

Diane Bawcom

Director,
BabySteps and
Children's
Formation,
Boise

Age: 41



"What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?"

Author Unknown

By Gaye Bunderson
Idaho Business Review

One small step toward achieving independence can turn into one giant leap in the direction of success for a woman of limited means. And sometimes the journey starts with BabySteps.

BabySteps is an outreach ministry of St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Boise that offers education to pregnant and parenting women and their families. The guiding light of the program is its director, Diane Bawcom. For her work at BabySteps and its sister programs, Children's Formation and the Step-Up Academy, Bawcom has been named a 2010 Idaho Woman of the Year.

Bawcom earned a bachelor's degree in human development and family studies from Texas Tech University and a master's in social work from the University of Texas at Arlington. Her career has literally covered life's cycles from birth to death. The woman who now devotes herself to expectant mothers first started out as a grief and hospice counselor.

From 1993 through 1994, she worked as a hospice social worker at Hospice of Lubbock, Texas. From 1994 to 1995, she served as director of bereavement services.

"I remember being told as a young woman in high school that death was just as natural as birth," Bawcom said. "When I started my work in hospice, I was young. Many of my patients became friends of mine before they died. ... I hope to die surrounded by family and

friends, being able to share words of wisdom and lessons learned to someone who will listen."

Bawcom was born in California and lived in Texas for many years. She considers the Lone Star State her home, she said, but the Gem State has found a place in her heart as well.

"I arrived in Idaho in 2005 following a relocation with my ex-husband's work to join J.R. Simplot. I love it. I love the sense of community, and the great people remind me of Texas - it just has beautiful mountains," said Bawcom.

A mother of two, Bawcom's employment at BabySteps is part-time but her commitment is full-time.

Kelly Showalter, a pediatrician who helped develop BabySteps' program to teach low-income mothers proper prenatal care and nutrition, said in her letter of nomination that Bawcom "is working tirelessly ... never complaining of the financial limitation a part-time church salary imposes. She gives freely of herself to mothers and children who rarely receive anything free."

Bawcom's inspiration comes from many sources, and she credits her mother, grandmother and other strong female mentors for her own strength and empathy. She seeks to endow the women in BabySteps with a sense that nothing's out of reach for them.

"Once one woman experiences success, the trickle-down effect is set in motion," said Bawcom.