

## **Borucki Vukelich Selected as 2010-2011 Policy Fellow**

Lisa Borucki Vukelich, a workforce development rep at the WorkForce Center (WFC) in Burnsville, was selected to participate in the Policy Fellow program at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs last summer.

Borucki Vukelich, who has a passion for assisting people with disabilities, has been attending the program for about six months. The program offers training in public affairs leadership for emerging leaders seeking new experiences and skills. Each year, 30 to 40 people from across the state are picked for this nine-month program.

Already she says the program has given her more confidence in promoting the continual need to create jobs for people with disabilities.

She says one of her principal passions, helping people with disabilities, can be traced to her daughter, Tasha, who has been diagnosed with Type 1, Juvenile Onset Diabetes.

"Counselors and other professionals supported Tasha and me during an extremely difficult time in our lives," she said. "I vowed that I would return what I have learned to help others who face barriers in their life."

Her duties at the WorkForce Center include helping people with disabilities use assistive technology, such as JAWS, which reads aloud what's on the computer screen) and a UbiDuo, which resembles a Mini PC, and makes it easy for the Deaf and hard of hearing people to converse. In addition, Borucki Vukelich has a vast array of resources about support and advocacy groups for people with disabilities. She also assists other WFC customers with job-hunting and other reemployment services.

In her spare time, Vukelich serves as a program counselor for Thomas Allen Inc., where she helps people with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses work on their problem-solving skills.

"People with barriers may need extra time and a lot more patience," she said. "Finding ground to build a rapport of trust with the customer is important."

Borucki Vukelich has also completed other programs that have enhanced her leadership skills. She is a recent graduate of Partners in Policymaking, a training program through the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.

She said that the program emphasized advocacy as a key to empowering individuals with disabilities and overcoming barriers to employment. Advocacy can begin with the individual, case manager, counselor or other human services professional, Borucki Vukelich notes.

Her participation in leadership programs has enabled her to share information about WorkForce Centers with prominent people.

Among them are former Vice President Walter Mondale; U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar; Steve Sviggum, University of Minnesota Board of Regents, and former Speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives; former State Representative Will Morgan; and State Senator John Doll.

“The ability to network with key individuals about the resources in the WorkForce Centers has been an honor,” Borucki Vukelich said.

Pictured: Lisa Borucki Vukelich with former Vice President Walter Mondale at a reception for the policy fellows at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs luncheon on Dec. 14.



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