

It's in our power to change.

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My Job, My Choice: Removing Employment Barriers for People with Disabilities

Amy Hasson did not want to work in a fast food restaurant when she grew up. "I've always wanted to do an office job," she said.

However, despite her plans, she soon found herself working at a fast food job she disliked for 18 months. Without the office experience she needed, she had little hope of following the career path of her choice. That's when Disability Advocates of Kent County (DAKC) stepped in.

Linda Joy Vazquez, Workforce Development Director for DAKC, says, "Amy was looking for a position outside of her skill set. After getting to know her at an employment workshop, we were impressed with her attitude, so we approached Michigan Rehab Services (MRS) to get her some additional support."

While unable to find placement in an office position through MRS, Vazquez invited Amy to work at DAKC, where she had been volunteering. "I'm a person with a cognitive impairment, and things do not come easily for me," says Hasson. "I have to work extra hard at what I'm doing. Disability Advocates gives you the acceptance of letting you try things on your own. In the workforce, there are not a lot of places like Disability Advocates."

She continues, "After interning for nine months, an AmeriCorps VISTA position opened up. Linda helped me with the application process, and I got

accepted to do that. Now I am an office assistant, and I do just about everything. One of my main jobs is putting together community resource books for Michigan Works. Other than that, I do referral intakes for the Workforce Development team, coordinate volunteers for projects, answer phones, and do faxes."

Vazquez comments, "Amy is one of the most positive people. She's willing to work at her shortcomings, take feedback, and acknowledge mistakes. Because of that attitude, I wanted to invest in her. She's made so much progress, and now we're working with MRS to secure assistive technology that can help even more."

Now far removed from the fast food counter, Hasson says, "I have achieved what I wanted to accomplish. I'm here, doing what I love. If it wasn't for Disability Advocates, I probably wouldn't be as far as I am right now, which is an awesome thing."

She continues, "Now my wish is to make it easier for people with disabilities to find jobs, so they don't have to face the challenges I've had. I'd like to see more acceptance by employers and not have them be as scared as they have been. People with disabilities have a great attitude. We strive even harder to work. We're dependable and independent. We just want to succeed like everybody else."



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-Amy Hasson

DAKC Workforce Development Services

- Labor pool expansion through employment of persons with disabilities
- Independent living assessments to determine employment barriers
- Disability friendly customer service strategies
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance
- Productive accommodations and accessible work environments
- Disability and community resource navigation
- Tax credit information
- Refunds for employing persons on SSA Disability
- Media publicity for your business decision to employ persons with disabilities