

The APSE Gazette

Summer 2007

Labor Day

Revolutionary Common Sense by Kathie Snow
www.disabilityisnatural.com

Just prior to the Labor Day weekend, email messages included sentiments like, "Have a happy Labor Day," and "Hope you have the day off!" Some of us did; some of us didn't. But the majority of American adults whether they were currently employed or not, whether they had a day off or not have experienced the joy of receiving a paycheck, the contentment of being good at what they do, and the hope and anticipation of moving on to a better job.

Can the same be said for the majority of people with disabilities? Unfortunately not. Too many have never had a real job. Some are underemployed in low-paying, dead-end, part-time jobs. Others have been "assigned" to "work" in sheltered workshops, earning sub-minimum wages. Few will ever move beyond these paltry "employment opportunities."

Many service providers bristle at the "sub-minimum wage" terminology. One provider exclaimed, "They're not sub-minimum wage jobs, compensatory wages is the appropriate term!" Loosely-translated, this means that if John, a person without a disability, can make 10 widgets an hour; but Jim, a person with a disability, can only make 2 widgets an hour, he'll be fairly compensated if he's paid 2/10ths of what John is paid.

This sounds good in theory, but think about your own workplace: haven't you known co-workers who share the same job description as yourself (or maybe one even "higher") who don't work as hard as you, but they get paid the same as you or even more? What might happen if your employer tried to institute "compensatory wages" for all their employees? Just imagine the brouhaha!

My friend, Cindy, is the owner of a popular lodge/motel in Colorado. She is also the parent of two teenagers, one of whom happens to have a disability. A high school

Nebraska APSE Board Members

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

special ed teacher called her to inquire about employment for students with disabilities. Cindy was delighted to meet with the teacher and a 17-year-old female student. After a tour of the property and a chat about potential jobs, the teacher escorted the student to her car, then returned to Cindy and gushed, "This is a great opportunity for you, you'll get a new employee, but she won't

Continued on page 2

Nebraska APSE Contact Information

Linda Kallhoff- President
NorthStar Services
Box 734
O'Neill, NE 68763
spirtg@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

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.

cost you a penny!” Cindy was appalled, and responded that anyone who worked for her would get paid. But the deal was off: a real job for real pay didn’t fit with the school’s policies!

How many people with disabilities are “working” in jobs for no pay? And how can this practice be justified? On December 6, 1865, Amendment XIII to the Constitution of the United States outlawed slavery and involuntary servitude, “except as a punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted...” Working for no pay in a job you didn’t choose is slavery. Perhaps it is also a form of punishment for the “crime” of having a disability!

In pre-Civil War America, slave owners bought into the myth that their slaves were happy and grateful for the opportunity to work. Today, many who “employ” people with disabilities in slavery-like conditions feel the same way: “Our employees are happy...and what would they do if we weren’t here to provide this help?” This pathetic and dangerous mentality is reinforced by parents who say they’re “grateful” the school system has found “work” for their young adult children. These same parents share their feelings with their children insisting they should be grateful for the opportunity to “work” for low- or non-existent wages. Now back to American slavery when slaves began escaping in greater numbers, and with the first shot fired in the Civil War, the myth of the “happy, grateful slaves” was exploded. What will it take to explode this myth as regards to people with disabilities?

Many of us abhor the shameful unemployment rate of individuals with disabilities (estimated at 70-75 percent). Yet too many of us continue to look to government-funded programs to solve the problem. Yes, the government should attempt to remove barriers to the employment of people with disabilities. At the same time, are we willing to do nothing on our own? Where is our personal responsibility, as individuals with disabilities, family members, or friends? Do we need to wait for the system to act before we do? No. Can we ask people with disabilities to wait any longer? No!

So, yes, let’s work on systems change. But let’s also recognize that systemic change generally occurs at a snail’s pace and during this snail’s pace, the lives of people with disabilities are passing them by! So while we are waiting for the system to change, we can also get busy, as there’s much we can do, individually and collectively, right now.

A recent (8/31/06) C-SPAN program focused on the latest national unemployment rate (4.7 percent). Diana Furchtgott-Roth, Director of the Hudson Institute, Center for Employment Policy, stated that the unemployment rate was “dependent on education,” and added the following unemployment rates of people with different educational levels:

Bachelor’s degree - 2% unemployment
Two years of college - 3% unemployment
High school diploma - 5% unemployment
No high school diploma - 7% unemployment

Department of Education statistics reveal that the high school graduation rate of students with disabilities is half that of students without disabilities. So, parents and teachers: are we ensuring students with disabilities are receiving a real and meaningful academic education which they’ll need to go on to post-secondary education, a trade school, or a real job? A “life skills” curriculum is not a ticket to successful employment! If you work in the human services system, are you helping people with disabilities learn how to get their own jobs, instead of you finding their jobs and making them dependent on you in the process? Are you recommend-

ing post-secondary education and/or other real-life learning opportunities in inclusive settings?

No matter what role we play, we can help individuals with disabilities learn how to find jobs the way others do, such as networking in the community, using ordinary employment services, and more. We can help them learn to use the natural support of coworkers, and explore assistive technology devices and accommodations which can ensure their success. Within the service system, we can investigate waivers and other alternatives to traditional services. We can and should see beyond the disability diagnosis, and focus on the person's abilities and interests which can lead to successful employment. And we can help individuals with disabilities understand that living a life of dependency on government assistance is not the only option!

If you are currently employed in any capacity, does your employer actively recruit people with disabilities? If not, what can you do to change this? And what about the employers of your spouse, other family members, friends, and neighbors? Imagine the dent we could put in the shameful unemployment rate of people with disabilities if we worked to influence the hiring practices of our own employers!

There so much we can do to ensure people with disabilities can join in the celebration of Labor Day, and there is not a minute to waste so let's get to work!

A Letter from the President

Linda Kallhoff

A Van is Waiting!

My mom lives in a nursing home in Lincoln. Her room has a window full of blooming African violets and sun catchers, walls full of pictures of her seven children and their progeny, photographs of flowers, blooming shrubs and trees around the home where she and my dad raised those children and co-raised grandchildren. A crucifix from the top of my dad's casket hangs amongst the faces of her great grandchildren, little people she doesn't know very well, but loves anyway. A couple of prayer books, and a rosary lay close at hand. Every nook and cranny is tucked full of mementos from almost 9 decades of living. This little corner of the universe so accurately reflects her interests and loves, concerns and hopes for the future.

My two sisters with Lincoln addresses are her primary family support network. A slew of grandchildren with local addresses wander in and out on the whim of their youthful compassion and consciences. But for the most part, Mom's daily intimate times and spaces are peopled with nursing home staff, visiting therapists, volunteers, and other residents of the 3rd floor.

On my last visit, Mom told me about a recent doctor's appointment. She'd returned from breakfast and was preparing for the next things in her morning ritual when an aide appeared to say she was there to take her down to the van, and they had to hurry because it was already downstairs waiting for her.

Mom asked some of the obvious questions: What? Where? When? Why? As it turned out, she had a three month follow up visit to a kidney specialist. Three months ago at the end of that appointment, mom was "informed" of her next visit. But that was 3 MONTHS AGO! She was disgruntled! Couldn't anyone have given her a "heads up" the night before or earlier that morning? She would have had time to do all those little extras a "date" to the doctor might require. As it was, she had to drop what she was doing, and head out into the world unrelated to the condition of her under and outer wear, dentures or hair. After all, A VAN WAS WAITING! I went away from that visit feeling a little disgruntled myself! I was wondering about the system that serves Mom, and its inability to see in its behavior, the lack of common courtesy and respect for my mother. I was wondering about the system I work in and the what, where, when and why of times we forget or don't even recognize common courtesy and respect for people we support.

How often do we miss the mark of even informing people of the shape and flow of their everyday? How often do we bypass the task of supporting people's choices to design the shape and flow of their everyday? How often do we neglect to help people have the experiences necessary to make reasonable choices about how they will live, work, play, and pray with others in their communities?

After all, A VAN IS WAITING!

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.

Upcoming Training

September 2007 Events

September 18 -19 Marketing and Job Development
Holiday Inn Select St. Peters/St. Charles (St. Louis), MO
Presenter Rob Hoffman
Registration Fee \$99.00
Registration Fee \$99.00 - Event Details
Register online at www.regonline.com/143345
Registration Deadline: August 21, 2007

October 2007 Events

October 3-4 Employment Services, Council Bluffs, IA
Presenter Darla Wilkerson
Registration Fee \$99.00
Open for registration late July
Registration Deadline: August 21, 2007

October 23-24 Customized Employment, Kansas City, MO
Presenter Rob Hoffman
Registration Fee \$99.00
Open for registration Mid- August
Registration Deadline: September 25, 2007

October 29-30, 2007 - Recruitment and Retention
Council Bluffs, IA
Presenter - Rob Hoffman
Registration Fee - \$99
Registration Deadline: October 1, 2007

November 2007 Events

November 1-2, 2007 - Recruitment and Retention
Kansas City, MO
Presenter - Rob Hoffman
Registration Fee - \$99
Registration Deadline: October 4, 2007

November 6-9 Advanced Employment Services
Simulation Kansas City
Kansas City, MO
Presenter - Darla Wilkerson
Registration Fee - \$125
Registration Deadline: October 9, 2007

December 2007 Events

Organizational Change Teleconference Series:
Session 1 - Foundation for Change & Dynamics of Change
Presenter To Be Announced
Exact Date To Be Announced
Registration to open in October, 2007
Registration Fee \$30
Length: 1 hour

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