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Unity House Stages Second Dan Howard Training For Direct Care Staff Supervisors and Managers



Dan Howard (standing)
interacts with training
participants

AUBURN – Unity House of Cayuga County Inc., a leading provider of transitional and permanent housing, rehabilitative, and employment services and programs in Central New York to more than 700 individuals a day with developmental disabilities, mental health illnesses, and those recovering from chemical dependencies, sponsored a second Dan Howard training session geared towards agency executive management, managers, and front-line supervisors who oversee the care provided by their

staffs directly to consumers.

Attended by some 53 direct care staff managers and supervisors from Unity House and seven other peer agencies including Elder Choice, Red Cross, Finger Lakes Independence Center, Challenge Industries, Evergreen Heights, Cayuga-Seneca Action Agency, and Catholic Charities of Broome County, the all-day was held from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on October 21, 2008 at the Springside Inn's Point at Sand Beach on Rte. 38 in Auburn. It was the second training for Unity House staff by Howard, a Geneva, N.Y.-based direct care trainer with 20 years of direct support experience with individuals with developmental disabilities whose two, three-hour trainings on the impact of staff attitude in the workplace, crisis prevention and intervention, and the importance of self-awareness in employee productivity and quality of service took place on May 28, 2008 at Auburn's First Presbyterian Church (*see cover story in Unity House's Summer/Fall 2008 newsletter The SPIRIT*).

Howard's training this past Tuesday provided supervisors and managers with information and practical application techniques to employ in supervising and achieving excellence with their direct support staffs. Howard took most off the morning portion of the training session to emphasize the importance of supervisors and managers recognizing and working with their own and their employees' beliefs and values and their outward expression when delivering service to consumers. It is that attitude, Howard said, and supervisors' awareness of it that ultimately determines the quality of relationships between the providers and recipients of service as well as the overall quality of an agency's service.

"When you choose to work in this field," he told his training audience, "there is a non-negotiable truth: you as managers and your employees as employees are responsible 100% of the time for the attitude you present and for how your attitude is perceived, by consumers and other staff. Supervisors and managers need to require off their staffs that they need to be whoever they are working with needs them to be at any given moment.

The core of an agency's performance depends largely on attitudes displayed in the workplace.”

Howard declared to the supervisors and managers that a key to their success overseeing the quality of care their staffs deliver rested with them being present whenever service was delivered, as much as possible. He added that supervisors and staff in hiring applicants for direct care positions at the very least had to ensure candidates were reliable, physically capable of handling job-specific demands, able to work well with others, could read and write effectively, and spoke in an easily understood manner.

The 42-year-old trainer, who started his human services career as a skills instructor in a residence for individuals with developmental disabilities, spent much of the afternoon session showing his audience how to use a variety of in-depth interviewing skills and methodologies to assure they identify such characteristics in those candidates. In seeking and finding candidates who are self-aware, non-controlling, empathetic, non-judgmental, respectful of boundaries, unafraid to let people fail, flexible, and can recognize how their own belief, values, and attitudes could impact consumers and service delivery, he told his audience they had to probe well beyond those candidates' surfaces and get to their real selves.