

Picture this- 26 year old girl, who grew up in small town that is surrounded by rolling wheat fields and cattle ranches. You know you're small little town in Eastern Oregon, where everyone knows everyone. I decided it was time for me to make a big life change, to accept a position as a part time nanny to precious 8 week old baby and accept a position through Dungarvin. I left home the day after my birthday for a life enriching journey.

Unfortunately working just one of my jobs alone wasn't go to pay the bills, so I took on the challenge of working two jobs 70 hours a week. I don't take either jobs lightly, I have other peoples lives in my hands. For example, I work in Supported Living, I work a straight 40 hours with my client. I assist with all his ADL's, attend community outings with him, see that his ISP goals, attend doctors appointments with him, pass his medications and encourage him everyday to do his very best and keep his chin up. My client has truly taught me so much about life and it really is an honor getting to work with him. In December I was chosen for Dungarvin Employee of the year, I was presented with a plack at a little party they held in my honor. March 3rd will mark my one year anniversary with Dungarvin, the knowledge I have gained in the past year, I will carry with me for the rest of my life. This job also is very demanding, stressful and requires long hours. Hours lost with my family and friends. For the work that DSP perform at Dungarvin and other agencies throughout Oregon we do not get paid what we deserve. It's frustrating living paycheck to paycheck even after working another job.

I have a few questions for you:

Would you and could you do the work that is required by DSP's for the amount that we are currently paid? Could you rise above the money and do it for the people that need our support? Where would our clients be if they didn't have us? Would you be willing to give up precious time with your family during holidays or your child's first baseball game?

I've been doing this line of work for many years now, obviously I'm not in it for the money, I'm in it for each and every life I can enrich with my skills, compassion and love.

Sincerely,  
Tara McIntosh

To whom it may concern,

My name is Elvia G. Zavaleta and have been working for Dungarvin for about 6 years total. I first found out about Dungarvin right after graduating High School, I had a sister that loved working here and referred me as soon as I turned 18. I remember her telling me of how this job impacted her life in a positive way and made her more loving, understanding, cooperative. She specifically talked about the way she started looking at life after she experienced working with this population. As you can imagine I could not wait to work here. I started at the California Dungarvin Day Program where I felt I could be my self and noticed I can bring a positive attitude, spunk, and many smiles to the people we serve. I fell in love with my job and have always said it was more than just a job for me, it is a place where I can feel needed and loved. Now that I work in Oregon for the same company and for the Day Program, when we go out into the community I feel like people are having a positive effect when they see that the people we serve have similar interest then them. The Community start knowing the people we work with by name and enjoy meeting them.

Of coarse to every job there is a down side, people that choose to work in this field go through a lot of things for example lose time with reletives during holidays because this job requires 24 hour care, also working with individuals that have behaviors I can't tell you how many times my hair has been pulled or how many times I've been out in the community with the individuals and having people stair at us like if we are from another planet, ofcoarse it is understandable but I don't think the people we work with deserve that. I also know that people that work in this field usually have a side job because we don't make enough money to support a family. I am one of those staff that works 2 jobs. It is more than overwhelming but we do it because we love it and the people we serve deserve the best care.

My intent in writing this letter is to make others aware of what we as staff go through and to persuade others to have compassion and increase our pay.

Sincerely,

Elvia G. Zavaleta

My name is Lou Conrad and I have been a caregiver/direct support professional for 6 years. I became a DSP because it is important to me that I have a job that I consider valuable to society. I enjoy helping people and knowing what I do on a daily basis improves the lives of others. Being a DSP is very gratifying in many ways. I get to work with an amazing crew helping awesome people who just need assistance with their activities of daily living. However, being a DSP can also be very physically, mentally, and emotionally taxing. Working with 5 clients in a single shift I can easily end up changing 7 to 10 depends, running and putting away 2-4 loads of laundry, putting away a load of clean dishes and starting a load of dirty dishes, cooking 6 meals, changing 1 to 5 occupied beds, shaving and showering 2 residents, turning and repositioning all 5 clients every 2 hours, changing their clothes, sweeping and mopping an entire house, administering medications, documenting everything for the whole night and stocking the bedrooms with depends, chucks, gloves, washcloths, and other supplies, etcetera. And that's on an easy night. On harder nights we may have to treat and document illnesses, injuries, seizures, and behavioral problems. We also take vitals and send people to the hospital when they become too ill for us to take care of. All of these things require specialized training, more time and documentation, patience and sometimes a strong stomach. I've had to change clients that were literally laying in a puddle of feces, or stomach contents from G-tubes coming open or becoming dislodged. That's all just the physical labor. As DSPs, we also get to handle all the undesirable behaviors of our clients, such as yelling, hitting, kicking, scratching, biting, pinching, attempts to hurt us the staff, themselves, other residents or even strangers in the public. I personally have had a client throw a large wooden chair down the stairs at me. I've had another client grab me by the shirt, attempt to pull me to the floor and choke me with my shirt. I've been yelled at, cussed out, threatened with a knife, intimidated, pushed, hit, and kicked by clients. I've also had to clean up after a client that likes to throw all of his belongings out the window and stuff feces into his VCR, every day for weeks (all for \$10.50 an hour). I also get to watch good coworkers come and go because the pay is not enough to support their families. Many people have asked me, "so why do you do what you do for so little pay?" Lots of people would never go near this job due to the physical labor and mental stress. I do it because these are people who genuinely need our help and care and who would not be able to survive without us DSPs. I do it because at the end of a long day I like to look at my work and pat myself on the back for another job well done. But honestly I am barely making ends meet and sometimes I really struggle to pay my bills on time because I have to live paycheck to paycheck and the cost of living keeps rising, but my pay does not. The turn-over in this field is so high because even the workers that enjoy the job quit because the pay is not adequate for the demands of the job. I was literally just beginning to search for a different job this month because the pay is so little... Then I heard that there is talk of raising the minimum wage for health care workers. I can imagine myself working in this field for the rest of my life, but only if I'm making more. I love this job but I have to be able to support my family and this hasn't really been cutting it. My partner makes almost 3 dollars an hour more than me taking wagers on horse races. What does this say about our priorities as a society? Peoples lives are literally in the hands of us caregivers and DSPs and we are making less than people who sit on a phone all day taking bets. Please, PLEASE be the person who

makes the change. Raise the wages for all caregivers and DSPs and improve the quality of life for staff in the medical field as well as the lives of the people we serve. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Lou Conrad

**Dungarvin Oregon, LLC**  
Camille Foskett, Employment Coordinator

**From:** Heather Franklin , Direct Support Professional / Dungarvin Oregon, LLC

**Sent Date:** 26 Jan, 2015 08:54 AM ,US/Pacific

**Subject:** My Story

**Recipient(s):** Camille Foskett, Employment Coordinator

**Notification:** Medium

**Status:** Read (You read this message on 26 Jan, 2015 09:41 AM ,US/Pacific)

**Type:** General

My story about how I came to work for Dungarvin....begins with our Habitat House.

I had just lost my long time job at Dari Mart after 9yrs, I looked for work and then started working at another convenience store in Harrisburg. I had a family to support and to stay qualified for the Habitat House we were building. If we didn't have enough income we'd lose our house we've worked so hard to build with our own hands and sweat and it was almost fully completed.

I had been looking for a job with more hrs so we didn't lose that desperately needed home for our children but had been coming up with nothing that would be a good fit. I then asked around to the few people I knew in town and after about 5 months 1 of my customers from when I worked all those yrs at Dari Mart told me to apply at her work. I asked if it was steady work and she told me there's always plenty of hrs and that her house always needed people. She told me she thought I'd do well and a little about what she did and then gave me the info to apply.

I looked Dungarvin up and went through the info on the site to get an idea of what I would be doing. I took a bit of time considering if I would qualify and then went ahead and applied for a job in Eugene Dungarvin.

I got a call for an interview and then the day came and I got all dressed up and did my best.

I didn't have any past job experience in this job field but I did have plenty of customer service experience with lots of different people and situations that I worked through. I also had a son living with developmental delays plus my niece who lives with autism and her brothers both also live with different developmental delays too. So I had a little idea of some of the things I'd see, but everyone is different.

I had high hopes to get a better job to support my family and to keep our house. It was getting very close in time to the point that if I didn't find a good job we'd lose the house. So when the call came to ask me if I would like to work at the Herman House I was super excited.

So as of February 25th Herman House has been my 2nd home for 2 yrs. I've never worked at another house and as long as I can afford to pay my bills, take care of my family and as long as they need me I'll still be coming in and hanging out with the ladies.

I've worked through some rough times with low staffing and high behaviors. My 1st few months were very up and down. I wasn't totally sure I could handle a family with 3 kids, a spouse and all the stressors of this job. I had a baby under 1yr old and 2 other kids. Also my spouse had a really hard time with seeing me coming home with lots of bruises and/or super tired and/or very stressed out or all 3 at the same time.

Sometimes I'd have to stay past my relief time or do some doubles that weren't planned. I've also worked with 50+ different staff, 2 (soon to be 3) PD's, and 3 (soon to be 4) HC's. It's been and still is a huge learning process. Everyone has made changes and lots of improvements to make Herman a better place to work and a better home for the ladies. All the staff be it PD, HC, or co staff has played a big part in the bettering of Herman and have played a part in my life too. I've been through illness and family issues and just recently a whole change in life with my spouse. I've chatted with our PD, HC and a few staff that help me with coverage issues, kept them in the loop incase I have appointments that need covered short notice or stress our just need some guidance. Everyone has been accepting and its great to have that support.

Now back to my Herman House history...

So then after a while I could see the clients get more comfortable around me and we started to find a good groove. After learning about all the ladies and what their needs were, and what things I could say or do to make our days together better, it changed bit by bit. The house became more like a family unit with staff and clients.

Still after almost 2 yrs it's a learning process. There are days that things are super good and we do lots of stuff in and out of the house. Then there are days that are rough around the house.

I've also watched all 3 ladies become healthier. They have ups and downs but overall it's a huge improvement from when I 1st started. I've helped implement new diet plans and new menus and learned new ways to cook for them. To make it taste good and help keep it different too. All 3 ladies have trimmed down some and are more active when they want to be. They move around better and have been doing so many more new and different activities since I 1st started.

So in the time I've been at Herman I've felt like I went through boot camp and then found a new way to look at the world. To see it through each of their eyes. To see how life effects them and to see what they do to effect the lives around them.

All the love and affection you can give and all the hard battles you can fight and win for your client and for yourself. To help both of you to strive to live to the fullest you can everyday, because tomorrow is a new day.

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