

Moraine Park names Mark Wildman as 2011 Distinguished Alumnus

Credits alma mater for love of learning
Moraine Park News Service

Mark Wildman, Moraine Park Technical College's 2011 Distinguished Alumnus, works to help better the lives of others. His passion for learning, which ignited as a Moraine Park corrections science student, spurred him on to earn several degrees; participate in multiple behavior workshops; and become deputy institution superintendent for the Wisconsin Department of Corrections Ethan Allen Schools, a juvenile corrections facility in Wales, Wis.

It took him awhile, however, to realize his potential. While in high school, Wildman remembers a teacher saying, "Don't expect too much of yourself."

"I remember not liking what she said, but I partly believed it," admits Wildman, who grew up as a farm boy. "It wasn't until I made my way to Moraine Park that I realized I could do more, and in the process, help others."

After serving four years in the U.S. Army and then working as a nursing assistant, he decided to attend a criminal justice presentation at Moraine Park. Martin Potter, a corrections instructor, led the presentation. "The message inspired me and drove me into the field of corrections science," says Wildman.

"Marty talked about being confident and learning to understand. He stressed applying that knowledge to your personal and professional life to positively impact others' lives."

At the time, Wildman believed his education would end with a corrections science associate degree when he graduated in 1996. In reality, his learning experience had just begun. He credits Moraine Park for nurturing his lifelong love for learning.

Wildman went on to earn a bachelor's degree in administration of justice and a master's degree in organizational leadership and quality from Marian College, in Fond du Lac, as well as a doctorate in human services from Capella University, in Minneapolis. All the while, he climbed the corrections ladder.

“Mark started out in the trenches so to speak, as a corrections officer,” says Potter, who retired in May. “He then progressed and became a correctional sergeant and psychiatric care supervisor. This was followed by another progression as a unit manager, and ultimately, he earned his most recent promotion as deputy superintendent of a juvenile institution.”

During all of this, Wildman also served a year stint as an adjunct criminal justice instructor at Moraine Park, and today, teaches courses such as cultural diversity, criminology, and ethics and administration of justice for Axia University of Phoenix Online. Additionally, at the University of Phoenix Online's School of Advanced Studies, Wildman instructs doctoral level courses and mentors doctoral students on their dissertations.

Giving back, Wildman also serves as a panel member at Moraine Park's “Careers and Corrections,” a culminating event for criminal justice-corrections students. Featuring a panel of professionals representing law enforcement, parole, corrections and education, the event highlights a variety of industry occupations, along with a question-and-answer session. “We also conduct and provide feedback on mock interviews with students,” Wildman says. “I often encourage them to elaborate on what they learned at Moraine Park, and how they might apply that knowledge within a particular occupation.”

His advice makes an impact, according to Potter, who taught Wildman at Moraine Park. “Mark is both a workforce and educational inspiration to all students in all programs at Moraine Park,” Potter says. “He is a class act with a very humble ego, who has accomplished incredible work and educational goals while supervising people who are incarcerated. He is a very good role model for all of our students to reach for the stars.”

Wildman – a counselor and mentor to hundreds of inmates over the years – strives to help them enjoy enriched lives. “I communicate the same message I learned at Moraine Park,” he says. “I stress the importance of self-confidence and lifelong learning.” Wildman urges them to read *Gifted Hands – The Ben Carson Story*,

an autobiography of a poor child living in inner-city Detroit, who grows up to be a leading pediatric neurosurgeon.

“I tell people that they can become more than what they are, so long as they are dedicated to self-improvement and learning,” says Wildman. “Learn not for the sake of learning,” he advises, “but learn to understand and apply that understanding to life.”

Wildman practices what he preaches. His thirst for information seems never-ending, having participated in more than 30 training and workshop sessions focused on a variety of topics, including suicide prevention, motivational interviewing, disruptive personality disorders, coaching, mentoring and team building, children of prisoners, and guiding others through stressful times. By taking in training opportunities, Wildman maintains it makes a person better all the way around.

His advice to Moraine Park students is clear ... “The road isn’t always smooth,” says Wildman. “Sometimes you hit bumps. But, if you keep moving forward, remain confident and continue to learn and grow every day, you’ll be amazed with what you can achieve.”

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