Employee Spotlight

Carol Rigdon

Along with being a skilled direct support professional, Carol Rigdon has a number of talents. This middle child with six siblings (three brothers and three sisters) is an artist. She enjoys making jewelry, painting, sewing blankets and photography. In fact, many of you have been the subjects of her photography as she often serves in this role at agency events. Carol started an online business selling jewelry, but isn't currently focused on that due to COVID-19 concerns, saying "I feel people have more important things to spend their money on right now."

Carol began her career journey working in a nursing home. However, it wasn't until she came to Platte County Board of Services that she found her true calling. She recalls working in places where she didn't feel the people got the care she felt they deserved. After coming to PCBS, she recalls feeling, "There was actually someplace out there that put individuals in the driver's seat of their lives. This place actually cares about people."

How does Carol unwind? Along with her artistic talents, Carol enjoys gardening and bird watching. However, she notes, "I can't believe I get paid to hang out with the most wonderful people ever." Carol is among a few employees with more than 20 years of service. When asked if she has plans for retirement she replies, "When this job begins to feel like work, I will know it's time to do something else." Thank you for your dedication Carol!
Business Carries On in Uncertain Times

It is hard to do a newsletter right now without mentioning the uncertain times in which we find ourselves. Like a whirlwind, COVID-19 came in and dramatically changed the way we do business. It has also made dramatic changes to the way we lead our personal lives. It goes without saying that the people at PCBS who have been most affected are the people we support and those who support them. PCBS direct support staff have been flexible, dedicated and positive throughout this journey. There aren't enough words to express the gratitude felt for all DSPs do, especially during this time.

Residential and day habilitation coordinators and supervisors are also to be praised. From the beginning, they jumped into gear to make sure people have the things they need. From scouring Kansas City to find toilet paper and hand sanitizer, to developing schedules that work for people, to helping people through anxious times, the coordinators have done an amazing job. Much gratitude goes to them as well.

There are so many that are deserving of praise:

- IT coordinator for getting us all up and running on Zoom among other things.
- Finance/accounting for making sure business continues to run smoothly.
- The front desk attendant for finding ways to keep phone traffic and deliveries moving safely.
- The drivers for sewing masks and helping out in a variety of ways.
- The resource coordinators for reaching out to make sure people continue to be connected to community resources.
- Nursing for helping people access telehealth appointments.
- Recreation for creating unique ways for keeping people entertained and having fun — Zoom Bingo anyone?
- HR coordinator for continuing to interview and hire while following social distancing rules.

The Platte County community is grateful for your service.

PCBS Direct Support Professionals Continue Essential Work Amid COVID-19 Outbreak

Platte County Board of Services is proud to recognize the efforts of direct support professionals, who are considered essential workers during the COVID-19 stay-at-home order.

Direct support professionals work with individuals with disabilities, for whom any interruption in routine can be challenging and uncomfortable. Direct support professionals provide a host of critical services, in addition to offering companionship and comfort in a time that can be frightening and frustrating.
“They are working with people who can struggle to understand all the new rules we are complying with, and they are dedicated and ready to help someone through an illness should that become the case,” said Denise Cross, Executive Director of PCBS.

“Direct support professionals often don’t receive recognition for what they do or feel as special and as crucial to this community as they are,” said Cross. Some of the heroic efforts offered by direct support professionals during this time include:

**Protection**
- Running errands, such as obtaining groceries for clients.
- Teaching individuals how to properly wash their hands.
- Repeatedly reminding clients of the rules of the stay-at-home order.

**Emotional Comfort**
- Helping clients to understand why they cannot work at their regular jobs at this time, run errands or go outside.
- Talking through the reasons for the stay-at-home order.
- Making themselves available after-hours and on weekends when individuals get lonely or want to talk through the COVID-19 situation.

**Going the Extra Mile**
- When an individual was sad that Easter would be different this year, Bunny, a direct support professional, called pretending to be the Easter Bunny and bringing a chuckle to that individual.
- Zoom birthday parties have been organized by direct support professionals to celebrate each individual’s special day with friends.
- Games, puzzles and craft activities are all being offered in abundance.

PCBS invites the public to join in showing their appreciation for direct support professionals, who fill an important role in guiding individuals through a difficult and frightening time with courage, love and respect for their clients.
What Does Re-Opening Look Like for PCBS?

As talk of re-opening spreads across the state and nation, PCBS is in constant conversation with several partners to determine best practices. Firm answers, specific to our industry, do not currently exist. Whatever plan is put into place, and when it starts, it will be done with the safety and health of PCBS clients and staff as top priority. We support a number of people at high risk for negative outcomes associated with the novel coronavirus. As things begin to open up, the need for vigilance increases. This vigilance continues to focus on physical distancing, restricting visitors, good hand hygiene, and so forth. It is acknowledged that these practices are hard for families who dearly miss their loved ones. Increased access to video communications has been put into place in hopes of helping to take some of the edge off of the separation. The strain on those affected by the lack of day programming and transportation is also acknowledged. Discussions about these programs has been ongoing as well. For all programs, look for information to be forthcoming as soon as there is some to share. We have already reached out to many to discuss needs in this area. Feel free to contact our offices if you have questions. Also, know that Resource Coordination remains ready to be of assistance to anyone experiencing hardship or with questions during this time. Everyone is anxious to get back to normal. It is WAY too quiet at the office, and we miss everyone! While that does not look possible right now, we do look forward to the creation of a new normal that can meet needs and be as safe as possible, at the same time.

Community Partner Highlight

Community Partners

Typically, this will be a place to highlight one of our many community partners. However, so many community members have stepped up to help us during this pandemic that it seems appropriate to highlight them all. The Department of Mental Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities, has been a great partner by helping with information overload. They have created a website dedicated to COVID-19 information and changes. They have also offered a space to ask questions to be answered on a weekly webinar. The Kansas City Regional Office has partnered by sharing cloth face coverings with us and working to source personal protective equipment. Along with these organizations, there have been many individuals who have helped us. Special thanks to the following people:

- Dagmar Wood, Platte County Commissioner, for sourcing surgical masks and checking in on us.
- Platte City Lions Club, for helping make for a great birthday celebration for one of our residents.
- Mindy Kay Gilkison, for helping make for a great birthday celebration for one of our residents.
- Jessi Conner, for donating food.
- Maryellen Swanson, for donating face coverings.
- Kay Blakeley Schafer, for donating face coverings.
- Linda Courtney with Crossroads Quilting, for donating face coverings.
- Michele Hensley, for donating cleaning supplies.
- Janice Tilman, for sourcing face coverings.

And to any others that might have been missed — community partnership has been so very evident and appreciated during this time.