



Crystal Run Village, Inc.

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News

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Simply the Best Citizens

The U.S. Senate has designated National Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) Recognition Week -- September 13-19, 2009 -- to honor and recognize the significant contributions DSPs make in our communities. Direct Support Professionals are the core staff at human service agencies like Crystal Run Village, Inc., New Hope Community, Occupations, Inc., Rehabilitative Support Services, Inspire, AHRC and Sullivan ARC. DSPs assist people with intellectual disabilities, Autism, spectrum disorders, mental illness and other disabilities living in community group homes and apartments by promoting independence and inclusion.

DSPs are quality citizens whose good work makes it possible for people with disabilities to master life to the full extent of their abilities, to become good neighbors and valued members of their communities. DSPs are highly trained in health practices, issues relating to human development and behavior and, regulatory compliance. They are people of integrity and compassion and, they know how to treat others with dignity and respect. Many of the people serviced do not have active family members and this too is a void filled by DSPs.

Few people are drawn to work as a DSP due, in part, to low wages and the high emotional and sometimes physical demands of the occupation. Living on wages tied into Medicaid funding, community residential DSPs attempt to support their families on an average of \$9.85 an hour. The average U.S. worker (in a non-supervisory role) earns \$18.00 an hour. That represents a 45 percent disparity! Presently the starting wage at Crystal Run Village, Inc. is \$10.65.

The individuals DSPs support feel the discouraging impact of high turnover personally. The relationships and friendships DSPs establish are critical to the well-being of those receiving supports, so frequent DSP turnover is internalized as rejection and often causes depression. Trust is fractured. Turnover causes staff shortages, which results in the cancellation of much anticipated programs, activities and events. Fatigued, yet loyal staff end up working overtime, sacrificing personal time with their own families.

Crystal Run Village, Inc. is an independent non-profit provider of community-based programs for more than 800 adults and children with intellectual and psychological disabilities and their families. With an operating budget of approximately \$38-million and 840 staff people, the agency provides support in the form of housing, programs for learning and self expression, opportunities for employment, community inclusion and recreation - all for the purpose of an individual's greater independence and contribution as a citizen. The human services agency has been headquartered in Middletown since 1959.

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