



COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT

The DSP Chronicles

Daniel Escojido:

A Young DSP/House Manager Who Stays Calm

By TOM KING



Daniel Escojido

At A Glance

Name: Daniel Escojido

Age: 26

Home: Ponca City, OK

Position: House Manager/Direct Support Professional

Where: Supported Community Lifestyles, Inc.

Number of People He Supports: 12
– 4 individuals who live in the house he manages and he supervises 8 DSPs.

Key Quote: *“The individuals I serve make my job enjoyable. I love taking care of and hanging out with them. I’ve never enjoyed another job like I do this one. It is fulfilling, and I feel like I’m making a difference in someone’s life. I can’t fix a car, or build a house, and I’m not a very good cook – but hopefully what I do now will change lives for the better.”*

How a Colleague Describes Him: *“The calmness that Daniel presents in difficult situations is hard to describe. He has a presence that allows for difficult situations to occur and he handles them and no one really realizes something has happened. He is a natural care giver and leader.”*



Attracting young people into the field of direct support is not easily done. Retaining them is even harder. When he was 22 years old, Daniel Escojido was hired by Supported Community Lifestyles (SCL) in Ponca City, OK. Today, he is 26 and is the agency’s youngest supervisor.

“Is he mature beyond his 26 years?” Marcie Grace said, repeating the question. “For sure!” Marcie is SCL’s Residential Program Director and has been working with Daniel for three years. “Some people in this field have got it, and some don’t have it. Daniel’s got it. He’s a natural.”

Daniel is the house manager for the Cann House, an alternative group home at SCL, and supervises 12 people – four men he has supported for four years and a cadre of eight Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who provide round-the-clock supports.

Jeanette Johnson is SCL’s Program Coordinator and is Daniel’s direct supervisor. “He has some of our most difficult clients and they trust him and we all trust him” she said. “He sets the bar high and is a role model as a DSP and as a supervisor. He truly cares for everyone he supports and you can see the compassion and care he has in everything he says and does.”

He was promoted to House Manager in May 2009 and was recently presented with an Award of Excellence in Direct Support Services by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and its Developmental Disabilities Services Division (DDSD). Daniel was nominated for recognition in “The DSP Chronicles” by Michaela Bishop, the Director of Training for the state’s DDSD.

“He’s young, but Daniel is an outstanding DSP, an articulate young gentleman and when you talk with him you quickly realize what kind of person he is and why he’s so effective as a DSP,” Bishop said.

Daniel didn’t just stumble into this field. As a young man reared in Houston, TX, he watched his mother, Maria, provide in-home supports for the elderly. “I saw and watched and heard how she talked with them, the difference she made in their lives and how she loved them and they loved her and I’ve never forgotten that,” he said. “I knew at some point this was a field I wanted to join.”

One of Daniel’s co-workers, Josh Clark, nominated him for the state award and in the process wrote these words about Daniel: “Daniel’s dedication to the people he serves is the perfect role model for his peers...the calmness that he presents in difficult situations is hard to describe. He has a presence that allows for difficult situations to be handled in such a manner that no one realizes an issue occurred. He is a natural care giver and leader.”

To that Josh added: “The individuals supported by Daniel – the ones who are verbal – will tell you how much of a difference he makes in their lives and those who are non-verbal – you can see their faces light up when Daniel walks into the room and you know they are so grateful for the good that he does.”

So, how does Daniel do what Daniel does? We asked Daniel.

“Whenever someone does something disruptive, I focus on remaining calm, and I stop and remind myself that they don’t have control over what they are doing and how they are reacting in the moment and the worst thing I could do is to be angry back at them,” he explained. “It’s all about staying calm, listening and talking to them about their concerns and issues.”

He thinks back to when he began at the Cann House...“When I first got here one of my clients was literally yelling and cussing and pounding on things for about 15 hours a day. He’d take breaks, take a nap or eat and then he’d go off again and he was truly angry. Now he has about one outburst a month that lasts about a minute. I just kept building a relationship with him, being patient and listening and talking and over time it has worked.”

This man whom Daniel changed is now a greeter at for a store in a mall and leading what Daniel calls “a much happier life now.”

One of the selection criteria for the state award was “Inclusion” and here is how Clark described Daniel’s approach to inclusion: “Daniel is creative and is always thinking of new things for the men he supports to do in the community. They have severe problematic behaviours that limit their ability to attend certain activities in the community for

continued ...

If you would like to nominate a Direct Support Professional to be profiled in *The DSP Chronicles*, please send your correspondence to Tom King at tking@collegeofdirectsupport.com. Please briefly explain why you are nominating this person to be featured.

The Job, The People & More from Daniel Escojido

Describe the types of supports you provide for your clients:

"I provide supervision of their Individual Support Plans (ISP – goals and objectives for quality of life) and Protective Intervention Plans (PIP – behavior supports). I provide training to the DSPs in the home and supervise their work to ensure all state regulations are followed and goals and objectives met. I hire new staff, provide orientation, and evaluations. I make a weekly schedule of activities for each individual to include leisure, medical, counseling, and family contact. I make sure the home is clean and free from anything that may cause harm. I provide support in helping them become more independent in their daily living skills."

Tell us a little about the people you support:

"There are four men who live in the home with completely different personalities. Two men have autism, and of those two, one is non-verbal and communication can be very difficult. But we have gotten to know his likes and dislikes – he loves going to the movie theatres and listening to his iPod. The other loves the 80's music, hanging out with staff and playing Super Mario Brothers. One is a cowboy and loves OSU, country music, western movies, and to spend money. The fourth individual loves to lift weights, exercise, eat healthy, and go to the movies. Their ages range from 34 to 48. Each of them has come so far in the three years I have worked in their home. They all have problematic behaviors, including physical aggression, property

destruction, elopement, self injurious behavior and other maladaptive behaviors. At this time all four are very stable and exhibit these behaviors on rare occasions when these behaviors were a daily occurrence. I am very proud of all four of them for working hard on coping skills and proud of the staff who work in the home for being proactive and providing redirection prior to the behavior occurring."

What is the hardest part of the job? "I would have to say the paperwork – keeping up with all the daily/monthly data, making sure it is routed to the proper people in a timely manner and filed correctly."

What is the most satisfying part of the job?

"The most satisfying part of my job is just hanging out with the people I serve – talking, laughing, listening, throwing a football in the backyard or playing volleyball. I think that these small gestures of friendship that we take for granted mean the world to them, and mean the world to me. Not only me, but anyone who gets to know them."

Would you (or have you) recommend this career to others and why?

"I have recommended this career to others. It is satisfying and at times a demanding career. This is more than a job or career – it is part of my life. My staff and I consider us and the people living in the home as family. There are good days and bad days. You've get to enjoy the good days, and take in stride the bad ones."

These words from Daniel are the framework for his success and his effectiveness:

"The most satisfying part of my job is just hanging out with the people I serve -- talking, laughing, listening, throwing a football in the backyard or playing volleyball. I think that these small gestures of friendship that we take for granted mean the world to them, and mean the world to me. There are good days and bad days. You've get to enjoy the good days, and take in stride the bad ones."

And he added: "I can't fix a car or build a house, and I'm not a very good cook either, but hopefully what I do now will change lives for the better."

We'll conclude with this from Marcie, who has been in the field of developmental disabilities for 14 years: "It is outstanding the way Daniel interacts with those he supports and those he supervises and how he helps build their quality of life. The love for his job and for those he supports is apparent. He's very caring – both here and outside of work. He's an all-around excellent person."



Daniel Escojido and a Client Having Fun Together

The DSP Chronicles

This publication introduces you to Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) from around the country and chronicles their stories as they go about the important work of direct support. They discuss the job: the challenges, the success stories, how they work with those they support and the unique ways they get the job done. DSPs are America's quiet and unknown heroes. Their dedicated and hard work improves the lives of those they support. Many work more than one job. They are devoted to the DSP profession and to those they serve.

The DSP Chronicles are archived on our website at www.collegeofdirectsupport.com and also on the website of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals – www.nadsp.org. If you would like to nominate a DSP to be featured, please contact Tom King at 1-877-353-2767 (toll free) or email him at tking@collegeofdirectsupport.com.

CDS Partners
RESEARCH AND TRAINING
CENTER ON COMMUNITY LIVING
The College of Education
& Human Development
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

WORKING BETTER. PERFORMING NEW.

continued from front ...

safety concerns. Daniel has worked with them and developed a relationship with them that allows for them to be included in the community."

He works long hours, and that's just at SCL. His day begins at 7 at the Cann House and he's there until 5 p.m. on a good day. He is working toward a degree in Psychology at Northern Oklahoma College and he's also helping his girlfriend with her newspaper route from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. When does he sleep? "On the weekends, I catch up," Daniel says.

He's majoring in psychology and his dream is to run his own business one day – a home for troubled kids who have nowhere else to go.

Daniel also has taken courses from the College of Direct Support since it is offered statewide in Oklahoma. "I like the CDS and enjoy it a lot," he says. "It's convenient and I have learned a lot about being and becoming a better DSP using the CDS. It's solid information and the course that included the information about negotiating skills (Positive Behavior Support) has been very helpful to me."

INFORMATION

111 Center Park Drive, Suite 175 | Knoxville, TN 37922 | tel :: 877-353-2767 (toll-free) | fax :: 865-531-4708
www.collegeofdirectsupport.com