



January 11, 2019

To the Forty Under 40 Selection Committee:



I am delighted to nominate Sean Abramowitz for Des Moines Business Record's Forty Under 40. Sean is a Lead Life Instructor for Day Services Programming at Goodwill of Central Iowa. In his capacity in this role, he is responsible for developing and implementing programming, oversight of staff and the welfare and experience for more than 50 adults with diagnosed disabilities or mental illness who participate in structured activities that foster acceptance, build self-esteem and improve social skills.

Sean has recently joined the Polk County Positive Behavior Support Network as a Board Member where he lends a progressive spirit and a willingness to challenge preconceived social attitudes about persons with disabilities.

During his time with Mainstream Living, Sean developed a program called ACE (Advocacy, Connections, Empowerment) which helped participants recognize their social condition and empowered them to work toward social change through advocacy efforts. His success with this program earned him the opportunity to present at the Iowa Association of Community Provider Annual Conference which resulted in positive feedback from providers across the state.

More recently, Sean further demonstrated his passion for advocacy by escorting participants from Goodwill's Day Services Program to the Make Your Mark Conference sponsored by Iowans with Disabilities in Action. This impactful opportunity exposed participants to "Living Your Best Independent Life" with session topics such as finances, cooking and employment and civic and political education. As a follow up to that education, Goodwill of Central Iowa hosted a training for participants with disabilities on voter rights which resulted in news coverage by two local TV affiliates.

On a daily basis I witness Sean's wisdom and compassion in his work with Goodwill participants. He also is a teacher, both in word and deed, demonstrating the humanity in all of us and challenging the power dynamics that often can be present between participants and staff. He is a fierce advocate for treating all people with respect and dignity and has demonstrated great success in helping individuals with disabilities gain independence and has facilitated placing program participants and community members on equal levels at every opportunity.

Sean once wrote, "I see myself as a strong advocate for respect, independence, dignity and community integration for the people I've served. As a direct support professional, I push to break down power dynamics between people with disability and staff, and also do my best to place program participants on an equal level with community members whenever possible. I seek to eliminate undue restrictions and recognize that these restrictions are more often than not the core cause of behavioral issues."

I hope that you will give Sean the consideration for this recognition for his contribution to our community.

Sincerely,

Katherine Riley Harrington  
Director of Mission Services  
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