

## **Get to Know Our Founder**

### **Lynn Cherry, President & Founder, Carpe Diem Community Solutions Inc.**

With a heart for communities and public service, Lynn Cherry started her 30 plus year career working with not-for-profit organizations. Working as a fundraiser for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and then a caseworker for a United Way referral agency, she saw the need for better health care and social services for our nation's most vulnerable people. Her passion for communities grew from these experiences and led her to a career in higher education.

While working at Gulf Coast Community College (GCCC) in Panama City, Florida, she pioneered and created the first partnership between the Kettering Foundation and a community college. This partnership led to GCCC being nationally recognized as the leading training site for the Kettering Foundation. Serving as GCCC's director of its Public Policy Institute (PPI) for 11 years, Lynn was responsible for training moderators for deliberative democracy community forums. In addition to training, Lynn provided the leadership for over one-hundred community forums in Florida with topics ranging from the environment to poverty. Expanding beyond the local community, she led the college's efforts in supporting the Kettering Foundation's United States – China Relations issue framing, and community forums were held across the United States and China.

As a companion to the PPI, Lynn created and directed the Kellogg Foundation's national award-winning Citizen Leadership Institute (CLI), a community college and statewide citizen-based leadership training program. The CLI won numerous awards including the Bellwether Award for Instructional Excellence (League of Innovation in the Community College), the Exemplary Practice Award for Community Service, the Adult and Continuing Education Commission Award (Florida Association of Community Colleges), the Outstanding Leadership Program Award (Association of Leadership Educators), the David Pierce Work Force Development Award for Organizational Leadership (National Institute for Leadership and Institutional Effectiveness), the Exemplary Program Award, Region IV (National Council for Continuing Education and Training), the Exemplary Practice Award, and the Curriculum and Instruction Commission Award for Academic Excellence (Florida Association of Community Colleges).

As a Girl Scout, Lynn developed a passion for Florida state parks that continues to this day. In 1995, she led the state effort to acquire and support the development of Camp Helen State Park in Bay County, Florida, leading to the first partnership between a state park and a community college in the U.S. Lynn is the recipient of The Nature Conservancy Florida Chapter Grassroots Leader, the Bay County Audubon Society Conservationist of the Year, the Florida Parks Citizen Support Organization of the Year, and the Florida Parks "Best in the District" awards. Additionally, Lynn has served in a leadership capacity, including president of the Friends of Camp Helen State Park for over ten years, during which time The Friends of Camp Helen State Park received the "Best in the State" award. She recently expanded her volunteer commitment to Florida state parks and now serves on the statewide Friends of Florida State Parks Foundation and advocates for recreation and education programs. Lynn recently received a certificate of achievement for over 20-years of volunteer service to Florida state parks.

After a successful career in higher education, Lynn created a small business to continue her quest in helping communities. Carpe Diem Community Solutions began in 2003. With a "seize the day" spirit, Lynn has served as public information officer, trainer, program developer, facilitator, and leader. Her extensive experience in moderating and facilitating group discussion encompasses focus groups, board retreats,

strategic long-range planning, visioning, and community forums. Lynn has a solid track record and the unique ability to plan and implement the appropriate public education awareness tools and involvement experiences. She creates public engagement and awareness strategies that focus on and garner community approval. Flexible methodologies are adapted to meet the needs of the community and the site. She has successfully grown a client base of governmental entities, non-profits, and community organizations.

Lynn has a Master's Degree in Psychology from Florida State University and a Bachelor's Degree in Family and Child Development from Auburn University. She is certified by the National Charrette Institute as a facilitator in charrette systems which is used to support community decision-making.