

MOHR Annual Conference 2024 Presenters

Welcome Keynote 5/20/24



Tim and Bridget Vogt have over 50 years of combined experience working with people with disabilities. They have spent their careers studying and innovating around person-centered design and social connections for people with disabilities, their families, and their neighbors. Tim and Bridget led Starfire through a transformation from segregated disability programming to inclusive community programming. Starfire transformed all the values, structures, mindsets, programs, and policies to help people with disabilities, their families and communities tell a better story around creative inclusion and relationships. Tim spent the first 10 years of his career building programs for people with disabilities and became Executive Director of Starfire in 2006. Under Tim's leadership, Starfire built award-winning segregated day programs and outings for hundreds of people with disabilities. In 2009, Tim led the staff and board on a learning journey to face the hard truth of Starfire's role in perpetuating social isolation. In 2017, Tim stepped away from the day-to-day work of running Starfire and started to exploring program models that didn't require people with disabilities to experience segregation. As a result, he launched Starfire's Family Network, helping families foster local support networks and Starfire's Learning Network, helping organizations shift resources and commitments to community-oriented and family-led efforts. Bridget has held a variety of positions at the organization but has always maintained a role in direct support of people with disabilities. She currently leads the Community Building Network involving neighbors in making genuine connections with a person with a disability. Both are sought out presenters on Starfire's creative collaborations with communities, organizations, and families.



Brian Begin is an Education Program Specialist at the University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration (ICI). The two projects Brian works on are the Residential Information Systems Project (RISP), and the Minnesota Transformation Initiative Technical Assistance Center (MTI). RISP is a longitudinal study of long-term supports and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities that tracks federal and state funding sources, residential setting type and size, and recipient age and expenditures. With the MTI project Brian works with service providers that have received grants to end the use of subminimum wages and expand employment services that support competitive integrated employment outcomes. This project also includes working with counties by providing technical assistance to support competitive integrated employment outcomes for people on HCBS waivers. Prior to joining the Institute on Community Integration, Brian spent 9.5 years working for the nonprofit Lifeworks Services, Inc. managing teams that provided 245D waiver and Vocational Rehabilitation services to transition age youth and adults. Brian has served on the board of the MN chapter of the APSE First since 2018.



Staci Jones is a Senior Policy Specialist with the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts at Boston where she supports the State Employment Leadership Network as well as provider transformation efforts in various states. Staci began her career in the disability support field 31 years ago working as a direct support professional (DSP) in a group home. She has worked in various capacities at disability service provider agencies and has also acted as the Statewide Employment Services Coordinator with the Maryland Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDA). Staci's career has focused on delivering person-centered services and supporting systems change and holistic provider transformation to increase employment and community life engagement outcomes.



Don Lavin is an independent consultant doing business as Strengths@Work, LLC. Lavin has 50 years of professional experience in the management and development of employment programs in the disability space. He is an active advocate in Minnesota's Employment First movement to advance public policies and adoption of practices leading to competitive integrated employment opportunities in support of Minnesotans with a wide range of disabilities. Lavin is an author of multiple books and publications about the delivery of customized and supported employment services. He has experience as an organizational consultant locally and internationally.



Elizabeth Wike is a Training Associate with the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Beth began her career working with people with disabilities at Easter Seals camps and has more than two decades of experience in the field. As a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, she has held various roles in the field of disability supports with a focus on community inclusion and vocational supports. Before joining the ICI, Beth coordinated the Island Disability Coalition, a community coalition that addresses the needs of people with disabilities and their families through a coalitional approach that fosters shared responsibility and creative problem solving. At the ICI, Beth develops and provides training and technical assistance on community life engagement to disability service providers.



Sherry Healey is a Community Living and Employment Specialist with the University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration. Sherry served as Human Resource Manager for NCR and AT&T Corporations for eight years, when her eldest son developed epilepsy and autism at the age of 2. She has since worked as a Job Coach, Job Developer, and Employment Services Director with Illinois I/DD service providers, and as the Statewide Employment First Manager with the Illinois Department of Human Services. She was among the first in Illinois to be recognized as a Certified Employment Support Professional with the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE). Sherry also volunteers as Board President of Community Access Naperville, a local nonprofit providing individuals with significant disabilities an opportunity to be active and engaged in their community.



Amy Gessert is a Training Associate with the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, where she supports provider transformation efforts in various states. She has served as an advocate for a decade at Missouri Protection and Advocacy Services, a federally mandated law firm that only served people with disabilities. In 2017 she worked with a local greenhouse to help develop a program to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities achieve their work goals, then began work at an agency that provided residential supports and case management services. Working from direct support to becoming the Assistant Executive Director for that agency, she was pivotal in transforming that agency into a robust provider of more well-rounded supports, including behavior and employment services. Amy also serves on the Board of Directors for the Missouri Chapter of the Association of People Supporting Employment (APSE). She believes that all people can achieve their dreams, given the right supports, and is driven to make those supports available to all.



Danielle Mahoehney is a community living and employment specialist at the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration. She provides training, technical assistance, and project coordination within the areas of community living and employment. She works with non-profit organizations and government agencies to advance competitive, integrated employment and community-based day support options for people with disabilities. Before joining the ICI staff in 2020, Danielle served the organization as a consultant on employment-focused projects. She also has worked as an advocate for The Arc Minnesota and as a direct support professional and frontline supervisor. She earned a master's degree in social work from the University of Minnesota and a bachelor's degree from the University of Notre Dame.



Jodi Blume has dedicated her career to social services, making an impact in various areas. Prior to joining Rise in 2016, she worked in diverse roles, including: Medical Social Work, Community-Based Residential Facilities, Domestic Abuse Advocacy, and Child Welfare. As the Senior Director of Community Integration & Life Enrichment Programs at Rise, Jodi provides leadership for multiple programs focused on life, enrichment, community integration, and employment exploration services for people with a range of disabilities and support needs.



Kate St. John has worked in the disability sector for 12 years at Opportunity Partners in Minnetonka. Starting out as a direct support staff, Kate spent her time planning enrichment activities and exploring the Twin Cities Metro area. From there, she learned the designated coordinator role. After supporting a caseload for a few years, Kate moved into management where she worked to streamline processes to better support staff in providing quality services. Now as the Director of Day Services at Opportunity Partners, Kate's main focus is supporting the team to continue to provide inspired service delivery and varied experiences within Day Services.



Margie Webb is a MS, CRC, Customized Employment Specialist for the State of MN, Vocational Rehabilitation Services. She has over 30 years' experience providing employment services to people with disabilities both in the private sector for 17 years and 17 years within VRS. She worked as a Program Director for a nonprofit Community Rehabilitation Program supervising as well as providing direct services in employment and independent living in southern MN as well as Dakota County. She developed work experience options for students at the Academy for the Blind in Fari-bault for seven years. She worked as a transition counselor with VRS for 9 years. She spent 2 working on a Pilot Project in Dakota County, Way to Work learning and practicing customized employment assisting individuals earning sub minimum wages obtain community, integrated employment. For the last 6 years she assisted adults and students in transition with significant impacts of disability to obtain competitive, integrated employment. In 2018, she completed certification in Discovery and Systematic Instruction through Marc Gold & Associates with an emphasis on Customized Employment. She has extensive training in the use of Person-Centered practices, Customized Employment, and Charting the LifeCourse tools. She is currently a member of ACRE. She participated in the curriculum development of MN Customized Employment model and currently teaches, trains, and mentors Customized Employment training in Minnesota.



Dominique Berg has been employed at STEP Inc. for the past 7 years, currently serving as the Director of Compliance & Employment. He is certified as an Employment Support Professional thru APSE and serves on the APSE Minnesota Board of Directors. He is also ACRE certified in Community Employment with an emphasis in Customized Employment. Employment for individuals with specific abilities has been a true passion in his life. Having 2 sons and 2 brothers involved with customized employment has proven that it can truly change a person's life. He is a firm believer that "All People Are Employable."



Karen Herman is privileged to lead the Udac team in the comprehensive transformation of the organization to achieve unparalleled excellence in establishing a Center of Excellence in Employment and Community Inclusion. She has a 32-year administrative and clinical career at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota where she led development of nationally recognized medical quality programs, creation of medical and allied health continuing education programs, fundraising programs and diversity and inclusion employee programs. Her experience in program development, leadership development and quality and process improvement methods is the foundation for creating sustainable change in community focused programs at Udac. Karen holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the College of St. Teresa and a Master of Science degree from the U of Minnesota.



Ann Dahl has over 38 years of experience working with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental health challenges. Ann's leadership is instrumental in guiding the Udac team through the transformation process and the many changes required to fully implement Competitive Integrated Employment and Meaningful Community Engagement strategies. She is the inspiration behind the creation of Udac's innovative business partnerships and business internships that expand employment - beyond traditional employment roles for people with disabilities. She leads the development of community activities that specifically address quality of life measures in program development and the attainment of individual personal outcomes. Her work includes mentoring employees to understand the many responsibilities, rules, and regulations in the disability field. Ann holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Minnesota, Duluth in Communication.



Lola Aune is an experienced leader with an extensive background in business ownership, administration, business development, and human resources. Her expertise extends to information technology and automated financial management platform implementation. Lola led Udac's transition from paper to electronic documentation. Her attention to detail and planning for ongoing data security ensures that confidentiality and data integrity are maintained while employees are providing services in the community. Her work included the complete revision of Udac's policies and procedures to be applicable in providing services in the community. She is currently leading the development of the progressive employee career skills/levels job description to address retention in the disability field. Lola is a Society for Human Resources Management Certified Professional.



Casey Lozon has 25 years of dedicated and creative work at Udac. Her background includes the development of several person-centered programs including a retirement from employment program and dementia friendly programming for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Casey is a leader in advocating for and implementing community inclusive design. Her passion for developing tools to support independence and to advance an individual's self-determination is instrumental in shaping their success and outcome achievement. She actively mentors employees to be successful in advancing competitive integrated employment and community inclusion. Casey has a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Superior in exercise science.



Jim Clapper is a co-founder of A-Team MN and has decades of experience advocating for disabled family members. Jim's son is employed in a special wage job in the community with center-based supports. Jim is also co-founder of MN Families and Advocacy Coalition and served on the board of directors of a DTH and Employment program.



Sue Hankner is a co-founder of A-Team MN and had many years of experience advocating for family members with disabilities. She has two sons who receive life enrichment services and supports in day programs. Sue has experience in lobbying elected officials at the local, state and federal level of government on education, wildlife management, electric utility and disability issues.

Closing Keynote 5/22/2024



Dupree Edwards is a self-advocate and behavioral support professional at the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration. He shares his passion for music as a teacher at Upstream Arts and serves on the board of The Arc Minnesota. In all of his work he passionately advocates for the rights and inclusion of individuals with disabilities.



Olivia Lape serves as the Peer-to-Peer Mentor Program Manager at The Arc Minnesota, overseeing a program dedicated to providing support and guidance to individuals navigating employment options and competitive integrated employment (CIE).