

Class helps good staff become good managers



**United Way
of Monroe County**



What are some situations that come to mind, Chris Urbanowski asked her class, when you think of the word “conflict”?

Scheduling conflicts between staff members, one student volunteered. Conflicting stories between arguing clients, another said, and conflicts between supervisors and their staff members when employees don’t meet the expectations their bosses set.

“If somebody doesn’t show up, we’re the ones that need to stay and make sure things get accomplished,” said Shannon Crigger, a

supported living program site supervisor for Stone Belt.

Crigger supervises four staff members and works with five clients with developmental disabilities at her job with Stone Belt, a United Way agency. Before working as a direct support professional, Crigger was a registered veterinary technician who set up low-cost spay and neuter clinics, which provided some on-the-job management training.

Many of her fellow supervisors didn't have that same opportunity before being thrust into management positions. Direct support professional managers were often first direct support staff at Stone Belt and LifeDesigns, another United Way agency that provides supported living sites, employment and educational programs for individuals with developmental disabilities.

"They make really good direct support staff, but never had any formalized training in management," said Susan Rinne, chief executive officer of LifeDesigns. "Going from being one of the team to supervising the team is a hard adjustment to make."

Stone Belt and LifeDesigns' direct support professionals go through extensive training before they start their work helping clients live as independently as possible.

To give current managers more tools to successfully supervise their staffs, the two United Way agencies are using funds from a Jack Hopkins social services grant from the city of Bloomington to provide a management training course to supervisors.

"It takes one set of skills to be a good DSP and really support clients, and it takes another set of skills to be a manager and handle employees, said Tammy Reuter, supported living coordinator for Stone Belt. "It's easier to gain these management skills and professional skills in an office setting, not as easy to gain those skills when helping cook dinner and in the bathroom with (clients)."

Urbanowski teaches the class, which has taken place monthly since October at Ivy Tech Community College.

Her course focuses on soft business skills such as time management, human resources responsibilities, leadership, task delegation and communication.

"These folks have been supervisors maybe for a while, so they have some skills," Urbanowski said. "They may have to learn some more subtle ways of delegating and motivating folks."

February's class revolved around conflict management. The supervisors discussed how miscommunication can lead to conflict, building on their previous lessons about verbal and nonverbal communication and active listening skills.

“It’s a skill I think none of us have really mastered,” Crigger said. “You forget to just sit down and listen.”

Highlights of the “Your Donation has Power” campaign

Total dollars raised: \$1,118,000 (86 percent).

- Hoosier Energy is empowering local lives by donating \$5,274 in employee and corporate contributions.
- General Motors employees are revving up our community through \$6,327 in generous donations.
- The team at New Hope Family Shelter, a United Way member agency, gave new hope to the community with their contribution of \$748.

Impact:

Donations to United Way ensured that New Hope Family Shelter was able to provide 2,881 nights of shelter to help families get back on their feet. Of shelter residents, 53 percent are children.

Donation impact to United Way agencies

LifeDesigns:

- \$3/week helps LifeDesigns ensure customers receive support that meets current evidence-based training standards by providing staff with continuing education opportunities.
- \$10/week provides one month of personalized support for a community member with developmental disabilities.

Stone Belt:

- \$1/week provides a financial planning seminar for up to 50 families with special needs members, providing resources and information they need to support their children in the future.
- \$5/week purchases first aid supplies for more than 340 individuals with disabilities.
- \$20/week supplies three months (approximately 30 hours) of job support so a person with development disabilities can maintain employment, helping him or her become more self-sufficient.