



PRESS RELEASE



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Iowa Finance Authority, Passageway partnership recognized nationally

State agency and nonprofit organization honored for their initiative to provide work for Iowans with mental illness

(April 22, 2009 – Des Moines) A unique partnership between the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) and Passageway received national recognition recently in Washington, D.C. Passageway, located in Des Moines, is a nonprofit organization that supports individuals living with the effects of mental illness. Over the past nearly three years, 13 Passageway members have worked at IFA in clerical support. An instrumentality of the state, IFA administers several affordable housing and water infrastructure financing programs.

The recognition event held March 24 featured 70 employers who have provided jobs to clients from “clubhouse” organizations such as Passageway. IFA is the only Iowa employer currently involved with the Transitional Employment Program at Passageway and the only Iowa organization to be recognized. The National Employment Expansion Project, in partnership with various clubhouse recovery centers across the US and the Massachusetts Clubhouse Coalition, coordinated the event. “I want to thank Iowa Finance Authority for the important national role it plays in expanding employment for people who have a mental illness,” said Iowa Congressman Leonard Boswell. “By encouraging other state agencies to hire people with mental illnesses, this will open up opportunities across the nation.”

Amy Schreck, a Passageway member since February, 2008 has battled mental illness for most of her adult life. For the past nine months she has worked as a mail processor at IFA. “Because of my mental illness, finding and keeping a job had proven challenging for me,” Amy said. “But with the help of the Passageway staff and the support that the organization provides, I was able to enjoy a part-time job at IFA. Not only did the job provide a paycheck, but it also instilled in me a new sense of self confidence and pride. I know that despite my illness, I can be a valuable member of any business team.”

IFA Executive Director Bret Mills said his agency’s partnership with Passageway is a win-win for both groups. “The members from Passageway quickly become integrated into IFA’s daily operations,” he said. “Our experience is that soon after a new Passageway member begins at IFA, he or she develops a rapport with our staff members and becomes a valuable asset to the IFA team. We are pleased that IFA can give the Passageway members the chance to learn important life skills as they work toward their goals of living a full, productive life despite the challenges of their mental illness.”

“Our relationship with IFA has been a great asset to Passageway and our members,” said Passageway Executive Director Linda Oleson-King. “Clubhouse model rehabilitation programs like Passageway provide unique employment opportunities. IFA’s staff members’ open minds and positive attitudes have provided a chance for not only an excellent work experience for 13 members, but also a strong community connection for Passageway.”

Founded in 1989, Passageway is a clubhouse model rehabilitation program that exists to support individuals living with the effects of mental illness. Through participation in a “clubhouse,” people are given opportunities to rejoin the worlds of friendship, family, meaningful work, employment, education, and access to the services and supports they may individually need.

Note: photo of award ceremony available at www.rainbowcenter.info/media.html

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