



Rhonda Frederick, People Inc. President and CEO

Direct Support Professionals Deserve our Accolades *A Message from our CEO*

In honor of Direct Support Professionals Week, it is important for us to acknowledge the thousands of staff who dedicate their daily work to making a difference in the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Though rewarding, caring for our community's most vulnerable population can often be a difficult and demanding job. DSPs' care is needed around the clock to bathe, cook, chauffeur, teach life skills and serve as companions and advisors. Their jobs require physical, mental and emotional stamina over shifts that can be arduous and long. But through it all, the impact that they have is vast.

It's this same impact that drives the dedicated and selfless DSPs to help others reach their life goals and dreams. By being there every step of the way through an individual's life, DSPs get the great opportunity to know what it takes for someone to grow and flourish. This is also why the stories of their impact are countless.

One individual I know, Amy, is a true testament to the impact DSPs can have on those they serve. Amy was born with a severe seizure disorder, cerebral palsy and an intellectual disability. The doctors said she would never talk or walk. They said it was unlikely that she would live past age three. Now, 50 years later, Amy is a happy, well-adjusted lady. She enjoys shopping, eating out, attending concerts and visiting her large family. Through the dedication of her support staff, Amy now lives life to the fullest.

For Bernard, who has a mild intellectual disability, his world opened up thanks to the support of DSPs. For 11 years, the 36-year-old resided in a supportive apartment where DSPs taught him how to shop, budget and clean. Thanks to their hard work and devotion, Bernard is now able to live independently in the community while being employed full-time. For him, the sky's the limit.

While the work they do is meaningful and important, DSPs face many challenges when it comes to earning a fair wage. Currently, Medicaid reimbursement rates make it difficult for DSPs to receive the pay they deserve. Statewide, an initiative called "BFair2DirectCare" was created to encourage elected officials to include in their budgets funding for DSP wage increases. The work DSPs do is much more than the minimum, and for all that they give to others, it is now our turn to advocate for them.

Throughout DSP week, let us each take the time to recognize those around us who take on these demanding and challenging jobs. Day in and day out, they have the lives of those who need help the most in their hands. The work they do is admirable and amazing, and every DSP deserves our accolades.