

QUESTION & ANSWER:

ACC EMPLOYEE LAURIE SKADSEM

What is your full name?

Laurie Colleen Skadsem

Officially, what is your job title?

My title now is Community Program Coordinator — Community Services.

Describe what it is you do and how long you've been doing it.

I have had this job title since late February 2008. I work mainly with adults in our Personal and Community Supports area of the new outreach services — Community Services.

As this program gets off the ground, my job has been to look at each client and what their interests are and then to set up a day schedule for them that is purposeful and fulfilling to them. I look at three areas to make a well-rounded day for each person we serve: 1) daily living activities, 2) recreation /leisure opportunities and 3) volunteer experiences.

As the program moves forward into new communities in North Dakota, I see my job changing a bit and training coordinators in each office to set up schedules and train direct care staff. I am also very involved in transition issues for our students (14-21 years of age) at ACC. I serve on a state transition council committee as well as two regional committees.

It seems like a pretty amazing job — helping people find places where they can volunteer. What are some of the best/most inspiring parts of your job?

Setting up the volunteer sites is probably the best part of what I do — maybe in part because they are not always a slam-dunk. Finding a volunteer site in a community business is really just half of the process. The other half is to look at the various jobs at the business, match it to the interest of our client, and

carve out a piece of the task that matches their abilities.

I think the most amazing part of this is watching the business coworkers change. If we do our job right in integrating the client into the "culture" of the business, that is when we see some true changes in attitudes.

The client changes because they are now responsible and take pride in a particular volunteer task. They have a purpose for getting out of bed and "giving back to their home community." The coworkers see the person (volunteer) next to them as an asset to their business, someone who contributes to their success. They no longer see someone who needs assistance or someone they may even feel sorry for; now they can see their abilities. It is inspiring to see this happen.

When you meet with clients, how do you determine which volunteer opportunities work best for them?

We have developed interest surveys and inventories over the years here which we use to determine their interests. We also do observations before we schedule the client to get a good picture of what they can do and what they like. If they are



able to communicate what they would like to do, that is always the best. But sometimes we can do all of these things and it is still unclear what the client would like to do or would be good at. Then I look for volunteer experiences that the client could try knowing that some may be a hit and some may be a miss! Once the schedule is done, it is never really done. There are changes and tweaking that need to take place just as it happens for all of us.

How exciting have the past 6-10 months been with the expansion of services for the Center?

The past 26 years here have been exciting — yes, 26 years. I was never one to keep doing the same thing over and over. If you don't change and grow, you are going backwards.

DO YOU HAVE IDEAS FOR STORIES WE CAN RUN AND OTHER TOPICS WE CAN INCLUDE IN THE ACC FAMILY NEWSLETTER?

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

SUBMIT THEM TO KALEN.OST@ANNECENTER.ORG.