



Business & Marketing Committee Report – April 2010

APSE's Employer Forum is a Call to Action

By Jessica Quintanilla

As those of you who attended the forum last year may recall, the forum was very successful with a dynamic conversation led by panelists from a variety of organizations. The discussion was facilitated by Eric Peterson from national SHRM and directly followed the keynote speech by Martha Artiles, the Chief Diversity Officer at Manpower, who also participated as a panelist. Other panelists included Jim Salzano from Clarke Shoes, Erin Riehle from Cincinnati Children's Hospital, Tammie Geis from ACS, Jerry McGeorge from Organic Valley, and Heather Davis from TIAA-CREF.

This portion of the conference is an opportunity for businesses and the integrated employment community to come together and discuss the benefits of and strategies for employing individuals with disabilities.

The 2010 forum will have a similar format to last year's forum, with a panel of speakers discussing their experience in hiring individuals with disabilities. However, this year's forum will also be different in that we will include a guest speaker component and a round table discussion following the panelists. Therefore, attendees will not only be presented with information, but will be encouraged to dialogue with one another following the presentations. After the forum, attendees will be invited to attend the awards luncheon, which will recognize successes and advancement in the field of supported employment over the last year.

The intent is to foster relationships and generate action plans for real solutions to employment barriers that can be applied beyond the forum itself. By incorporating a community conversation-style component and once again inviting conference attendees to participate with business representatives, this year's forum is truly a call to action.

Each table will have a facilitator who will ensure that the conversation stays on task and that specific action steps are established. These action steps will lay the groundwork for ongoing integrated employment development both at the local and national levels. The facilitator will record their proposed action items, and follow-up to these action items will be tracked by the forum planning team.

For example, a business manager in Atlanta may suggest that he or she is interested in hiring an individual with a disability. A local job developer at the manager's table will

propose an action item of scheduling a meeting to discuss the business needs and potential referral options to meet that goal. Or perhaps an attendee representing a national employer will see an opportunity to integrate individuals with disabilities as a corporate initiative and will be referred to APSE's HR Connect with the potential to develop a partnership.

These action items will be recorded and at the 2011 forum in Seattle, we will return to this topic to track progress and hopefully generate new solutions in a continuing conversation. As National APSE continues to advance the field of integrated employment, the forum will continue to evolve as a tool to effect positive change through the exchange of diverse ideas and perspectives.