

APSE Notes

The Future is Now Transitions: New Name, New Leadership, and New Models Promise Exciting Times for APSE and its Mission

Bob Niemiec

APSE The Network on Employment. That sounds great to me. As both a member and a part of the APSE leadership, for many years, I have seen APSE from the outside as well as from the inside. My tenure has now spanned three executive directors, and the board presidencies of Rebecca McDonald, Bob Lawhead, Dale DiLeo, and Pat Rogan. My association with APSE has brought me many friends, colleagues, and acquaintances from across the country. My knowledge base and ability to work effectively has been greatly enhanced because of this network of people. I have seen APSE in its golden years, and in the lean times. But no matter what the fiscal status, it has been a vital and necessary association. Who else speaks for integrated employment for people with the most significant disabilities? What other association took a strong stance against the continued segregation and isolation of people with disabilities? During those debates, APSE often stood alone and true to its principles and values. Now we are in a new era. Customized Employment, Entrepreneurship new buzzes! Medicaid and Social Security are more proactive in the employment process. The Dept. of Labor is asserting itself into the arena of integrated employment for people with disabilities. Of course, we still operate with uncertain or complicated funding mechanisms. The economy continues to fluctuate and is hard to predict. Some of our allies and leaders have gone. People like Rebecca McDonald and Justin Dart are but a few of the examples of those who are no longer with us. But their shining light remains on the horizon. That shining light is APSE The Network on Employment. You may have noticed

a new energy about APSE. It is the energy that comes with change. Tammara Geary, who led the association with dignity, passion, and true grit, left us as Executive Director. Tammara brought APSE through its growing pains from a small organization to one that represented over 4,000 members. The list of her accomplishments as Executive Director could fill this newsletter. We were sorry to see Tammara go, but are glad that she continues to be involved as an active member and that we will benefit from her talents in many new and different ways. (eg, Tammara will be one of the trainers SE 101, 2004 at the national conference in Indianapolis.) APSE owes her a debt of gratitude. I hope you will have an opportunity to take a few minutes and thank Tammara at the conference in July. With Tammara's departure, the Board was presented with a new challenge. How do we replace someone who had been with the association for over a decade? Celane McWhorter stepped up to the plate. You should all know Celane from her hard work as APSE's Director of Public Policy. Celane was offered the position of interim Executive Director in January, and later installed as Executive Director in April. Celane has done a magnificent job taking up the reigns and steering us forward.

Under her brief tenure, the Medicaid/SSA conference in Minneapolis was a rousing success. The national conference in Indianapolis is well on its way to being a huge success. (Much thanks to Teresa Grossi and her staff at Indiana University for their hard work on the conference.) The tele-training series APSE hosted earlier in the year was very popular – watch for a fall series. Although Celane is responsible for leading the

charge, she has had help. APSE members volunteer time and expertise as trainers for the teletrainings. As previously mentioned, Teresa Grossi (Board Treasurer) and her staff have been planning and organizing the conference in Indianapolis. Becky Banks (also from IU) did yeoman's work on the Medicaid/SSA conference in Minneapolis. Board members have taken active roles in helping Celane move this ship forward. And Gracie Burwell has been a rock through the transition of Executive Directors, the regular computer glitches, snow and ice in Virginia, and Member Clicks. She has ridden herd over membership, billing, conference registration, the myriad of questions and phone calls that come into the office, and pretty much anything you can imagine. Many of you have occasion to speak with Gracie on the phone or email. Please take a minute to thank her. Of course, you will see her in person in Indianapolis. So, the future is now. I haven't been this excited about APSE for a long time. There is a renewed energy about us. People are interested in being connected to us. Members are renewing at a record pace. We still have a lot to do. I am proud to be part of this organization, and as I conclude my term as President, I am comforted in knowing that I left the organization in good shape and in capable hands. Bob Niemiec is outgoing APSE President. He lives and works in MN.

From the Director

Greetings from the APSE National Staff – that would be Gracie and me. We've been moving fast to keep up with changes in the office and the myriad of exciting events for APSE membership. We were very pleased with the success of the conference in Minneapolis. Through the creative leadership of Teresa Grossi, the annual conference promises to be the best ever! I just reviewed the draft conference booklet, and guarantee you will love the simulating new additions and new issues covered in the sessions. For conference stress, there will even be a massage therapist in the exhibit area. Our first tele-training series was well received; watch for the fall schedule soon. Membership is up. Our finances are looking good. APSE is on a roll! For those of you who shared our frustrations with the web based system of the past few months, I am happy to announce that we now have an in-house web based interactive system and a newly designed webpage. We are far more cyber user-friendly. And, as you can see, the Advance is back with a new look. We welcome comments stimulated by the Advance and will publish them in future issues or on the web. We thank you for your support of APSE and hope to see you in Indy!