

# independence



Our mission is to empower people with physical disabilities to reach for their full potential in every aspect of life.

## MARY JO KIELY

“Where is the dinosaur exhibit?” “How do these musical stairs work?” “Is that real water shimmering up that wall?” “Where can I buy tickets?” “Psst. Where are the restrooms?”

The next time you visit the Minnesota Science Museum, think about the number and range of questions fielded by the museum’s talented visitors’ assistants. You’ll be thinking about people like Mary Jo Kiely.

“I *love* my job,” she beams. “And if it weren’t for Courage Center, I probably wouldn’t have it.”

Kiely has ataxia, a condition from birth that affects her ability to balance and her coordination. She first learned of Courage Center back in 1994 through the Minnesota State Department of Rehabilitation Services, which referred her to Courage Center when she wanted to attend classes to improve her computer skills.

“I learned a lot in Courage’s computer classes,” she says. “I also met my future husband in class, but that’s beside the point,” she laughs. “I’m now comfortable using computers. I was in my 30s then and thought I would like to become a receptionist, but it turned out that most employers are looking for speed on computers. I’m accurate – *very* accurate – but not terribly fast.”

Kiely “kept her day job” at a sheltered workshop, but knew she was ready for a change. “So, when I learned that Courage Center offers job placement services, I thought they might be able to help me find the right kind of job to suit my particular skills.”

She was right. The first thing Courage Center Vocational Services counselor Lynn Vincent did was evaluate Kiely’s aptitudes and current skills. “Was *that* ever enlightening!” Kiely says with a grin. “I learned that I was ‘a people person.’ I had *never* thought of myself that way, so I learned something about myself. Lynn suggested that my skills and aptitude would be perfect for some kind of customer service job. That opened up a whole new world of possibilities for me.”

Kiely has been working part time as a visitors’ assistant for three years now at the Science Museum, the job Courage Center helped her secure. With the help of Courage



### BIO – MARY JO KIELY

Diagnosis: Ataxia

Age When Started Services: 31 & 42

Years at Courage Center: Three years total

Current residence: Minneapolis, MN

Services received at Courage Center: Vocational Services – Computer skills training, job assessment, job placement, job coaching, supported employment

Made gains towards independence: Increased self-confidence, maintaining permanent part-time work

Center’s job coaching and supported employment assistance, Kiely greets customers, answers their questions and does whatever necessary to make their visit to the museum enjoyable. Her self-confidence has increased so much that she no longer needs Courage Center’s supported employment services. She’s able to negotiate and manage her work life without outside support.

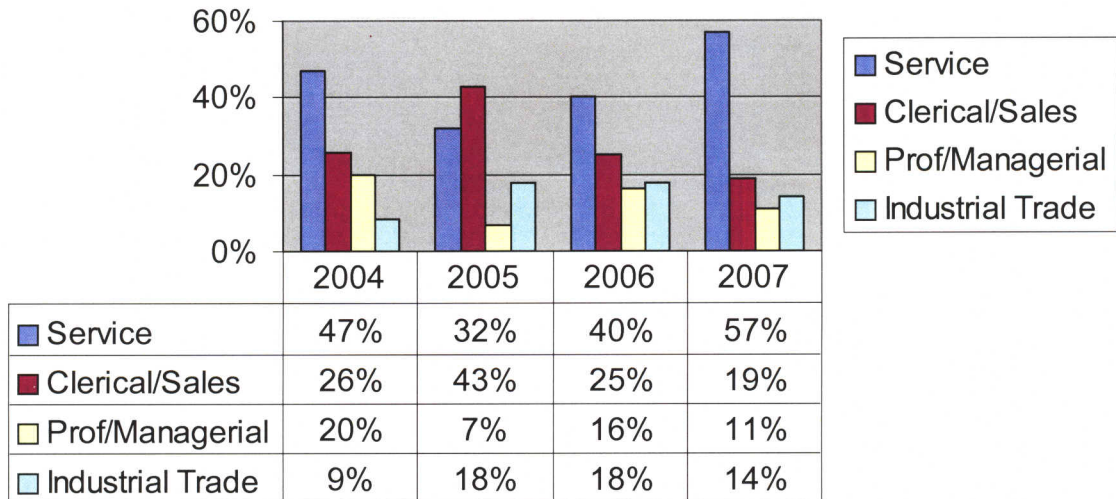
“My co-workers are so nice. They’re really understanding. And, you know what? People seem to like me. It feels great to be able to help our visitors.”

Kiely’s advice to others who might feel stuck in a rut? “Go to Courage Center and see what a job assessment indicates you’re qualified to do. Don’t be afraid: just *try*. It really is that simple.”

# VOCATIONAL SERVICES

*A Better Life for Minnesotans with Disabilities  
A Better Deal for Minnesota Taxpayers*

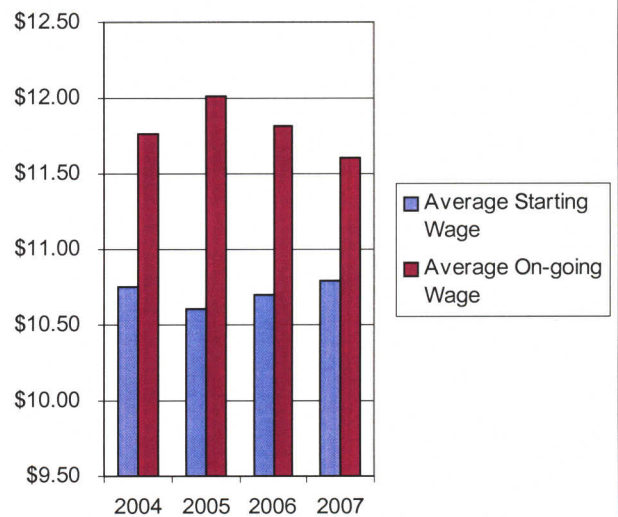
## Courage Center's Placement by Vocational Category



**In 2007, Courage Center's Vocational Services assisted 92 individuals to achieve and/or maintain employment.**

- Average length of job retention is 3.10 years
- Average hours worked was 28.7 hours a week
- Average starting wage was \$10.79 per hour
- Average hourly increase of \$.49
- Average on-going wage was \$11.61

## Wages Earned



COURAGE CENTER is a nonprofit rehabilitation and resource center that advances the lives of children and adults experiencing barriers to health and independence. At Courage Center, we specialize in treating brain injury, spinal cord injury, stroke, chronic pain, autism, and disabilities experienced since birth. Founded in 1928, Minneapolis-based Courage Center offers advanced technologies and innovation provided in part through the efforts of thousands of volunteers and donors.

For more information about Courage Center, visit [CourageCenter.org](http://CourageCenter.org).