

APSE Conversations: Meet Lorie (AZ)!

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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.

Kari Tietjen

Welcome to the APSE podcast. My name is Kari Tietjen. I am with national APSE. I'm the certification director and also get to do fun things like this podcast and chapters all over the nation and that's how Lorie and I know each other. So I'm going to invite Lorie to introduce yourself and we're also wrapping up National Disability Employment Awareness Month. It's the end of October. So we'll talk about some of the fun things probably that have happened this month, I'm sure and what's coming up. Take it away, Lorie, share who you are, where you are, ...

Lorie Sandaine

Okay, thanks so much for having me here today. And my name is Lorie Sandaine. And I am an Arizona APSE Chapter board member. I actually just joined about almost about nine months ago the chapter here in Arizona, but I am here in Arizona living in Tucson I moved here from another state to just decided that I wanted to kind of retire here a little early and I'm not really retiring but get to where I wanted to be for my retirement. So that's Arizona.

Kari Tietjen

Nice. Yeah. You just moved there early and started that process but still working right?

Lorie Sandaine

Yep. still working.

Kari Tietjen

Was that recent that you had joined Arizona APSE. It's obviously a newer chapter, newly established and hopefully growing and especially with new board members like yourself. I've enjoyed seeing those members that have moved across the country and been able to get involved in their new chapter and, um, so share a little bit about what that process has been like? What was the move like? Finding a new job? And now what you're doing?

Lorie Sandaine

Sure. Yeah, so I'm actually from in Washington state where I was- ran a program manager for employment services with a behavioral health organization. Okay. I actually started there as a county coordinator. For a small rural county there.

Kari Tietjen

Oh, okay.

Lorie Sandaine

And then, yeah, a county coordinator. So in Washington State, they have county coordinators that localize the DD services from DDA. And so I was that's what I originally started with, but you know, an interesting story is that my mother growing up in a small town in eastern Washington was a DA coordinator while I was growing up. And so I had a lot of exposure to people with disabilities and saw the work she did. She was a social worker and the love that she had for the demographic and she is where I got kind of my like, inkling of what it is. And it's kind of interesting, because when we talk about jobs and work, and especially in regards to supportive employment, a lot of times it's about what they're exposed to when they start talking about those interests and why they want to maybe do that it's usually because aunt or uncle and my parents do that, you know, why do you want to work at Starbucks or whatever, you know, it's one of my as my sister works there, you know, or something. It's similar to me that that's how I, you know, just awareness around it regarding my mom and the work that she did. And I think about how we as people can observe the world around us and kind of even do our own little discoveries on what what, what we see and what we don't see like about jobs around us, you know, the waitress that's working while we're going out to eat, those are all opportunities to establish ourselves on just really being observant on what people do for work, you know, and just recognizing the work around us in this world. But that's how I kind of got I mean, that's, that's why I say I got started but then I was working for nonprofits. That's kind of where my grassroots is a grassroots nonprofit. But then I got older and I started to think I'm going to start thinking about retirement. I had been in nonprofits that are nonprofits to nonprofits, were you really there for the work? So...

Kari Tietjen

Yeah, are you saying you weren't earning like a 401k? Or... (laughs)

Lorie Sandaine

-that's what I'm saying. (laughs)

Kari Tietjen

Yeah,

Lorie Sandaine

-we're lucky

Kari Tietjen

longevity and financial planning. It's so important and we talked about more for everyone.

Lorie Sandaine

Yeah, it's part of the work that we need. And it's part of the creating that independence for long term, right. So I started thinking about that for myself. And so I actually switched jobs to a job that had benefits. I mean, you know, and yeah, went to the county and got jobs county coordinator there. And they started as coordinating the DDA contract for people with disabilities in their employment and like I said, Washington State localizes their DD services by having a county coordinator coordinate the services for each county. Okay, yeah. So it's just a little bit different.

Kari Tietjen

Is that different from like Arizona as an example?

Lorie Sandaine

yes

Kari Tietjen

Okay.

Lorie Sandaine

Yeah. And so states are different on how they manage those funds or how they how they want to do that. But

Kari Tietjen

Right... I think that's an area where people are still like, really learning is understanding the funding streams and how they are so different and like, app see as an organization can provide resources, certainly, but your state chapter is one of the best resources to like find that info.

Lorie Sandaine

And our state chapters really should be where the consistent messaging and, you know, I kind of the expertise comes from, in my opinion, that's why I decided to join there as long as one is because I wanted to understand that more was specific and unique to Arizona. You know, I say that that's what's great about supportive employment, too. Is that it's individualized. But so are the systems. So the people that we work with, and so are the systems that we're part of moving from a different state to a new state. It's been having to learn it understand how those systems work. And Arizona apps is really one of the best resources for that is recognizing what's unique to your state? What issues are we facing in the state, but we're more importantly, what are our strengths and our state and why do we do well and how can we harness that and make change for what we need to do for to implement forward for an inclusive workforce. That's really why I started why I joined to his app seat is known for that. Right? Right. Having those resources and being a part and I wanted to be a part of that I wanted to make be in a place that I could make an impact in an app see is a great place for that especially in regards to supported employment, obviously. And I just saw that we as a nation but Arizona to have a lot of work to do. And that's okay. It's okay. I'm not I'm not that not adopt that. But we all have a lot of work to do. And I just

I wanted to land where I felt like I could make the biggest impact. Arizona actually is a great place to be.

Kari Tietjen

Well stated. Yes. Which numbers are you looking at the monthly report that just came out from nTIDE or a different report?

Lorie Sandaine

I'm looking for a lot of numbers, but yes, I'm looking at those. Those numbers I've been looking at our planning council has done some good reach, reach out, reaching out to others and to see where we are as a state. The Sonoran you said has also done some research and on you know and where we are with developmental disabilities and employment. So I think that's important work and how can I you know, that you kind of look at a place and you especially when you're new and say, How can I help? And that, that's what I thought. Let's see what I can do with with the Arizona chapter. Absolute chapter. Yeah.

Kari Tietjen

Very cool. Well, I'm glad you are on the board. I know that it's been a burst of energy seeing your posts on LinkedIn and, and you know, you're very engaged in social media. That's where I think you and I kind of got connected over the CESP credential and started seeing your posts pushing that and just building awareness around employment first. So you certainly have skills in that but I'm eager to hear how you're working within the systems of Arizona to and and that data collection piece which is so needed everywhere and is not consistently done, is a big issue of concern in this field I think.

Lorie Sandaine

I think so too. I think that I think and that's one thing that when we look I look at the state of Arizona specifically is the data collection. And I don't think that we are unique. I mean, I think other states and like you said nationally, I think that's one thing we could do better in this in the work is better data collection, maybe even more consistent. They were that were all clipped and kind of the same kind of things. And that's that that information is so important because it's where you can kind of do where do we start? And I think when we look at the work, we don't have to look at it and say to ourselves where it's so overwhelming. It's, you know, we It helps us narrow our focus. And so, I think I mean, when I come back from state to state and I talk with other states and have familiarity with the work nationally that people are doing every state is so different. And so I specifically think that having conversations with people with disabilities, their families, and even providers, people in the trenches, doing the work, people receiving the services, and recognizing what they think needs to be happening or what changes do they see that need to happen so that we can do Employment First, in the state of Arizona, it is no longer about awareness. First, is about the implementation of employment first.

Kari Tietjen

Good. That's a good place to be.

Lorie Sandaine

Yes, that's where we need to be is the implementation and setting that expectation and I think that for sure. consistent messaging is super important right now I think that there's we have a lot of terms and as does any kind of group or organization but I think it gets confusing. And so I really think that consistent messaging is one of the things that we need to do here in Arizona making sure that words are being said and then people understand and are all on the same page. What like even employment first. What does that mean? What you know, a lot of times I think people think it's a program, you know, that they can send somebody to how do I get someone to be involved in that employment first program? You know, I hear that quite a bit. So just getting consistent messaging out that employment versus patient and and then how do we implement that through legislation and state systems and families and schools right, all throughout and how do we get that started? That's the That's the tough part. One of the things we did for National Disability Employment Awareness Month was back in June, I did a statewide supported employment training was a four part series when I was with this new set, and that was funded through the planning council. And I in order to make that switch for people from awareness to implementation, I wanted an action step. I want to I wanted the state to do our people in the work to make an action step that is no longer we're not talking about it anymore. We're doing and so I created the Employment First pledge that maybe you've seen some of our Arizona post, but it's it's a pledge that people take right we don't either what role you are or your name. And say that I pledged to do these things promote and expand and expect employment to be the first option for people with disabilities, you know, supported via voice those kinds of things, but for me the pledge was really something that we could do that gets people from talking to doing it just kind of a mindset right. And so what was the dean that's one thing that the MC chapters really pushed in the sun you said and Arizona Planning Council and up you know, the state agencies have been really taxed with providers to kind of encourage that pledge and post it on social media and show people that that's, that's what we're doing is we're doing we're now pledging to make action and to do action and move forward and move into the implementation of that. So that sounds kind of exciting. And I love I mean, I, I get super excited when I'm on my social media, and I see that that's being posted and people are making their pledges and committee to Employment First, but that I find that very exciting and sharing those success stories with us and this is what Employment First means and this is my pledge to continue to be a voice for it.

Kari Tietjen

I have seen those posts and I think they're fabulous. That's great that and you started, you know, three to four months early to get people on board, but it's relatively easy implementation of that mindset shift right like you said that it takes it to an action and then what comes next hopefully they're taking that into the next step. But I have seen also great stories posted with that too, with the pledge sharing stories. Do you want to share some of the stories in Arizona, tell me about in the individuals?

Lorie Sandaine

Yeah, so I love talking about Luis in the state of Arizona at... doing pre ETS, pre employment transition services, through VR, so I think that's a great you know, because he's taking all the

steps you know, through his school. And then what happened and one of the things that we're really trying to do here to increase transition outcomes is to put people to work and work experiences in their community. So there was a lot of work experiences on campus on our school campus or during work skills within their school for getting them out in the community in real work experiences with real employers. And so that's one thing that we've been working on and doing here. And he got to do that and participate in our Summer Work Program, which was through the summer, paid, and he got a job with awful bikes, which actually met his interests and his capabilities and what they want to do and when you asked him when we first sat down to do the kind of the interview of discovery, he said that my dream job is to work at this business called Auto bikes. Which is a mile away from this house and was his local bike shop and he has his love for bikes. So we're like, let's let's go for it. So we put we placed him at this business of auto bikes. This is someone who typically has sometimes some behaviors, especially when he's not in a routine and just really wanted to work he was getting to the 19 or excuse me, 80 and transitioning, so we put them to work. He worked there during the summer. And then they decided to bring him on after the summer work program ended as a part time employee. So he kept What's lovely about this as he kept his same schedule.

Kari Tietjen
From the summer?

Lorie Sandaine
From the summer. And then they just kind of incorporated some after school stuff to so it was really nice, and he's really excelled. His mom, who when I first met with her was super scared and didn't want him to work and wanted him to work with do want him to work and just talk really about our fears and that was really one of our first meetings was just listening to validating understanding that those are true. Those are real. We all even as parents have those I, I get it. Like we I get it. And so I think too, it's not just like convincing her but just really validating and then reassuring her that we as job coaches or employment specialists will be there to help educate the employer to work with them to help support them, and that really helped her with that. And then just I tell people communication is free. communicating constantly with her that you know, we even give her updates every time after work. You know, she he did great today these things and I think that's so key is that open and transparent communication. Because we need families on board. We need their support in order for people to be successful at work. They can't just be at work. It can't just be all at school right has to be there supports have to be in place everywhere. So he has not has many behaviors. He has done better in school. We've had some kind of hiccups in the sense that he's like, I don't need to go to school.

Kari Tietjen
Eager to get to work.

Lorie Sandaine
I'm an adult, now right? I'm working so I love that but you know it's just helping through those, those those transitions and those changes in his life. And recognizing that he sees the value of

himself and the value of work. And so he he did this this last number still employed his employer has recommended to his fellow when other employees on our employers that he knows different people who are this program and you know, having more diverse inclusive workforce and how beneficial it's been for them. So that's really a plus that not only is it seeing, you know, the worker and their family but employees excuse me employers receiving too, and sharing that.

Kari Tietjen

Thank you for sharing the story of Luis and working in amo bikes. I think that's fabulous when it works out well to communicate with the family. bring them on board and I love that you talk about that openly and honestly especially with families because you're right everyone does need to be on board during the process, otherwise it won't be successful in the long run. So I hope that he's enjoying working with the bike shop. I know I went by check shopping this summer and they were in high demand. So hopefully that's a really good indication for future career for him.

Lorie Sandaine

So yeah, he tells me he's gonna retire. He's gonna retire there. That's what we want.

Kari Tietjen

Well, that's fabulous. I think there's so many great things happening that you described in Arizona. I know the big hashtag is #transformAZ2021. And you've had a webinar series and that's continuing into November. Am I right?

Lorie Sandaine

Yep. And we have one in November on the 18th on employer engagement actually. And then on December we have one on transition that transition from school to work.

Kari Tietjen

Perfect. Well, I wish the Arizona board the best as you head into 2022. And I know there's great things in store with an active board, including yourself and Vanessa Zuber and Susan Voirol. There's some great leadership happening in Arizona so I hope people check you out.

Lorie Sandaine

Thank you so much. I just encourage anyone in Arizona to join the Arizona APSE chapter. We need your help, and they're we're doing great work and moving moving forward.

Kari Tietjen

Absolutely. Well thanks for joining me in conversation today. I'm looking forward to catching up soon. And I encourage people if they're enjoying these conversations, make sure you subscribe so that you get notifications when we have new episodes. It's been so fun featuring APSE members, people with disabilities who are receiving employment supports we've even had employers so I really encourage people to keep listening in and visit the main APSE website

which is apse.org and we continue to have great events coming up around employment first thanks again, Lorie,

Lorie Sandaine
Talk to you later.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>