

Outstanding Volunteer Award Nomination

NOMINEE: Grace Kastens

ORGANIZATION: Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas

NOMINATION NARRATIVE:

Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas is proud to nominate Grace Kastens for the InterHab Outstanding Volunteer Award.

Grace Kastens has a lifelong history of not only working with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, but actually growing up with them. Grace, born and raised in Atwood Kansas, spent her childhood in what was a Family Teaching home managed by Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas. During the 1980's, Grace's parents were Family Teachers and provided support in a group home setting to several people served by DSNWK.

When Grace attended college at Fort Hays State University in Hays, she worked for DSNWK. She then moved back to Atwood and became the town's librarian.

Remembering her roots, Grace started a special program through the library for the people supported at DSNWK's Prairie Developmental Center called Next Chapter Book Club. The club consists of people served by DSNWK at PDC who go to the library and enjoy listening to Grace read special books and discuss them. The club meets once a week on Wednesdays from 1:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

"Some of my earliest memories contain some of the people I get to have in our Book Club now and that is really special for me," states Kastens. "I especially love when a part of the books we are reading contain a funny scene or something that tickles the clients and we all end up laughing together."

Kastens explains that she became Director of the Atwood Public Library 6 years ago and connecting with the people at DSNWK with a community class was one of the first things she wanted to do.

“Everyone looks forward to going to the library,” says Sheena Luedke, Program Manager at PDC. We have a non-verbal individual who always comes back and makes a point to show me the book that they are reading.”

“I think this is one of those full circle moments in life where we are reminded how special human connection is and what an honor it is to have that link between not only community organizations but the people who are running them,” states Kastens.

DSNWK is proud to nominate Grace Kastens for the Outstanding Volunteer Award. Her efforts to connect people with I/DD with the joy of reading is worthy of recognition.

NAME OF PERSON MAKING THIS NOMINATION: Steve Keil

ORGANIZATION: Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas

TELEPHONE: 785-625-5678

E-MAIL: steve_keil@mydsnwk.org

I have reviewed and agreed to the criteria for filming the awards video.

I have obtained approval for this nomination from the submitting agency's
Executive Director