Caregiver, Inc. to Expand Management Leadership Program, Focus on Superior Service Delivery

LEAD Program's First Year Results in Texas Show Marked Uptick in Employee Retention

Within two months of her arrival in summer 2017 as Chief Human Resources Officer of the then-2500-employee Caregiver, Inc., Dau Tucker was charged by Caregiver CEO Mark Lashley with investing in a strategic initiative to train company field leaders how to excel in their roles. Dedicated direct support providers (DSPs), who had deep understanding about caring for clients, had often been deservingly promoted to a management role. All too frequently they lacked helpful preparation and training for their new responsibilities. This was certainly true for over 800 Texas-based Caregiver managers. Lashley's growth strategy depended on company stability and a leadership development program such as LEAD would be the solution. LEAD would make an impact to an industry that has challenges with high turnover. As managed care for IDD services expands and the industry becomes more competitive, Lashley has confidence that his company can blaze a trail to superior service delivery by focusing on his front line – DSPs and their managers.

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> *CEO Mark Lashley*

Tucker would lead this charge, and she was ready.

Prior to her arrival, Dau Tucker has had over twenty years of healthcare human resource experience, in acute care healthcare systems and multi-group physician practices. Tucker has experience in physician recruitment, designing physician compensation programs, developing physician contract programs and leading medical group acquisitions and mergers as it relates to human resources and physician relations. Formerly the Executive Director of Human Resources at JPS Health Network in Fort Worth, Texas, and Director of Human Resources and Physician Development for Salem Health in Oregon, Tucker also led human resources for Caritas Good Samaritan Medical Center in Massachusetts before

serving as a Principal/Senior Human Resource Consultant advising clients like Jordan Hospital (Plymouth, MA), Christ Hospital (Cincinnati, Ohio), and Roger Williams Hospital (Providence, Rhode Island).

So, for Caregiver, game on. Tucker's objectives were to guide and grow business and organizational leaders, inspire engagement and improve professional identity. The goal was to improve employee retention and be on path to Employer of Choice in the IDD industry. As a result of LEAD, turnover at Caregiver was reduced by 30 percent.

Inspiring Creativity, Honoring Compliance

Too often, service for the IDD population was primarily focused on state mandates and rules for individuals' care without focus on developing the people who provide the care. Why not be creative while compliant and develop a program to enhance the skills of our leaders while creating an environment of high engagement.

Tucker's game plan was based on a formula that would invest in building leadership skills in the management team and improving employee development for the long term, influencing their ability to adapt to change, welcome technology and foster loyalty.

Dau Tucker (right) implemented her plan with the support of Lashley by first expanding her department by creating an HR Business Partner model. This model provides no office space for the new HR Business Partners with the intent that a virtual office would give them the flexibility to work with the field managers, keeping a finger on the pulse of employee satisfaction, communication, and handling issues – in the moment. The HR Business Partners work virtually, with boots-on-the-ground availability to support the field managers as needed. Tucker knew the process would be a journey, and it would take effort and creativity. She morphed what had been once called simply a *training* department into the *learning and organizational development department*. She developed the curriculum and launch ideas. Her capstone program needed a name.

She called the program LEAD: Leadership Expedition and Development Program.

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> *Dau Tucker,*
> *CG Chief Human Resources Officer*

Launching the Program

The two-day introductory LEAD session was held in April 2018 in Austin, gathering 100 selected managers from Texas and Tennessee. The program consisted of understanding the IDD landscape and the future of the industry, conversational and emotional intelligence, and defining culture.

She wanted to provide attendees with opportunities to interact with executives and experience hands-on ways to discuss challenges and solutions. They heard from expert guest speakers such as Elix Cintron, Executive Coach out of Boston, Massachusetts and former Deputy Executive Commissioner of Texas Health and Human Services, Gary Jessee. Participants took a short field trip to a downtown Austin high-tech enterprise, Spredfast, to get a feel for a culture where people deal with rapid change daily, face frequent challenges and create a work environment and communication tools to make coming to work enjoyable.

The atmosphere at the session was full of enjoyment,

laughter, fellowship and fun. Tucker assigned a LEAD Ambassador for each leader to serve as his/her own personal concierge. Participants could rely on their ambassadors to text reminders of event activities, dinner and snack schedules, and help where needed. This experience was to display the importance of service and servant leadership. Attendees played company bingo, matching execs' unique characteristics to the person, filling in the square though face-to-face discovery conversations. The event would not be complete without dinner at Punch Bowl Social for virtual gaming, bowling, giant jenga matches, and watching Lashley in the karaoke booth surrounded by staff cheering him on.

On the last day of the event, Mason Morgan, President of Texas Operations said, "This feels like the last day of summer camp."

ADVANCING STATE-WIDE, SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT TEAMS

But it was so much more than that. The session launched a process that will soon expand company-wide, with an energy that, Tucker believes, has staying power. They've taken LEAD mini-sessions into various other Texas regions, with great success. Collectively, satisfaction rate of the program is 100 percent, with staff asking for more. And the program will move into Tennessee, Indiana, and Ohio before the end of the first quarter for 2019, with some variations in presentation, perhaps depending more on technology.

"In Texas, reimbursement rates have not increased in nearly 8 years, making it challenging to create a robust compensation program for our staff," she explained. "Those challenges do not mean we must limit respect for such valuable work, individual achievement, employee satisfaction, and important recognition for accomplishments."

Knowing that learning and development programs like LEAD are there for employees who want to advance is important. Having each employee feel valued and appreciated is mandatory. Tucker is setting the stage for an environment in which state-wide, site-based management teams contribute their own best practices and fresh ideas for cost savings and financial stewardship, all to help further refine an evolving company culture that advances employee engagement and, ideally, meets retention goals.

"Larger organizations like ours have the resources to do this and the teams to lead the learning and organizational development efforts," said Lashley.

"This goes beyond recruiting and retention," he emphasized. "The underlying principles of the program form the basis for handling our changing industry environment, adapting to rapidly advancing technology and growth opportunities, and operating successfully within our improving economy. States may be slow to keep up with rate increases. But we must move quickly, efficiently, and creatively to stay at the top of our game."

Dau Tucker has certainly accepted the challenge with much success.

ABOUT CAREGIVER, INC.

Caregiver, Inc., is a privately-held company with over 3500 employees within the headquarters support group 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, HHC of Ohio, and Omni Support Services of Tennessee. 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 (left). Company headquarters are at 4100 International Plaza, Suite 800, Fort Worth, Texas 76109.