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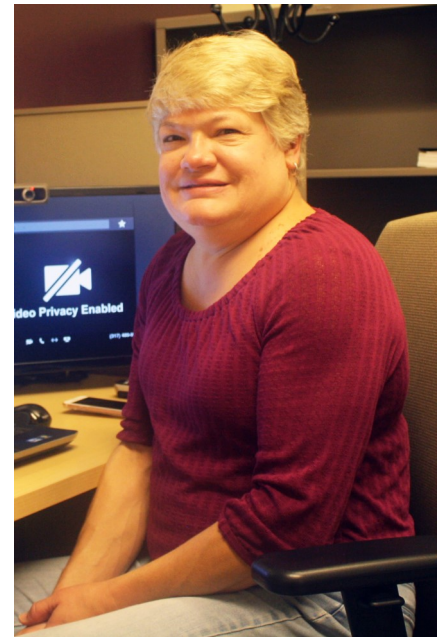
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Bobbie LeMere: Advocate and Ally

September 24-30 is International Week of the Deaf—a week dedicated to celebrating the Deaf community and promoting the rights of Deaf individuals. In honor of this special week, we wanted to highlight the work of Bobbie LeMere, an employment consultant and community resource coordinator who works with Tangram’s Deaf clients.

Bobbie has a passion for helping Deaf individuals achieve their personal goals. As a Deaf individual and someone who has worked in the disability sector for much of her working life, she has firsthand experience in confronting and overcoming many of the challenges that face individuals who are Deaf and hard of hearing.

After high school, Bobbie studied at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, NY. She earned an associate degree in medical laboratory technology, but couldn’t find a job in that field, so she returned to school at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, pursuing a degree in medical technology. She also started working in a group home for Deaf individuals at Aspire. Though she didn’t finish this degree, Bobbie’s experience in working at the group home inspired her to change her trajectory and enroll in an accelerated track to earn her Master of Social Work degree. She earned both a BSW and MSW in four years, while working full time at Aspire where she stayed for 23 years, spending 13 of those years as the Director of Deaf Services. Though she loved this work, Bobbie was ready to try something new. She took a one year hiatus before going to work at FedEx, where she gained a deep appreciation for how the company embraced disability inclusion. She said, “The companies that are more successful have open minds about learning sign and deaf culture. I worked at FedEx at the airport for a while and they were really good.”



Bobbie (pictured above)

But she also knows that this experience isn’t true of every employer. “When I transferred to a place without these supports, it was frustrating.” Bobbie recalled that she had a supervisor who was particularly difficult to work with due to his misconceptions about disability, saying, “I grew up with Deaf parents and went to the Deaf school, so I don’t talk. Deaf people aren’t all the same. Some people talk, some people sign. My boss thought everyone was the same. There was one woman who was hard of hearing and used a hearing aid, and he thought we were the same. That manager could not understand what it was like to be Deaf, and he didn’t even try to work with me.”

Now, as an employment consultant, Bobbie has an opportunity to help individuals with disabilities overcome barriers to employment and find meaningful work. She enjoys working directly with clients and says that is the best part of her job. But she also loves that she can use her personal experiences and expertise to educate businesses and eliminate harmful misconceptions about the Deaf community's ability to work.

"In employment, I have seen many people afraid to hire a Deaf person. They are afraid they can't do the job. They are afraid they can't communicate. We text, we write notes on our phones. There are lots of ways to communicate," Bobbie explained.

Bobbie currently works with 15 clients in her two roles. She prides herself on being able to connect with her clients, understanding their goals and dreams and acting as an advocate and ally to support them in their journey toward achieving these goals and dreams.

As for Bobbie's dreams? "My dream is that all people have full access—a fully accessible world."

Celebrate International Week of the Deaf and partner with us in creating an inclusive world by making a tax-deductible contribution to Tangram. Together, we can build a world that values EVERYONE! [Donate now>>>](#)

