvette Sanders, the Sanders sisters’ organization targets girls from age 9-18 in Gary, Indiana. They meet with the girls twice a month, one session is a mentoring session and the other session is an exposure outing. “We want to open the floor to women of color our black girls don’t normally see. We had a black female farmer and at our last session, we had a jewelry entrepreneur who sells her line in Macy and Carson’s,” Sanders stated. The girls are able to reach out between sessions to touch base. It is also important to Cherie and Whitney to ensure the girls are also exposed to opportunities they might not be exposed to in their home life such as an auto show. Sanders recalled, “Growing up, our friends would have

Jordans and our parents had the money for those material things, but they believed it was more important to spend that money on outings to expose us to various experiences.”

In the future, Sanders hopes to expand About My Father’s Business to Indianapolis and other areas across the state. “We are really excited to work with as many community partners as we can. There are more opportunities now than when I was in school and I want our girls to become the best version of themselves.”

Sanders has this advice for young women:

*What I try to instill in young women and girls is your life has to be driven by purpose; we are all here for a reason. When you live your purpose and live life purposely, things will be better for you. It can take a while, but you shouldn’t worry about the timeline. You have to try new things and you have to fail. It’s alright to say ‘that’s not for me,’ but once you walk in your purpose, it makes a world of difference. Finding your purpose will make your life worth living.*

During Women’s History Month, we salute this phenomenal Indiana woman and her efforts to mentor girls and help them find their purpose.

You can learn more about Cherie Sanders’ organization About My Father’s Business on her [website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), or phone 708.998.AMFB (2632).

**Also, check out this phenomenal woman:**

[Phenomenal Indiana Woman: Nikia D. Garland](#)