Keeley Has Long History With the CPD | CPD

Becky Keeley at her desk at the CPD.

When Cache Valley native Becky Keeley moves to Caldwell, Idaho later this week, she leaves with a lifetime of memories. But, her nearly life-long connection to the Center for Persons with Disabilities will remain as she works remotely from her new home.

Keeley’s experience at the CPD began in 1976, when she first received services from the Center for Exceptional Children, as the center was known then.

“I was one of the first children with disabilities to be mainstreamed,” Keeley said. “I was never in a special education classroom, other than here.”

She graduated from Mountain Crest High School and received a scholarship to Utah State University, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in English literature.

“I was going to be a librarian, but when I was a senior, my advisor told me that libraries were looking for IT people, not English people,” she said.

Her vocational rehabilitation counselor sent her to an employment agency in Logan, and she became a VISTA volunteer with OPTIONS for Independence, the local center for independent living.

“It was my first real job,” she said. “I was in charge of ADA advocacy at OPTIONS for 18 months.

When the VISTA position ended, she came back to USU in 2000, as the disability studies program was just getting off the ground. She completed the coursework for a master’s degree, but then got sick and never completed the thesis.

Becky Keeley with an unidentified staff member, when she received services at the Center for Exceptional Children, now known as the Center for Persons with Disabilities.

While Keely was working on her master’s degree, a professor from the special education department and an employee at the Disability Resource Center were working on a grant to train university faculty how to better help students with disabilities. She worked with them for three years, but the grant was not refunded.

A co-worker spoke to Judith Holt, director of the interdisciplinary training division at the CPD, on Keeley’s behalf, and she started her current position in July 2006.

“I tell people I’m a glorified TA,” she said with a laugh. “I do a lot of clerical things for the IDASL class like take roll, answer questions and grade writing assignments.”

She will work remotely from her new home with a laptop equipped with a camera, so she can join the IDASL seminar sessions via Skype.

Keeley’s oldest brother and his family live in Caldwell, and they have just built a completely accessible house for her use.

“It will take awhile to unpack and get used to the new house,” she said. She works only part-time because she also receives SSI, but she will fill her time with family, books, work, books, and perhaps some volunteering at the Caldwell library.

“Before OPTIONS, I volunteered at the library,” she said. “I wanted to turn that into my real job.”

As a teen, her favorite literary genres were fantasy and historical novels. Now, she said, “I’ll read almost anything if it has a good review.”