

Employee Spotlight

A Conversation with Christine Arouth, Director Middletown and Newport Family & Child Opportunity Zones

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Talk about your role within your program and how you contribute to its success.

“As the Director of the Newport and Middletown Child Opportunity Zone (COZs) programs, my role is to develop and manage high-quality, comprehensive services for elementary and middle school students, their family members, and the community that result in improved educational outcomes for children. Services include before and after school licensed childcare and enrichment programs, school vacation camps, and summer learning programs. Our services also increase access to food and other basic human needs and connect families to community resources. Programs are designed to provide academic support, reduce truancy, support social/emotional learning, create partnerships with families and increase parental involvement, and eliminate barriers to accessing services. COZs address the needs of the whole child, ensuring that they are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

I am also responsible for leading and supporting a team of professionals to enable them to successfully serve children and families. Over the past 25 years in this position, I have learned how important it is to create a work environment that allows staff to use their skills and talents, to be creative, and to accomplish their personal and professional goals. Each member of our team is important, and no one staff

member is more important than another. I feel confident that I don't need to know how to do everything or know all the answers. We take a team approach to problem solving. I want each member of our team to feel valued, supported, and heard.”

What motivates you to help those we serve?

“I wish I could count the number of children and families I have met in over the 25 years that I have worked at EBCAP. I am now seeing children that I met when they were 3 years old coming back to Pell with their own children! Some of the staff who now work at Pell were in elementary school when I met them. Seeing the pride on children's faces when they master skills, develop confidence, and conquer personal challenges motivates me to do the work that I do. Being able to help their families by providing food, gift cards, fun and enriching activities, and resources to make things a little easier makes me feel proud. Whenever I am having a challenging day, I go and hang out with the children and play for a while. There is something very grounding about hearing a child's laughter. It reminds me why I do what I do. A wise colleague once told me that if you put children and families in the center of every decision that you make, you will always make the right decision. It's a mantra that I have always lived by, especially when struggling to make a big decision.”

What is it about EBCAP that you like best?

“I have always been proud to say that I work at EBCAP. I have never met a harder working, more passionate group of people before. There is sincerity in every decision that is made and a commitment to improving the lives of the people that we serve. From those on the front line, to those behind the scenes, EBCAP staff work with integrity and grit.”

What's your proudest moment as an EBCAP employee?

“It is impossible to just name one! Every day, staff across the agency give their all for the people we serve. However, there have been several major events that I can recall over the years that have tested our strength and resources, and EBCAP staff creatively rose to the occasion. Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, EBCAP staff was there on the frontline, helping to support families arriving from New Orleans to get settled in the area. In January of 2019 during the National Grid energy crisis, EBCAP staff once again sprang into action to help families with housing and food. Nothing can compare to the world-wide pandemic. In the past two years, I have observed a commitment that was unprecedented. Watching staff handing out food, delivering supplies, mastering the world of virtual meetings and programming, administering tests, giving vaccines, and helping families get back on their feet has been truly inspirational. I have been proud to be part of this extraordinary effort.”