



Debi Scruggs has been with the WorkOne service provider Community Action Program, Inc. in West Central Indiana for over 17 years. In that time she has provided employment and training services to residents of Montgomery, Fountain, and Warren counties who were in need. Debi has taken on every challenge that has come her way, and with her patience and sincere desire to help people succeed, she has overcome those challenges. She has worked providing case management service to clients participating in the IMPACT program and as a Case Manager for JTPA, WIA, and WIOA programs.

Paige Brost, Teacher/ Career Counselor with Benton/ Fountain/Warren Adult Education, added, “It has been a privilege to work with Debi Scruggs in recent years. She is helpful and informative with any questions regarding classes or training requirements. I feel that Debi is willing to go above and beyond her duties when working with our students and community members at the Warren County Learning Center, and I really appreciate the way that she treats everyone with kindness and respect. She always has a great sense of humor and positive attitude.”

Here’s Debi’s story:

I started working when I was

young—just 14 years old. In the time since I have worked many places. For example, I worked in an emergency room as a ward clerk, as an Outreach Coordinator for a social services agency, and I spent 16 years working for a local manufacturing company. Now that I reflect on my work life, I realize that I have never been happier than I was working in the world of social service.

When I was downsized from my job as Customer Service Manager at the manufacturing company, I knew I wanted to return to the world of social service. Eventually I was hired as an Outreach Coordinator with Experience Works!, an up-and-

Professional Spotlight (cont'd)

coming social service agency. When I started working at Experience Works! I met many new and wonderful people who were doing amazing miracles in my eyes, things for so many people. No matter how old you were or what challenges you faced the people at Experience Works! provided you the help you needed. That was 17 ½ years ago, and great things are still happening there!

During my first year at Experience Works! I was introduced to the Community Action Program (CAP) by Chris Cohee. My first assignment with CAP was to act as an Impact case manager. I worked with families to help them achieve the goal of coming off of public assistance by getting jobs where they were able to earn a livable wage—a wage where they could support themselves and their families. We were able to do this successfully in part because of an “out-of-the box” conceptual Work Model developed and implemented by Chris Cohee.

This model started with the Department of Family and Children referring candidates to CAP. From there, to make it convenient for the families, we travelled to them so we could conduct the first program interview. When families agreed to accept our help (and completed the paperwork) we were able to open up new opportunities with the Work Model.

With a Work Model we were able to get people paid work. Recipients worked 20 to 25

hours a week for a non-profit and earned living while gaining valuable skills. This program was able to live and succeed for 5 years. During that time I learned so much about people, their drive to survive, and what they were capable of doing to take care of their families. To this day I still have people (friends now) that I met through Work Model who give me



Debi Scruggs

Community Action Program of
Western Indiana

updates on how they are doing, ages of their children, and their successes. Verbal hugs are priceless.

The WorkINdiana program is a fairly new tool in our arsenal. It was developed to assist many people realize their goals to get a high school equivalency (HSE), training in a demand occupation, and a good paying job. Partnering with supportive and knowledgeable ABE services, Community Action in Montgomery, Fountain, and Warren WorkINdiana continues the process that has helped families achieve success.

Asking anyone to raise a family or pay her bills making \$7.25 an hour is a travesty. Paying a hard-working waitress or waiter \$2.10 is ludicrous.

Adult Education, the Community Action Program, and WorkOne partnerships with WorkINdiana have helped students in our area to become Certified Nursing Assistants—\$9.50 to 10.50 an hour; Commercial Truck Drivers—\$14.00 an hour; Heating and Air Techs—\$11-13.00 an hour; CNC operators—\$14.00 an hour; and Patient Access Assistants—\$12.00 an hour. In addition, WorkINdiana continues to always be working on and developing new career-related training for Hoosiers. Because of this, word-of-mouth has been our best advertisement! We often hear that friends are telling friends to call and sign up!

Growing up the eldest of six kids, I remember having too much responsibility put on me. I had to live up to high expectations and to teach my younger siblings right from wrong. We were taught being lazy and not doing what we were capable of had consequences. Here it is 2016, and I hear my parents' voices coming out of my mouth when I meet with customers. Here I am encouraging them to do and be their best, pursue personal goals and find what they need, and not to settle for any less than they deserve. I guess I have been in social service training a very long time! Thank you Community Action Program of Western IN, now 50 years old, for allowing me the honor to watch so many people grow and succeed.