

Bettie L. Carlson

Bettie Carlson was among the distinguished teachers at the South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD) during the period of 1957–74. She came from Washington, D.C. to teach arts and crafts when her husband, Dave, was offered a job as graphic arts instructor at SDSD. She said that fresh open-sky air, wide-open spaces and much less traffic congestion in South Dakota were some factors in her decision to stay.



Carlson is a West Virginia native and graduated from the West Virginia School for the Deaf, where she developed her skills in arts and crafts. She attended Gallaudet College (University). During her teaching career, she attended Sioux Falls College, and one summer she took a course at New Mexico State University in programmed instruction.

Prior to her SDSD teaching job, Carlson had worked for the federal government for four and a half years as a cartographic draftsman and chart compiler during the time of the Korean War.

In the later years, Carlson taught arts and crafts, science, social studies, health and home economics. She assisted with the formation of the Junior National Association of the Deaf chapter at SDSD and served as one of their first advisors. In 1973, she served as one of the first advisors of the original “Christmas Choir” that consisted of high school students who performed in the Sioux Falls community to enhance awareness of deafness and SDSD as an educational option. The group eventually became known as SDSD Awareness Group.

Carlson was active in the South Dakota Association of the Deaf and the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf Division throughout her tenure at SDSD.

After 17 outstanding years at SDSD, Carlson accepted a position at the Maryland School for the Deaf in Frederick, where she spent 17 years as the head of the elementary school residential program. She was instrumental in developing and implementing an independent living curriculum for school-wide use in the after-school programs. She retired from MSD in 1991 and returned to Sioux Falls to work for CSD in a variety of positions, until her retirement in 1999.

Currently, she lives in Sioux Falls and enjoys her retirement with her husband, Dave.