

## A Supported Employment Success Story: DEBBIE GAUDETTE

### Background:

In July of 2007, Debbie Gaudette sought help from UCP's Supported Employment program. She wanted a job but was experiencing many barriers to employment. Debbie is deaf and uses a wheel chair. In addition, her recent work history was scant – when she came to UCP, she had been out of the work world for ten years.

### Strengths:

Debbie had worked for 13 years in the office of a deaf church, so she had basic computer skills and lots of experience with all types of office equipment. In 2000, Debbie earned an Office Specialist Certificate from Depaul Training Center.

Debbie and her UCP Job Developer, Melissa, decided to try to find Debbie a position in an office. Unfortunately, even after several months, there were no strong prospects.

### The Right Job Match:

During this period, Melissa realized that Debbie has characteristics that are perfect for the social services field—she is patient, compassionate, understanding, and kind. Perhaps the social services field might be a better fit for Debbie. Melissa suggested that Debbie apply for a Personal Assistant position at UCP.



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UNITED CEREBRAL PALSY (UCP) OF OREGON AND SW WASHINGTON offers direct program service, information, and advocacy for people with cerebral palsy and other disabilities throughout our region.

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EMPLOYMENT

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DEBBIE AND HER JOB DEVELOPER, MELISSA MILLER

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This job would require Debbie to work with a gentleman with disabilities (K.B.), assisting him with basic living activities, such as teaching him about good hygiene, helping him keep track of his medications, and cleaning his apartment.

When K.B. interviewed Debbie, the two of them hit off immediately. However, they were worried because some of the job duties might be tricky since Debbie uses a wheelchair. How would she get the large laundry box to the basement? How would she take out the trash? Could she change the bed linens on her own?

These seemed to be insurmountable problems, but there was a simple solution, one that would be empowering for both people. K.B. could help Debbie with these tasks. The tasks in question were ones that K.B. was very capable of doing—he just hadn't been expected to do them before, or hadn't been shown how to do them. Debbie asked K.B. if he would be willing to help her. He agreed and hired Debbie to support him in his daily care activities.

And that was the start of a fabulous new team. Debbie has been working independently at K.B.'s house since September of 2007. During the first month, Melissa and Debbie worked closely together, but after that, Debbie began to work independently.

Debbie's new job has helped her to build confidence, learn new skills, and branch out into the social services field. As her supervisor, Iain Tomlinson, says, "Debbie has been an all round outstanding employee." It's the perfect match!