

*Included.
Supported.
Empowered.*

We All
Have a
Stake

The **ANCOR** Foundation
is helping people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities
achieve success and independence.

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A Special Advertising Supplement

Shining a Light

The ANCOR Foundation celebrates the professionals who make independence possible

by ELISSA EINHORN



Gabrielle Sedor (back row, right) with the ANCOR Foundation's first Leadership Academy cohort.

Photo COURTESY of ANCOR

As the American Network of Community Options and Resources looks back on 50 years of supporting people with disabilities, Gabrielle Sedor looks toward the future, ensuring individuals feel included and that the necessary workforce is in place to make this happen.

ANCOR is a national nonprofit trade association representing more than 1,600 community-based service providers who impact one million people with disabilities. An ANCOR member for 16 years, Sedor is now the current chief operations officer for ANCOR and the director of the ANCOR Foundation, the organization's charitable and advocacy arm.

This combined experience gives her a unique understanding of the need for supportive, inclusive communities as she oversees Foundation projects. These include a Leadership Academy that helps create the next generation of leaders with an intellectual or developmental disability; national recognition of the contributions of disability providers; and the public awareness campaign: *Included. Supported. Empowered.*

"This campaign [is pulling] the curtain back to show the public what it takes to make inclusion happen," Sedor says. "We all see stories on social media about an individual with

Down syndrome who opened a bakery or other entrepreneurs. We love these stories too. But what you don't see is the person behind those stories—the occupational therapist, the direct support professional or the respite provider who gave parents a break from 60 hours of care."

These are the people, she says, who directly touch a person's life, supporting them toward empowerment and independence. With a crisis-level workforce shortage, understanding the critical role direct support professionals play helps the public appreciate why it matters when services for people with disabilities are being threatened.

While ANCOR has evolved over five decades, it has stayed true to its mission "to advance the ability of our members in supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to fully participate in their communities."

Sedor is grateful to be part of this legacy.

"Any way we can serve as a conduit is positive," she says. "When you see someone with a disability, take a look around them. See who is supporting them. We would love people to open their eyes and talk to direct support professionals and learn more about what they do."

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Gabrielle Sedor
Director ANCOR Foundation

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In 2020, the ANCOR Foundation wraps up a three-year public awareness initiative, which highlights the role of professionals who support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The campaign has been focused on digital, social and traditional media. Since its inception, the campaign has:

- Placed more than 100 unique stories that have appeared in more than 1,100 media outlets.
- Placed stories in 30 states with a combined reach of more than 500 million people.
- Reached millions through social media.
- Shared personal stories, including Mindy from Vermont, who makes and sells lunches in her community, saves half of her profits and donates the other half to a nonprofit organization.
- Changed the public view of people with disabilities taking from the system to a better understanding of their contributions to society.



Antoinette Morris (left) works with people so they can find and retain employment.
Photo COURTESY OF TRINITY SERVICES

A Job Well Done

Employment supports for people with disabilities makes real work for real pay possible

by ELISSA EINHORN

Seven decades after it was founded as a school by parents whose children with developmental disabilities had no educational options, Trinity Services has grown to be a nationally recognized leader in the field.

Headquartered in New Lenox, Illinois, Trinity provides an array of services throughout the state, including employment support. That's where Antoinette Morris comes in. A direct support professional, Morris is in the business of working with businesses so individuals with disabilities can find and retain gainful employment.

"I want employers to see individuals with disabilities as helpful people who can do the job and not be singled out as being different," she says.

Morris makes that happen through workforce readiness, including guiding individuals through job research, filling

out applications, driving folks to interviews, and completing employment paperwork.

A DSP for 16 years, she explains, "Employers want people who are diligent about their job. I want them to treat people with disabilities the same and have the same expectations."

Her expectations for people with whom she works are high: she expects them to stay motivated, and do what they're supposed to do, when they're supposed to do it. That's what she's been telling Dwayne Thomas since they met five years ago when he was getting ready to leave his group home. Thomas has listened.

Currently the cook, server and dishwasher at a public café housed in the same building as Trinity Services, the 24-year-old says, "I'm basically in charge of the kitchen. I know everyone who comes in. They're like family."

Thomas describes how Morris helps him with coping skills and getting along with people. "Anything I need, she helps me out," he says. "She helps me to be a better person, to have patience, and to focus on what I need to do. We have disabilities, but just like regular people, we want to work hard and have what everyone else has."

Acknowledged by ANCOR for her work as the 2019 National Direct Support Professional of the Year, Morris says she enjoyed being recognized with the honor, while Thomas simply adds, "I was so happy because she deserves it."

Employment Support: A Win-Win

Today, the employment of people with disabilities is seen not only as a civil rights issue, but also as a boon for businesses. Employing people with disabilities has been shown to benefit businesses by providing lower turnover, increased productivity and access to a broader pool of skilled workers. With the right supports, individuals with disabilities are successful and contributing employees. Supports that can help people succeed in the workforce include:

- ✓ Skills development
- ✓ Resume writing
- ✓ Interview coaching
- ✓ Application support
- ✓ On-the-job coaching
- ✓ Performance review and feedback
- ✓ Career development coaching



I want employers to see individuals with disabilities as helpful people who can do the job and not be singled out as being different."

Antoinette Morris
Direct Support Professional
Trinity Services

Cooking for Good

A Pennsylvania woman uses her passion to make a difference and honor a dear friend

by MELANIE ANDERSON



When cookbook author Bobbi Leckrone stepped out for the Walk to End Alzheimer's in York, Pennsylvania, last October, she inspired many friends to join her.

"Bobbi was the catalyst for Penn-Mar to join the walk and have a big presence," says Lisa Hartley, residential supervisor at Penn-Mar Human Services.

"We had eight team leaders who organized their own teams of walkers and raised a total of \$8,432."

The fundraising walk was a joyous event in Leckrone's journey to advance Alzheimer's research and awareness in memory of her longtime housemate, Erin McDonough. "When Erin was here, she was like a sister to me," says Leckrone, who has lived in her group home since 1993. "That was really hard [to watch her suffer from Alzheimer's disease]."

Leckrone's path to becoming an author and advocate began with a deep conversation. "Bobbi and I were discussing her aspirations for her life and she said she has always wanted to write a book," says Hartley. "I know Bobbi likes cooking but I never knew she wanted to write a book. It's not until you sit down and have this deep driving conversation where you find out what people's dreams are."

Together, they developed a plan for Leckrone's fundraising cookbook, "Simply Delicious Recipes: Bon Appétit by Bobbi," which is dedicated to McDonough and benefits the Alzheimer's Association.

"We collected recipes from family and friends and people who I don't know," says Leckrone. People from around the country—and even abroad—shared cherished recipes in response to a call for contributions on social media.

"We had a big team [supporting us]," says Hartley. "It was such a big undertaking to get all these recipes compiled." In fact, Penn-Mar staff continue to support Leckrone and Hartley as they fulfill orders—many from families touched by Alzheimer's—and make public appearances, which have included leading cooking demos on local TV.

Through these efforts, Leckrone is also calling attention to the fact that people who have Down syndrome—like Leckrone and

McDonough—have a greater risk of developing dementia. "I'm really happy about [being able to help]," says Leckrone.

Meanwhile, Leckrone has inspired her housemates to consider their own dreams. "There are a lot of dreams out there that just need to be brought out," says Hartley.

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Lisa Hartley
Residential Supervisor,
Penn-Mar Human Services

welcome Contributions

“People with intellectual and developmental disabilities should have the opportunity to feel the pride that comes with making a difference, and often they are some of the most active in our community when it comes to making that difference,” says Sean Luechtefeld, communications director at ANCOR. “Sometimes they need support to be able to do so, and with the appropriate access to that support, there is no limit to the positive impact that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can have on our communities.”

COMMON WAYS INDIVIDUALS GIVE BACK INCLUDE:

VOLUNTEERING with organizations like meals on Wheels, Special Olympics and local nursing homes.

MAKING ART, CRAFTS AND BAKED GOODS to benefit charities.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP that fills a community need. For example, a Pennsylvania woman named Hillary launched a business that creates braille menus for local restaurants.



Direct Support Professional Steve Holley (center)
Photo COURTESY of NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CENTER

Taking the 'Dis' Out of 'Disabilities'

People with disabilities are working as direct support professionals and helping others achieve independence

by ELISSA EINHORN

Meet Eric Mack, a goal-oriented gentleman in his 30s, who wanted more for himself—to work, to have a meaningful relationship and to live on his own.

Thanks to the National Children's Center, Eric works at the Mark Center Building in Alexandria, Virginia, home to several Department of Defense agencies; has a girlfriend; and went from a group home to living independently.

"[Eric's employers] treat him no differently and that's what we expect," says Tiffany Sanders, NCC's director of community living services.

NCC provides far more than children's services. For the past 60 years, it has provided what CEO Patricia Browne describes as "community-based options that are caring

and empathetic, and that integrate children and adults with disabilities into the community."

Eric's success is in no small part due to direct support professionals like Steve Holley, a DSP for 28 years who is also deaf.

"I help with health and oral care, transportation to medical appointments, and also advocate at medical appointments," Holley says. "I want people to ignore the disability and see each person for who they are. Given opportunity, supports, tools and encouragement, we can help each individual reach their goals."

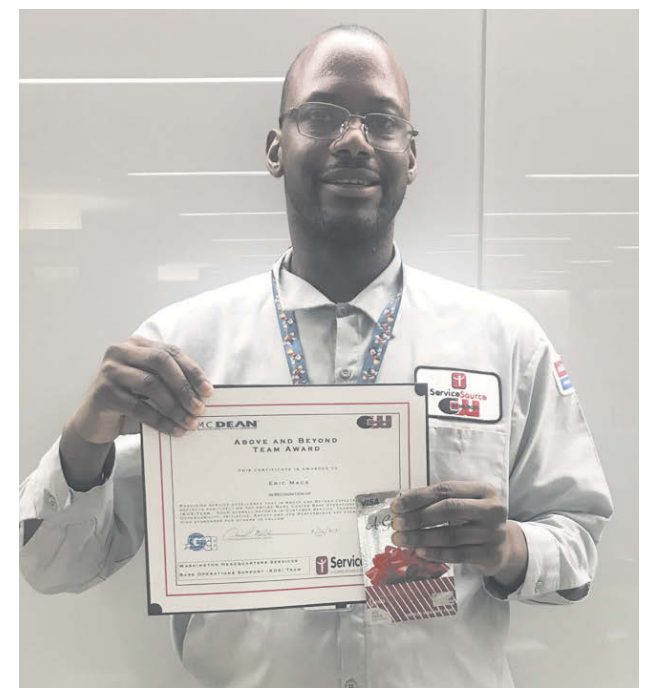
However, this support is threatened because of what Holley, Browne and Sanders describe as low wages, high turnover, no wage increases, and lack of time and resources spent on recruitment and training, including the field of DSPs not being promoted as a career path in high schools.

Browne notes that NCC is willing to explore hiring more people with disabilities as DSPs as part of their overall strategic planning process. "We are open to all candidates with the required education and experience," she says.

In fact, Browne sees this type of inclusion as a civil rights issue, just like movements focused on ethnicity, gender and race. "We want to take the 'dis' out of disabilities and talk about varying abilities," she says.

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- Here are the steps employers can follow toward successfully hiring individuals with disabilities:
- Be willing and open to hiring people with disabilities and realize the value in neurodiversity.
- Talk to peers in the community who are hiring individuals with disabilities to learn what steps can translate to employment success.
- Understand that accessible supports, such as providing communication devices, don't always add to costs.
- Provide accommodations such as having a job coach come on a weekly or monthly basis.
- Observe employees and provide honest and open feedback about what is going well and how to troubleshoot less successful areas.
- Listen to the needs of the individual.



Eric Mack holds a quarterly award for his team's outstanding performance.

Photo COURTESY of NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CENTER

Making Higher Education a Success

Independent living, social life and time management can be challenges for any college student, but can be particularly difficult for those with disabilities

by KrySta ScripTER

Students from the UI REACH program

Photo Courtesy of UI REACH, University of Iowa



“There are many, many programs across the United States... that are figuring out ways to help people with disabilities come into the same environments where their peers are, and learn and benefit from that by developing meaningful lives,” says William Loyd, director of the University of Iowa’s UI REACH Program (Realizing Education and Career Hopes).

But students with disabilities face unique challenges when they arrive at college, especially since this is the first time many have been on their own.

“So you’re out there and you’ve got to figure out how to budget the money that you have access to; and you’ve got to figure out how to get along with folks in the environment that you’re living in; and you’ve got to figure out schedules on your own,” he says.

“I think we all could say that diversity and inclusion benefits us all.”

William Loyd Jr.
Director of the UI REACH Program

Having access to a program that guides and supports students with disabilities can make a world of difference even after college, Loyd says, especially concerning employment.

“When you just look at national statistics for the employment rates of people with disabilities, it’s abysmally low in our country,” he says. Graduates from the UI REACH program, however, tend to have higher employment and independent living rates than those not in such a program.

That support system at the University of Iowa is what drew parents Tony and Cindi Williams to enroll their son, Joshua, into UI REACH. Joshua was born with a very rare heart defect and has faced numerous medical issues in his lifetime. But Cindi says there weren’t a lot of options for Joshua after high school.

“I think the system should allow for students like Joshua to be able to have an experience after high school that prepares them for life, in the same way that my college experience and my husband’s college experience prepared us for life,” she says.

Loyd says that programs like UI REACH reflect a growing demand for diversity among universities. “I think we all could say that diversity and inclusion benefits us all,” he adds. “So finally that notion is taking root in post-secondary education institutions, and we’re so happy that UI REACH is not alone in what we’re trying to do.”

In Focus: The UI REACH program

The university of Iowa’s UI REACH Program (Realizing Education and Career hopes) was created to help students with disabilities live the full college experience and prepare for independent life.

The program, which has two-, three-, and four-year options, is divided into three parts: academics, career development and student life. In academics, students receive support based on their needs, be it extra study labs or assistive technology like text readers. In the career development portion, students are given the opportunity to explore employment options based on their interests, including an internship to help them make informed decisions about their career.

The last portion of the program is student life, which Program director William Loyd Jr. calls “the biggest classroom.” Here, students with disabilities form social skills and lasting friendships through organized events and student organizations, some of which Loyd says go far beyond college. He also says this support structure is crucial for these students to live independent lives past college. “That’s why that experience in the residence halls and on campus, all of those are so very important to the outcome that people can achieve, having attended a program like UI REACH.”



Imagine! technology helps people train for employment.
Photo: Courtesy of Imagine!

High Tech Job Training

Innovative supports help people with disabilities become part of an important regional workforce

by Gail Lynn Short

To hold a job, live independently and become part of a community are ambitions many young adults have for themselves. But for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such goals can seem out of reach.

In Lafayette, Colorado, however, a nonprofit called Imagine! is helping nearly 4,300 people with disabilities in surrounding counties integrate into the workforce, local communities and live independently. Imagine! provides them with job training and placement, technical assistance and other supportive services.

“The greatest advantage of community integration over institutionalization is human dignity, respect and agency,” says Chris Baumgart, an assistive technology specialist for Imagine!

Imagine! operates several host and companion homes where clients can live in family settings in a neighborhood. It also runs two group homes outfitted with smart home technologies that

make it easier for residents with disabilities to digitally control appliances and lights and perform routine tasks.

Additionally, Imagine! provides job training. For example, the nonprofit is experimenting with virtual reality as a new and innovative way to prepare their clients to work in the state’s booming craft beer industry.

The breweries in Boulder and Broomfield counties often hire Imagine! participants to assemble mixed beer packs, Baumgart says. But the assembling requires precision and accuracy; and in the fast-paced work environment, one-on-one, on-the-job training is often nonexistent.

So the tech team at Imagine! came up with a novel idea to train clients by partnering with a local tech company, Reality Garage in Boulder. Virtual reality technology generates a 3-D virtual world that users wearing an Oculus headset can see.

The teams created a training program where potential employees can practice putting beer packs together in a virtual environment. During the lessons, the Imagine! team can gauge trainees’ progress and offer additional support if needed.

For now, the virtual reality project is a pilot study, Baumgart says. But eight people supported by Imagine! have already participated.

“Everyone—regardless of age, gender, race, religion or ability—deserves the opportunity to be the best they can be,” says Baumgart. “And the only way we can make that happen is by giving people the opportunity to build and be part of a community.”

High Tech Support

ANCOR members nationwide are using advanced technologies to give people with disabilities the chance to live their lives safely and independently for an improved quality of life.

CORE SERVICES OF NORTH EAST TENNESSEE

Core Services is partnering with the Tennessee department of Intellectual/developmental disabilities to provide smart home and other technologies to give individuals with disabilities greater independence. 215 University Parkway, Johnson City, Tenn., 37604, 423-928-2752, www.coreservicestn.com.

GOODLIFE INNOVATIONS, INC. Located in Lenexa, Kansas, the nonprofit offers iLink, a one-touch system where seniors and people with disabilities living at home can instantly notify “professional neighbors” whenever they need assistance. GoodLife Innovations Inc., 11627 West 79th St., Lenexa, Kansas, 66285, 913-225-8900, www.mygoodlife.org.

ASPIRE, INC. Aspire Inc., in Aberdeen, South Dakota, has introduced people with communications support needs to apps for smartphones and tablets so they can communicate with caregivers and others with greater ease. Aspire Foundation Inc., 607 North N. 4th St., Aberdeen, South Dakota 57401, www.aspiresd.org

“The greatest advantage of community integration over institutionalization is human dignity, respect and agency.”

Chris Baumgart
Assistive Technology Specialist
Imagine!



Help build an inclusive world

Join the campaign today at
WeHaveAStake.org

For Families:

Use the toolkit to share your story today at
WeHaveAStake.org/toolkit.

For Advocates:

Get the facts on how well your state is supporting people of
diverse abilities at caseforinclusion.org.

For Providers:

Be a part of our vibrant national community of providers by
joining ANCOR today. Learn more at ancor.org.

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