

APSE Conversations with the National Board: Margaret Gilbride

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<https://apse.org/apse-conversations-with-the-national-board-margaret-gilbride/>

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

Another episode on meeting folks on the national board. So for today's podcast, we're going to talk with Margaret, who is our national absi. board president. So just like we did with our new folks, we want to welcome Margaret as the new president. Not so new yet, but new back in June. bots have happened since then. So we wanted to just take a little time and get to know Margaret. So welcome, Margaret. I hope you're staying warm today. I know we have snow on the ground where I am in Rochester. So hopefully it's a little warmer where you are.

Margaret Gilbride 1:16

Thanks, Erica. Just flurries right now.

Erica Belois-Pacer 1:20

Excellent. Uh huh. So Margaret, I just wanted to get started and just kind of get an idea of how did you end up in this field?

Margaret Gilbride 1:29

Gosh, it's a good thing that the long term memory goes last because I started in the field in August of 1989, when I was hired by Patti Cassidy, which a number of people listening probably know her well from her work in supported and now customized employment. I had been a teacher for a couple of years in Ohio. And when I moved to Indiana, I thought I would just take this job as a job coach to to bridge the transition from education into my next business, like career, or whatever I was going to pursue. But I ended up falling in love with the work and have been here ever since.

Erica Belois-Pacer 2:17

Oh, wow. Now, so it's I think you've lived in quite a few states, doing similar work. You mentioned Ohio, and we're out. So have you lived in the past.

Margaret Gilbride 2:28

Um, I grew up in New York, but I went to school in Ohio, and became a teacher in Ohio, when I moved to Indiana, was when I entered the field, and I worked in provider organizations, and then had the opportunity to work with Theresa Grassi and David Mank, at the Institute, and at IU.

Erica Belois-Pacer 2:54

Oh, how exciting. I actually started off as a teacher as well, Margaret. So it is kind of interesting how people, you know, fall into this field. For me, it was a little different. I got to do some training for school personnel, which I loved and options for students after high school, so and then it just kept going. But lots of work to do. And I definitely haven't been in the field super long, but I know there's more to do. So I know that you are very busy with both being the president of the National advocacy organization, but I know that you're pretty active also in New Jersey. So would you mind talking a little bit about the New Jersey FC chapter?

Margaret Gilbride 3:40

Sure. I joined the New Jersey APSE chapter when I moved here in in 2015 or so. And I am currently coming to the end of my presidency of that chapter. We do a lot of standing events, a statewide conference along with the bog center called facing the future. We do community conversations with memberships around now Employment First in the COVID era. We have done leadership link activities and a number of other training opportunities and we make resources available and do statewide policy work. I came to the New Jersey chapter after having been on the Indiana chapter of APSE for many, many years. So I've had the opportunity to have both those chapter experiences and the cultures of the different chapter experiences as well as getting an understanding of the differences in how we approach our work from state to state.

Erica Belois-Pacer 4:47

That is very true. That I yeah, very interesting. And I think when I started with national APS I was surprised to see kind of the different focuses maybe that each chapter has I think New Jersey, from what I've seen does a really nice job with the trading opportunities. And with your yearly conference, so how many people typically go to that conference?

Margaret Gilbride 5:13

Um, the last couple of years prior to this year, we had hit the 600. Mark. Wow. So me, since I've been there, there's never been less than 420 or so. But prior to COVID, we were really hitting our stride. Wow.

Erica Belois-Pacer 5:33

Yeah, that's what I thought just for other conversations. I feel like you always have really immediate, amazing keynotes as well. Does that sound right?

Margaret Gilbride 5:42

Um, we do. We're fortunate if a difference between, for instance, what we do in Jersey, and what we did in Indiana is our facing the future conference is just a one day event. And we

typically have a closing keynote, who is a national speaker. And then the majority of our sessions are all done by people who come from the state of New Jersey, with a couple from Pennsylvania or New York who, who come across the border,

Erica Belois-Pacer 6:12

he was just gonna say, Let's listen. Oh, well, that's good. I know, I've constantly talked about how hopefully, at some point, we can collaborate with your Jersey and Pennsylvania and all those bordering states, to New York, because I feel like there's so much to share on and you know, I think we're doing a lot of the same things, but we could learn from each other, which is, you know, the gift of being part of a national organization.

Margaret Gilbride 6:39

Yeah, it's almost an embarrassment of riches, because we have so many strong active chapters in the Northeast region here, that I think if we ever got the opportunity to do something regionally, it would be strong and exciting. It's just, as you know, all of our states are so busy themselves. We just haven't pulled it off yet.

Erica Belois-Pacer 7:02

No, you're right. I know, I always think about if there's like a mentoring opportunity for states that might be just getting started. And I know, we're trying to roll a lot of that out with the chapter leadership, trainings and different things like that, which is great. So. So let's see here. Margaret, another thing I'm curious about in terms of Employment First, what kind of things are you doing in your real job, not your absi role to move Employment First?

Margaret Gilbride 7:36

Well, gosh, I have the pleasure and the opportunity to work with an amazing group of people about nine folks that are training in consultation specialists, and folks that have roles supporting them are all of whom are in the schools or working with adult providers to advance employment. First, we do the state wide training on for job coaches, who are funded through our DVD services. We do many hours of technical assistance. I myself, the majority of my time, I guess, is really spent doing some direct statewide trainings and technical assistance on Employment First. But I serve on lots of different statewide and national policies, policy committees, that are devoted to looking at how we could advance the cause around Employment First. So where in the past I was a provider, giving the services and then a trainer who was trying to build capacity in the states that I belonged to. Now I'm more in a position to support the trainers, support the providers, and reach out to families and policy folks. On a more direct level now.

Erica Belois-Pacer 9:03

That's wonderful. I'm wondering in New Jersey, are there a set number of hours that employment support professionals have to complete in training each year or when they first start off in the job?

Margaret Gilbride 9:16

Oh, if they have to have the certification, the statewide training to become job coaches within the first six months of hire, and there is a set number of training hours that everyone has to receive each year, from that point forward.

Erica Belois-Pacer 9:36

Yeah, it sounds similar to New York where you have to do a certain amount. I think you have to do 24 within your first year of training, and it's a state, you know, led initiative, and then you also have to do continuing to add each year so do you feel like it's made a bigger impact on the field having that mandatory training and certification

Margaret Gilbride 9:59

I think it's a good minimum, it in our state there, in order to provide DVR services, there's a little more flexibility and where you might have gotten those trainings from. But most folks do the initial training. But by the time they get the initial training, turnover being what it is, the implementation is not as strong as it otherwise might be for best practices. So I think all of us are trying to move the needle. But there are other influences that work against the training piece actually being implemented, implemented with a robust arm.

Erica Belois-Pacer 10:51

Yeah, no, I would agree. I think it's tricky. I agree. I think it's a step in the right direction. But with turnover, and so many other factors, it is hard, it's hard to have employment support professionals, step away from, you know, their job, to do the training, and just fit all the needs of everyone. So that's the work to do. So, Margaret, in terms of being the president of national FC, do you have any short term or long term goals? Moving forward over the next year and a half, I know, you mentioned that, you'll probably be the first president to be part of two virtual conferences. So that's, that's a little different, too.

um, is there any other you know, things that you really want to focus on or you're hoping to achieve?

Margaret Gilbride 11:44

I think I'm, in terms of this year, and moving into the next. I think epsy needs to take a stronger stance. And what I'm hoping to ensure happens is that we really look at our culture, our mission, our values, and our vision around truly becoming an inclusive, welcoming, diverse group, both on the board, and in terms of our presenters, in our practices that we are reflecting that which we have always held dear, these have been hard times. And we have really been challenged to work for equity and inclusion, not just in the disability room, but across race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, we just want to ensure that as we work for the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce, that we're at the same time working for the full inclusion of all people, with them as collab collaborators and co workers in the workforce.

Erica Belois-Pacer 12:59

Yes, I agree. And I know you've already started doing some groundwork with that. So I'm excited to see, you know, what it's gonna look like maybe a year from now, but just really looking at how to include and represent everyone. I think that's a great cause.

Margaret Gilbride 13:16

As to anything else, the this having been an election year, and having a new administration coming in. We're fortunate to have Julie Christensen keeping her eye on national policy. And I think there are a lot of laws, rules, regulations that we want to ensure we are supporting, or in every which way possible that will advance the interests of employees with disabilities.

Erica Belois-Pacer 13:49

Yeah, I agree. Well, thank you. So I usually end our podcasts. With a quick question, Margaret, is there a fun fact she would love to share with our listeners today?

Margaret Gilbride 14:04

Oh, then I would just love to share fun. Well, I don't know that it's a fun fact, I do have a tendency to apologize to any roadkill that I pass by on a given day. But since I've not been commuting anymore, and by the way, I have not contributed to the roadkill It's just that I always felt bad that an animal's life ended ended in a way they didn't expect. So I do apologize for that. Probably the only other semi Fun fact would be that I have only taken music lessons once in my life, and they were lessons around playing the bagpipe, which I still to this day can't play. So I best stick with the things that I I do either semi well or can aspire to doing semi well.

Erica Belois-Pacer 15:01

That's awesome. So do you own bagpipes? No.

Margaret Gilbride 15:09

No, Patrick the lessons back in the day. And I never got advanced enough to actually buy the full bagpipe set. You learn on what's called the chanter. And I had one of those, I no longer have it, because I really try to be kinder to the world than that.

Erica Belois-Pacer 15:29

Well, hey, that is definitely a fun fact. And I've heard it's very hard to learn how to play them. So I have never tried myself, and I don't see it in my future. But I'm assuming it was pretty difficult.

Margaret Gilbride 15:43

Well, it was for me, but not as difficult as it was for anybody who was listening to me.

Erica Belois-Pacer 15:51

Oh, dear, how funny. Ah, well, thank you for joining us today. Margaret. I appreciate you taking time, I know that you've been very busy with all the different board requirements and also with your real job. So thank you. And is there anything else you want to leave us with before we sign off for today?

Margaret Gilbride 16:12

I'm actually Erica about, I just want to be sure that I take this opportunity to thank people on whose shoulders my work rests. And that really is Patty Cassidy, who hired me and gave me the opportunity to enter a field that came to be one that I loved. I threw her teaching and mentoring was employing the vision and the values and the mission of Employment First, before that phrase was even coined. And two of them had the opportunity after working with Patti, to work with the likes of Teresa Grassi and David Mank, and so many others. I just want to be sure that I thank them publicly. And then I say that none of them are ever held responsible for anything that I might have screwed up along the way. But, but I didn't want to miss that opportunity to thank them and to acknowledge the good work of my colleagues at the Bug Center at Rutgers here in Jersey, as well as those that I worked with in Indiana and along the way.

Erica Belois-Pacer 17:25

Absolutely. I feel like you learned from the best of the best so.

Margaret Gilbride 17:30

So thank you. Thanks for the opportunity to chat today.

Erica Belois-Pacer 17:34

Absolutely. So have a great rest of your day and look for our next podcast, which will be featuring Maya, who is our vice president. Have a great day.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>