

Client Highlight – Associates in Counseling and Psychotherapy

Dana Thomas, Linda Burke, and Ken Welch together own Associates in Counseling and Psychotherapy (www.acp-indiana.com) located in New Albany and Paoli, Indiana. Some of the services ACP offers include: Individual, Family and Group Therapy, Substance Abuse Treatment, Psychological Diagnostic Services, Art Therapy, and more.

In addition to her role as co-owner, Dana Thomas is also passionate about directing community-based services at ACP. Before becoming an entrepreneur, Dana was the executive director for an all-boy residential facility. Dana, Linda, and Ken worked in the mental health field in their local area before beginning work on ACP. They were also heavily involved in community-based services and residential care. Linda was a therapist for Providence House and Ken continues to work with Veterans to treat trauma.

The transition from their previous roles to becoming entrepreneurs was smoother than the owners could have imagined. Their years of experience in the therapy field and involvement in the community paid off when starting the project of opening ACP.

The mission at ACP is to encourage balance and stabilization by providing compassionate mental health services and creating an opportunity for individuals, families and communities to grow. They are committed to offering professional and ethical services designed to support the enhancement of emotional wellbeing and self-sufficiency. ACP strives to provide quality services with compassion and understanding. They are employee centric and find it important to providing a supportive, healthy and professional environment that will draw quality providers and enhance individual goals through professional development. ACP also strives to be an effective and active community collaborator and a teaching facility that supports the healthy and relevant development and training of students and recent graduates.

With a large family of six kids, Dana loves the flexibility of her role. Having a healthy balance between family and work is very important to the ACP owners, and they encourage their employees and providers to also find that balance. They feel that letting employees have flexible schedules translates to happier attitudes at work. When their providers and employees are at ACP, they are happy to be there, which translates to higher quality services for clients. The owners are so proud that ACP provides opportunities for people that wouldn't have gotten them otherwise.

The owners faced some challenges when starting out, like most small businesses do. The owners are trained as therapists, and the administrative work didn't come naturally at first. With dedication and the help of an office manager, creating and evolving the administrative structure was made possible. The most challenging part of Dana's everyday role is making sure all clients and providers are taken care of because she is so determined to provide high quality services and maintain a happy work environment. In addition, she strives to make the business the best it can be because there are a lot of people that depend on the business' success.

ACP is experiencing tremendous growth. ACP opened its doors in 2004 and started getting serious about expanding in 2011 when their space couldn't keep up with client demand. They moved to a new building in 2012, doubling their facility space. In the last two years, ACP has quadrupled in size and volume of clients. They went from having only 5 contract providers to 30. ACP has seen hundreds of

clients, keeping the providers happily busy. In addition, ACP has expanded by opening an office in Paoli, Indiana.

ACP is committed to their community and are invested in a being community collaborator. They strive to provide the community with an ethical and effective health provider. They genuinely believe that it takes all of us in a community to make things better. ACP is committed to identifying specific issues and developing programs and services to address those specifically.

Dana has been a client of the Southeast ISBDC for three years. She works with Regional Director, Blayr Barnard. Dana says that the ACP owners are trained as therapists and that Blayr helps them with the business side of ACP. She says that the ISBDC is a great resource in the community that they wouldn't have had otherwise.

"ACP has really taken "treat your employees as you want them to treat your customers" to heart. Although it took extended time, effort and collaboration, ACP created a compensation schedule that is very competitive for their industry. I could tell they were dedicated to their providers when it took a mapped out graph to explain the structure," Blayr says of ACP.