

A Job Coach Lesson for the Professionals

The following true story was told by Lynne Elwell, a disability rights advocate from England, to Elizabeth Barnes, a friend of mine and former Tri-Development Center staff member :



Lynne promotes asking individuals with disabilities what they want to do instead of placing them in jobs determined appropriate by others. On one occasion she asked a gentleman named George what he would like to be. He had been influenced by the television show "Upstairs, Downstairs", seen in the United States on the Public Broadcasting System. George stated that he wanted to be a butler. All involved were taken aback, but were determined to follow through on assisting him in achieving his goal. They sent out many letters stating that they had a gentleman who wished to be a butler and asked if there were any openings or where they might find training. There were very few responses. All were negative.

When everyone was about to give up, they received a call from Buckingham Palace (yep, the Queen of England's residence). While they did not have an opening for butler, which was described as a highly skilled job, there was an opening for a footman. The caller stated that an application from George would be welcomed. An application was made and an interview was granted. George did a great job of interviewing the interviewers. When asked if he would like to be a footman, his reply was "No, I want to be a butler."

After considerable discussion, George finally agreed to give the footman role a try. There were several stipulations. He would have to live at the palace, and he would receive on-the-job training and lots of supervision. There was to be NO MEDIA COVERAGE!! An agreement was made.

George is currently a footman at the palace. This is a true story of a gentleman with an intellectual disability who is working toward his dream.

(I have no idea if this individual is still working at Buckingham Palace today. – Ralph Courtney)