



2023 ARRM CARES AWARD FINALIST

KATIE HENSEL THE EON, INC.

Katie leads with compassion, empowerment, high expectations, and vision. She knows how to listen beyond the words and most importantly she is responsive to what she hears. Katie then organizes, plans, ensures staff support, and always follows through. Constantly, she applies a person-centered approach to those she serves, her co-workers, and our organization. Katie is always listening and teaching. She does this by not only challenging herself, but her co-workers and supervisors to be solution based and to think creatively. Katie is a caring and loving person with remarkable integrity and grace. She embodies the definition of a Direct Support Professional and an inspirational leader.

To illustrate Katie's innovative, creative, and person-centered approach, when Nicole and Tiffany were simultaneously diagnosed with COVID, without hesitation, she immediately packed her suitcase and quarantined with them, in order to protect their housemates, Joy and Mary Jane who have complex medical needs. You see, Katie, even during the most difficult times heeds the calling without hesitation. For 14 days, she ensured quality of care and life with Nikki and Tiffany by creating a recreation and craft area for the ladies, cooked meals with them, and connected the ladies with their families. Especially on those tough days, she was right there by their side with them expressing empathy and practicing patience to help Nikki and Tiffany through their discomfort and monoclonal antibody infusions. During this time, Katie, once again displayed leadership and focus by teaching and assisting her co-workers with maintaining infection control standards to prevent the further spread of COVID. Katie's unwavering, selfless, and love for Nicole, Tiffany, Joy, and Mary Jane is absolutely beautiful to witness.

What makes Katie a successful leader is her impassioned advocacy for person centered services - what is important to and for the person and her ability connect the people she serves with natural supports. Because of her advocacy, she has altered the trajectory of people's lives by offering detailed information or encouraging research, so the people she serves can make informed choices. When James wanted to live out his dream of going to Disneyworld, Katie was right by his side using her unique gifts and talents to support him. Katie created a budgeting plan, taught budgeting skills of saving, and researched his vacation with James. With Katie's support, James contacted a travel agency and they all worked together to plan his dream. Due to Katie's person centered supports and ability to connect with natural supports, James' dream was realized. This has also proved advantageous, as it in turn motivated other individuals to seek Katie's support with person centered outcomes. Carrie, of another site, is now utilizing Katie's support for budgeting and saving money for her own Disneyworld trip. Likewise, Katie supported Leo to engage in his community by enhancing his life by increasing independence and his autonomy. Through encouragement, practice, consistency, and establishing trust of others, Katie, supported Leo to overcome his anxiety of public transportation. Today, when the bus pulls up to his home, Leo proudly walks with his head high and utilizes the city bus with natural community supports for transportation to work and appointments. Katie is a consistent champion of the people she supports, which truly sets her apart in many ways.