

# The APSE Gazette

Spring 2009

## Thanks Kim Turner!

On November 17, 1994 I went to a conference in Grand Island entitled "Strategies for Implementing Supports for Persons With Developmental Disabilities". Kim Turner, a young woman from an agency in Madison Wisconsin called Options in Community Living was one of the speakers that day. Fourteen years later, I can still see Kim standing in front of our group of Nebraska service providers, telling us about their agency which helped people who experience disabilities to live in their own homes & communities; to have lives & experiences comparable to those of their neighbors, & other community members. I was enthralled by her stories AND her language, language which described their work, & the people they worked for in every day terms, ...people were people, supports sounded like partnerships to help people get where & what they wanted in everyday ways. She talked about home ownership, jobs, friendships, church memberships, co workers, libraries, weddings, & weight loss groups. She said that parents, family members, neighbors, co-workers, church members, bank tellers, bus drivers, waitresses, employers, friends, clerks, members of clubs, plumbers, medical professionals, social service personnel must be involved daily in providing & obtaining the supports & services necessary for people to experience what they want in their lives. Like I said before, I was blown away! I wanted to go work there! I wanted it to be like that here!

On that November 1994 day, I'd already worked in the Nebraska service delivery system for almost 20 years! If it was going to be like that here...IN MY LIFETIME, we were going to have to KICK IT UP! "When the student is ready, the teacher will come." And so the teachers came. Person centered planning tools & the personal Network/Relationship Map caught our attention. They helped us hear the voices of people we served in whole new ways & helped us see futures & outcomes through the eyes of people we served & those who loved them. We've been challenged

## Nebraska APSE Board Members

Carol Collicott  
Lisa Enstrom  
Joleen Frey  
Joe Govier  
Brenda Johnson  
Laurel Johnson  
Linda Kallhoff- President  
Sonia Kistner- Treasurer  
Becki Koehler  
Mary Lawson  
Melody McLaughlin  
Mike Mischnick  
Cheryl Montgomery- Secretary  
Jodi Ronspies  
Todd Scholz  
Rita Skiles  
Kierstin Reed- Vice President  
Sally Vaughn  
Laurie Ackermann  
Jackie Six

ever since to adapt & change our services & interactions so that they increase the likelihood people will live these hoped for futures.

One day last fall, as I went to lunch, I was debating where to go. I drove down the highway past McDonalds & Cubby's & met Chuck\* walking home from work at Alco. I saw Richard\* & Mark\* hurrying across Micky D's parking

*Continued on page 2*

## Nebraska APSE Contact Information

Linda Kallhoff- President  
NorthStar Services  
Box 734  
O'Neill, NE 68763  
spiritg@northstarservices.net

Kierstin Reed - Vice President  
ServiceLinc  
145 South 56th STE: B  
Lincoln, NE 68510  
krservicelinc@yahoo.com

To submit information for the Nebraska APSE Newsletter Contact Todd Scholz at [tscholz40@yahoo.com](mailto:tscholz40@yahoo.com)

lot. Well, Richard was hurrying & paging through his communication book, getting ready to order. Around the curve, I discovered that Taco John's was calling my name, so I pulled through the drive-thru, where Pam\* called to me from behind the counter. I greeted her, took my food & headed west down Douglas Street. Coming upon Rodeo Market, I remembered the Tylenol I was going to down with my dinner. I ran in quickly...didn't want my beef burrito to get cold, grabbed the generic version & got in line to check out. Standing in front of me was Sharon\* with a few groceries including the roast she was planning to go home & stick in her crock pot. Got me to thinking about what I should be planning for supper. I checked out & drove south to Carney Park where I could sit, & eat lunch in peace. I was mostly alone watching water diamonds race in front of the wind across the pond, where Kelly\* was getting instructions on how to use a camera to get snapshots of the geese pouring up the bank in her direction. Aldon\* was cutting across the Softball fields to the car, thwarting his support staff's plan to add a bit more distance to the morning excise event.

As I sat sucking salt off a potato ole, it occurred to me that I did indeed work in a world that resembled the long ago stories, I had heard Kim Turner telling an audience in 1994! Imagine my surprise when I find myself no longer satisfied with 1994 hopes for the future. Today I want to work in a service system in a state that finds itself in the company of states like Oklahoma where employment outcomes for people who experience disabilities is at 77% instead of Nebraska's 24%! It could happen here in Nebraska! It will take the belief that it's a possible & desirable future to work toward in all sectors of the service system. Nebraska, are we ready to move out & be leaders again? Check out both the National APSE Network on Employment website [www.apse.org](http://www.apse.org) & Nebraska APSE's website [www.nebraskaapse.org](http://www.nebraskaapse.org) . Let's work together.

### **National APSE Mission Statement**

**APSE: The Network on Employment is  
a membership organization formed in 1988 as the  
Association for Persons in Supported Employment  
to improve and expand integrated employment opportunities,  
services, and outcomes for persons experiencing disabilities.**

### **Memories of community placements**

I began my career with ENCOR in 1971. While this was not the very beginning of the deinstitutionalization movement it was close. In the late 60's many of the individuals who moved from the Beatrice State Home were highly skilled and so those individuals found jobs and lived in apartments soon after they returned to their home communities. Community instructors were provided by Educational Service Units.

The number of people living at the Beatrice State Home was between three and four thousand. Many had work experience at the farm and working in laundry and food service on campus. Agencies were funded with block grants and were expected to serve as many people as possible with that money.

Brief files of individuals that included psychological evaluations were provided for review followed by trips to Beatrice to meet individuals. Interdisciplinary meetings were held with as many as 20+ sitting around the table. Every shift, location and specialty was represented. Often time the meetings were confrontational. It could be difficult determining if the individual's best interest were being considered. While employees of the institution were very protective, community based employees tended to believe that no issue was too big or too serious.

The concerns were many, including the need for overnight awake, diets, proper medical care in the community and the overall safety of individuals who had lived their entire lives on the campus of the State Home. I believe that the same concerns exist today. I was always struck by the limited number of possessions that people owned. Many times all that was owned would fit in the trunk of a car.

The goals for independence and inclusion were in place in the late 60's and early 70's. Service providers have the same basic mission now as they did then. What has been missing is a sense of urgency. Service providers are too good at wasting the lives of the people they support.

## Benefits of Supported Employment

Supported Employment has been around since the early 1970's to assist individuals with severe disabilities to obtain and maintain meaningful employment outcomes. The intent of early Supported Employment was to target individual who would normally only have the option of receiving day services in a sheltered workshops, day services centers or who would receive no services at all.

Since then, almost forty years have past and the question still remains, what is the true benefit of Supported Employment. Since that time, numerous studies across the United States and the United Kingdom have tried to answer that question. One such study, Bond, Becker et al (2001), identified the following three factors when looking at cost benefit .

1. Individuals perspective – Net earnings minus welfare benefits
2. Tax payer perspective - Tax revenue plus welfare benefits saved and saving on alternate programs
3. Societal perspective – Saving to the state from alternative programs (earning + tax minus baseline productivity plus employment support); and changes in health or wellbeing.

Cost benefits ratio's were developed by dividing net benefits by gross benefits plus gross costs, yielding a ratio between -1 and +1.

A critical review by Cimera (2001) identified 21 such cost studies and found that at the individual level that the cost benefits ratio is almost always positive regardless of level of disability.

At the taxpayer level, it was discovered that after the fourth year of employment Cimera estimates that the taxpayer obtains a net benefit.

Additional studies conform to the conclusion of Cimera. For example, McCaughrin et al. in Illinois (1993) stated that the benefit to the individual was positive and the taxpayers benefit was negative the first year but positive within year five. His conclusion was that "Supported Employment was consistently less costly than sheltered work."

Both authors caution that using customer satisfaction and quality of life indicators may underestimate the benefit to the individual. From a quality of life standpoint, who can argue that supported employment is a better option then sheltered employment.

Simply stated Supported Employment is a win win for both individuals utilizing the service and the tax payer. So why are Day Service Centers and Sheltered Workshops still the most available option to someone who experiences a disability? What can APSE do to educate people and families in Nebraska to look at Supported Employment as the first option to having a meaningful day? APSE still has much work ahead.

## Groundbreaking Developments on the Statistics on Unemployment for People with Disabilities

On February 6, 2009, for the first time ever, the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported officially reported the Current Population Survey (CPS), employment data about people with disabilities. These data have been gathered since June, 2008 when six questions about disability were permanently added to the CPS, a monthly survey the federal government uses to estimate the unemployment level and rate. The Current Population Survey is a monthly sample survey of about 60,000 households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The sample is selected to reflect the entire civilian non institutional population. Based on responses to a series of questions on work and job search activities, each person 16 years and over in a sample household is classified as employed, unemployed, or not in the labor force. Data on demographic characteristics such as sex, age, and race are also collected.

Although it is widely believed that people with disabilities typically face a higher rate of unemployment than individuals without disabilities, official estimates were not available until now. The U.S. Department of Labor released the first of its monthly data series on the employment status of people with a disability, assisting the nation in understanding how the changing labor market condition affects Americans with disabilities. In January 2009, the unemployment rate of persons with a disability was 13.2 percent, compared with 8.3 percent for persons with no disability and the employment-population ratio for persons with a disability was 20.0 percent, compared with 65.0 percent for persons with no disability. Every month henceforth, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Office of Disability Employment Policy will publish disability employment data on their websites at [www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability.htm) and [www.dol.gov/odep](http://www.dol.gov/odep). To access the current report, visit [www.bls.gov/cpsdisability.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cpsdisability.htm). (Information provided by [www.aaid.org](http://www.aaid.org) and Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities: Media Release from the CCD Task Force on Employment and Training, February 6, 2009)

### National APSE Goals

Provides advocacy and education  
to customers of supported employment (SE),  
i.e. supported employment professionals,  
consumers and their family members,  
and supported employers.

Addresses issues and barriers  
which impede the growth and implementation  
of integrated employment services.

Improves supported employment (SE) practice  
so that individuals and communities experience SE  
as a quality service with meaningful outcomes.

Promotes national, state, and local policy development  
which enhances the social and economic inclusion and empowerment  
of all persons experiencing severe disabilities.

Educates the public and the business community  
on the value of including persons experiencing severe disabilities  
as fully participating community members.

### Does Disability Discrimination Still Exist?

*An editorial by Kierstin Reed*

To view the original article please visit: <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/200902080405/NEWS/902080344>

I recently read an article that was reporting on a group of men with intellectual disabilities that lived and worked in Atalissa, Iowa. The 21 men in the article, reported to be mentally retarded, were living in a renovated school house known as "the bunkhouse" that was shut down by the state fire marshal. All the men worked for

Henry's Turkey Service, a Texas-based company that for 34 years had employed these men to work at a local meat processing plant. The company, who also owned the property and provided for the "care" of the men, is now under investigation by the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, the Department of Justice, Department of Labor, and the FBI. The residence and the wages for these men were completely unregulated.

The men were being paid sub minimum wages (reported to be half the salary of other employees) to complete jobs in the factory. In addition, pay was being deducted by the employer to provide for room and board and for "kind care" for the men that lived in deplorable conditions and were not being provided needed services. Obviously the disability communities, as well as many others, are appalled about the conditions in which the men were living and working, but what is even more stunning is that the company has been the subject of several investigations prior to this latest incident regarding the care of the men. No action was taken in these situations. Although the city of Atalissa owns the property in question, which was rented to Henry's for \$600 a month, the city is claiming little responsibility for monitoring how the men were paid or treated.

Knowing the system in which we work, it is appalling to me that the conditions in which these men live and work have been allowed to continue for over 20 years! The system failed to act in the face of a problem that could have been prevented. It's not that they systems are not in place to deal with these problems, they just failed to act. The problems were right under the nose of numerous departments and the conditions were seen by so many people in the community and the fail to act was irresponsible.

The comments posted to this article were even more saddening to me... "That's not fair to imply these men were on a level of slaves. These men I saw were happy. They held jobs. They had money to spend, a place called home, food on the table and friends. No 'employee' was physically abusing them or sexually abusing them. They were regular member of the community..." "(they should go back to Texas)...they could call it the tardtrain or something" "Sylvia Piper (advocate) knew of this 30 years ago as a mental health advocate and now she is upset that noting has been done. Excuse me, as an advocate if you knew about it 30 years ago isn't that part of your job to follow up and keep following up until something is done."

"...don't be so quick to judge the people who cared for these boys because they truly do care for them! If they didn't they would all be back in Texas or nursing homes by now! The people who are caring for them don't want the boys to have to leave what they have known and loved for the past 30 years."

"People live on the streets everyday and are lucky if they get to eat at all. These boys were taken on outings, shopping, fed, received medical attention! Maybe the people who were taking care for them did the best they could with what was provided for them! And might I add none of them caregivers had any sort of education in caring for the handicapped! They did a fine job as far as I could tell!"

"I see them everyday. They are happy!!! Most of them are what you people would classify as mentally handicapped but not as bad as some of you may think! In defense of the people who have cared for them here in Atalissa they were fed three meals a day! Had heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer! They were not treated as dogs! Maybe some of their living conditions were not up to state codes for a care facility. But they did have a roof over their heads and people who cared about them. They received medical attention when necessary and on a daily basis as far as medications go! They were free to walk downtown when they chose and had a curfew."

Our society STILL does not see anything wrong with treating people with disabilities as second class citizens! How is the treatment these men received, living in a communal setting with 21 people, working along side them for eight hours a day, not receiving adequate pay, and being forced to live in squalor when they are paying over \$1,000 a month to have adequate care, any different than how slaves were treated? If we even have to justify a comparison to slaves and dogs~ I think the answer should be clear.

I don't know about you, but I don't freely choose to live like this and I have a hard time believing that ANY of these men were actually happy with the conditions they were living in. Did anyone ask them? Did they have other options?

When is this mindset going to change? What do we have to do to get there? Let us not be the advocate that was sited in the article knowing that this had gone on for 30 years and thinking that the problem was fixed... Don't give up on what you believe... Continue to fight... I'll be right there with you!

## **To Disclose or Not to Disclose... That is the Question**

(Information reprinted from The Office of Disability Employment Policy- Job Accommodation Network at [www.jan.wvu.edu/links/employment.htm](http://www.jan.wvu.edu/links/employment.htm))

Deciding when to disclose a disability can be a difficult choice for a person with a disability who is job hunting. If you support someone with a hidden disability such as a learning disability or a psychiatric impairment, when and how to support them to disclose their condition can be a real dilemma.

The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits employers from asking medical or disability-related questions on a job application. The exception to this is that a government agency can ask an applicant to voluntarily disclose a disability for affirmative action purposes. Otherwise, if you encounter specific questions about your disability or medical history, leave them blank. If necessary, this can give you the opportunity to explain why you did not answer the questions instead of why you intentionally gave false answers.

Below are some guidelines for dealing with disability issues in the pre-employment process:

### **Step one: Start with a Good Resume**

Take time to write a good resume. A resume should have three basic components:

- 1) Name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address;
- 2) Education and training experiences; and
- 3) Work history and experience.

Do not overlook the value of non-paid work experience such as internships, volunteer activities, and work that you have done for non-profit organizations such as a church, civic organization, or political party.

### **Step Two: Write a Cover Letter**

A cover letter is used to introduce a prospective employee to the prospective employer. It should briefly identify who they are and why they are applying for the position. A cover letter also gives the job seeker the first opportunity to disclose their disability. This would be to their advantage if: They are applying for a job with a state or federal agency that must comply with affirmative action policies; The job they are applying for directly relates to their experience as a person with a disability such as a rehabilitation counselor; or having a disability is a qualification for the position.

### **Step Three: Completing Applications**

For most people, the employment process begins with a company's job application. How a person obtains and fills out this application can be the first impression the employer has of the applicant.

#### **Step Four: The Interview**

For most job seekers, the interview is the "make it or break it" point. Remember that you have about a minute to make a good first impression, and first impressions mean everything during this stage of the employment process. Disclosure of your disability is critical at this point if accommodations, such as access to the building, are necessary to do the job. Do your homework! If you know the location for the interview is not accessible to you, contact the person who will be interviewing you and request an alternative location. It is a good idea to have a location in mind, just in case the interviewer needs some suggestions.

If you do not know if the location is accessible, call and ask questions about whether there are accessible parking spaces available or whether the building has an elevator. It is better to deal with these issues ahead of

time than 15 minutes before your interview. This also shows your perspective employer that you are able to deal with these situations effectively.

The best way to handle difficult questions during the interview is to be prepared for them. Make a list of the questions you know you are going to have trouble with and formulate an answer, then practice your delivery of these answers so you will be ready for them. For example, "I see that there is a two year gap in your work history. What have you been doing during this time?" This is an opportunity to talk about what you have been doing, not what you have not been doing. Think about valuable life experiences that you have gained during this time. Have you been taking care of children or a parent, going to school, taking art classes, or volunteering? This question may prompt you to disclose your disability if you have not already done so. Be sure to do it in a way that shows how you have dealt with a difficult situation in a positive manner. Remember to keep the past in the past, stating that you are ready to move forward and are qualified and able to do the job you want.

Remember to talk about your abilities, not your disabilities. Employers need qualified, capable individuals to fill positions. Find a way to show that you are that person. Sell them on what you can do, not on what you cannot do and the interview will go better than you expect. Be positive about yourself and be honest. Information reprinted from The Office of Disability Employment Policy- Job Accommodation Network at [www.jan.wvu.edu/links/employment.htm](http://www.jan.wvu.edu/links/employment.htm)

## **Coaches Corner ~ Tip of the Month**

Be sure the capacity of the business to make training and support decisions is encouraged and developed:

(Excerpt taken from Naturally Supported Employment- Institute on Disability- University of New Hampshire 1997)

Many of the approaches that a business used to train and support their typical employees will be effective in training and supporting a supported employee. An important role of employment specialists is to help companies and coworkers to understand this. In addition, many of the solutions to train and support problems that a supported employee may have are actually not "special" or "technical", but rather common sense solutions that most coworkers can figure out on their own. One approach that employment specialists can use to help coworkers to build their confidence in their ability to solve problems, is to brainstorm solutions with them (encouraging them to come up with common sense solutions), rather than simply telling the coworkers how to solve a problem.

However, a supported employee may need a training or support approach that a coworker has not used before. For example, a particular supported employee may need a written or picture task list to follow in order to remember the order in which to perform his or her duties. Another role of the employment specialist is to provide suggestions about unique training approaches that a supported employee may need of which the coworkers may not be aware. By doing so, the employment specialist will help to build the coworkers' knowledge of these approaches, so that they can then use them in the event the supported employee has difficulties in other aspects of his or her job.

# APSE has many benefits. Here are a few!

## **The Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation**

APSE members now have electronic access to the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation (JVR) as part of membership! The JVR offers cutting edge information on supporting people in the workplace. Free to APSE members, JVR has a regular subscription rate of \$453, making this a significant deal for APSE members. You can go on-line now and download issues. Or if you prefer a print copy, you can sign up to receive one at the substantially discounted rate of \$48.

## **InfoLines Partnership**

APSE members get discounts on InfoLines, an electronic newsletter published 10 times per year, that provides practical, easy-to-read information on supporting people with disabilities in the workplace. InfoLines is published by Training Resource Network and their team of Dale DiLeo, publisher, and Dawn Langton, Editor.

## **APSE WebSite and On-Line Membership System**

APSE's website carries updated information on a myriad of issues relative to SE; provides electronic communication with our members for rapid distribution of e-news and information updates; includes a new membership system that allows members to renew or join on-line, register for the conference and training sessions on-line; and has a members only section which allows access to JVR, updating your member record, and more.

## **theAdvance**

APSE members receive four copies of theAdvance, the APSE newsletter, each year. Topics discussed in theAdvance include: Public Policy affecting People with Disabilities; Empowerment of SE Workers; Management of SE Programs; Personnel Competencies and Training; Alternative Funding Sources; Ethical Standards for Service Providers; The Americans with Disabilities Act; Best Practices in SE; SE in The Rehabilitation Act; SE Worker and Employer Satisfaction; Transition From School to Work; Natural Supports; SSA Work Incentives, PASS, IRWE, etc.; and a myriad of other issues.

## **Annual Conference**

APSE sponsors an annual national conference to provide a forum for sharing and collectively improving SE practice and opportunities for persons experiencing severe disabilities. APSE members have access to conference activities at reduced rates.

## **State Chapters**

APSE members involved in the development and implementation of supported employment are tied into a national network of others involved in supported employment. State and local Chapters are forming to facilitate the continued expansion of quality SE in their states and localities. APSE currently has fully-chartered 36 State Chapters and State Chapters in Development. Many other groups are working to develop chapters in their states.

## **Legislative Action and Policy Change Activity**

APSE monitors issues including funding support for SE and community integration, rights for people experiencing disabilities, technical assistance, eligibility and entitlement, special education, rehabilitation, social security, and so on. In addition, APSE staff provide a voice for SE as policies are established and funding decisions are made that may have an impact on the services you are able to provide. We will bring SE issues to the table in this year's Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act. In Washington, D.C., APSE works with the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) to make recommendations on the legislative language and regulations on all issues which impact the national implementation of supported employment services. APSE members are updated on national policy relevant to the continued growth and development of SE through theAdvance and periodic member service documents and policy updates.

## **Voting Privileges**

Members have voting privileges in board elections and other questions brought before the members. Each Individual Member has one vote. Each Organizational member (as a group) has one vote.

**For more information on APSE membership please visit [www.apse.org](http://www.apse.org)**