Dungarvin

2014 ANCOR Direct Support Professional of the Year Nomination

Marhu Clay – Dungarvin Oregon
nomination submitted by Tim Omachi, Program Director

Marhu works 1:1 with an individual (BG) who exhibits extremely challenging behaviors. As a result of his patience and flexibility, Marhu has been able to find ways of communicating with BG when no one else can. Because of his dedication, Marhu has opened up the entire community for BG to explore. They now go into restaurants and shopping malls regularly, places that were unthinkable to enter just a year ago. They go bowling, play basketball, and throw rocks in the river. Most importantly, BG has gained confidence because of his increased ability to express himself and be understood by others. He has gained these skills thanks to Marhu's endless patience and dedication to his job. BG's family, his doctors, and case managers have all expressed astonishment at Marhu's accomplishments and success in supporting BG's independence and community inclusion.

Prior to Marhu working with him, BG had established no real relationships with anyone outside of his parents. Because Marhu has committed himself to learning how to communicate with BG, including supporting BG in expressing himself in his own ways effectively, a genuine bond has developed between the two. Marhu has found the key to supporting BG lies in finding ways to reassure him that he is safe, and that Marhu (and other staff) know how to keep him safe. And because of that ever present reassurance, Marhu is able to build on the relationship of trust between himself and BG, expanding it to other DSPs, and thus expanding BG's world immeasurably. Marhu has worked hard to lay the foundation for BG to begin to develop relationships with others.

There has been no stronger advocate for BG than Marhu. Marhu has attended every team meeting since the day BG moved into his current group home, including meetings that he was not required to attend. Since BG is unable to actively participate in meetings, Marhu has been his very effective advocate. Marhu was able to observe/discover things about BG that no one else, including his parents, had known. It is directly because of Marhu that BG has all of the supports he needs, and is able to express himself fully to his team. In addition, Marhu sets an excellent example among his

peers by patiently and vigorously advocating for person centered thinking for all of the individuals we serve.

Marhu is the ideal DSP. Despite the fact that he lives out of town and has a long commute, Marhu is always the first one to volunteer to come in and cover a shift. In addition, he comes in on his own time and invites BG to come and play basketball at the local park with him and his friends. Marhu has a family of his own with special needs step-children, yet he is always ready to give 100% at work.

Marhu is creative without being wild. When one thing doesn't work, he doesn't throw it all away. Rather, he looks at the situation holistically and looks for ways to tweak it. Marhu has learned how to "interpret" BG's language, because he uses words in his own unique ways. Marhu looks for BG's strengths and then works with him to expand them, and blend them into his weak points. He is not afraid to try new things, and has learned how best to present new things to BG, who has extreme difficulty with transitions and changes. Marhu has learned to work BG's Behavior Support Plan so that it works for everyone.

Marhu is a DSP that everyone respects and seeks out for advice. He is respectful of everyone, including new staff, and listens to what they have to say. Marhu realizes that newer staff ask the best questions, and never discounts their suggestions. He acts as a mentor to new staff, and a sounding board for the more experienced. Marhu is always professional, and by his example he sets the tone on every shift he works. Most importantly, Marhu never lets the team give up on any task. He always finds a way to accomplish what needs to be done, and encourages a team atmosphere by including others in finding solutions.