

## Bluester looks to build on YWCA success

By Tiffany Y. Latta, Staff Writer

8:53 PM Monday, January 18, 2010

**HAMILTON —** The YWCA Hamilton didn't look far in finding a replacement for Sibyl Miller, who retired as director Dec. 31.

Fairfield resident Sherrie Bluester has worked at social services agencies in the Greater Cincinnati area for nearly 20 years.

The 43-year-old Bluester has worked at the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati, Girls Scouts of America for the Oxford and Ross communities and was most recently the regional director of a new foster care agency.

She has also worked part-time for Butler County Children Services and has volunteered for the Greater Cincinnati Red Cross for 15 years.

"I know the needs of women, families and children in this area," Bluester said. "All of my previous positions I think have led to this position. They've provided the foundation to be able to provide programming and resources for women and children."

Miller headed the Y at 244 Dayton St. for 10 years, leaving behind an organization that — despite the sagging economy — is financially sound and one that recently received the highest level reaccreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

Bluester is the right person to succeed Miller, said YWCA board member Wanza Jackson, warden of Warren Correctional Institution.

"She is very much qualified," Jackson said. "She has the experience of working with the YMCA. She has the educational background. She's done grant writing, which is really important for finding funding."

Bluester attributes much of who she is today to her family, especially her mother.

At age 4, Bluester's father died of a heart attack, leaving her mom solely responsible for two girls.

Her father's death rocked the family, but her large extended family — which is deeply rooted in faith and service — pulled together. Meanwhile, Bluester watched her mother — a teacher — keep the family intact and help needy people in the community.

"My mother took in people who were down on their luck. She would take our clothes and toys and give them to people ... It was truly use it or lose it," Bluester said laughing.

Bluester carried the lessons she learned watching her mother into a career — first in health care and now in social services as the new director of the YWCA Hamilton.

Bluester holds bachelor's degrees from Auburn University and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She earned a master's degree in counseling at Xavier University.

With Bluester's experience, Miller said she has the right to tools to lead the Hamilton Y.

"She's the perfect person to succeed me the executive director," she said. "Her skills, her background, her enthusiasm and her experience all will work well to make her a wonderful leader for our organization and our

community.”

Bluester said the YWCA’s mission to empower women and eliminate racism is timeless and one she hopes to encourage others to join.

“Every community, every family knows women just like the ones we have here,” Bluester said. “If someone need help, you help them. That’s just part of who I am.”

She said her goals are to expand existing programs such as the Y’s culinary arts program. She also wants to offer classes on financial stability and job training to encourage more community involvement.

“Our mission hasn’t changed,” she said, “but our approach to what we do has to change.”

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