

## Minnesota APSE 2010

Bob Niemiec

**E**mployment: *Everybody, Everywhere* is the theme of the 2010 Minnesota APSE Conference to be held at the Earle Brown Heritage Center on Monday, May 17, 2010. The world of employment for people with disabilities is expanding and more than ever, we know that employment is possible for anybody who wants to earn a living. We also know that employment is possible anywhere, from large cities to small, rural communities. Employment First movements, many of which have been inspired by the efforts in Minnesota, are sprouting up in states ranging from Nevada to Rhode Island. Based on one simple concept, that employment should be the first and preferred outcome for people with disabilities, groups of people throughout the country are organizing to make employment a reality.

The 2010 MNAPSE Conference will build on the momentum from the 2009 conference as well as the recent Statewide Disability and Employment Conference that was held in December of 2009. Our featured speakers are Jim Meehan, Executive Director of KFI in northern Maine, and Russell Sickles, Supported Employment Manager of Job Squad Inc. in Bridgeport, West Virginia. Both Jim and Russell have proven that competitive employment is possible in small towns and in states that have been hit hard by the recession. Both Jim and Russell are



Jim Meehan

Jim led KFI, a northern Maine non-profit agency in transforming itself into a progressive, cutting edge

advocates and practitioners of individualized community-based employment for people with disabilities. Both believe in using a customized approach to assist individual job seekers increase their own economic prosperity as well as the prosperity of their communities.

organization providing supports built around individual interests rather than program requirements. One of Jim's proudest achievements is the elimination of all programs. KFI assists people with disabilities to live in their own apartments or homes (KFI owns no property); find individual community jobs for minimum wage or greater; enjoy the activities and resources of the community (nothing special or separate). Jim will focus on leadership and organizational capacity to support community-based services.

Russell leads a team of employment professionals that have changed the discussion about disabilities and employment into one of economic development. Russell is the principle author Job Squad's Community Economic Development Blog, [www.jobsquadinc.blogspot.com](http://www.jobsquadinc.blogspot.com). They are proving to the community, the state of West Virginia, and the rest of the country that anything is possible in the employment and economic prosperity of people with disabilities when innovative and proven methods are put into practice. They have worked with people to find quality jobs, start their own businesses, utilize Social Security Work Incentives, and more. Russell will share some stories of how these practices, including the ever present questions about braiding and blending funding, resulted in a positive outcome for the people they support.



Russell Sickles

Join Jim, Russell, Laura Owens and your Minnesota APSE colleagues as we come together to learn from each other and engage in discussions that will forge an action plan for disability employment policy and practice in Minnesota – an action plan that will make employment a reality for everybody, everywhere.

## Minnesota APSE Board

### Heidi Maghan, President

president@mnapse.org  
hmaghan@kaposia.com  
763.231.3570

### Jolene Thibedeau Boyd, Vice President

vp@mnapse.org  
jolenet@cipmn.org  
952.851.6186

### Georgette Wondolkowski, Secretary

gwondolkowski@choiceunlimited.org  
218.724.5869

## Board Members at Large:

Dawn Bacon  
dawn.bacon@co.ramsey.mn.us  
612.266.4194

Gil Bessard  
gbessard@tasksunlimited.org  
612.871.3320

Don Lavin  
dlavin@rise.org  
763.783.2815

Mary Morehouse  
maryt.morehouse@charter.net

Bob Niemiec  
bniemiec@griffinhammis.com

Jeffrey Nurick  
jnadvocate@msn.com

Steve Piekarski  
stevepiekarski@picsweb.org  
952.854.6364 x10

Andrea Zuber  
andrea.zuber@co.ramsey.mn.us  
651.266.4261

## National APSE Representatives in Minnesota

Jon Alexander, National Board  
jalexander@kaposia.com  
651.789.2807

Becky Brink, Delegates' Chair  
bbrink@goodwilleasterseals.org  
651.379.591

# A Word from the President

This past year I have had the privilege of representing all of you as the President of MN APSE. It has been a wonderful, busy year, full of lots of work from a bunch of dedicated folks. What you need to understand is that it takes all of us to keep a grassroots movement like MN APSE going. We are a membership-based organization, responsible to our members.

Much is happening in MN and across the nation to move employment for individuals with disabilities forward. MN APSE has been a driving force behind this. We have put our words into action and are making a difference. Employment is a key factor in survival. In feeling good about ourselves. About having a purpose in life. We have to keep moving. This is where we need you. I know, I can hear you already, "I'm already too busy, doing too much." Well, we all are. It is the new reality in our world. I want to challenge you to seriously think about joining a committee, becoming a board member or just becoming more active in MN APSE. You might not even have to leave your desk! There are many behind-the-scene things we need help with. Are you good at organizing...do you like to write articles...are you good with graphics? The list goes on and on. We all have talents and are passionate about something related to supporting people with disabilities or we would not even be connected to APSE. Find a quiet moment, stop and think, How can I use my talents to keep moving APSE forward? Then move on it.



If you have questions about how you can get involved, please feel free to contact any of the board members and we will be happy to speak with you. I look forward to hearing from you about how you can be more involved in MN APSE, even from your own corner of Minnesota!

Heidi Maghan  
President MN APSE  
763-231-3570  
president@mnapse.org

## Yes, We Did - Minnesota APSE Annual Conference

### Steve Piekarski

In May of 2009, over 100 people attended the MN APSE Annual Conference at the Earle Brown Center in Brooklyn Center. The attendees were comprised of family member, self advocates, educators and direct support professionals and they gathered to be inspired, share knowledge, and learn about emerging practices aimed at achieving integrated employment for all persons with disabilities.

## Yes, We Did *continued from page 2*

The day opened with a keynote presentation from Jennifer Fox, an international award winning speaker and leader of the Strengths Movement. Ms. Fox gave the audience practical advice on how to join together to transform our communities into learning environments where all children are focused on discovering their strengths and ultimately finding success.



the American Dream they must have the opportunity to gain meaningful employment. Because the power of meaningful work continues to be the key element to one's ability to achieve economic prosperity, social connections and individual growth and development. As Charlotte Perkins Gilman once stated "The first duty of a human being is to assume the right functional relationship to society -- more briefly, to find your real job, and do it."

Besides discovering our strengths the attendees had numerous breakout sessions on such topics as Customized Employment, Evidence Based Practices, Job Development, Mn Employment First Coalition, and many others. All the sessions continued to empower participants to make employment the first option for all persons with disabilities.

On May 17th 2010 Mn APSE will hold its annual conference at the Earle Brown Heritage Center in Brooklyn Center. To learn more about Mn APSE go to [www.mnapse.org](http://www.mnapse.org) or if you want to read more about Employment First go to [www.mnapse.org/employment-first](http://www.mnapse.org/employment-first)

As the day ended attendees were left with the message that in order to for persons with disabilities to achieve

# Update from National APSE

# APSE

ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT.  
CONNECTING PEOPLE.

Jon Alexander, APSE Board of Directors

### Annual Conference

APSE held its 20th annual conference in June 2009 and had 425 attendees. The conference received excellent reviews. Kate Adamson, Martha Atilas, and James Salzano were the keynote speakers. The highlight of the conference for many was the closing session. Rather than have a speaker, APSE facilitated a "Community Conversation." Cesilee Coulson and Wendy Quarles led the session through a series of questions that were answered and recorded by the participants. Each person was finally asked "what is your next bold move?" which we hope will lead to action across the country that leads to advancing employment of people with disabilities.

### Strategic Planning

The Board of Directors met in November and reviewed and updated the Strategic Plan. The three goals continue to be: 1. Secure a major infrastructure grant. 2. Create a comprehensive public policy strategy. 3. Redesign the national conference to better meet the needs of our membership. For more information refer to the report on the APSE Website.

### By-law Changes

The Delegate Council reviewed and made recommendations to the Board regarding some proposed by-law changes. Most of these changes were technical in nature, but some of the highlights included allowing all corporate members to vote as well as run for state and national board positions, term limits for board members, and tightening the reporting requirements of the state chapters.



**The 21st Annual National APSE Conference will be held June 8-10, 2010 in Atlanta, Georgia.**

# Be an Employer for People of All Abilities

Derek Nord

**A**s a project coordinator at a major university I have the opportunity to do many exciting things, from writing curriculum, to training staff, to supervising others. One of the most important things I do is supervise people with disabilities.

Contrary to what many employers often think, a person with a disability presents no more of a challenge to a supervisor than any other employee. This “deficit” way of thinking has created an added barrier to employment for people with disabilities for too long. This barrier is best illustrated when comparing employment rates of those with disabilities to those of people who don’t identify as having a disability. When you look at the percentage of people “participating in the labor force” in October of 2009, 21.7% of people with disabilities are employed or actively seeking employment, while 70.5% of people without disabilities are doing the same. I see this gap in workforce participation as an indicator of how our communities and employers remain focused too heavily on the “dis” in disability. When we do this we overlook the fact that each individual with or without a disability brings their own unique skill set to a work environment and that as employers it is incumbent upon us to direct and enhance that skill set through work.

So how does an employer make a difference and decrease the gap in workforce participation?

First, get over the fear that hiring a person with a disability creates more work, greater liability or will cost the company a lot of extra money to accommodate.

I have found no difference in the amount of work I do as a supervisor in developing an employee with or without a disability. You may need to make an accommodation, but remember, the majority of these accommodations cost little or nothing and often improve how all team members view their employer.

*I see this gap in workforce participation as an indicator of how our communities and employers remain focused too heavily on the “dis” in disability.*

Employers also need to get past the question, “What do I do if the employee with a disability needs additional support?” This question is really more about the supervisor’s needs than about the person with a disability. It often stems from the supervisor’s discomfort around communicating the additional needs for support a person may have, regardless of disability. Don’t dismiss the possibility of a potentially great employee because you are uncomfortable talking and learning about one’s job needs. Remember

the individual you are talking to has likely encountered questions before and will often be candid about their additional desires. That is, if they have any. After all, the individual with a disability wants to succeed in landing and keeping a job. If, as a supervisor, you look at these conversations as your opportunity to learn, you will become a better supervisor for everyone on your team.

## News From the Training Committee

Chris Davies

“**Everybody means everybody.**” This prolific phrase is one that has been uttered by some of the greatest minds in supported employment. This was also the phrase that sparked our brainstorming session at our last training committee meeting. The result of the brainstorm was a powerful slogan for next year’s conference. Our slogan for the May 17, 2010 conference is **“Employment: Everybody, Everywhere.”** “Everybody” speaks for itself, “everywhere” speaks to the fact that we are doing things a little differently this year by bringing in two nationally known speakers that are known for cutting edge employment practices in rural areas. Jim Meehan

and Russell Sickles hail from Main and West Virginia, respectively.

Mr. Meehan is the director of KFI (Katahdin Friends Inc.) and will provide our keynote address as well as an extended breakout session around leadership in the field of supported employment. KFI has a forty year tradition of providing respectful, forward thinking, community based supports to people with and without disabilities.

Mr. Sickles is the Manager of Community and Economic Development for Job Squad Inc. He will provide a dynamic extended breakout session for participants in the job

development track. Job Squad Inc. is an organization that touts itself for “changing lives” through employment.

In addition to these great sessions, we will have a general session in which we have the opportunity to develop an

action plan for Minnesota. We are very excited about the 2010 conference and particularly view it as a good opportunity to attract participants from outstate. After all, Minnesota means Minnesota and Everybody means Everybody. We plan to see you May 17th!

## MN APSE Members Travel to Iowa for the First Employment First Summit

Georgette Wondolkowski

**O**n October 22nd Iowa APSE held their first Employment First Summit. By request, five members of MN APSE attended and assisted in facilitating, recording and participating in the luncheon panel. The MN APSE members involved included Heidi Maghan, Jon Alexander, Bob Niemiec, Carol Rydell and myself. As participants in the Minnesota Employment First movement these individuals were able to share their own experiences.

Iowa APSE began months ago with the premise that “Iowans with disabilities, as their peers without disabilities, possess the right and responsibility to work. Iowans with disabilities, as their peers without disabilities, have the opportunities to live their life to the fullest and contribute toward their own self-sufficiency.” From there they conducted 14 focus groups around the state leading up to the summit. From these groups five strategic outcomes were generated. These outcomes are:

- ❖ Policies and Funding dollars are aligned with Employment First.

- ❖ Individuals with disabilities and family members advocate for Employment First and participate in the design of employment services and supports.
- ❖ Businesses influence businesses to create employment opportunities.
- ❖ Strong partnerships remove barriers to employment outcomes.
- ❖ Best practice models drive successful post secondary outcomes for working, learning and living.

The Summit was attended by key stakeholders from throughout the state. The focus of the day was to address each outcome with the questions, Where are we going? and How do we get there? Bob Niemiec participated in the panel discussion, including Employment First participants from other states. The afternoon was devoted to action teams setting the course of action for the future.

## The Key to Remaining Relevant: Strategic Planning and Initiatives

Jolene Thibedeau Boyd, MN APSE Vice President

*“Success is the sum of small efforts,  
repeated day in and day out.”*  
-Robert Collier

**W**hile serving as an officer for MN APSE, I have learned a couple of important strategies for maintaining a sense of relevance as an organization in a world that seems less predictable. First, the importance of engaging the group in a strategic

planning process on an on-going basis cannot be underestimated. Second, establishing clear, workable objectives for the group to focus on each year allows members to remain actively engaged and focused on the mission on the organization. Finally, holding members accountable for the initiatives established by the organization ensures that goals are achieved (or modified if needed) and outcomes are shared with the organization and its membership. As Robert Collier stated, “Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.”

## The Key to Remaining Relevant *continued from page 5*

To demonstrate what can be accomplished by a relatively small but passionate group of individuals, below are just a few of the initiatives achieved by the various committees of MN APSE over the past year:

- ✧ Held a successful state conference in May 2009 that included national speakers and a keynote by Jennifer Fox—our largest conference attendance to date!
- ✧ Hosted Summit 2 (11/2008)
- ✧ Developed and published Summit 2 Report: “The Scorecard” (collaboratively with Pathways to Employment-DEED)
- ✧ Influenced APSE (national) strategic plan and national conference

- ✧ Worked with APSE to develop a white paper on Employment First
- ✧ Participation on numerous employment groups
- ✧ Connected with other organizations through grant process
- ✧ Greater diversity on MN APSE Board

As we continue to move forward toward ensuring that employment is the first option for all working-aged adults, MN APSE has established the following initiatives for the upcoming year (lists include highlights—contact vp@mnapse.org for a complete list of initiatives established at our Strategic Planning session.)

MN APSE Committees	Initiatives (lists are not all-inclusive)
<b>Employment First Coalition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☆ Expand and diversify the membership of the Employment First Coalition</li> <li>☆ Work collaboratively to organize and host Employment Summit 3</li> <li>☆ Support policy and training initiatives around employment of people with disabilities</li> </ul>
<b>Training Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☆ Plan and hold 2010 Annual Conference – Scheduled for 5/17/10</li> <li>☆ Focus on regional topics and trainings</li> <li>☆ Support collaborative training initiatives related to employment of people with disabilities</li> </ul>
<b>Building a Strong &amp; Viable Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☆ Participate in Disability Mentoring Day</li> <li>☆ Nominate individuals &amp; associations for employment-related awards</li> <li>☆ Develop technology (web) to connect training to MN APSE members</li> </ul>
<b>Building Dynamic Community Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☆ Educate and support families, educators – engage at program level counties &amp; program</li> <li>☆ Build relationships/networks with employers</li> <li>☆ Invite 5 new organizations to our meetings</li> </ul>
<b>Shaping Public Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☆ Take lead on Employment Summit 3 (focus on families)</li> <li>☆ Create a summary report of action items following Summit 3</li> <li>☆ Communicate &amp; coordinate between MN APSE, MNTAT, &amp; MEPI</li> <li>☆ Meet with key legislators</li> </ul>

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the men and women who have made MN APSE successful in recent years—obviously it is their hard work and dedication that have helped us accomplish as much as we have! 2010

promises to be another exciting and eventful year. If you would like to become more involved in our grassroots efforts, please contact me (Jolene) at vp@mnapse.org or 952-851-6186.)

## ***Employment: Everybody, Everywhere***

**Minnesota APSE  
Annual Conference**

**Monday, May 17, 2010**

**9:00 am – 3:45 pm**

(Registration opens at 8:15 am)

**Earle Brown Heritage Center  
6155 Earle Brown Drive  
Brooklyn Center, MN 55430**

### ***Keynote Presentation:***

**Jim Meehan, Executive Director  
KFI Maine**

### ***Additional Presenters Include:***

**Russell Sickles**, Job Squad, Inc.  
**Laura Owens**, APSE Executive Director  
**Jon Alexander, Don Lavin & Carol Rydell-**  
MN Employment Policy Initiative  
**Bob Niemiec**, MN Training & Technical  
Assistance Center

### ***Training Topics:***

- ◆ Discovery Process in Job Development
- ◆ Creative Funding Strategies
- ◆ Job Negotiation
- ◆ Job Development Strategies for Rural Communities
- ◆ Leadership Principles for Shifting to Community-Based and Regular Life
- ◆ Employment First Initiatives (National & Local Initiatives)
- ◆ Getting Involved with MN Employment First Communities

### ***About Our Keynote Speaker:***

Jim Meehan has been the Executive Director of KFI, a non-profit agency in northern Maine providing individualized supports to people with and without disabilities, for 27 years. He has a strong belief in the advantages of a team approach which resulted in KFI transforming itself into a progressive, cutting edge organization providing supports built around individual interests rather than program requirements. Under Meehan's direction, KFI has received the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities' national Full Community Inclusion Award and the American Network of Community Options and Resources' national Community Builder Award.

Jim Meehan has presented on organizational change and the creation of inclusive supports at conferences nationally and internationally and is a nationally-recognized consultant. He believes in Peter Drucker's assessment that ***"The bottom line of the social sector organization is 'changed lives'."***

### ***Registration opens at 8:15 a.m.***

Registration fee includes materials, continental breakfast, lunch and refreshment breaks.

### ***For more information or if you require an accommodation to participate, contact:***

Jolene Thibedeau Boyd at 952.851.6186  
or vp@mnapse.org

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Embassy Suites, 6300 Earle Brown Dr, Brooklyn Center, MN, 55430. Tel: 763-560-2700  
Ask for the MN APSE room rate of \$99/night.  
Room block will be held through April 16, 2010.



**Annual  
Conference  
Monday  
May 17, 2010**

**Earle Brown Heritage Center  
6155 Earle Brown Drive  
Brooklyn Center, MN 55430**

### ***Complete form and mail with payment to:***

**MN APSE  
PO Box 23087  
Richfield, MN 55423-0087**

### ***Conference Rates:***

**\$100 MN APSE/APSE Members  
\$150 Non-APSE Members  
\$50 Self-Advocates, Family Members or  
Support Persons for Self-Advocates**

***All registrations, payment &  
accommodation requests must be  
received by May 7, 2010.***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

APSE Member # (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

If you require an accommodation, please  
describe below: \_\_\_\_\_

Check this box if ASL Interpreter is needed.



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more than ever, we know that employment is possible for *anybody* who wants to earn a living. We also know that employment is possible *anywhere*, from large cities to small, rural communities. Employment First movements, many of which have been inspired by the efforts in Minnesota, are sprouting up in states ranging from Nevada to Rhode Island. Based on one simple concept—that employment should be the *first* and *preferred* outcome for people with disabilities—groups of people throughout the country are organizing to make employment a reality.

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Join Jim, Russell, Laura Owens (APSE Executive Director) and your Minnesota APSE colleagues as we come together to learn from each other and engage in discussions that will forge an action plan for disability employment policy and practice in Minnesota – an action plan that will make employment a reality for everybody, everywhere.



Minnesota APSE - The Network on Employment  
PO Box 23087  
Richfield, MN 55423



*Presents*

## **2010 Annual Conference and Membership Meeting**

### ***Employment: Everybody, Everywhere***

**Monday, May 17, 2010  
9:00 am - 3:45 pm  
(Registration opens at 8:15 am)**

**Earle Brown Heritage Center  
6155 Earle Brown Drive  
Brooklyn Center, MN 55430**