



1880 Fisher Rd. NE, Salem, OR 97305 (503) 586-2300

My name is Cloe Wells, and I am proud to be a part of Integrated Supports for Living, Inc. in Salem. We have been a part of the community since the early 1970's, at which time we were known as Spruce Villa. Since our establishment, we have grown to offer 14 residential programs for children and adults in Marion and Polk counties which include group homes, individual homes, an apartment complex in addition to an affordable housing apartment complex in Silverton. We also provide invaluable vocational services through job coaching and development, Oregon Forward contract employment and Day Support services. All of this important work is successful because of our skilled and dedicated workforce of DSPs.

Our staff of DSPs provide crucial supports to adults and children experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities. Their work includes managing medical needs, behavior health supports, intimate care and support to ensure that those we serve are able to live with autonomy and dignity. Many of our DSPs give up time with their own families to be present and supportive during holidays and birthdays, events which can be triggering and painful for many whose own families are disengaged.

For example, Christina surprised her worksite on Thanksgiving when she came in with mini apple and pumpkin pies for the individual that she supports; specially made sugar-free, whipped cream and all, so that he could enjoy a sense of normalcy in his new home. All of this was done in her own time, simply because she cares for the person she supports.

Chelsea is a DSP at our Children's Programs. She is a warm, calming presence that brings great comfort to the children and serves as a great model for both new and tenured staff. She handles every situation with compassion and has been instrumental in the progress made by these kiddos. Chelsea puts her heart into all aspects of her work and has built incredible relationships with the children and their families.

In February, the vast majority of the Willamette Valley was hit with a devastating ice storm. At each of our programs, we saw staff step up and step in to care for those that they serve. Jimmy, an employee of 6 years at IS Living, was the first to volunteer to be a live-in at his worksite during this storm. He and another DSP left their homes to stay with their "second family", a group of 14 individuals that reside in an apartment complex. They spent several days onsite to provide support, and made sure that everyone had fun in the process.

These examples show the exceptional work that our DSPs do, but they are by no means the exception- this is the norm for direct support professionals. This is a group of people that bring their all to their work in spite of persistently low wages- the current average of which is \$13.94. These low wages are a factor in the state-wide average turnover rate of 49.4%, a rate that creates a consistent strain in terms of hiring.

All of our staff bring an array of skills to the table to create an intricately woven blanket of support for a very deserving community. DSPs are essential to those they serve, they are essential for the success of community-based living and for our communities as a whole and deserve to be paid accordingly.

It is worth noting that several of our staff experience housing insecurity and work second jobs, but show no indication of these hardships due to their investment in their work. We have acquired an additional home to provide support for our staff, but it is our hope that funding for wages will be raised so that these essential workers may enjoy the consistency that



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they provide to others. We can get there by moving forward with POP 119 or 120, but we could truly affirm the value of the direct support professional workforce by implementing HB 2964, which would fund DSP wages to 150% of the metro area minimum wage. An investment in our essential DSP staff is a critical and well-deserved investment in IDD services and the greater community.