



COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT

The DSP Chronicles



John Lambert, right, enjoys an outing with Bill Keith

John Lambert:

Moore Center Wants DSPs Like Him

By TOM KING

He writes poetry. He's at home in the kitchen. He is a tennis player. He lives and breathes the New England Patriots of the National Football League.

But his life today – and from now on, he says – is built around his role as a Direct Support Professional.

John Julius Lambert Jr. is a Community Support Specialist at Moore Center Services (MCS) in Manchester, N.H. The role of supporting people with developmental disabilities is a new one for John, who at 47, came to the field late in life after years of working in the retail sector. He's now 52 and loves the direct support field.

He was burned out. "After doing retail management, I'd had enough," he says. So he began looking at employment ads in a local newspaper and stumbled on one for Direct Support workers at Independent Services Network in Manchester. He interviewed and took the job in their day program. After two years there he moved to MCS. "I decided to look for a position with the Moore Center. I felt that I would have more opportunity to learn more about what I do and grow there," he said.

And he added: "I was not looking for a career in this field and I took the job thinking that I would eventually find something more financially rewarding. However, I have discovered that the personal rewards and the fact that I am making an impact on someone's life are more important to me than financial rewards."

Today, John supports eight people at MCS.

Scott Trudo, MCS's Manager of the College of Direct Support Implementation who trained John, says about him: "From my heart, John Lambert is an example of what we hope all our DSPs will be. John is patient, he gives those he supports the time they need and supports them along the way. John is someone I would hire to support my family member."

To say that John is an interesting person is an understatement. He attended Northern Essex Community College and then joined the Air Force, where he completed military tech school and then became a Military Policeman, or an AP as they are known in the Air Force. He recently completed some classes at Manchester Community College in the Human Services field and in 2007 he was one of the MCS graduates to complete all courses in the CDS.

"The College of Direct Support really opened up my understanding of what we do," he says. "What I learned was practical and its application has benefited both me and the people I support," he said. "Taking this training has put me back in the college mindset. It's given me a solid foundation of what to build on."

John laughs about that "college mindset," remarking that at 52 it may seem a little late in life to pursue his education, but his experience with the College of Direct Support, coupled with the rewarding nature of the Direct Support field, has invigorated him.

"I would not be in this field if I didn't feel it was it was fulfilling a need I have for job satisfaction," he said.

At A Glance

Name: John J. Lambert

Age: 52

Home: Manchester, NH

Position: Direct Support Professional (Independent Living Program)

Where: Moore Center Services

Number of People He Supports: 8 over the course of a week

Key Quote: "It (this job) made me see people with developmental disabilities in a different light. Before I would just look at them with pity, but this job changed me. I see them as people, people who interact and talk with you. When you start doing something like this you realize that it is more than just a job."

How a Colleague Describes Him: "Relaxed, almost laid back. A man of principle. Serious. Approachable and empathetic. A good listener. Not a showman. Not full of himself."



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 John Lambert

Describe the supports you provide for your clients: “I work with people who are mostly living independently in either an apartment or congregate housing. I provide supports about learning how to cook healthy meals; budgeting a checkbook; developing grocery lists based upon a budget, health and nutrition concerns; safety skills; knowing how to access community resources; using communication equipment to communicate with those in the community such as a TeleTYpewriter (TTY); overcoming obstacles that would prevent the person from getting out into the community and becoming more independent.”

About the people you support: “I work with a very diverse group of people. Two that I have worked with in the past are attending college at Hesser in Manchester. One has Aspergers, which is in the autism spectrum, and the other has fetal alcohol syndrome. Currently, I work with a person who has a traumatic brain injury. He was in a severe car accident where the person driving the car drove over his head, causing the brain injury. He has difficulty communicating through speech due to the accident. I have been working with him on the use of a TTY machine to communicate with those in the community who would otherwise have great difficulty understanding what he is trying to communicate to them.

“Another person who I support has Asperger’s and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. He is learning how to cook quick healthy meals, learning about budgeting – shopping skills and safety skills. He is also living in our transition house preparing to live on his own in the near future. I am helping him with the preparation of living in his own apartment. He loves to do surveys online, and has created quite a following of companies that send him solicitations to do surveys for them.

“I work with a person who has an intellectual disability, and was working on a goal of shopping independently using the local transit system that provides

a shuttle bus for people who live in congregate housing to go shopping at the main supermarkets in Manchester. She had difficulty at first with overcoming her fear of how other people would treat her while traveling on the bus. It took her over a year to complete the first step in her goal, which was to make several trips with me going with her. The other two components required her to make the trip on her own. She had difficulty getting past that methodology and almost changed her goal. The end result was that she took the step on her own to go shopping without my assistance due to a mistake in when she thought that we would be meeting to go shopping. She went anyway, and has been going on her own since then. She is very proud of her accomplishment and I believe it will have impact on future goals that she works toward.”

What is the hardest part of the job? “I would say that the hardest part of my job is to know how to do my job in a way that best supports those I support. It is easy to make decisions for other people, thinking that you know better than they do about what will best help them achieve success. That is a part of the problem, because they might not want the results that I think they should be striving for. That means that I really need to get to know the people I support and understand what it is that they want to accomplish with their life, before I can really help to make a difference in their quality of life.”

What is the most satisfying part of the job? “Getting to know the people who I support as people and not as people that I support. What amazes me is that when you get to know the people you support a lot of the misconceptions that society has and that I have had myself really get squashed, because you realize that they are people just like you, who have similar passions, desires, dreams, goals, wants and needs as you do. Their personalities are very unique and they can’t be put in a box, in order to make our lives easier in dealing with their disabilities.”



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.

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