Executive Director’s Year in Review 2020-2021

What a year it has been. A very hard time to have lost Barb and enter a state of transition. Speaking with the other Directors in the state, they have noted that this has been the hardest year in remembrance. That’s really saying something since some of them have been in their positions for over 20 years! Fortunately, I didn’t know any different, so I just jumped in and tried to make sure that RRCI’s consumers and staff were all protected and RRCI’s mission continued at full speed ahead.

a. One of the first things that I did upon taking over as director was to check-in with staff. I met with each of them individually right away so that I could get a pulse on moral and listen to what their ideas and insights were for RRCI. Through these conversations and my own experience and vision for RRCI, we came up with an action plan of goals to accomplish. These goals were adopted by the board and now comprise the current Strategic Plan.

b. Something I have been passionate about from the beginning was to make sure we do as much as we can to spread the word about our services to everyone throughout our vast service area. To this end I challenged each staff member to set an outreach goal for this year. I also developed a new position of Outreach/Resource Development Coordinator whose main job requirement is to get the name of RRCI into the community and foster donor relations. She is also assigned to keep an eye to diversity both culturally and demographically. It has been amazing to see the swift results of these efforts.

c. An advantage to being the former office manager is that I came to the job of director with an established grasp on the day-to-day workings of the office, staff, and consumers. I’m still the back up to the front desk and phones. I still attend consumer activities whenever possible and greet and council with consumers on a regular basis. I think it is because of my close contact with the consumers that I feel it’s so important to shift our focus from counting consumers in the door to truly providing those services to the consumers we have. My going motto: Are we doing all we can? What more can we do?

d. Over the past year we’ve lost four of our staff. I redistributed area boundaries to fill one position, hired a tech service to fill another, hired one individual to fill an outreach area, one to fill my old position of office manager, and moved one to the newly created outreach/resource position. For the most part, there has been very little strife among staff. I have had to do a couple of disciplinary actions but have found for the most part that a listening ear solves a whole lot of problems.

e. A leader is only as good as their team. The RRCI team is fantastic! I find it difficult to start my reports using “I” because I always want to say “we.” I’ve found ways to include my team from the beginning and continue to find ways to collaborate. If there is a way a committee comprised of staff can do the job, that’s the way I go. Taping into collaborative ideas and knowledge is a powerful resource. I also hold individual meetings with every staff member ever month. All 16 members of staff. Sometimes the appointment runs 30 min. sometimes it runs over an hour. I allow them to run the meeting. It’s their time to let me know what they are accomplishing and my way of finding out where I can lend support. Regular training goals are set that everyone participates in to learn new and approved ways to serve.

f. There were many systems to overhaul when COVID hit. We had to move to working from home for a little while and obtain the equipment and solve all the problems that come with that. A big piece to that was ensuring security and confidentiality measures were in place. Once back in office sanitation issues needed to be addressed and supplies acquired for both staff and consumers. I am happy to report that RRCI continued services throughout the pandemic without interruption. We had to come up with creative solutions, but we never stopped serving our consumers.

g. Along with the pandemic came the need for additions and alterations of policy. We had to create disaster policies that we wouldn’t have even thought of before. It was also necessary to be on top of all COVID guidelines to consistently make the decisions that came with such an unknown and ever-changing situation. However, I pleased to report that there was not a single case of COVID spreading from contact with a team member of RRCI.

h. Stepping into this position with no warning or training made this past year one full of surprises! Almost every day I would look in Barb’s email to find notice of some report or application that needed to be completed. With the help of the other directors and asking a whole lot of questions I was able to get everything finish and turned in on time. I am pleased to report that all state financial, systems, and grant audits came back clear! We already have such great systems in place, so it is only a matter of keeping up the established procedures and assuring that no one gets complacent, and nothing slips through the cracks.

i. It has been an adjustment transitioning to being the spokesperson for RRCI. I’m not one who loves the spotlight, but I love to talk about the mission of RRCI so the talking is easy. My resource development coordinator created several, nerve wracking opportunities for me to address the public. I promoted RRCI in a webcast, speech to the business community, and various social media video spotlights. I’ve attended a variety of networking meetings and continued to serve as the Chair of the Reginal Mobility Council.

j. I had the opportunity to address six Utah State Representatives and followed up on the meeting with written correspondence. It is my intention to cultivate these connections for multiple reasons not the least of which being that we may need a representative to help us get a building block grant in the future. I have also kept in touch with Representative Snow who has been a supporter of RRCI.

k. I received a crash course on financial policies and budget management. Carol, Michael, and I navigated challenges to changing authorizations over due to the sudden nature of Barb’s passing. I attended financial trainings and sought out help when needed. This was another area that being the former office manager helped out on. I already had a working understanding of what needs to get done and an established relationship with Carol, so we were able to work through the more difficult things together.

l. The biggest grant challenge faced this year was that of navigating the management and expenditure of the $140,000 CARES Act grant. The first of its kind for the IL centers, it took much training a careful consideration to assure that we were spending it correctly. Not to mention a lot of inspiration and creativity. I am proud of the things we have been able to accomplish with the funds. I was also able to work with Greg to submit a complex land proposal for IHC. Though it was ultimately given to another entity, we made it all the way to the final cut and gained important contacts within the community.

m. I enjoy working with the Board and all its members. I am pleased to be able to provide information and support as needed. I apricate all the work and support that is given to me and to our RRCI team.