

Editorial

It is my pleasure to introduce selected papers from the APSE 25th Anniversary conference that took place in Indianapolis, Indiana in June 2013. These Proceedings are drawn from the papers that conference presenters submitted to the Journal for publication. Inasmuch as all APSE members have open access to the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation as a member benefit, the APSE Board, Executive Director, Laura Owens and I felt it appropriate to share some of these papers.

The conference was a wonderful opportunity for many of the original APSE pioneers to get together again and talk over the beginning of supported employment. More importantly, there were hundreds of newer faces at the conference eager to engage and make a difference. It is these APSE members who are crucial as we move ahead into the next decade. It is an extremely exciting time to be a member of APSE. For the first time ever, the US Dept of Justice is now going into a number of different states and negotiating settlements to close segregated facilities which include, in some cases, sheltered workshops, as well as state institutions. The Olmstead Act findings upheld by the US Supreme Court in 1999, as a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act, are now providing the judicial impetus for supported employment and integrated employment to become the primary adult service practice in the land. More than ever, there will need to be an army of highly successful, highly passionate, highly competent and totally driven employment specialists in every city and in every state in order for this happen successfully. These employment experts must be able to help escort individuals with autism, intellectual disabilities, psychiatric impairments or multiple physical disabilities out of segregation and into the real world of work.

To this end, it so very appropriate that we are honored to have as the kick off paper in this issue, one by Professor Emeritus Lou Brown PhD and his colleague Kim Kessler, both highly experienced providers and supported employment program developers from Madison, Wisconsin. This paper provides a series of creative and stimulating ideas about one of the great

est challenges for employment specialists: finding good jobs for persons with significant disabilities.

Lou and Kim have worked tirelessly for over a year on developing this paper. I have had it reviewed by professionals in the supported employment field who have found it to be tremendously valuable. It is my hope as I include it in this special issue, that others will also perceive it as a gift to our members of APSE.

In interest of full disclosure, I have had the incredible pleasure and good fortune to have a wonderful professional relationship with Lou going back to 1973 when he came to lecture at Lincoln State School in Lincoln, Illinois. At this time, I was toilet training 55 year old women with profound intellectual disabilities. I heard his presentation and was deeply moved. I realized what I didn't know and what I needed to know, and the next year moved to Madison, Wisconsin to begin my PhD program. I was so fortunate to spend part of my doctoral program with Professor Brown and his team. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it focused my professional life for the ensuing 35 years.

Lou Brown, by all accounts, is clearly the 'Father of the Severely Handicapped' movement. In the mid-1970s, TASH was just starting, the new federal law for mandated special education was coming into being, there was no de-institutionalization, no community integration, no supported employment, no person centered planning. In other words, things were just beginning. But, at the core of Lou Brown, were always two ideals: 1) Values for inclusion, equity, fairness and helping the disenfranchised and 2) The need for evidence based approaches to demonstrating learning and behavior change. Those lucky enough to attend his lectures and fantastic presentations heard Lou Brown's values and demonstrations of the potential of all persons with severe disabilities. What they often missed was his continual reliance on an applied behavior approach, one that continually required data to be collected to monitor and trace learning and behavior change.

Lou Brown has students, colleagues, and followers throughout the world. I am biased, of course, but I do

not hesitate to say that there is no one in our modern generation who has provided more moral and scientific leadership for persons with severe disabilities in our world than Lou Brown. His writings have been cited over and over and over again. He has lectured, presented at conferences and meetings, and consulted nationally and wherever he went people were always inspired, re-energized and re-invigorated.

Of course there were people who did not agree and still do not agree with his passions or values. But even those folks could not say he was inconsistent in his thoughts and beliefs. He was unyielding in expressing what was best for parents, families and students.

We are fortunate to have this paper to kick off the 25th APSE Conference proceedings issue. We are even more fortunate that we had a Lou Brown in our generation to be the beacon for hundreds of community leaders, who now know how to advocate on behalf of those who have been swept to the side as being too “disabled”. The legacy of Lou Brown, TASH and APSE is just the opposite: Lifting up all, liberation and freedom to work and live in the community with dignity.

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