

Laurie Schindler Appointed to the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment

Laurie Schindler has worked at Morningside since 1999 when she began as a part time job coach. She is now Vice President Employment Services/ Chief Operating Officer. Those who know Laurie aren't surprised at her meteoric rise in the organization. She is a competitive, driven person who strives to do her best for the clients she serves. Laurie's job prior to working at Morningside was as an instructional assistant in a special education classroom at Horizons Elementary School in a classroom specializing in working with children experiencing autism. So she was not only exposed to instructing individuals with disabilities but knowledgeable in working with a special population in the special education setting prior to coming to Morningside. A neighbor who had a son supported by Morningside suggested she apply for a job there. Within a couple weeks, Laurie's abilities and work ethic were evident as she quickly went from part-time to full-time. She said "I remember sitting at my desk and thinking I landed my dream job. I get emotional just thinking about that moment." She continued "I also remember listening to my co-workers strategize around supporting a person and successes they wanted for this person in their job and knew this was an agency that walked the walk, talked the talk and totally believes in the mission as they work together for positive outcomes for people."



Laurie Schindler, VP Employment Services

Laurie has always loved to teach and instruct people and is a stickler for process so when Morningside wanted someone to focus on state supported employment she answered the call. Governor Locke signed an executive order allowing state agencies to hire individuals with significant disabilities that wouldn't count against FTE levels, yet encouraged agencies to hire if it was within allocated budget amounts. State agencies partnered with Morningside to conduct worksite analysis and a process for selection of individuals with disabilities that would be suitable for the identified job. Laurie met with dozens of state agencies individually and in groups to explain the process and work to eventually hire individuals. Many of those state employees with developmental disabilities are still employed today after many years of employment.

After several years serving as a Program Manager, she then became the agency wide Director for Training and Quality. Her reputation for teaching led her to work during the winter quarter at Highline Community College's Employment Professional Certificate Program teaching Job Development and Marketing. This program between Highline, state agencies and WISE is designed to increase the competence of employment professionals. Laurie has been training professionals in this capacity for eight years.

Laurie was appointed to her current position as Vice President Employment Services/COO in 2018, having proven herself a capable leader of professionals supporting individuals working in the community. She has always been called upon to share her knowledge and passion as evidenced by her work with the Washington State Chapter of APSE (Association of People Supporting Employment First) and recently being elected to serve on the board of the Community Employment Alliance (CEA). She is excited to be a part of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment, a gubernatorial appointed position. Laurie said her decision to join the Governor's Committee was motivated by the desire to ensure that the voice of employment services was heard on the committee and throughout the state as she has seen firsthand the life changing benefits of a job for people with disabilities. Congratulations Laurie on this honor and additional opportunity to serve the disability community throughout the state!

The Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) promotes equality, opportunity, independence and full participation in life for people with disabilities. Its members represent a wide range of constituent groups, geographical perspectives, ethnic origins and cultural heritage. As a group they: **Advise** Governor Inslee, the legislature and state agencies on policies that affect people with disabilities; **Monitor** legislation to assure equal opportunity and access for employment, education, healthcare and public services; **Promote** understanding of the needs and potential of people with disabilities, offering information and awareness training to the public; **Recognize employers** who demonstrate leadership in employing people with disabilities; **Provide training** and technical assistance to the business community to promote employment opportunities and awareness of disability issues; **Other:** Conduct their activities in barrier-free environments and use appropriate auxiliary aids and services to ensure effective communication.

Rotary Partners for Work

Partners for Work was developed by the Auburn Rotary Club in 2003 (Rotary District 5030) and has expanded throughout Washington as a viable program that assists employers in gaining access to a talented and untapped workforce. The target population is people who are over 18 years of age who have developmental disabilities and want to work. Rotarians are often the top people in their companies and play a key networking and leadership role in helping open the door towards paid work.

Representative Laurie Dolan (D – 22nd Legislative District) is a lifelong resident of Washington. She grew up in Spokane and after college worked there as a teacher and administrator for Spokane Public Schools, where she became familiar with individuals with disabilities interning as greeters at the Rotary Club of Spokane and suggested to the Olympia Rotary Club, after she became a member of the club, that they should consider Partners for Work. Laurie who has extensive experience in special education knows the importance of good transition from high school to the adult world of work and that interning as a greeter can lead to jobs. The Club's Board of Directors agreed and they met with Morningside staff to lay out the duties of the volunteer position.

Terrance Hanson was in his final year of high school and ready to transition to work. He is a very friendly person who loves theater and movies. As the Partners for Work Club Volunteer, he was responsible for scanning badges for attendance purposes and setting up and tearing down equipment for meetings. Through these activities, he gained and built skills related to prioritization and meeting planning. He also greeted members of Rotary Club of Olympia, which gave him a chance to hone his skills working with others. Several club members commented on how well he did and enjoyed having him at the meetings. Terrance said that he loved his experience and by being a greeter at the luncheons he became more confident in speaking. He felt the experience helped him with his interview at Walmart where he was hired on the spot as an overnight stocker!

Thank you Rotary Club of Olympia for your adoption of the program and thank you Representative Laurie Dolan for suggesting the club begin this important program assisting individuals with developmental disabilities on their path to employment in the community. Terrance, thank you for being the first person, a pioneer so to speak, in developing this volunteer opportunity and we wish you all the best in your new job!



(L-R) Terrance Hanson, volunteer;
Dan Lehuta Club President



Victoria

Project SEARCH: 10 Years of Success

In partnership with the Olympia School District and The Evergreen State College, Morningside recently celebrated 10 years of the Project SEARCH transition program. Many graduates returned to the campus to celebrate the program's success. Each of the partner organizations expressed gratitude for the positive relationships that have sustained the program. Since the program's launch in September of 2009, it has been instrumental in preparing 75 young adults for competitive employment, most of whom became successfully employed in the community either during or after their Project SEARCH school year. Through the intensive internships they worked on the Evergreen State College campus, interns have gained a cumulative total of over 36,000 hours of job training which has allowed them to explore work environments, hone soft skills and gain amazing job skills. The program has produced many wonderful success stories and this year was no different in that regard.

The 2018-19 school year began as it normally does for new Project SEARCH interns at The Evergreen State College. Time was spent learning to independently navigate campus, use public transportation, get to know each other and most importantly, identify internship interests. Each year there is a diverse range of vocational goals and interests among the Project SEARCH cohort. While some interns are very specific about which internships they are open to experiencing, others are game for exploration in a wide spectrum of jobs.

Victoria M was such an intern, listing no fewer than a dozen internship sites she was interested in trying. In mid-September, Victoria interviewed for an internship at Aramark's Einstein Bros Bagels, a hip little restaurant on campus that serves great coffee and bagels as well as a full menu of breakfast and lunch options. Victoria had a great interview and began an internship at Einstein's before the end of the month. What Victoria didn't know at the time was that this was to be her one and only internship at Project SEARCH because she was offered a permanent position at Einstein's just a few weeks after her internship began!

Victoria came to Project SEARCH directly from Capitol High School and had a few months of paid employment experience as a cashier at Target. She had firm goals which included working and living on her own. We are proud of Victoria for her successful employment at Einstein's and excited to add that she will be moving into her own residence this summer. With her determination, outgoing personality and great work ethic we know she'll go far!