

An Up and Coming Direct Care Worker Advocate!



SALLY KLING, HCA

Hometown: Ankeny, Iowa

My work: Was employed by a local home care agency in February 1991.

Recent Accomplishments: I've been an ICA member for several years. I was an ICA Board Member and am now on the Direct Care Worker Advisory Council. I participated in the first ICA Leadership Program. This gave me the opportunity to receive a scholarship to attend the 2004 Direct Care Alliance Conference in Washington, D.C. I attended the 2005 ICA "Checkpoints to Success" Conference on scholarship as well. As always, this was 2 days of educational sessions and networking with direct care workers from all over the state. WOW! In September, my 12 weeks of medical leave were exhausted and I was medically unable to return to my job. In October, ICA held its annual meeting. "It's Time" was a celebration meeting over dinner at the Botanical Center. It was a wonderful way of meeting and greeting the new ICA Board of Directors, staff, supporters, and friends. In November, my parents moved back home, meaning a "sandwich" lifestyle for my sister and myself. We continue to care for them in our home.

My first Job: As a home health aide for a doctor and his wife in their home. He taught me that sometimes quality care simply means walking him safely out to feed the birds, squirrels and rabbits. She taught me that preparing and serving a formal dinner was indeed personal care at its best.

Best part of caregiving: Likewise, the best part of caregiving is finding and doing what gives each person their desired quality care which renews them. And that is a WOWIE, ZOWIE to my spirit in return.

Toughest part of caregiving: Is convincing administrative people that real quality care is about much more than rules, regulations, and schedules. Often the person receiving care needs you to be courageous and creative in doing those assigned cares and still do their real desired care needs.

Something I'd like to change about the caregiving industry: The business of care needs to become a caring business as defined by the one receiving care and the one doing caregiving, rather than rules, regulations and schedules of defined care.

What advice would you give to employers about what they need to do to find and keep direct care workers?: Technical and mechanical devices or computers doing virtual care applications will not be able to replace quality hands on care by direct care workers. Only creative and alternative thinking to retain and recruit qualified people to be direct care workers will solve this impending crisis. Living wages and benefits will help, but realistic workloads and working hours allowing direct care workers to be at their best should be done now. Working 92 hours or more to earn a living and provide needed

caregiving is dangerous and unhealthy. Direct care workers should receive the respect and dignity they've already earned. Technology and computers used to get a workable Direct Care Worker Registry is a good start for recognizing the value of quality care being professionally done now.

Someone I admire: My sister and others doing bone-hurting workloads and backbreaking hours of real quality cares everyday. My peers on the Advisory Council who all are making a difference for every direct care worker, most of which goes unheralded. Advocate Champions like the ICA Directors, supporters, and staff, who partner and network with state and federal leaders, businesses, and other entities on behalf of direct care workers. And the patients and families who speak out about what caregivers mean to them. These people restore my spirit, belief and strength every day by a welcoming smile, a please and thank you for real quality care given.

Outside Interests: Reading, therapy, exercises and swimming. I enjoy my cats, dog, and fish. I love my family, John, friends and doing most anything for and with them.

My family: Mom and dad, 3 sisters (families), 2 brothers (families).

My favorite vacation spot: Arizona, Colorado, sailing to the British Virgin Isles.