



Member Spotlight – February 2017

Frank Pike

**Employment Development Specialist
Abilities First in Springfield, Missouri
Springfield and Greene Counties**

Having a heart for people with disabilities has always been a part of Frank Pike’s life. At age twelve Frank said he met a boy down the street from where he lived who had an intellectual impairment and they became fast friends. Although they separated after Frank moved with his family the memories of the time spent with his buddy Jackie made an impact on the life he would follow.

In 1976, while Frank was studying theology in college, God gave Frank and his wife a beautiful daughter who was diagnosed with microcephaly. With the uncertainty of raising a child with a developmental disability Frank elected to enlist in the Air Force in order to have the medical supports for his daughter if ever needed. After two years in the Security Police field the Air Force allowed Frank to cross-train into the mental health field where he spent ten years being taught by psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers. Frank stated it was like having a private university at his fingertips.

After leaving the Air Force the family returned to Missouri where Frank began a career as a vocational evaluator for Lakes Country Rehabilitation and Alternative Opportunities. During those nineteen years Frank worked in evaluation, supported employment and skills training. It was during this time he developed a close relationship working with Vocational Rehabilitation.

In 2014 Frank took a position with Abilities First in Springfield as the Employment Development Specialist. In this position he has been able to foster very strong relationships with Vocational Rehabilitation and the four Community Rehabilitation Providers who provide such wonderful services to Springfield and Greene County.

In 2015 Frank acquired a partner, Bethany Edwards, and they have worked together to forge these partnerships in order to promote community employment in Greene County for the consumers they serve. Through these strong partnerships many of the Abilities First and the Next Step’s consumers have found competitive employment in the community.

While with Abilities First Frank has become a Certified Benefit Specialist and Certified Employment Support Professional. Frank said his association with APSE has been invaluable and inspirational. APSE has enhanced his career in many ways and he reports he has met so many “cool” people in APSE Mo that he looks forward to attending all of the events being conducted throughout the year.