

Mom and Pop Shops



Names: Gayle Klopp and Gayla Sherman

Business/Positions: Co-Executive Directors for Charles Hall Youth Services in Bismarck; Gayla serves as Co-Executive Director of Programs & Resource Development; Gayle serves as Co-Executive Director of Administration & Operations. The 45-year-old faith-based agency serves over 100 at-risk foster care youth each year.

How long have you been working together: Almost five years

How do you separate your roles/one clear 'boss': "As co-executive directors, we share the leadership function in the organization," said Gayle. "Some things we work on together, while other tasks have clear delineations for who is responsible. With aging parents and two kids in college, it's been great to have someone who can fill in if one of us needs to be gone to help family."

At an annual retreat, the agency's board set a goal that Charles Hall Youth Services would become a model organization for others like it across the nation. The board hired Gayla and Gayle and gave them the freedom and encouragement to hire and train a staff with the same level of energy and commitment as they both demonstrated. Within five years, the staff doubled in size, the agency's budget more than doubled, and Charles Hall is now known for building on kids' strengths.

How has working together changed your marriage: "We have to work hard not to work all the time," said Gayla. "It would be very easy to live and breathe Charles Hall Youth Services, its kids, its staff . . . 24/7. We both feel called to what we do and are passionate about our work. So, it's definitely different than when we both worked for separate organizations."

"We see a lot more of each other every day, so there's definitely a need occasionally to have some personal space," commented Gayle. "It's not always easy, but working together makes everything more meaningful. As recent empty nesters, we're looking forward to the future, both in business and our personal lives."

How do you separate work and home issues: "For the most part, I think we've kept our personal lives out of the office, except where raising our own teenagers and dealing with their problems had a direct correlation on the work we do with youth," said Gayle.

"We haven't done as well keeping business out of the home, but we're getting better."

"Gayle is better at this than me," said Gayla. "Sometimes, I even wake him in the middle of the night to talk about things at Charles Hall."

Ever consider doing anything else:

"My current role is very satisfying and working at Charles Hall Youth Services truly makes a difference for the youth we serve. We have both done different things in our careers, but I like it where we are working together," said Gayle.

"There have been times when I've questioned if I needed to do something different, as I have been approached a couple times during the last few years concerning other job opportunities. But, I always come back to realizing that I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be at this time in my life. We both can look back and see how all that we've done in the past 20 years has prepared us for where we find ourselves today," said Gayla.

"We both have parents who worked together – my parents in higher education and Gayle's in private business. So, when we had the opportunity to work together, it felt very natural and normal," explained Gayla. "We said when we first married that it would be great to work together someday, because our backgrounds fit together so perfectly!"

Tips for other husband/wife teams:

"Definitely take some time to get away from each other," offered Gayle.

"I think to work together as a couple in leadership, it's extremely important to know who you are as individuals," said Gayla. "Know your strengths, know your needs, know your desires. Then, it's important to recognize the strengths, needs and desires of your spouse in his or her role. It's important to support one another, lift each other up when necessary, and coach each other when mistakes are made. And, mistakes are inevitable because we're human."