

## CAREGIVER, INC. SETS 2020 EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS PROGRAM GOALS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES THEY SERVE IN TEXAS



Emily and Megan depart for work at Marshall's in Granbury.

### *Fulfilling Work Adds Meaning, Income*

When Texans want to work, isn't it important for them to have an opportunity to do so? Fort Worth-based [Caregiver, Inc.](#) believes the answer is an emphatic, "Yes!"

Caregiver provides services and supports to people with [intellectual and developmental \(IDD\) disabilities](#) through Medicaid waiver programs, over 2300 in Texas alone. The company also has operations in three additional states. Through home and community-based services, Caregiver in Texas empowers individuals to carry out their passions and desires in the workplace through a signature program – Employment Supports.

"It sounds simple to say, but work is an important part of all our lives," said Amanda Corrigan, Vice President of Operational Excellence at Caregiver's operations support center in Fort Worth.



*"It's beyond gratifying when you can help an individual rise above challenges and move into a fulfilling, progress-oriented situation."*

**Debbie Youngblood**  
North Texas  
Regional Director,  
Caregiver, Inc.

"Just like any one of us, people facing disability challenges also want to learn new skills, make money, have a sense of accomplishment and contribute to their community. We're here to support them at every stage: from job seeking, to training, and the employment stability process."

In 2018 alone, employed individuals Caregiver served in Texas earned a cumulative \$300,000 in community workplace employment. The company aims to raise that figure by 2020. To that end, [Caregiver's four Texas regional directors and 18 area directors](#) met late last year to define clear targets.

"We want to see wages up by 20 percent to \$360,000 by year-end 2020," Corrigan said. "That can mean more individuals in the workplace and more income for those who are already working."

Caregiver's support systems and programming evolve on an ongoing basis. Interestingly, a driving force in advancing Employment Supports has also been spurred by an uptick in interest from individuals who want to find a job. As it is for anyone looking for work, a critical component for those Caregiver serves is getting a good fit.

Caregiver's Employment Supports process begins with assigning a support manager to work directly with an individual to assess capabilities, set a tone of optimism and infuse a can-do attitude.

Then, the support manager researches appropriate job options in the community. After sharing identified options with individuals and guardians or families, the support manager talks to employers. If an opening is identified, the support manager preps the individual and schedules an interview, provides transportation then coaches and shadows the new employee at work when hired.



“By doing everything we can to find ideal job placements that are workable in the community, our support managers are making a huge difference in the lives of individuals,” said Kathy Griffith (left), Caregiver's South Regional

Director in San Antonio. “Bosses get reassurance that at any particular work site, we will provide a high level of support.”

Griffith stressed that there is no separate funding stream, while job support services are not billable but are nevertheless critical to mission. Equally important is a community job pool for opportunities. That's why she is dedicated to sharing their success stories. When individuals with IDD challenges are recognized for the achievements that they have gained, the stage is set to inspire prospective employers.

“We want all our employment partners – like McDonald's in Sugarland and so many others – to know that we are here to help make each employment engagement a success,” Griffith said.

Facilitated by outstanding partners such as McDonald's, Texas Tech University, Marshalls Department Stores and others who have stepped up their hiring of persons with disabilities, Caregiver is optimistic about their 2020 targets. Here are a few current success stories:

West Texas Regional Director Kirk Coates in Lubbock shared the story of **Jonathan Morales** (right), a Lubbock resident with a great love for Texas Tech football. Morales has been receiving services through Daybreak Community Services for the past seven years. A young man who has experienced a lifetime



of disabilities, he has, with Daybreak's support, experienced much success overcoming barriers. Early on as he prepared for community employment, Morales completed a three-year stint at Market Street Supermarket as a sacker before he lost that job, and, therefore, his schedule and paycheck.

Daily frustrations mounted. No one questioned Jonathan's work ethic. Yet, was there a company that would give him a chance to show his abilities? There was. In fact, it was a university.

Daybreak was able to place him in a job in a work environment in which he could excel, right on the campus of Texas Tech University.

Today, Morales is a lobby attendant, food prep and dishwasher at [The Commons](#), with a red and black uniform and an increase in pay.



“I love my new job, and I am very happy to be working again,” Morales (pictured above) beamed. “The best part of working at The Commons is being able to attend Texas Tech University home games for free.”

Another shining example is **Andrew Smith** (below), a resident of Sugarland. Smith lived in a group home beginning in November 2017. He struggled with mental



illness, acting out and nearly losing his placement there and in a subsequent location, as well. He also was having problems at his dayhab facility.

After a thorough series of [telepsychiatry](#) and local group sessions – far superior for Smith, as he was anxious about outside appointments, his

behavior improved, and he began to understand that medication compliance would help him reach his goal of employment. Kimberly Williams and her Daybreak staff and the Texas Employment Supports program got in motion. Within a year, Smith went on a job interview and was offered a job at a McDonald's franchise. With positive experiences driving his dedication, he now calls his



employer independently to receive his weekly schedule and arrives in his freshly pressed uniform to do a job that he greatly enjoys. Along with a paycheck, Smith has an increased level of confidence and self-esteem and an improved outlook on life.

In North Texas, **Emily Kidd and Megan Smith** both live with six other young ladies in Granbury House, a group home with [Southern Concepts](#) about 30 miles from Fort Worth. Gina Graham is their home coordinator.

With the help of Graham's staff and in cooperation with [Texas Workforce Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation Division](#), Megan and Emily (pictured left) found out about an opportunity at Marshall's Department Store.

To prepare, they began nine months of careful training and instruction at their Granbury house and in their day habilitation facility.



The Texas Workforce Commission's Tommy Provost worked to ensure that Emily and Megan knew how to greet the public, how to dress properly for work, and how to respond in an interview. They were ready.

The young women soon began working at Granbury's Marshall's Department Store in Granbury.

This is just a beginning. Emily wishes to become more financially independent so that she does not have to rely on her family for monetary support. Megan is thinking in terms of a retail career.



“Without the help of LesleyAnne, Kaytlin, Pam, Melinda and Gina,” stressed Megan, “I would not have had the tools to accomplish this.”

Social media has helped expose accomplishments, and the company wants more people across the state to know about them. As awareness grows, Caregiver anticipates further expansion and enhanced Employment Supports across the state.

“It's beyond gratifying when you can help an individual rise above challenges and move into a fulfilling, progress-oriented situation,” adds North Texas Regional Director Debbie Youngblood (pictured right).



“This program is a result of the efforts of all our team members working in many areas of support for the people we serve,” she emphasizes. “As Caregiver exceeds industry standards, those we serve reap the benefits.”

## ABOUT CAREGIVER, INC.

[Caregiver, Inc.](#), is a privately held company with over 3500 employees within the headquarters support group in Fort Worth and branded affiliate organizations in four states. The affiliates provide intermediate, home and community care services to nearly 2800 individuals who qualify as developmentally or intellectually disabled or are impacted by related conditions. Caregiver, Inc. was formed in 2015 and now includes these affiliates: [Unified Care Group](#), [Southern Concepts](#), [River Gardens](#), [Daybreak Community Services Inc.](#), [St. Giles Living Centers](#), [DSA of Indiana](#), [CG-HHC](#), [All Care Services](#), [T/R Residential](#), and [Omni Support Services of Tennessee](#), and S&K in Ohio. All have similar service offerings and strong reputations in their local communities. [Caregiver services](#) include supported home living, family protective services, case coordination, nursing services, respite services, day habilitation, psychology services, dental treatment, specialized therapies, adaptive aids, minor home modifications, and supported employment. Caregiver president and CEO is Mark Lashley. Company headquarters are at 4800 Overton Plaza, Suite 440 in Fort Worth, Texas 76109. Phone is (800) 299-5161. They are on the web at [cg-idd.com](http://cg-idd.com).

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Kathy Griffith, South Regional Director in San Antonio, Caregiver, Inc.

