

Recently, I (Kathie Thodeson) had a conversation with MCS' new Executive Director, Karla Daniels. Her infectious smile and warm personality made me feel as if we had known each other for a long time. As our meeting went on, though, I realize that we share more than meets the eye--she has already developed a real commitment to MCS, its mission and its clients. I hope many of you soon have the chance to meet Karla in person as she leads MCS into its next phase of development. By way of introduction, here's some of what Karla had to say as she takes on her new role.

*Kathie:* After two weeks here, what's your first impression of MCS?

*Karla:* It's such a warm and inviting environment! And the people are great. I really gravitate to the mission—mental health is an essential component of a well-balanced person. Also, everyone in the community is affected when the emotional and mental issues are not addressed—homelessness, crime, broken relationships, can all be a result of untreated issues. I feel that MCS is very well positioned because of its history, expertise, and community partnerships to move forward successfully.

*Kathie:* What personal attributes do you bring to MCS?

*Karla:* I have over 12 years of fundraising experience in both large and small organizations. I have found that Atlantans are very loyal donors when there's a good fit between organizational and personal priorities. If they can see change, and understand the importance of the work to the local community, they will continue to be supportive. I also bring fresh perspectives, new ideas and high energy to this exciting new position.

*Kathie:* What will be your biggest challenge as Executive Director?

*Karla:* I don't know yet! I'm a person who tends to see challenges as opportunities. I'm excited about learning to tell MCS' story, creating new awareness of our services, and breaking through the stigma about mental health issues that still exists in our community.

*Kathie:* What is it like to be around so many therapists?

*Karla:* Actually, it's a very calm environment. There are so many listeners here! I already feel that I am a good "fit" for MCS. Staff members are all very positive, and have given me a warm welcome.

*Kathie:* How important is humor to you? One of the first things I found out about you is that you like to laugh!

*Karla:* Humor is very important to me. It defuses many stressful situations, and allows us to connect to each other. There are so many people who come to MCS with a lot of pain, but there's laughter in here, too. It's very important to find joy in life.

*Kathie:* What do you wish for MCS and its clients?

*Karla:* I wish that each client that leaves MCS would be better equipped to face life and feel more confident. I'm looking forward to working with MCS' talented board, staff and loyal supporters to bring life-changing help to people in financial need. It's a worthy mission!

*Kathie:* Welcome, Karla!