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Kim Hoy (left) is a courier for BC Libraries. (Photo by Lee Pellegrini)

EDUCATION - Every weekday, Mindy Beaulieu, a clerical assistant at the Boston College School of Social Work, rises at 5:30 am to commute to campus. She is always punctual and has not missed a day of work in three years. That dedication is a hallmark of the 23 BC employees who are part of the university's award-winning Supported Employment Program (SEP), which provides jobs for adults with developmental disabilities.

Beaulieu distributes mail and oversees the office supply inventory at BC's School of Social Work, where she has worked since 2006. She also serves as an unofficial ambassador for the school, greeting new employees.

Boston College's Supported Employment Program started in 1987 with seven employees, six of whom are still working in BC Dining Services. In total, there are 17 SEP participants working in Dining Services, which has partnered with SEP since the program's inception. Other SEP participants are employed in the nursing school, human resources, mail services, BC's libraries and its bookstore.

SEP participant Kim Hoy works as a library courier, transporting books between BC's several libraries. Hoy said the best part of the job has been meeting so many nice people.

Each SEP participant works one-to-one with a job coach, who handles training and assessment and provides ongoing support as needed. “The coaches’ energy and creativity is what makes this work so well. They give a lot of time and effort to each individual,” said SEP director Mary Brown, who has been with the program for 24 years.

That support is key, according to Senior Library Assistant Elvira Reynolds, who has supervised SEP participants for more than a decade and is Hoy’s supervisor. “You’re not on your own. SEP is fully behind you. It’s been a wonderful experience.”

SEP is considered a model work program for people with disabilities and was honored by the Arc of Massachusetts, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life and services for Massachusetts citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Brown says there is a large demand for SEP positions and she has a wait-list that runs three to five years.

“These jobs are so precious to these employees,” said Brown, citing the pride and personal satisfaction, as well as the social interaction, enjoyed by the SEP workers. “It’s the right thing to do.”

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