



"The People Company"

Serving Persons with Special Needs Since 1998

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From the Director's Desk ~

I seem to recall that when I was young we had snow in winter. Huge drifts over my head and days without school.

Over the years the climate seems to have changed. Life is much different now. People are connected in ways we could not even imagine back then. Connecting with others electronically has become a matter of convenience for most of us who have real person to person connections. However, for many with disabilities the person to person connections are still difficult to establish. At AmeriServe International we strive to ensure people make connections the old fashion way, face to face. That is why we are the "People Company"

As for the snow drifts... I was much shorter then.

Tom Hoff

The Connector

Choice ~ Respect ~ Participation ~ Presence

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AmeriServe International, Inc.

Making life better tomorrow because of what is done today.

Advocating for Good Health

While searching the internet for resources recently I came upon the website for the Center for Disabilities and Development (CDD) associated with the University of Iowa Healthcare System. The organization serves as a resource to people of all ages who have disabilities in the state of Iowa as well as several neighboring states. The CDD provides a myriad of services, including, but not limited to clinical and consultation services, research, training and advocacy programs and referral services for those looking for used equipment.

An article in one of their quarterly newsletters featured a story about the health of people with disabilities who participate

in Special Olympics. When thinking about the Olympics most people tend to think that the people who participate represent the healthiest of our population. While that notion may hold true for athletes of the Olympics, it does not hold true for those athletes who participate in the Special Olympics.

The article goes on to explain that in 1996 a group of people began talking about the health problems of the some of the athletes competing in Special Olympics. Health problems identified as hindering the performance of the athletes were:

- Improper support for feet
- Pain from untreated dental cavities
- Poor vision



This group of concerned individuals decided to do something. They began to offer health-related screenings at Special Olympic events, inviting athletes to have their vision and teeth checked in-between sporting events by volunteer health care professionals. From these beginnings, the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® initiative was born and has grown to include six different areas:

- Fit Feet®

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What We Do

Home and Community Based Services (HCBS)

Habilitation, Respite, Consumer Directed Attendant Care, Group homes

Day Treatment

Adult Day Habilitation and Community Integration Services

Residential Support

Supported Community Living, Specialized Living Arrangements

Advocating for Good Health con't.

- Opening Eyes®
- Special Smiles®
- FUNfitness®
- Healthy Hearing®
- Health Promotion®

The CDD article goes on to explain that the Healthy Athletes Screening program exposed the fact that some people with disabilities are not receiving adequate health care. It suggests that many are either slipping through the cracks or the health care system doesn't provide the chance for routine health care.

One survey of doctors and dentists reported a general lack of training in disabilities. Nearly 100% of the

medical and dental schools surveyed said they would provide training on the treatment of people with disabilities, but needed a good program. The Healthy Athletes program has turned out to be that "good program" the schools were looking for. Train the Trainer programs are now held at Special Olympics Games throughout the country, where participating health care providers can learn about the health care needs and abilities of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The first National Special Olympics Games was held in Ames, Iowa in July of 2006, at which time athletes were screened for healthy weight, bone health, respiratory volumes and skin lesions. In addition, educational programs were provided to athletes on nutrition, tobacco avoidance and sun

safety.

As advocates for people with disabilities we have a responsibility to advocate for their good health. The Healthy Athletes® Health Promotion is an outstanding example of what can be accomplished on behalf of people with disabilities on a nation-wide and world-wide basis. All people deserve the best "competitive" advantage in life, whether or not they compete in sports. Take a few minutes to think about how you can advocate for the good health of those people to whom you have pledged your support.

Suzette Blakestad
CSC Specialist

Grant Makes Life Easier!

Recently a grant from The Foundation for the Challenged was awarded to Jackie to build a ramp for his home. The Foundation for the Challenged, headquartered in Dublin, Ohio, is a non-profit corporation whose goal is to "bring forth solutions that improve the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities."

Because of mobility issues, entering and exiting his home was challenging for Jackie, and assistance was required to do so safely. Thanks to this grant, Jackie and his housemates, Billie and John, are able to walk in and out of their home independently and without fear of falling. The three men are thankful to The Foundation for the grant that allows them more freedom and independence.

For information about the services available through The Foundation for the Challenged you can access their website at www.fcoho.org.

Anna Pruet
Client Services Coordinator



Making a Difference

AmeriServe International, Inc. carefully selects all personnel to ensure that they possess beliefs, experiences, skills, and knowledge that will assist persons with special needs in exercising a quality of life of their choice. If you or someone you know is interested in doing the right things, in the right way, for the right reasons, at the right times, we are looking for the right people.

Please call **712-322-0272** to find out how you can make a difference.

The Dignity of the “Struggle” and Finding One’s Own Way

In previous articles we tried to stimulate readers to think differently about how supports to people with disabilities are delivered and the manner in which those supports are provided. The gap between how we as helpers perceive those supports and how the person receiving them perceive them is not one that gets much attention.

A support provider may say they assisted the person with meal preparation. The person being supported may say they cooked for them. This may be an indicator that too much help may have been provided. Most certainly not enough recognition of the person’s role was given to make them feel as though they made a contribution to the effort.

This enabling of dependence is a common trait among caring people. It is in the heart and sole of many people who choose to support others to be there for them and to rescue them from their struggle with life’s daily issues. It is this very human kindness that often gets in the way of independence. It is human nature to assist those who are struggling. It is often perceived as like helping a little old lady across the street or stopping to assist someone change a flat tire. However when supporting people who’s struggle for independence has been life long there is definitely a point when we should consider the impact on the person’s dignity, self direction and

personal responsibility. We should not let our need to assist others become the thing that causes dependence.

Each of us has a responsibility to see to our own basic needs. We each have our own way of dealing with the struggle to do so. We seek out assistance when needed and do not seek it when we don’t need or want it. We reserve the right to direct the amount and how that assistance is provided. Yet in our efforts to assist others we often do not offer the same courtesy. This is particularly true of those who have disabilities.

Those who require support to ensure their needs are met do not abdicate the responsibility to meet them to the person assisting. On the contrary, it is the role of the support person to ensure that the individual being assisted is in a role of being the one who is actually meeting that responsibility and provide only the amount and type of support needed and wanted. It is ok to let them struggle in the process. There is much to learn from the struggle and often a person will find their own way to meet their needs and it may work better than the way we would do it for them. There much more to be gained than lost.

What is at risk of being lost is the learning and dignity that goes with the struggle. When too much assistance is provided we develop a sense of learned helplessness and dependence on others. Many people with disabilities have had a

life full of kind hearted people who have seen it as their role to remove the struggle and make life easier. The resulting dependence perpetuates the perceived need for support and diminishes the perception of self reliance and self direction.

What is to be gained is dignity respect and self direction is the dignity of accomplishment in spite of the struggle. Learning comes from the effort to accomplish something. If I have to find my way to a place I have never been, I learn how to get there. If someone takes me I have difficulty finding it again with out there help. I may get lost and there is no dignity in being lost. The same is true for assisting people to accomplish their needs and wants. If we take them there they will be depend on us to take them again. In a joint effort between both will learn and each will find their own way. The helper will find the way to assist and the person will find their own way doing things. .If together they are involved in the struggle they both learn and gain abilities.

At AmeriServe International we enter into life’s struggles freely in close association with those we serve. Our joint efforts help people find their own way to a lifestyle of dignity and value for the person being supported and for those who support them.





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Support Options

1. In-home Support—training to increase self-help, socialization, and adaptive skills within the home and community.
2. Day Treatment— specialized sensory-motor, cognitive, communicative, social, interaction and behavioral support.
3. Residential— designed to maximize consumer successes through the use of habilitative therapies, special developmental skills, participative enhancement, and sensory-motor development in the group home or specialized living setting.

Call for more information today!

AmeriServe International, Inc. ~ 712-322-0272



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