



Community News Article –Lakeside Curative Services –May 20, 2013

Contact: Mary Beth Popchock, Executive Director

Phone: 598-8304 popchockm@lakesidecurative.com

www.lakesidecurative.com

“One can never consent to creep when one feels an impulse to soar.”

Helen Keller

Community Action Teams

Employment First is about raising expectations or “soaring” as Helen Keller so eloquently suggests. The real driving force behind social change is not money but rather expectations. Of course, we need adequate public support to obtain high quality education and quality integrated employment outcomes. However, without higher expectations, some individuals with disabilities and/or their families may settle for programs or services that do not encourage them to participate fully in the mainstream of community life.

To address this issue, LCS has been instrumental in developing “Community Action Teams” with the goal of advancing Employment First in the Racine area. The teams are comprised of local coalitions of individuals who are willing to work together to move Employment First forward in our community. These Action Teams are organizing their work plans around the unique situations that exist in Racine. The teams are comprised of job seekers, educators, family and disability advocates, employment providers, workforce development professionals, county representatives, vocational rehabilitation professionals, and other interested community members. The “ticket” to belonging to a successful Community Action Team is a commitment to action. Each Action Team’s overall performance will be gauged by the implementation of better practices and measurable increases in integrated employment for individuals with disabilities.

A key component of Employment First initiatives is to connect the demand side (business needs) with the supply side (available workers). There is a growing body of evidence that hiring Americans with disabilities is just good business. Studies have demonstrated that workers with disabilities are loyal employees who bring necessary talents and skills into the workforce. Despite stereotypes about disability, there is no evidence that employees with disabilities are unsafe or less effective on the job than employees who do not have disabilities. Further, the American public has expressed strong support of businesses that choose to hire job seekers with disabilities.

A local employer (Willkommn Company – Burger King) employs a former LCS Participant. The restaurant manager, Vicki, expressed similar sentiments to those cited above when she was asked why she feels other employers should hire individuals with a disability. “We value anyone who has a strong desire to work. Employing someone with a disability is an asset to the business. It also teaches the community that everyone can work. Everyday Meg brings personal ‘sparkle’ to the job and her positive attitude reminds me that anything is possible.”

Employment First is about *fundamental rights*. It is difficult to imagine that anyone wouldn’t support people with disabilities having an equal opportunity to get a good job, use their talents and skills, earn

competitive wages, increase their self-support, and contribute to the prosperity of their communities. For information about joining an Employment First Action Team please contact Mary Beth at 262-598-0098.

LCS Update

Just a reminder ...Hot Dog Day... LCS' signature event will take place on June 21 at the agency from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Please plan on joining LCS for an amazing afternoon. For information about the event please contact Jill at 262-598-0098 or visit the LCS website at www.lakesidecurative.com.

A sincere thank you is extended to everyone who attended Pansy Day. The event was a huge success. The community's willingness to step out and "smell the flowers" on such a blustery spring day was very much appreciated. Please make plans to join us again next year on May 9, 2014.

#####