IF YOU ELIMINATE WHAT NO LONGER WORKS, YOU ILLUMINATE WHAT DOES

Cheryl Richardson
“Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness.”
– Anne Frank

When it comes to the national discourse on employment first, APSE is the candle that both defies and defines the darkness; its members are the torchbearers. Through APSE’s policy and advocacy work in 2021 a spotlight was focused on the realities of employment inequity for people with disabilities, and paths to remedy that inequity illuminated. Through APSE’s CESP program, the complexity of the community employment professional’s knowledge and skill sets were acknowledged, and its status elevated. Through APSE’s professional development and training program, high-need topics were addressed and hundreds of dedicated practitioners, Emerging Leaders, and Rising Stars were bolstered. Through APSE’s membership outreach and support program, a grassroots network of change-makers was strengthened and refueled. Through you, APSE’s members, APSE’s mission, vision and values shed light on the path forward for employment first from Maine to Hawaii and from Alaska to Florida. APSE worked on behalf of, and in concert with, its members: its accomplishments are our own.

These accomplishments, let us remember, occurred in the context of a second year of continued quarantining, virtual presence, racial reckoning, economic uncertainty, political polarization, an epidemic of “othering,” and the blossoming of “the big quit era.” In some respects our accomplishments occurred because of these contextual realities; in others, they occurred despite them. We networked more than ever; made the most out of a second virtual conference; declared our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion unwavering and central to our mission; remained decidedly bi-partisan in our approach to promoting employment first; and, we took action to address the staffing crisis facing community employment providers. Within our states and across the country, APSE.org and its membership was a unified voice and collective force for real work with real pay.

Moving Mountains Together! is the theme of our upcoming in-person conference and functions as both an appellation of our past year and a challenge for our next. It is a reminder that the act of moving a mountain begins with the removal of small stones. Each of us APSE members is invited to celebrate all that we did in 2021 and recommit to our work in 2022 so together we move mountains.

Cheers,

Margaret T. Gilbride
Chair, APSE Board of Directors

I have spoken the phrase, “It takes a village,” more times over the past year than I can count. Now, more than ever, I know this to be true when it comes to advancing Employment First. Despite an ongoing pandemic and a struggling economy, the village that is APSE has only grown stronger. Our collective efforts to ensure #RealWorkRealPay have made a significant impact. Indeed, there is much to celebrate as we look back at 2021. Here are just a few highlights:

• Membership continues to grow, with nearly 300 new members joining our community this past year!
• The recertification rate for CESP increased by over 30%!
• Twenty-seven mid-career professionals completed the year-long Emerging Leaders program, and a new training opportunity for frontline staff was developed!

Additionally, five states passed legislation to phase out the use of 14c certificates and subminimum wages for people with disabilities in 2021. Most importantly, we achieved a record-breaking employment rate for people with disabilities and historic gains in labor market participation.

As you read on and learn more about our accomplishments over the past year, know that it truly took a village! National APSE continues to adapt to meet the emerging needs of our members, and it’s the ongoing engagement and feedback of our members that informs how we do our work. For this, we thank you – as there is still much work to be done!

On behalf of the National APSE team, we are grateful for each and every one of our members and supporters. We particularly wish to acknowledge the tireless support and work of the APSE Executive Board and Board of Directors, as well as our network of State Chapter Leaders across the country.

With gratitude,

Julie Christensen
Executive Director, Director of Policy & Advocacy
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: MEMBERSHIP & CHAPTER ENGAGEMENT

2021 APSE CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- **CALIFORNIA**
  California APSE became more active in the public policy and advocacy realm this last year. They supported the passing of Senate Bill 639, the elimination of sub-minimum wage in California, and have become a strong and guiding voice to the state funding agencies!

- **MINNESOTA**
  Minnesota APSE completed our first season of the MN APSE podcast, If You Believe It, You Can Achieve It!

- **CONNECTICUT**
  Connecticut APSE continued to focus on providing virtual training and supports to its members in 2021, as well as celebrated the well-earned retirement of several long-standing Board members, Beth Aura Miller and Karin McMahon.

- **TEXAS**
  In 2021 TX APSE advanced employment first through legislative testimony and informative presentations to key partners in Vocational Rehabilitation and with state Medicaid waiver administrators. TX APSE helped to pass SB50 advancing employment first policy for Medicaid waiver recipients and advocated for the recently instituted 22% raise in reimbursement rates for Vocational Rehabilitation employment services.

**SHINING EXAMPLES**

**MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**

“I attended my first APSE conference in 2016, having left a 30+ year profession where networking was key to success. Since that event, APSE conferences, as well as APSE members, have brought tremendous value to our organization through networking, trainings, and other collaborations.”

- Kathy DiRusso
  Director, National Jobs Operations
  Best Buddies International
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:
MEMBERSHIP & CHAPTER ENGAGEMENT (CON’T)

www.apse.org/membership/

2021 APSE CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS (con’t)

• NORTH CAROLINA
  NC APSE held a virtual conference in October, and continues to hold ongoing virtual training under our training grant through the state.

• SOUTH CAROLINA
  SCAPSE hosted its second annual membership meeting. It was a virtual event. SCAPE signed a letter of support with Able SC (Center for Independent Living) to end Subminimum wage and develop a Task Force to implement a strategic plan.

• MARYLAND
  The Maryland APSE chapter continued our successful statewide monthly meeting called Lunch with Leaders. This collaborative outlet is for professionals and leaders in the field to share news, experiences, and efforts on a wide variety of topics, that impact the individuals we both serve and advocate on behalf of and is open to all Marylanders.

• OHIO
  Ohio APSE hired an intern to oversee our membership recruitment.

• VIRGINIA
  Virginia APSE was successful in adopting language similar to the Federal Schedule A hiring authority to increase the number of people with disabilities into state government employment.

• ARIZONA
  AZ APSE delivered a monthly webinar series addressing Employment First topical areas, created of the AZ APSE website, and the increased visibility through our communication efforts. Our AZ APSE members also participated in several activities during National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October and conducted a successful AZ APSE Annual meeting with rich session presentations by local and National APSE presenters.

NEW MEMBERS IN FY21: 294
- 7 Gold Business Members
- 3 Silver Business Members
- 25 Bronze Business Members
- 177 Professional Members
- 49 CESP Professional Members
- 17 Self-Advocate and Family Members
- 16 Student Members

DID YOU KNOW?
WE HAVE NEW APSE BUSINESS MEMBER BENEFITS!
National APSE has restructured our business memberships to better meet the needs of businesses and organizations working to expand competitive integrated employment. Now a business membership with National APSE brings value to your entire staff, as well as the individuals selected to receive the professional memberships under the business account.
APSE HOSTED BI-WEEKLY CESP CONVERSATIONS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

APSE brought together 80+ CESP credential holders for networking and learning. In addition to providing support in navigating the CESP application and recertification processes, discussion topics have included:

- Creating quality job matches
- Funding in employment services
- Supported employment service providers’ best practices
- And more!

BETTER TESTING UX AND FUNCTIONALITY

The CESP program switched to a new testing vendor, Kryterion, in 2021. This change afforded the opportunity to:

- Implement remote (online) proctored exam
- Offer practice exams for test takers to purchase

CESP SPOTLIGHT

“It has been absolutely career-changing for me to have the CESP.”
- Renee Cencer, Michigan

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:
CESP CREDENTIAL

www.apse.org/cesp-central/

BEAMING WITH BRILLIANCE

CESP BY THE NUMBERS

315
NEW CESP
earned their credential

357
CESP RECERTIFICATIONS
(required every 3 years)

STATES WITH THE MOST CESP:

- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Maryland
- Oregon
- Iowa
- Tennessee

DID YOU KNOW?

A calendar with pre-approved CESP continuing education opportunities is available on APSE’s website! For more information, email us at cesp@apse.org

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CESP SPOTLIGHT

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EMERGING LEADERS AND RISING STARS

Facilitated by Rick McAllister, a nationally recognized subject matter expert, twenty-seven (27) mid-level managers participated in the Emerging Leaders program during the past year.

With input from Emerging Leaders graduates, APSE has developed the Rising Stars program. This complimentary skills development and mentorship program is designed for frontline staff and launches in January 2022!

“I have had the phenomenal experience in the Emerging Leaders cohort. I gain tremendous insight and ideas from my colleagues and am able to receive support from them in a way that few people are able to offer due to the complexities of our roles. Rick has been an amazing mentor and support for me, and truly allows each of us to guide our own learning journey in a way that makes most sense for us.”
- Participant feedback

RELAUNCH OF APSE’S ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

APSE has updated our highly acclaimed regional institutes and repacked them to facilitate regionally based collaboration and organizational transformation workshops to jump start learning around best practices to achieve competitive, integrated employment. With funding support from Anthem, APSE piloted the program in Arkansas in 2021. Thirty-three (33) professionals participated in an 8-week intensive “virtual bootcamp” followed by a monthly community of practice.

“I just want to say that I thought the sessions were very worthwhile and meaningful! We are looking at ways to broaden our supported employment service and appreciated all of the valuable experiences and information shared through this training. I look forward to our monthly meetings!”
- Participant feedback

DID YOU KNOW?

APSE hosts a monthly Pre-ETS Collaborative meeting. To date, 173 professionals have joined to share ideas and resources for improving pre-employment transition services programs and outcomes! For more information, email us at info@apse.org

PRO SPOTLIGHT

“The Emerging Leaders program has allowed me to increase my knowledge in the Employment Supports area through networking with other professionals from around the country as well as through the monthly class. It has provoked me to change my methods and increased my confidence in developing employer relationships. It has also shown me what I should be doing as a supervisor that I’m not currently doing.”

- Lisa Svidron, PA APSE

JOIN US FOR APSE WEBINARS

40 LIVE AND RECORDED WEBINARS OFFERED

2,721 ATTENDEES
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:
POLICY & ADVOCACY

A BRIGHTER PATH FORWARD

14c CERTIFICATES PHASE OUT

National APSE and State APSE Chapters advocated to end the use of 14c certificates at the state and federal levels. In 2021, state legislation to phase out 14c was passed in five (5) states!

- California—SB639
- Colorado—SB39
- Delaware—HB122
- Hawaii—HB603/SB793
- Washington—SB5284

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RIDGE POLICY GROUP

Kudos for being included in The Hill’s 2021 Top Lobbyists! The list recognizes those who most effectively worked “behind the scenes to reshape the COVID-19 relief package, bipartisan infrastructure bill and Democrats’ climate and social spending plan.” In what has been considered “one of the busiest years on record” APSE is grateful for our continued partnership with RPG, and for their support of Employment First!

DID YOU KNOW?

All APSE members are invited to join the Public Policy Committee. The Committee meets twice per month, to discuss strategy related to both Federal and state advocacy. Contact julie@apse.org for more information.
APSE’s Public Policy Priorities and Federal Legislation worked to support:

Phase out of 14(c) and subminimum wage
- Transformation to Competitive Integrated employment Act (HR2373)
- Raise the Wage Act (HR603, S53)

Building the Capacity of the Direct Support Workforce
- American Rescue Plan (HR1319)
- Relaunching America’s Workforce Act (HR602, S200)

Achieving the full intent of current Federal employment first law
- Disability Employment Incentive Act (S630)
- SSI Restoration Act (HR3824, S2065)

Promoting ABLE expansion
- ABLE Adjustment Act (HR1219, S331)
- Work without Worry Act (HR4003, S2108)

NJ APSE Member Testifies Before Congress

The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor held a joint Subcommittee hearing on 14c and subminimum wages for workers with disabilities on July 21, 2021. Nantanee Koppstein (NJ APSE Chapter Board) opened today’s hearing by sharing her own living experience, as a parent of Monica, as the family navigated the complex pathway from school to work. To read Nantanee’s full testimony, and learn more about Monica’s story, click HERE.

Front-Line Spotlight

Cooking at home as a hobby turned into a first job. “Working makes me feel proud.”

Nathan (Illinois)
OUTREACH BY THE NUMBERS

3,867 LinkedIn Followers

4,647 Facebook Followers

2,777 Twitter Followers

47 Podcast Episodes Produced With

26,530 Email Newsletters Subscribers

2,012 Downloads

DID YOU KNOW?

Everything you need to know to support membership and chapter engagement can be found on APSE's HelpScout page. Access it through the member portal, or email us at info@apse.org for assistance!

ICYMI: APSE ON THE RECORD!

APSE’s Executive Director, Julie Christensen, and several APSE members provided expert analysis as part of the U.S. Government Accountability Office’s Report to Congressional Requestors: Subminimum Wage Program, Factors Influencing the Transition of Individuals with Disabilities to Competitive Integrated Employment (GAO-21-260, March 2021).

GAO Probes Disabled Worker Pay As Congress Mulls Changes, Law360, 4/6/21
While we would have much preferred to meet in person, we made the most out of our second virtual conference.

**#APSE2021 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE BY THE NUMBERS**

**ILLUMINATE**

2021 APSE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Lighting the Path Forward for Employment First

Conference keynote speakers are Hasan Davis (top photo) and Jim Warne (bottom photo)

GLOWING REVIEWS FROM CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS:

“APSE truly ILLUMINATES the best path in the midst of major upheaval.”

“I value APSE education in best practices. I count on APSE to keep me current.”

“This keynote was a gift to anyone who got to hear it. THANK YOU!!”

“To say it exceeded my expectations is an understatement. It was extraordinary.”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOURS OF LIVE CONTENT</th>
<th>19</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOURS OF PRE-RECORDED CONTENT OFFERED</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPECTACULAR KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS PROVIDED BY HASAN DAVIS AND JIM WARNE</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>700+ ATTENDEES</td>
<td>700+</td>
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</tbody>
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Conference keynote speakers are Hasan Davis (top photo) and Jim Warne (bottom photo)
SNAPSHOT:
FISCAL YEAR 2021

FINANCIALS

REVENUE: $1,066,175.92

- 29% Conference
- 25% Membership Dues
- 22% PD Training
- 10% Other
- 9% CESP
- 5% Grant Income

EXPENSES: $1,019,606.89

- 58% Salaries & Benefits
- 21% Program Expenses
- 12% Office Expenses
- 8% Legal/Professional Fees
- 1% Other

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- 1% Other

FRONT-LINE SPOTLIGHT

“Don’t let your disability define what you can do.”
Brianna (Maryland)

SUPPORT SPOTLIGHT

“Employment is the key to independence. My goal is to nurture the individuals’ desire to be self-sufficient and to have choices to live their best life. Hence, employment and the pre-skills is what will ultimately allow the individual with a disability or not, to live fully as all humans should.”
Wendy (California)
SNAPSHOT: FISCAL YEAR 2021 (CON’T)

MEMBERSHIP

TOTAL MEMBERS: 2,414 (as of 9/31/21)

- Bronze Business: 21%
- CESP Professional: 7%
- Gold Business: 12%
- Silver Business: 14%
- Professional: 43%
- Student: 1%
- Self Advocate & Family Members: 2%

NEW MEMBERS: 294 (10/1/20 - 9/31/21)

- Bronze Business: 1%
- CESP Professional: 6%
- Gold Business: 6%
- Professional: 17%
- Student: 2%
- Self Advocate & Family Members: 5%
- Silver Business: 2%

FRONT-LINE SPOTLIGHT

“I am more confident now, not as anxious as when I was looking for work. I want to keep this job and work here forever! I don’t want to be like other people and not call or show up!”
Frank (Michigan)

FRONT-LINE SPOTLIGHT

“Luis reminds us that work provides a purpose and places individuals in an environment where their capabilities are recognized. They just need the opportunity!”
Luis (Arizona); quote from Lorie, Luis’s job coach
APSE LEADERSHIP

LIGHTING THE WAY

NATIONAL STAFF

Erica Belois-Pacer
Director of Professional Development

Julie Christensen
Executive Director/ Director of Policy & Advocacy

Sarah Manning
Systems Manager & Program Support

Erynn Pawlak
Director of Operations

Christa Rainwater
Director of Membership & Chapter Engagement

Kari Tietjen
Director of Certification

NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS (2020-2021)

Top row: Margaret Gilbride, Maya Cox, Bridget Hassan, Wally Tablit, Julia Barol
Middle Row: Wesley Andersen, Kelley Land, Paula Johnson, Kie O'Donnell, Jan Dougherty, Courtney Horton
Bottom row: Kelly Nye-Lengerman, Duane Shumate, Ryan Aldrich, Pamela Cross, Katie Wolf Whaley, Justin Blumhorst

THANK YOU
to our members, collaborators, sponsors and contributors!

GET INVOLVED TODAY!
Email info@apse.org to learn more