

Sarah Finds Her Seat on the Bus

Last Wednesday morning after learning earlier of Sarah Shorey's death, I sat in my office leafing through her personnel file. An impromptu lunch with Sarah's colleagues on the Family Team was happening in an hour. I wanted to center my thoughts, prior to speaking to Sarah's friends and fellow staff. I didn't have to look long; the first document in the file was her recently completed performance evaluation. In the section that asks the employee to express their thoughts on SMOC's mission, Sarah had written the following:

"In my opinion, the agency does a great job of carrying out the mission of "Everybody Matters". In today's world, people need to feel like they are coming to a safe place and without fear of judgement and I feel like SMOC does a great job of making those who come to us feel like they do matter. It is nice to work for an agency that is all inclusive and do not assume someone cannot do something based on their circumstances."

Sarah got it! Her words had confirmed my impressions from observation; Sarah was "on the bus". A brief digression which allows me to put this phrase in context is required ...In the late 70's I was responsible for an agency that provided services to a poor, troubled and sometimes difficult population. Like SMOC, we did this in an open setting that was casual, respectful, free flowing, and largely staffed by paraprofessionals and students doing internships. Sometimes our newcomers got it right away (meaning how we used the environment to deliver services), sometimes it took a while before they figured it out, and occasionally they didn't get it and left for another job or internship.

We developed a phrase to describe this process; either someone was "on the bus" or "off the bus". Sarah was definitely "on the bus" here at SMOC. It wasn't always easy, at the start she, like a lot of other new staff, struggled a bit. But Sarah hit her groove when she became a part of the Housing Consumer Education Center team, with Katie Michaud as her supervisor. Watching Sarah at her desk speaking with a client, sitting in the lunch room talking with colleagues, and sharing , and sharing a few conversations with her, that groove was evident.

Then last Wednesday, suddenly, tragically and way too soon Sarah's seat on our bus became vacant. So, let me end this by saying to Sarah's folks, friends, her supervisor Katie, her colleagues, Ron who greeted her at the front door each morning, and the SMOC community that in her two and a half years with us; Sarah made a difference in people's lives. Her grit,

determination, spirit and energy will continue to be a part of us. Indeed it is part of the mysterious mix of forces that powers SMOC's mission. Sarah Shorey, You will *always* be "On the Bus"

Jim Cuddy

May 16, 2017