

Dungarvin

2014 ANCOR Direct Support Professional of the Year Nomination



Crystal Tso – Dungarvin New Mexico
nomination submitted by DeAnn Fierro, Director

I first began working with Crystal about 8 years ago. During the first several years she supported an individual who had a low BMI (body mass index). Through her supports and supplement feedings and power shakes he was able to elevate his weight within normal range. Crystal had developed a close working relationship with this young man and his mom. Due to the services she provided his mother would allow for him to take short out of town trips knowing he was in good hands. This allowed him to experience activities in which he would not have otherwise participated. She had developed a close bond with this gentleman and was there with him until he passed on. It was a difficult process and hard for her, but she stayed with him until she was no longer needed.

Michael, another person she supports, is an individual who struggles with transition. This can be as simple as transitioning from one vehicle to another. Crystal has figured out ways to get him involved in activities in which he usually would not participate. She has helped develop a communication routine. Due to her concerns with new staff understanding his needs, she has made a life book in order for other staff to get to know him better and understand how to work with him. Crystal is a very petite woman who is able to assist an individual who is over 6 feet tall weighing 235+ pounds with proper body mechanics and verbal direction.

Crystal is also instrumental in supporting people to be physically active. She understands how water resistance helps many of the individuals develop or maintain their muscle tone. She is not afraid of the water and is willing to take any individual who is willing to go swimming.

Crystal also helped develop a recipe book for an individual who makes and donates dog biscuits. She created the book with recipes and pictures of the person making the items. This has given him the opportunity to build a future business.

Crystal has developed a strong working relationship with Michael. She has served as his staff for over two years now. She has a knack in being able to understand what Michael is going to do or what direction he is headed. Regardless of the setting or where Michael is she is able to read his body language and know what it is he is trying to tell her. When Crystal takes time off, Michael continues to look for her until she returns. If Michael is present in the building and Crystal enters the room, his face just lights up and he becomes very excited and happy to see her. If she is not working with him for the day due to training or the needs of another individual, he will seek her out and refuse to go with other staff; usually he will then have a bad day and refuse all other activities. Michael recently transitioned from living with his parents to a Supported Living home after 30+ years. This was a very difficult transition for Michael and his parents. Crystal was instrumental in the success of this move. She would come by, off of work, and check on him, going in for extra hours to help him adjust to his new home and staff.

Crystal has encouraged and supported individuals to be active in the newly opened chapter of People First in Farmington. She encouraged one of the individuals she supports to take training through DDSD so he could be more involved in directing his meetings and to advocate for himself. He now attends his meetings and is developing his skills to advocate for himself and others.

Crystal has given up spending time with her family during the times Michael has been in crisis with his living transition and other times in his life. When his brother passed away in 2010, Crystal made herself available to his family so they would not have to be concerned about Michael's care while they made the needed arrangements; she served as a support during their time of need. She took Michael with her to her own family events to ensure his family could grieve and work through this time. The beginning of this year Michael's parents made the hard decision to transition Michael into Supported Living the beginning of June. Michael had been living with his parents for 31 years when this decision was made. The transition into the home was very difficult for Michael. Crystal had been working with Michael during the day for several years when this transition took place and had developed a close relationship with him. During the transition she made herself available for Michael when he was in crisis. She would receive calls from the house staff notifying her Michael was lying on the ground somewhere in the community, refusing to get up. Regardless of the time of the day, she would leave her home to attend to Michael, even if it was the middle of the night. At this time Michael has adjusted as much as possible to the transition, but Crystal is still available and will help out when needed.

Many people in services will have outcomes that involve making items. Understanding many of the individuals in services have access to limited funds, she is very creative in finding items that are looked up on as discarded and making it an art creation. She has made creatures out of rocks and paint. She can be very thrifty in finding items that are inexpensive to make items that can be part of an outcome such as making cards, crafts, and decorations. At Christmas time or when one of the individuals is in need, she willing to donate needed items such as craft supplies, warm clothing, and supplies to develop ADL eye hand coordination. She never gives up on helping the individuals to develop new skills. When working with one person she began working on a communication ring, that then developed into a picture ring, and then into a communication book. She is an employee who will figure out a new approach when one did not work; she is innovative and does not give up. This creativity and tenacity are second nature to her; most of the time she does not even realize what it is she has done. She often amazes me and others with some of the ideas she develops.

As an experienced DSP, Crystal understands what is expected of her. She is a hard worker who very seldom misses work; if she needs a day off she ensures reliable staff who are familiar with the individual will be there for him. Because of her comprehension of the DSP role and her knowledge of most of the people who attend the day program (27 total), she has been assigned as a mentor for new staff. She has been assigned special projects, such as out of town trips, and has been able to make all of the necessary arrangements for the outings. She also understands if an individual's plan is not working, the importance of requesting the team to meet to discuss other options for the individual. She has called several team meetings over the years and has been instrumental in bringing needed changes to the programs.