

APSE Conversations with the National Board: Jan Dougherty

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<https://apse.org/apse-conversations-with-the-national-board-jan-dougherty/>

Julie Christensen 0:10

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Erica Belois-Pacer 0:37

Again, it's Erica Belois-Pacer with national APSE. And we've been taking some time out this week to have some conversations with our newish board members. On we had four folks join us back in June. And we're finally getting a chance to kind of sit down and have a little talk with them about what they've done in the past and what they're hoping to do in the future with Employment First and working with absi. So today, I have Jan with me, and Jan is in a close state to me. So I'm in New York, it's actually 60 degrees today, but it was snowing yesterday. So Jan, I hope it's not super cold there.

Jan Dougherty 1:22

We're in the 50s!

Erica Belois-Pacer 1:23

Nice! So Jan, graciously agreed to join me today. And we're just going to kind of talk about how she ended up doing what she does. And I'm hoping she can talk a little bit about what she does in her real job, not the APSE job because I know, as being part of a different type of board, it turns into almost a full time job. But so anyway, Jan, thanks for being with us. And do you mind kind of letting us know a little bit about yourself and how you ended up in this field.

Jan Dougherty 1:58

Um, thank you. Um, so I got into the field of employment, um, the path was through our oldest son who has a disability, and that and so as he was growing up, and going through school, and that we've always knew that we wanted him on the same life path that his younger brother was on when you go to school, you graduate, go on to college, or go into the workforce in that. So we knew the college path probably would not be ideal for him. And so the workforce was the other path. And we just always thought that throughout his life, even though other people were not supportive of that path. So we went ahead and forged ahead, sometimes very alone. But along the way, we met some really great folks that encouraged us supported us in that. And also, we met some families who also have challenges of getting their sons and daughters on the

path to employment. And they were ahead of us. So they were role models for us, and really gave us a lot of hope in that. So that's how I entered into the employment field. And then took a position at an agency overseeing the Employment Department.

Erica Belois-Pacer 3:29

That's excellent. So Jan, I used to be a teacher before my changes and career path as well. And I actually have two children who also have IPS. And I used to do some trading for schools in my area and options for kids after high school that have disability. So I'm curious how old is your son now?

Jan Dougherty 3:51

Um 36... I think?

Erica Belois-Pacer 3:53

Oh, wow. Yeah, that's a really yeah, I totally get that. I have 3 kids and I often mix up their names and ages. But I'm curious. After high school, how did it go? Was it a smooth transition? Or was there a lot of advocacy and work? They had to be put in?

Jan Dougherty 4:15

Oh, yeah. When he was getting ready to graduate, we, he stayed over that an extra year, he had all his credits, but we wanted the schools to just work on employment that year, even though he had all his credits and could have graduated. Perfect. Yeah, but it didn't quite turn out that well. Um, so at the end of the year, and I didn't keep up on it, because we had some, you know, my mom, I was we were taking care of our parents and things like that. So, um, when it was getting towards the end of the school year, and we met with the school officials and that they told us they had no intentions of working with him on employment because he wasn't a person that they would recommend to work in the workforce. So we just left the building and just made it our own path and plan for him. And I got him involved in every kind of work opportunity I could think of, in the summers gotten small jobs here and there. Just to get him some work skills, he got fired quite a bit laid off. And we would just go find another one. And he'd hold on to that for a little while. And that so yeah, so it wasn't easy, but no regrets. And sometimes you just have to, you know, take a harder path to get to whatever your goal and outcome is. I always encourage families have a vision, have a vision, have a mission, and then map out a plan.

Erica Belois-Pacer 5:54

Oh, absolutely. Plus, I mean, I know you said that he lost some of his jobs. But I think that is typical of anybody, regardless of having a disability or not, I think plenty of young adults, either, yeah, like you said to get laid off, they might not have a great experience at a job and it is okay for anybody to kind of learn from their mistakes and move forward. So I don't necessarily think that's a bad thing.

Jan Dougherty 6:20

It's not like we always, we never looked at it like that we didn't make a big deal out of it and said, there's always another job out there. So. And I think that's important not to make a big deal out of it. So they don't pick up on that and then be fearful of getting another job.

Erica Belois-Pacer 6:37

Absolutely. So it sounds like, after all your work with your son, did you kind of transition into a job doing employment? Or was this at the same time that you were working with your son?

Jan Dougherty 6:53

Um, when you say transition into another job?

Erica Belois-Pacer 6:58

Oh, so like you said that you were doing employment services? I just didn't know if although at that time,

Jan Dougherty 7:04

No, not in the beginning. I was not I wasn't even in the field at that time.

Erica Belois-Pacer 7:08

Okay.

Jan Dougherty 7:09

Yeah, I was working for other companies. And and I hadn't even started into the field during that time. So I was just doing that on the side finding him jobs, mainly through networking through my friends, they were telling me about open positions. And that's how we got them into different positions with different companies.

Erica Belois-Pacer 7:31

Makes sense. So I'm curious, I'm pretty sure you've done quite a bit on a state level with APSE, I don't know if you can talk about any things that you might have done along the way, at the state level with employment first.

Jan Dougherty 7:48

Sure, so after, when I did get into the employment field. Um, it wasn't long after that, that I was introduced. And it was shared with me about this organization called APSE. And I think it came from another family, and then also a long standing APSE board member, Vic Gable, and that and so that's how I came to know APSE, and that in this one family, in particular, had told me, they said, you know, we think you would really like this organization, because they have the same mission and think the same way that we do about employment for people with disabilities. And it's all like minded people. And so that's how I got involved in our state chapter in that and then was a board member in that. So we advocate at the state level, especially around policy in and around sub minimum wage.

People coming out of transition from high school to go right into employment versus day programming. And that and we also advocate around good quality training for the employment provider workforce.

Erica Belois-Pacer 9:02

Oh, that's excellent. Yeah. I I did not realize that it was Vic Gable that had encouraged you or that you knew I

Jan Dougherty 9:10

yeah, I got him when I started at the agency, is where I met him. And he was on the board, actually. So yeah.

Erica Belois-Pacer 9:19

No, that's great.

Jan Dougherty 9:20

I think he told me about David Hoff. He goes, I think you've got to like David Hoff, because he and David reminds me of some of the national people, different people that I read up on in the field that had been around for years and years and years. And so yeah, he was strong advocate.

Absolutely. Well, I think my first introduction to David was at a New York State APSE conference where he was the keynote. So he was very passionate, and it was kind of a good introduction to learning more about the national level of APSE. I also think it's huge and so important to have parents, you know, perspective and representatives on state chapters and, you know, national board. So I, I think that voice is definitely very necessary. And we need to, you know, take that into account. So now that you're on the national board, I'm just curious if you have any goals or what you would like to work on over the next few years on with us, we're excited to just kind of move Employment First, on further.

Yeah. So since I'm just new on the board, and I'm getting adjusted to everything that I want to continue on the policy workgroup that APSE has going on and that so that's really important to me. I want to learn more on advocating on a policy level. And that's so um, and then the other thing that is important to me is just keep spreading the word about Employment First, because I think sometimes we forget to mention the word. I know there's a thought process out there that do we have to say Employment First for it to be employment? I believe we do. I think we need to keep it on the front burner. And in the forefront on people's mind.

Erica Belois-Pacer 11:23

I would agree. I would agree. So I know, Jan, we kind of joked about a fun fact, or something interesting about ourselves. And Jan said, I don't know if I have any fun facts. So I guess, is there anything not fun? That you would like to share?

Jan Dougherty 11:45

Well, let's see. I don't know if this is a fun fact. But when, when COVID happened and people got sent home, people would share like how much you know, alcohol intake they had. And how much weight people were gaining from they called it COVID. Wait. So really? Yeah. So when I would hear this, I thought, Oh, I'm gonna do the opposite. So I gave up wine. I haven't had wine since March.

Erica Belois-Pacer 12:16
That's impressive.

Jan Dougherty 12:17
Yeah. And then I started running. So I don't know if that's fun. But no, I think that is kind of a that is like the opposite. You're absolutely right, of what many people have done during COVID.

Erica Belois-Pacer 12:29
I'm impressed. What did you do? Did you work up slowly with running?

Jan Dougherty 12:33
I did, I started walking. And then then I would just start, like, you know, a really light jog. And I thought, Oh, my gosh, I made it five minutes. Because I thought I was gonna have a heart attack. So it would be in the same boat. I know. It was like, and then next thing, you know, it was a half a mile. And I'd come home and I tell my husband, I did I have a lie. Oh, man, it was a mile and then I get up to three miles.

Erica Belois-Pacer 12:55
Oh, that's awesome. No, I think that's, you know, it's probably a lot healthier. So congratulations.

Jan Dougherty 13:04
Probably not quite as exciting as some people's fun facts, but...

Erica Belois-Pacer 13:08
hey, it's more than I did. So that's awesome. Well, I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with us. And we just wanted to make sure that we introduced and welcome to our new board members, even if it's a little bit later than we had hoped. And I know that the APSE staff, and I'm sure the board is excited to move forward with Employment First and you know, take your ideas and suggestions and work together as a team. So I'm excited. And thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to mention before we sign off, though?

Jan Dougherty 13:43
I'm just excited to be part of the board and learn from everyone. There's so much to learn and people with all the experience that sit on the board and that it's overwhelming to me sometimes. So even though I've been in the field, I feel now that I'm back to being the newbie, just learning even more that I didn't even know prior to that. So it's it's been an exciting time over the past couple months.

Erica Belois-Pacer 14:10

I'm glad and I would agree. I think I felt the same way when I started working with APSE. It does seem like lots to learn. Lots of work to do. But I think like you said, keeping just the concept of Employment First in the forefront, helps with that focus.

Jan Dougherty 14:29

Mm hmm. It sure does.

Erica Belois-Pacer 14:32

Well, I hope you have a good rest of your day. And, again, thank you and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Jan Dougherty 14:39

Thank you

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