



# 2023 ARRM CARES AWARD FINALIST

## SUE STONE MARY T INC.

Sue's 40 year career as a Direct Support Professional has been supporting people in their own homes with SILS and IHS services. She listens carefully to dreams and desires and she puts an action plan in place. A person she serves with SILS services wanted to visit a dear friend in AZ and Sue planned flights, hotels and logistics while consulting with her supervisor to discuss how to use the limited hours of funding and avoid overtime by volunteering her time. Without the sacrifice of her time and understanding the difficulty of paying her for all the unfunded hours of work, this trip may not have been possible. What mattered to Sue was creating the trip of a lifetime for the person served and she was able to deliver through flexibility and putting the outcome as the primary focus.

Sue has done creative work to develop group activities for persons served with unit based services that supports them in their own home. She has organized regular basketball games in the summer and bowling in the winter as well as card and board games to connect people who receive services to one another and other tenants in the building. She has taken the time to get to know others in the apartment buildings that the persons she serves live in so that there is an extra safety net and a community of support. She is a natural people person and her outgoing and persistent personality has taught the people she serves, through example and coaching, to make these connections without her support.

Sue is known as someone who never lets an opportunity pass to teach a skill. Any time spent with a person served is a chance for growth and learning. From making good food choices to pedestrian safety she uses her time to teach and strive for the best life. When a person served was digging through the recycling dumpsters in their apartment building to "help" by washing out the cans she deemed unsatisfactorily rinsed, it was determined to be a potential safety concern by her team. Rather than trying to stop or control the "behavior" Sue developed plans to make it safe by providing gloves to avoid the risk of cuts and a smaller container to reduce the risk of falling in the dumpster. Sue realized that trying to curb or eliminate an activity that this person enjoyed was going to be met with resistance and attempts to hide the activity from others so she came up with innovative plans to make it safe. Another person that Sue served for 30 plus years was having difficulty getting into her regular tub to shower. Sue developed a unique system of multiple shower curtains on the floor and walls that allowed her to sit outside the tub to shower and the water was able to be directed back into the tub. This made the difference to allow several more years of independence in the home this person cherished.

Being a direct care staff for 40 years has meant that Sue has had opportunities to make an incredible difference in the lives of many and truly become family. She started with a few folks in their 20's and 30's who were moving out of an ICF home and transitioning to an apartment training program. Sue was with them all the way and through years of teaching and support they were able to reach their goal of living in their own apartment. There have been several people served that she assisted all the way through the stages of life. For two women who were best friends, Sue supported them from an ICF to their own apartment where they lived happily for many years. She advocated and supported them as long as possible but when it came time to get more support and move to an Assisted Living she was there to make the transition smooth. For these people served, Sue was much more than a paid staff. The bonds made over so many years means that Sue became family and a rock of support through incredible bonds of trust and love. From the people she serves, to guardians and families, everyone has the same thing to say about Sue.....she has a heart of gold and always puts the person first.