

APSE Conversations with the National Board: Kie O'Donnell

November 18, 2020

<https://apse.org/apse-conversations-with-the-national-board-kie-odonnell/>

Julie Christensen 0:10

Hi, this is Julie Christensen with APSE. We're excited to launch the APSE Employment First employment for all podcast as a new way to connect with you. This podcast is a way to provide updates, real time advocacy alerts, and information related to all things employment. First, be sure to subscribe so you don't miss an episode. And thanks for listening.

Erica Belois-Pacer 0:37

Welcome to another session with national APSE. This is Erica Belois-Pacer. And today I have Duane joining me as one of the new board members. I know I mentioned when I was on with key that, technically they started being board members back in June. But because of all the excitement going on with the conference and various other things in the world today, we didn't have a chance to introduce them until now. So I'm excited today to be with Duane and I actually had the honor of working with him when I had first started at national APSE on the conference that we had in St. Louis, in Missouri, which I thought was amazing. And his team. And his chapter did a really great job of working with us and others across the state. So, Duane, thanks for joining me today. And I don't want to talk the whole time. So I'm just going to ask if you can kind of introduce yourself and let our listeners know how you ended up in this field.

Duane Shumate 1:42

Sure, it's great to visit with Erica. And it's one of those things that I just truly have been humbled to have the opportunity to be on the APSE board. It's one of those things that I first ran for the National Board probably four years ago, and wasn't elected. And of course, you always feel a little dejected. But it was one of those things where I really invest in myself in the state chapter, continue to do more work, not only in the state, but really doing a lot of outreach nationally to get to know more individuals. And so it really was truly an honor to get elected this past year, especially having tasted defeat, you know, a few years ago. But my job is during the day aside from APSE is I'm the state coordinator for employment and community engagement for the Missouri Department of Mental Health Division of developmental disabilities. I've been there for about seven years. Previously, I've worked with Missouri vocational rehabilitation for almost 21 years, from everything from working as a counselor to being a district supervisor to being a admin administrative staff role that did approvals of out of state schools and help set up housing contracts.

You know, I think I first got into this field I've been saying purely accidental, which is kind of ironic in the work that we do, we always talk about people having a well defined career path and building on their interests and skills. And

Erica Belois-Pacer 3:18

That's a good point.

Duane Shumate 3:20

I have to admit that from about sixth grade up through my junior year of college, I thought I was going to be a doctor and I was a pre med student. I did explorer activities as part of scouts, Scouts of America, at hospitals growing up, you know, I got my Eagle Scout badge, met with doctors and physicians to to help me look at getting into medical school. And I would say that my aspirations and talents probably weren't the most aligned and quickly realized that molecular biology and genetics and organic chemistry wasn't for me. But I always had this interest in I had actually minor in psychology. And so I decided to make the switch over to psychology as my major in biology as my minor. And I would say that probably one of the greatest motivating influences on that was I had experienced some personal trauma through loss of a grandfather but through suicide that really started getting me to focus on kind of mental health, personal well being, seeing the impact that it had on my family and others around them. That really kind of started motivating me to really want to work more with individuals that were experiencing challenges and obstacles in their life and so settled on psychology, completed that bachelor's degree and was accepted into a master's degree program in education, counseling psych with an emphasis on rehabilitation counseling, and then the next 28 years have been history.

Erica Belois-Pacer 5:07

Wow, that is I never knew all that, um, that is definitely a unique path. And I can't picture you as a doctor, although I'm sure you would have been great. I'm probably just because I know you in this role. So much better. No, that's really interesting.

Duane Shumate 5:24

Well, and you know, being a child and have we always have these unrealistic career path, my path was to be a physician during the day and a stand up comedian, night,

Erica Belois-Pacer 5:35

That I could see

Duane Shumate 5:36

My comedian skills were about as good as my pre med skills.

Erica Belois-Pacer 5:44

That is really interesting, well, I think I could see you as a stand up comic.

Duane Shumate 5:48

I don't know, I'm always good as a class clown.

Erica Belois-Pacer 5:52

That's true. So it's, I feel like, at least in my experience, I was a teacher for many years. But I think vocational rehab, and kind of the path that you ended up taking, wasn't really talked about as much when I was looking at career goals, either. So it's kind of nice that you actually had the opportunity to be able to take what you were passionate about, and then move forward.

Duane Shumate 6:19

And to be honest, you know, even when I get into my master's program, I was looking for counseling psychology. And I didn't realize that the master's program I had been accepted into had an emphasis in rehabilitation counseling. And so it still wasn't until probably the end of my first year of grad school, that I really kind of settled on vocational rehabilitation and rehabilitation counseling. And so it's definitely one of those things that I guess I always look back on in my own life, how I allowed myself just to kind of be like that leaf on the water and just blow around and take in life experiences and allow life to shape you and, and, you know, I think it's one of those things that I kind of draw back on those experiences, as I work with others on really trying to implement discovery or career planning with individuals with disabilities, because I think sometimes we tend to think that it is a linear path. And we need to remember within our own lives that many times it was anything but a straight.

Erica Belois-Pacer 7:21

Yeah, absolutely. I agree. And I think a lot of times, we think they have to get this certain type of job and stay in that role for extended periods of time. Yeah, but most people have had a lot of different jobs that have led to where they currently are, and will probably have more jobs moving forward.

Duane Shumate 7:41

Definitely, you know, and it's one of those things that, you know, as I look back, you know, I've done work everything from driving forklifts in warehouses to working on assembly lines to being an umpire for baseball, to refereeing soccer, to cutting pumpkins out pumpkin fields. Well, working at concession stands, and, you know, it's one of those things that, you know, I think there's just so many different occupations out there and opportunities, some of those were, while I was younger, some of those were as an adult, just because I wanted new and different experiences and that opportunity to just see what others do. And so, you know, it is one of those things, you know, the whole career pathway truly is a journey, and truly a pathway and with a lot of curves, but it's one of those things to me, just taking the beauty of that would surround you and, and allow it to gradually grow and develop you.

Erica Belois-Pacer 8:43

Absolutely. So, Duane, I know you are very involved with your state chapter, and additional to the national bar that you're now part of on are you able to talk a little bit about Employment

First, in terms of what you might be doing in your, your non APSE job, and at the state level, and additionally, kind of what you're looking to do, as part of the board on a national level.

Duane Shumate 9:12

So on the state level, as far as my job at the division of developmental disabilities. Last year, I was very proud of the fact that we worked very closely with our governor's office. And we worked with them and then a advisory team from each of the state agencies here and we were able to work with the governor to eventually develop an executive order, implementing Missouri as a model employer which follows the national governor associations, better bottom line initiative, which is where within state government, you purposefully look at recruitment strategies and efforts to increase the number of individuals with disabilities who are in state employment, jobs and So that's one of the things that I've worked very diligently on, we've developed a survey that goes out annually to all 60,000 of Missouri State employees, that really kind of helps us identify how many employees have a disability. If they do, What challenges do they have, what opportunities may exist in supporting and mentoring others. So beyond the day to day work with Medicaid waivers and creating flexible employment service definitions to support people with intellectual developmental disabilities, and beyond implementing customized employment practices, and looking at value based purchasing strategies, you know, we're also working very close on the public policy side, at a grander and kind of higher level than Medicaid with that. Missouri is a model employer initiative. And so definitely a lot of things around employment and Employment First and messaging that occurs not just with the lives of those folks who are waiver recipients and their families, but also those who support them, and the public officials who that and approve all those state rules and state regs and all the way up to the executive office. Some of the things you know, that I'd really like to do, I think at the national level is, you know, more so to me is I think we are on a pathway that is going to continue to support Employment First and continue to support individuals with disabilities with increasing their own assets and financial capabilities. I think the main thing that I want to do is just continue to bring a heart and a passion because I know, in my 28 years, it's easy to get fatigued. I think that there's already a lot of capacity, I think there's already a lot of promise, I think there's already a lot of skill. But what I always worry about is the energy to continue the fight. And so that's really what I would hope to bring is just a structure and a framework and an energy and a level of perseverance, to continue to help us push Employment First across the goal line.

Erica Belois-Pacer 12:19

I would agree and Duane, I feel like just working with you on the conference, the energy and the enthusiasm is huge. You're right. I feel like I don't want to say burnout. But I think there are a lot of great opportunities and things happening across the board. But continuing on that path and keeping up the way that it's going. I would totally agree

Duane Shumate 12:41

And it's easy to get distracted. You know, it's easy to get distracted, it's easy to get discouraged. And but I think that's where, again, even during times of ultimate chaos, there's still always a single point of calmness. And I think it's it's continuing to find that calmness, which is our

mission of APSE. And, you know, I'm making sure that we stay mission focused and focused on that vision. Because again, all these other things can happen around you with the ledger, with legislation with elections and, and the pandemic and many other things. But it's it's keeping that focus during those times of chaos, you know, like, well continue to help us to keep that forward momentum moving.

Erica Belois-Pacer 13:30

I agree. Absolutely. Now, Duane, are you... I was trying to remember if there's any specific committees that you're on with the national board this year.

Duane Shumate 13:41

Yeah. I'm the co chair of the public policy committee with Julie Christensen and David Hoff, two folks who I've known for seven years now. And I've had the opportunity to work closely with both personally and professionally. And then I'm also a member of the Finance Committee.

Erica Belois-Pacer 14:02

Excellent. Yeah, I just I love everything that's going on with the policy committee. So I just wanted to kind of highlight that you are very involved with that group as well. So I appreciate it.

Duane Shumate 14:15

Well, thank you, I'm very much of a ride along participant because obviously, David and Julie have tremendous skills and experience in the arena of public policy. And as much as anything, I just hope to be able to learn from them and channel some of their spirit.

Erica Belois-Pacer 14:36

Oh, absolutely. But I also feel like you've done so much within your state. That that, you know, view comes in very handy, because I don't know that every state is in the same position that you currently are.

Duane Shumate 14:51

Well, and, you know, it's one of those things. I appreciate those words and they will because we've worked very hard on that. And I also know we still have a long way to grow, and not until each person who has that aspiration to be employed, has their hope, brightened and able to actually experience the pride of that employment and the pride of a paycheck. I think we still have a lot of work to do.

Erica Belois-Pacer 15:19

I would agree. I would agree. So, Duane, before I let you go, I have just two questions. One would be Are there any fun facts you'd like to share about yourself with our listeners? And then if there's any words you'd like to leave us with, before we sign off?

Duane Shumate 15:42

As far as a fun fact, I would say that probably most people don't realize outside of the pandemic, that I actually emcee a trivia night, one night a week at a local drinking

establishment. And I've really just enjoy the the opportunity to do a little research and kind of get my way my brain away from working and just look for that fun trivia stuff. And so so I do love to do trivia and host trivia. That's probably the other little fun fact. And people may or may not have any reason to be surprised by this. But I was actually a four year Letterman in high school and math club was Tim's and so it's one of those things that 100 people have letters and math club that I'm one of those few handful of people.

Erica Belois-Pacer 16:34

I don't know either. But that is definitely a fun fact. I'm also very intrigued by the fact that you host trivia nights, because, you know, with our virtual conference in tune, we are definitely looking at doing some sort of trivia night. So now I think I'm gonna have to tap into your skills and knowledge of that.

Duane Shumate 16:53

Well, I probably have 12 years worth of trivia questions. Excellent waiver repository to draw upon. But as far as any finishing words, you know, one of those things that I identified probably 910 years ago, through going through some leadership development classes was really developing your own personal mission statement. And it's really the mission statement that I used at that time when I worked with voc rehab, it's still my mission statement today. I think it's kind of my parting words for each person. That Absolutely, and that is to ensure that we're always inspiring hope and creating pride, because if folks don't have hope, then they don't have much at home.

Erica Belois-Pacer 17:36

Thank you, Duane. I think that's a great way to leave our listeners. And I just want to thank you for taking the time out to talk with us today. I know, as part of the APSE staff, we are very happy that you have joined us and we're excited to work with you even more as the next few years go by. So thank you.

Duane Shumate 17:58

Thank you, Erica, and I'm looking forward to it.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>