

An Up and Coming Direct Care Worker Advocate!



Name: Vicki Erickson, CNA

Hometown: Atlantic, Iowa

A few words about my work: I am working at Leadway-Shelby. It is a group home. Now I have eight consumers that we take care of. I work the 6-2 shift. I love it!

Recent accomplishments: September 2003 I received a scholarship for the ICA Mentor Program. April 2004 I was selected for the Direct Care Worker Advisory Council. May 2004 I received a scholarship to go to the local conference in September in Des Moines. Then I received a scholarship to go to Washington, D.C. for direct care workers. I could not have done it if it was not for the ICA. Thank you.

My first job: I worked at an Osceola nursing home. My sister called me on Friday and told me she had some good news and some bad news. The good news was she found me a job. The bad news was I had to be there Monday at 6 a.m. for work. I worked for about a month before I had the 60 hour course. My sister and co-workers taught me how to properly lift residents. When I started I had no idea what I was doing. I had co-workers that didn't like working with me because I had not yet received training.

My favorite part of caregiving: When I walk into the nursing home or the hospital, and the patient/residents are there to greet you, it makes you feel wanted and appreciated. They think of us as family. If it is going to be your day off they say, do you have to be gone tomorrow? They will tell the other staff they want you. That makes me feel good. I like to go that extra mile for them.

Something I'd like to change about the caregiving industry: The lack of respect we get from supervisors, Directors of Nursing, Administrators, peers. I would like to hear more good job, thank you for what you did. Let the CNAs have a voice in the matter you are working on. I wish we would get more credit. I would like to see more adequate orientation to the new CNAs.

How caregiving will change in the next decade: There will be more rules and regs out there. If we don't get more direct caregivers out there it is going to be hard to take care of the people. People are staying in their homes longer also. Better wages to all the direct caregivers and better training.

What advice would you give to employers about what they need to do to find and keep direct care workers? Treat the new and old employees with more respect. We want to be respected as a person. Our

jobs are just as important as anyone else's. We are all part of the team. Tell people that they can do this work, it is rewarding.

Something else I'd like to accomplish: I want to better myself so I would know more about my caregiving. I want to be able to talk to people in the public about our jobs. I would like to become more of an advocate for us as caregivers.

Someone I admire: ICA. I am really glad that I signed up for ICA. Di has taught me a lot. Di will sit down and listen to you all day. And the rest of the staff will listen too.

Outside interests: I like to swim. My hobbies are collecting unicorns and stuffed teddy bears. I like to scrapbook when I get time.

About my family: My husband, Ray. He is a CMA in a nursing home.

Favorite vacation spot: In the middle of the ocean on a cruise ship.