

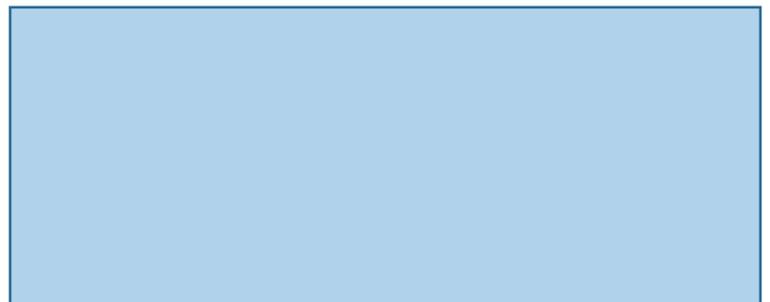
Start of a New Year



2017, 10 Year Anniversary

It is hard to believe that 2017 was Able Hands 10-year anniversary. A lot has changed since our humble beginnings. Josh and Max started Able Hands with a vision that there was a better way to deliver services to people with disabilities that gave them the freedom to enjoy life to its fullest. Something that started out as serving only 6 participants in our community has grown to six residential locations and serves over 30 participants. Both our growth and success are directly attributed to our committed staff and families that believe in our services. Hopefully we will have the opportunity to write a twenty-year Anniversary newsletter when the time comes. In the meantime, let's have a look back at some of the landmark events that shaped us.

When we first began we solely provided services to participants that either lived on their own apartments or lived with family members. In the summer of 2007 Max was approached by a guardian of a participant that he had provided services for as a kid. The guardian had toured some of the other residential options locally and was not impressed by what she had seen. While not providing residential services at the time we recognized this to be a great opportunity if we were willing to make the commitment. Looking back this was probably the biggest decision we would make. Expanding into residential would be no easy task and would require that Max and Josh work a rotating schedule working at the newly formed house. That itself was another issue, a house that could both feel like a home while also meeting all the state and federal guidelines. Touring several facilities throughout Wyoming it was clear that this would pose a challenge as most locations had a very clinical or institutional feel. Looking at what some facilities in other states had done, along with our own belief system we were able to create a very nice home feel while maintaining all legal requirements. By chance we lucked out and were introduced to Randy Tabuchi, a local State Farm agent and renter. He was kind enough to have faith in us and see our vision and so residential services began. It wasn't long until we started getting inquiries from other guardians and shortly our house was full.



The next big event for Able Hands was a tragedy for Sweetwater County, the closing of SWRC. In a perfect world we would have been able to help everyone stay in Sweetwater County, unfortunately that was not the case. We were however able to help a handful and opened our second residential house. This was quite an undertaking, we were quite fortunate and were able to hire some very good employees whose lives were also turned upside down by the closure. Again, we partnered with Randi Tabuchi in acquiring a house that fit all our needs. Within a year our waitlist was full and we knew it was time to once again expand. By this time, we had gotten the hang of opening houses and our biggest dilemma was and has since always been finding staff whose beliefs matched our own.

By 2012 we had come recognize another gap in what we believed was quality services through out our industry. There was a piece missing for those that lived independently but lacked any reliable natural supports. While they were receiving services eight hours a day five to seven day a week, what must it be like to have no other supports or social connections those other 16 hours. While “group home” services would not be appropriate being alone that much was leading to depressions and a host of other issues. A possible solution, a college dorm / roommate situation where everyone would have the ability to socialize and play off of one another’s strengths. Our first such house was quickly opened. It was such a success that it was not long before we had caught the interest of several families interested in such services. Before long a second house was open.

In 2016, we were approached once again to start another 24-hour home. After several months we had our sixth, and for now, final home up and going.

While residential was our primary means of expansion it wasn’t the only thing. At one point we had opened up a “day” facility in Green River. The idea was that people should have the opportunity to stay in their community and as many know Green River and Rock Springs are very different communities despite the short distance between. While this did hold true for some of our participants many preferred coming over to Rock Springs as they felt it offered more opportunities for activities and shopping experiences. After a year we decided it wasn’t beneficial to anyone and forgo continuing to have a day facility in Green River.

Another service we put more focus in was Employment. Luckily a business associate knew someone who had been through extensive training finding competitive employment in our field. When approached she was excited by the opportunity and Interlink Employment was born. Currently Interlink has made more than 60 competitive employment placements not counting youths in the paws program. During that time, we were also fortunate enough to be part of creating the W.E.S.T. program. The W.E.S.T program was designed to help people in the field of placing people in competitive employment learn best practices in the field and over come some of the obstacles that can come with the rural nature of our state.

