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Employment journey leads to job and accolades

Linda Baker has had an amazing employment journey.

She was referred to Carey Services for Employment Services by Vocational Rehabilitation in 2011. Through the partnership of Vocational Rehabilitation and Carey Services' Employment Services Department, Linda was able to receive a variety of services including job readiness training, interviewing assistance, and job placement.

Despite some setbacks along the way, Linda preserved and demonstrated great determination to find employment. When an opportunity came open at Northwood Manor Senior Living Community in Marion, Linda applied, interviewed, and was selected as a housekeeper.

Linda used her opportunity to grow professionally and personally thanks to the increased self-confidence she experienced as a result of her work. Linda takes great pride in what she does and has worked extremely hard in building rapport with staff and residents of Northwood Manor. Linda has developed great relationships with her co-workers that have grown into an excellent network of natural supports.

Kevin Planck, Northwood Manor's executive director, said Linda seemed to struggle with anxiety and self-confidence when she started, but during her employment she has gained self-assurance and self-reliance that match her abilities.

"Linda now has the self-esteem to 'take on' her duties and address things as they come her way," Planck said. "The fact that Linda can now trust co-workers and customers is a huge achievement."

Linda overheard a supervisor say he was craving a butterscotch pie, and the next day Linda placed a butterscotch pie on his desk, Planck said. When residents had a planned July 4th cookout, Linda showed up on her day off and brought in a beautiful watermelon basket filled with fresh fruit went from table to table serving it to residents.

"Her supervisor received numerous compliments about Linda's gesture and they wanted to make sure she we recognized for it," Planck said. "Linda's work has become even better than when she first started."

In another example of Linda's attention to detail, Planck said the company's regional vice president toured the building and commented on how the building had the cleanest elevator tracks he had seen, which was one thing he liked to emphasize. Planck said the vice president sent a picture to other properties as an example of his expectations.

It was just something Linda started doing when she was hired and something she continues to check daily, Planck said.

Linda's employment journey has come full circle. She recently received the annual IN-APSE Personal Achievement Award at the state conference. IN-APSE is a state-level organization dedicated to helping people with disabilities find employment and is an affiliate of the national Association of People Seeking Employment First.

Northwood Manor nominated Linda for the state award. With the state recognition, she also has been nominated for a national-level APSE Personal Achievement Award. Winners will be announced at the National APSE Conference June 20-22 in Portland, Oregon.

"I cannot express our satisfaction with Linda enough," Planck said. "She excels in her duties and has come a long way with her personal challenges. If it was not a conflict of interest, I would have hired her months ago to clean my own home. She is a trusted and valued member of Northwood Manor's team."