

A year of heroic effort

As we celebrate workers throughout our country on Labor Day, the week of September 13 — 19, Community Options will also celebrate National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week.

Our amazing direct support staff have always been the heart and soul of what we do, and that hasn't changed. The employees that we celebrate often bear great responsibility for the very lives of the people we support, and this year it has been that on steroids as these dedicated and caring souls endeavor to keep the vulnerable people we serve and each other safe and healthy in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over these past six months each and every one of our employees has demonstrated incredible perseverance, understanding, and caring in facing these unprecedented challenges, and their stories are accentuated by the heroic and selfless efforts of four of those employees who are truly among the heroes of this pandemic.

In mid-March, just as we all were realizing the full danger and impact of this pandemic, we closed our two day program facilities and "locked down" our group homes under the stay-at-home order.



Community Options Ink

By Tom Turner

Pretty much right out of the chute, a resident of one of those group homes got very sick and presented virtually all of the COVID-19 symptoms. Testing was difficult to arrange and slow to get results, so while awaiting those results, we quarantined the home and sent all of the staff home with the exception of two brave souls who volunteered to "shelter in place" and provide 24/7 support to the eight residents who live there, including the person who was so sick.

This went on for almost a full week before we got the wonderful news that this person's COVID test had come back negative, and we were able to send those two employees home for some much needed rest and time with their families and bring back the regular staff. That resident has since recovered.

Then, in mid-July, a resident of one of our other group homes tested positive for COVID, and we went through the same process, although this time, since a person had tested positive, we also had to arrange testing for all the other residents and all staff who had contact.

Fortunately, everyone else tested negative, and the person who tested positive remained asymptomatic, but again, we had two brave, dedicated employees who volunteered to "shelter in place" and provide 24/7 support. Because the testing process involved so many people, the "tour of duty" for these two employees lasted nearly two weeks.

As we celebrate Direct Support Professionals Week, please keep in mind and honor the selfless sacrifices being made to protect local citizens with intellectual disabilities.

Tom Turner is the executive director of Community Options.

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