

Employee finds job success through Exceptional Persons Inc.



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WATERLOO — On Aug. 7 Lorraine Parker, 53, will celebrate her two-year anniversary of working for Comfort Suites in Cedar Falls. For Parker, this really is something to celebrate.

Through job training and encouragement from staff at Exceptional Persons Inc. in Waterloo, this is the longest Parker has stayed at a job.

She became involved with EPI on Nov. 3, 1997, and entered its employment program in March 2005.

"Lorraine's two-year anniversary is great news considering the average unemployment rate for individuals living with a disability is 76.6 percent," said Katie Slade, communications and development director for EPI. "Before working and building on her employments skills, Lorraine was not able to maintain a community job for more than six months at a time. Lorraine recently learned that she was not

Lorraine Parker, who is developmentally disabled, will be celebrating her two-year anniversary working at Comfort Suites in Cedar Falls.

MATTHEW PUTNEY / Courier Photo Editor

only getting a raise but that she was getting a new job title with added responsibilities."

When Slade first met Parker in 2005, she was in-between jobs. Parker had been consistently changing and/or leaving jobs about every three months.

"Lorraine began working in our enclave program here at EPI and stayed with us in that program for one year before beginning a job search again," Slade said. "She then obtained employment with Comfort Suites and has been employed with them ever since.

"I can truly say that Lorraine is a success story, and I feel very proud and privileged to have had the opportunity to help Lorraine achieve her personal vocational goals," Slade added. "She is becoming confident, strong and independent and soon will not need the support of a job coach to assist her with her employment at Comfort Suites. She recently gained the power to be her own payee and guardian, which she is very excited about."

According to Slade, Parker's current job supervisor has nothing but positive feedback regarding her overall job performance.

"Lorraine's supervisor should be commended for her diligence in working with Lorraine," Slade

said. "She has given her a positive environment in which to work in as well as different work tasks and duties to further assist her in her development. She is always open to any ideas Lorraine has and works with her to help her realize her inner potential. She has stated that she is more than happy to work with Lorraine and has also stated on numerous occasions that Lorraine is one of her hardest workers and she can always count on her rooms being cleaned to the hotel's standards."

"I have had to overcome some personal obstacles in my life," Parker said. "I've had to learn that I could work out in the community, work on stress levels and find coping skills and positive outlets for work stress.

"Finding the confidence within myself to know that I am doing a good job and that people recognize that I am doing a good job has been challenging," said Parker, who has recently been promoted to assistant to the lead housekeeper.

"I am very excited about my new position because I get to check my own rooms over and enter into the computer when the rooms are all cleaned," Parker said. "I like working with all of my co-workers, and I enjoy working with my supervisors. I also like housekeeping."