

The Wisdom Coach

by Brad Benson

Saluki greets Kent Williams and Jermaine Dearman had one in former SIU Head Basketball Coach Bruce Weber. Tom Koutsos and Muhammad-Abdulqaadir have one in Southern's Jerry Kill. What do these athletes have in common? A coach.

Webster's Dictionary defines a coach as "a private tutor, one who instructs or trains." But a coach can be much more. A coach can be a mentor who pushes people beyond their comfort zones while holding one accountable. And if this type of person is there to confide in and talk to athletes in times of need, then SIU alumnus Carole Billingham may well be the coach for the rest of us.

A "Business and Spiritual Coach," Billingham '84 works virtually out of her home in Estes Park, Colo. with clients from all over the world. "Whether it is more balance, more money, more achievement, more time with their families, I try to assist them," she says. "If their life is not revolving around the things that are most important, I try to start moving them in that direction."

The author of *The Ten Principles of Attraction* and *Master Certified Coach* helps her clients lead happy and prosperous lives, while enabling them to find their **own** answers to life's questions.

"I feel my job is to help clients find their own answers rather than giving answers and creating a co-dependant relationship," says the SIU Alumni Association member. "That's one of the pitfalls some fall into – thinking others have better answers.

"Coaching is finding the core needs that drive your behavior. Is it the need to accomplish? Is it the need to be acknowledged? It's often about getting off automatic pilot and being conscious of what makes you tick."

Much of her approach comes from life experiences formed while at SIU.

"What I garnered from SIU was how to sit down, eliminate distractions and learn," states Billingham. "I learned that when you get focused and intentional, you can do anything."

While at SIU, she also learned the value of mentorship in Patricia Welch, professor of Food and Nutrition. "Trish was my mentor at SIU and gave me leadership opportunities while believing in me without question."

However, coaching was not always in Billingham's career path. After earning a degree in Food and Nutrition in 1984, she initially started her career with Diversifoods Inc., working at a restaurant in Tallahassee, Fla. In 1985 she went to work for the Sysco Corporation (a marketer and distributor of foodservice products in North America), where she applied a work ethic learned at SIU and honed in the restaurant business to a sales environment. She would go on to earn Sysco's Torchbearer Award, which honors the corporation's top performing marketing associates. After several years with the company, however, she felt the need for another challenge and accepted



Billingham, shown above with husband Barry Stein, says much of her philosophy comes from life experiences formed at Southern. For more on Billingham, go to her Web site at www.wisdomcoach.com.

an offer in 1993 to join Prudential Securities in Miami, Fla.

The position with Prudential would serve as a new test for Billingham and awaken her desire to serve people. "It was different from the restaurant business," she says. "I learned a lot about myself from it, including my commitment to values and integrity. I came in with high morals and values; money was not my motivator. The emphasis there was on sales, not helping people."

So after two years in the securities industry, she left her business contacts in Miami, sold her home, and moved to the mountains of Colorado to find her calling. After reading an article in the *Denver Post* on coaching, she knew what she wanted to do and immediately signed up for training.

Soon afterward she began teaching her *Ten Principles of Attraction* workshops. "The whole premise is that there is something called "the law of attraction." It's in effect whether you are aware of it or not. We attract things to us based on our thoughts."

While her life has taken her a long way from Carbondale, the Hinsdale, Ill., native still applies the tools learned from her days at SIU. "The stuff I learned while at SIU – the importance of a mentor, balance, and power focus and determination – all four of these things are part of being a coach. These are still tools for success today."

And what about the corporate world she left behind? "The business world is ready for a change. 'Workoholism' is an epidemic that's almost become a badge of honor for most people, but many are getting burned out and leaving the corporate world in droves.

"My message is that you *can* have it all. You can make a great living and have a really rich life. I'm only working a few days a week, am a mom the rest of the time, and earn a full-time living. I'm having a blast – this is so much fun." ■