

# Meet ILO Community Builder

## Michelle Harris

Michelle is a Certified Preschool Teacher, and believes with a can-do attitude, and a persuasive mentality, there is potential in everyone. She believes a smile and words of motivation can change someone's day, and that persistence will help many in our community.

The main thing I like about my job is that I get to help people with different abilities. It's more like being a friend to lean on, someone to talk to and help guide them in the right direction.



What I find most challenging is that sometimes the self-advocate gets complacent, and then you have to change the dynamic of how you work with them. Sometimes they tell you they don't need your help and you don't need to be there, but 5 or 10 minutes later they realize they need your help.

There are so many rewarding scenarios. Like when a self-advocate makes their bed without being reminded. Or if the self-advocate doesn't sleep in all day but does something productive like cleaning the house without being prompted. Seeing what they've accomplished on a day when we haven't been with them is very rewarding.

If I had to give a tip to someone wanting to be a Community Builder I would say it's not as challenging as it seems. For the most part being a community builder is about listening and enjoying what the SAs like to do whether it's crafting, or bowling. Sometimes you have to take a step back and look and

see what they're doing. They want to be treated like everybody else. Be respectful and join in the fun!

There is no team I'd rather be a part of than ILO. I've worked for different companies in the past and I felt like a 2<sup>nd</sup> rate employee. Here I'm equal. We can shoot ideas to each other and we're all receptive. No one is left out. We're a team. We work together. We are one unit serving ILO.

As for the future, I want to be **THE CB**. I want to be the best. I would be interested in maybe starting a cooking club for ILO for those who aren't efficient in the kitchen. I would love to see Germantown grow. I also want to gain more

certifications. I dream of a community where my self-advocates aren't seen as having "disabilities" but "different abilities"....where each of them are comfortable and capable of living the life they dream of.

Michelle is a mother of two children and loves to write poetry. She also enjoys cooking, baking, traveling, and working out. She is a lover of music and grew up singing in her church choir.

