

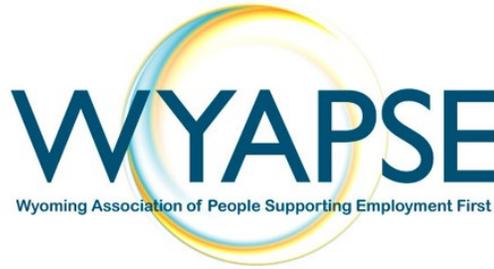
Spring 2016

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**Re-Introduction**

Welcome to our first edition, we are thrilled to bring APSE back into Wyoming!

APSE is a national and state membership organization with an exclusive focus on improving community integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The National APSE was founded in 1988 and stands for Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE). WYAPSE, or the Wyoming Association for People Supporting Employment, is a chapter-in-development establishing Employment First initiatives within the state of Wyoming. Wyoming’s APSE chapter started in '95, and is now regaining mo-

mentum with the new employment first initiatives. We are looking to reestablish our connection on a national level and to provide current information regarding policy changes, educational opportunities, and best practices in supporting employment. Having a national network gives us more options and opportunities to support consumers, professionals, employers, and families throughout the state. “Employment First” is not a universally defined term, but is the idea that integrated employment opportunities with competitive wages for people with disabilities should be the first and preferred option. This idea does not mean “Employment Only”, and there might not be other options out

there, but to start with the presumption that people can work, and should. Most people start to attain work experience as a teenager. As an adult the expectation is that we go to work and earn a paycheck and make a living. Encouraging individuals with a disability to maintain the same standards, responsibilities, and expectations as any working-age adult will strengthen community ties, and present an opportunity for people with disabilities to contribute to society on a more global scale. Even people with the most significant disabilities are capable of doing productive work.

*See Reintroduction, page 2*

**Supported Employment**

In 2013, an estimated 70.7 percent of working-age adults were employed in the United States. By comparison, less than 30 percent of working-age Americans with disabilities participated in the workforce ([Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014](#)).

Supported employment is designed for individuals who do not meet traditional criteria for ‘job

readiness’ or employability. Supported employment programs are different from more conventional approaches to job placement. Traditional programs utilize pre-employment vocational training aimed at learning and practicing general job skills before looking for employment. As such, it allows for new employment opportunities for people with disabilities who might not be ready to

move directly into independent competitive employment. Often people with disabilities begin the process of workforce re-entry in steps. Volunteer work, training, and supported employment can serve as a springboard to independent competitive employment.

*See Supported Employment, page 3*



**Did you know?**

*In July 2010, President Obama marked the 20th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by signing an Executive Order intended to remodel employment options for people with a disability. This directive calls on federal departments and agencies to increase the recruitment, hiring and retention of people with disabilities.*



**Re-Introduction cont'd**

The goals of the WYAPSE Chapter are to advocate for social change, educate through empowerment, and legislate to create change in public policy to ensure equitable employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Employment First is not a service model; it should be defined more as a policy, and that is something WYAPSE is striving to achieve in the state. It needs to be a system adopting

this concept as a priority. Grassroots efforts have had a presence in federal legislation in more recent years with civil rights laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Olmstead decision. The energy behind this movement nationally should propel Wyoming into a leadership role for the rest of the nation. In the past several years, there has been more media attention and value from the gen-

eral population around employment and disability, and the idea of people with disabilities, regardless of the severity, being included in the workforce. WYAPSE will strive to keep employment for people with disabilities as a forefront and lead Wyoming's citizens toward working in competitive employment settings.

**Customized Employment in Wyoming**

The Griffin-Hammis program is designed to meet the needs of individuals, with or without a disability. Customized employment is a person-centered system of creating the right position in the workforce for an individual, rather than an individual being the right person for the job. It was originally designed for people with complex support needs. Customized employment is not searching for that "dream job", rather it is determining where the strengths, needs, and interests can be combined to meet specific needs of an employer.

are defined. Learning about an individuals' likes and dislikes, personal skills and talents, as well as situations to be avoided are also part of the DPG process. There is no time limit for DPG to "work" for someone. Several vocational themes can then be created, and then narrowed to fit the individual best. Once themes have been established, skills, interest, and personal attributes can be interconnected to create a working model that is flexible, and has room for more opportunity and ideas. Themes are not one job description, they hold many possibilities. Introducing tasks that are relatable to the theme and finding employers and/or businesses to work with is another step in the process of customized employment. This is what is called social capital; "the goodwill and reciprocity inherent in relation

ships" is the link to networking and determining a good match for the employee. Wyoming currently uses a Customized Employment approach in Cheyenne at Magic City and in the Thermopolis area through Big Horn Enterprises, made possible through the Wyoming Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities. The council hopes more communities in Wyoming will take interest in the customized employment approach.



## Supported Employment Cont'd

*Continued from page 1:* While the concept of supported employment has been in use for some years, recently it has received increased attention nationally for several reasons. Working fosters self-esteem, confidence, and social opportunity. Firms that employ people with disabilities frequently re-

port improvements to staff retention and morale. Working with a supported employment provider can reduce recruitment costs due to it being free of charge. Wherever you are, there will be local people with disabilities wanting and able to work.

### DID YOU KNOW??

THERE ARE 13 UNITED STATES PRESIDENTS WHO LIVED WITH A DISABILITY WHILE IN OFFICE?



## Finding a Natural Support: A Customized Employment Story

When he came to us a little over a year ago, it was in an emergency placement situation. Initially he came only to our Day Hab services and into the Residential services of another program. Over time, the other residential services cycled through and he ended up with us. This too was temporary and because of the inability to quell episodic violent outbursts he again moved. He is now in the care of a separate residential program currently.

Upon initial arrival, he was placed almost immediately into a job working at a local hotel. He was handed a job coach and kept separate of the other teams. It went well at first,

but devolved quickly. He and any single job coach could never really jive. Any efforts in instruction or setting limits erupted into struggle. He didn't look forward to work and began to refuse to go. These refusals combined with the troubles when he was at work eventually led to him being let go. Before he left our residential services, he was given discovery services to explore new options.

Working in the discovery process, he took to all of the initial exploration incredibly well. He easily learns most new tasks and attacks them with exuberance. His mind is very active, loving to explore new situations. Through testing, we found that he is

adept at most tasks that are very active. He expressed a desire to wear Carharts and boots while doing these things, we learned later that this identified with the desire to wear "work clothing", or a uniform, while at work. We tested him in various paid work experiences, for instance; moving furniture, collecting and recycling metal, landscaping and host of construction activities, among many others. Regardless of the task, he enjoyed his time. Going on informational interviews however, he didn't take to any of the people or situations we were in. Something was missing in these relationships.

*Continued on page 4*

**MYTH:** When I go to work, I'll lose everything, including my cash benefit, and I won't be able to pay my bills so it's not worth working at all!

**FACT:** Special rules make it possible for people receiving Social Security disability benefits or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to work and still receive monthly payments.

## Finding a Natural Support Cont'd

*Continued from page 3:*

One day while performing a landscaping job, we stopped in to a grocery store to grab some lunch. Looking at items on an aisle, I was lost in thought for a moment, while my friend wandered down the aisle, as anyone would. Looking up I noticed that he was frantically facing the items on the shelves. Walking over I asked him where he learned to do that, to which he responded that he couldn't recall. Too late though, my brain was off and running with a new direction.

Getting back and reviewing his ideal conditions, as well as the developed themes, I saw that there was a chance that a grocery store could fit them. On that educated whim, I called the local small grocer, to see about setting up an informational interview. I knew the manager there very well. In the world of groceries, these places are the artisans. Staff here routinely dress and act differently than in other corporate cultures. Also, they seem to be generally more passionate about their product, with the focus being on local and organic foods. The manager excitedly agreed to a visit.

When we got to the store, the Manager was there to meet us with a big smile. After pleasantries were exchanged,

he and the participant were off. Though we were merely there to see what goes on in a grocery store (called an 'informational interview') and within a few minutes a job offer was made. His response was "can I wear an apron?" Going through all of the various needs for a job match, it was readily apparent that this could be a great fit. Though it wasn't what we were originally thinking, but were led there through the systemic Discovery Staging Record process, it was exciting to once again see a great job match with natural supports develop itself. A job coach was never discussed, as it was clear that the intention of the team at the store was to bring him in and train him as they would any other person.

He started work immediately. Initially his job was to carry the heavy produce and other boxes from the backroom to the front of the store. But, within a day's work he was all over the store; clean up on aisle two, bagging at the register, facing and stocking shelves. His energy and enthusiasm have been infectious and a hit with customers. After initial training, nobody was needed to follow him around, they likely couldn't keep up anyway. He feels trusted and is shoring up that trust organically. The manager is a wonderful natural support who is fully invested in his

success. Yet, he knows and respects who is boss is innately. He is allowed to do his work autonomously and is excelling in this, for four hour shifts. The team immediately wrapped their arms around him. They have ridden with him as his life outside of work experiences ups and downs, being there to offer support and a position whenever he returns.

This is a guy whose plan details that he must have 1 on 1 support, and often may even need 2 people to keep him out of trouble. He is rarely given the ability to turn left without permission. Yet, in this natural setting with fetters untied, he is excelling wonderfully. This whole process has been an incredible example of what a good job match is capable of accomplishing. It also illustrates what can happen when people are allowed control and power within their lives, as well as being in a place that offers an inviting, encouraging and supporting community.

*Dan Mead, Magic City Enterprises*



*“Looking up I noticed that he was frantically facing the items on the shelves. Walking over I asked him where he learned to do that, to which he responded that he couldn't recall. Too late though, my brain was off and running with a new direction.”*



**Did you know?**

*The ADA  
(Americans with  
Disabilities Act)  
makes it unlawful  
to discriminate in  
employment  
against a qualified  
individual with a  
disability.*



**National APSE News**

The National APSE Conference provides education and networking opportunities for individuals with disabilities, families, rehabilitation and employment professionals, transition teachers, employers, policymakers, educators, and anyone interested in advancing Employment First. The annual National APSE Conference brings together businesses, individuals with disabilities and community

leaders from across the country and around the world to network and discuss state-of-the-art strategies to ensure equitable employment for citizens with disabilities. Based on past conference attendance, we anticipate 1000 registrants this year! Last year, the APSE Conference brought together representatives from 47 United States and Washington D.C., Canada, Singapore,

Japan, China, Puerto Rico, Pakistan, Turkey and Finland.

For more information regarding APSE at the National level, or for information on individual states, please visit their website at:

[www.apse.org](http://www.apse.org)

**Vocational Rehabilitation in Wyoming**

Vocational Rehabilitation Services is a federal-state program designed to assist people with a disability find and/or keep a job by using work-readiness services such as job training and resume development. A person is eligible for VR services if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that results in a "substantial impediment" to employment

for the applicant. "During any given year, the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services' Vocational Rehabilitation Division actively works with more than 4,000 of Wyoming's citizens with disabilities, and, on average, approximately 700 of those citizens successfully complete a rehabilitation pro-



gram and enter the workforce. For every dollar spent on Vocational Rehabilitation services, a consumer earns, on average, \$11 in increased taxable income," (Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, 2015).

**What is ODEP?**

ODEP (Office of Disability Employment Policy) is an agency within Department Of Labor that works to influence national policy regarding workplace practices to ensure that today's workforce is inclusive of people with disabilities. ODEP's mission is to increase the number of participants and quality of employment opportunities available to people with disabilities. ODEP promotes the adoption of effective practices by sharing information, providing technical assistance to government agencies, service providers, and non-governmental entities, as well as public and private employers.

## WYAPSE Mission

Through advocacy and education, WYAPSE advances employment and self-sufficiency for all people with disabilities.

All citizens, regardless of disability, have the right to pursue the full range of available employment opportunities in their communities, and to earn a living wage in a job of their choosing, based on their talents, skills, and interests.

## WYAPSE Vision

All people with disabilities are employed earning a competitive wage in a career building on their interests, talents, skills and abilities.

## WYAPSE Goals

In support of the Mission & Vision and to change expectations and achieve outcomes WYAPSE will:

### Advocate

Champion the Employment First principle that employment and careers be the expected and preferred outcomes of all publicly funded services for those with disabilities.

Change philosophies, policies, practices and funding to advance employment, career development and economic opportunities for people with disabilities.

Help establish and expand equitable employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Advocate for social change to help those with severe disabilities achieve a lifestyle that approximates that of individuals without disabilities.

### Educate

Promote attitudes and beliefs that fully include and support people with disabilities to be part of the economic and social mainstream, to achieve careers and lifestyles like anyone else.

Empower individuals with disabilities to fully realize their potential.

Raise awareness within the business community as to the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities.

Promote employment opportunities for all people, through local, regional, and national networks.

### Legislate

Create Change in public policy to ensure equitable employment for individuals with disabilities.

Highlight public/private sector employer champions to demonstrate the capabilities of people with disabilities in the workforce.

Advocate with federal, state, and local legislators for legislation promoting integrated employment.

Work with federal, state, and local policy makers to increase funding for integrated employment.



### *Did you know?*

*There are almost 3,000 members of APSE in 38 states! At least 26 of these have an official state policy that employment first is the first and preferred option for people with disabilities.*



## WIOA

In the Strategic plan for the Department of Labor, it states as goal 1 the DOL will prepare workers for better jobs by giving people the skills they need to grow in a competitive economy. The State of Wyoming is pushing this initiative by introducing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which be-

came effective July 1st, 2015. This program will provide opportunities to assist people seeking employment to prepare for a successful career, and to meet the needs of job seekers and businesses in the 21st century. WIOA provides comprehensive services which assist individuals to enter industries where they can make a

self-sufficient wage, with particular focus on occupations that have a higher projected growth potential. For more information, contact WIOA at their toll free number: (877) WORK-WYO, or (877)-967-5996 or visit their website at [wyoming-workforce.org/workers/employment/wioa](http://wyoming-workforce.org/workers/employment/wioa).



### Did you Know:

*Every beneficiary has a Ticket to Work, which allows a beneficiary to receive employment services from an Employment Network (EN). There are 112 EN providers serving the state of Wyoming currently.*



## Putting Ability in WyAbility

In 2008, Sheila Strand marched into the Wyoming Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities offices and quite directly said, "I want a job." And now, eight years and nearly 128,000 magazines mailed later, Sheila is still an integral part of the Council office, specifically playing a key role in public outreach. Before joining the Council staff, Sheila was the president of Cheyenne's People First chapter, a nationally recognized self-advocacy group and had held a few other part-time jobs.

Working with the Council, Sheila's focus is to assist with the WyAbility and Kids' Crossroads magazine distribution plus comes in on an as-needed basis to provide any extra assistance

for the office, and at conferences to help at the council vendor table. Her main job responsibility is to assemble and prepare the magazines in preparation for mailing, which is no easy task considering nearly 4,000 magazines need to be processed in a short timeframe four times a year.

Sheila says the most important aspects of her job include getting to listen to music while she works, and being in a comfortable environment to work in. The occupations she had previously experienced didn't seem meaningful. Sheila also says she enjoys working alongside the council staff because she feels a sense of belonging and respect, and that she's involved with

something that is important. One thing she does not like about her job though, is getting papercuts every now and then.

When asked about something she hadn't ever done that she would like to try for work, Sheila expressed a desire to learn about computers. She is not familiar with them at all, and believes that learning about computers would further her in any career down the road. For now, Council is very pleased to have her as part of the office and looks forward to many more years, and magazines, working alongside Sheila.

*Written by Aleyta Coffey*



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## Top Five Reasons to Join APSE...

1. **Take a Stand:** Join an exciting and growing national movement advancing equitable employment for individuals with disabilities.
2. **Make a Difference:** Self advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities to meaningful employment and competitive salaries.
3. **Effect Change:** Play your part in creating change in public policy to ensure equitable employment for individuals with disabilities.
4. **Learn from Others:** Join a growing network of like-minded, forward thinking people concerned about equitable employment for individuals with disabilities.
5. **Stay on the Cutting Edge:** Access state-of-the-art concepts and practices in expanding equitable employment for individuals with disabilities.

Are you interested in becoming a member of WYAPSE? Please contact us at [wypase@gmail.com](mailto:wypase@gmail.com)

## Upcoming Events



Early Bird Registration Rates Expire January 31st!



For more information, or to sponsor an exam session in your state, please contact:

APSE National Office: [612-385-5122](tel:612-385-5122)

Wyoming Employment Specialist Training is now being offered!



For more information and registration contact us at: [WEST@bridgeshab.com](mailto:WEST@bridgeshab.com)

Find us on Facebook! <https://www.facebook.com/groups/WYAPSE/>