

HOPE HAVEN RECEIVES NATIONAL APSE AWARD



Presenting and receiving the National APSE Award for the Best Practices Award is (L-R) Allison Wohl, APSE Executive Director; Rachel Riphagen, Area Supervisor of My Choice Employment; Toni Tewes, Manager of My Choice Employment and Derek Nord, National APSE Board President.

At the recent Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE) national conference held in Portland, OR, My Choice Employment Services of Hope Haven won the national Best Practices Award. This award recognizes an organization for outstanding accomplishments in promoting state of the art practices in Employment First. Dr. SueAnn Morrow from Mount Pleasant, IA nominated My Choice Employment Services on behalf of Iowa APSE

As part of the continual search for new and better ways to provide employment services, Hope Haven became involved in the Employment First movement in 2012. Hope Haven, which serves approximately 1700 children and adults with a wide array of community living, mental health & recovery and employment services; initiated the My Choice Employment Services program in 2013 with the primary focus on community integrated employment while serving a nine county area in northwest Iowa. Since September of 2013, My Choice Employment Service has assisted 184 individuals to obtain community integrated employment in 267 different jobs. These jobs were provided by 136 businesses in 21 communities in northwest Iowa.

My Choice Employment Services recognizes in order to provide high quality services it must have distinguished staff. Both the Program Manager, Toni Tewes and Rachel Riphagen, an Area Supervisor, are Certified Employment Support Professionals as well as five other Employment Specialists at Hope Haven.

Dr. SueAnn Morrow, the Employment Specialist with the Money Follows the Person program, announced her support of the My Choice Employment Services program: "My Choice Employment Services did it right. They communicated the need for the change in the direction of traditional services. They trained their staff, they brought people on board, they had one focus – integrated employment- and they articulated this focus through the agency's strategic plan." Mike and Beth Lamb of the Lakes Area also recognized the significance of My Choice Employment Services for their son: "We are very thankful to have been introduced to My Choice Employment. Our son Brandon feels that he has an important position and is a part of the community."

Hope Haven has been a leader in providing high quality services and its commitment to Employment First is recognized by many of its peers. Sherry Becker, the Executive Director of NIVC Services Inc of Mason City, IA offered her support: "Hope Haven is not only an advocate and leader for people with disabilities, but this organization serves as a leader for other providers. Hope Haven is always available to share lessons learned and resources for others." Amy Desenberg-Wines the Director of the Iowa Coalition for Integration and Employment also recommended My Choice for the APSE Best Practices Award by stating: "Hope Haven has been a trailblazer in Iowa for other providers and they have helped lay a foundation that not only demonstrates that providers can successfully shift their employment service approach, but that anyone who wants to work in the community can be successful with the right supports."

Scott Witte the Director of Partnership in Service Development at Hope Haven, serves on the Iowa APSE Board. Toni Tewes and Rachel Riphagen both on staff at Hope Haven, are two members of the training unit developed by Iowa APSE to deliver the Community Employment Training Service Model throughout the state of Iowa.