

Agency aids disabled find jobs, stay working

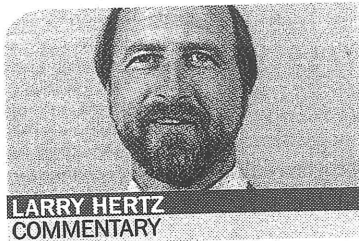
Five days a week, Andrea Amrod shows up for work in the kitchen of Ferguson Hall on the campus of the Culinary Institute of America. The 23-year-old Hyde Park resident buses tables, keeps track of dishes and silverware and performs various other tasks to keep the student and faculty dining room running smoothly.

Amrod gets high marks from her supervisors, not only for how she does her job, but for her infectious, bubbly personality that brightens everyone's day at Ferguson Hall.

Andrea Amrod is good at her job — and the job has been good for Andrea Amrod.

"I'm a lot stronger now than I was when I first came to work here, (in January 2008)," she said last week as she took a break from her tasks at Ferguson Hall. "I used to have to take muscle relaxants, and I don't need them anymore."

Born with cerebral palsy, her left side was always considerably weaker than her right, and she had difficulty performing some physical tasks. There's little doubt her



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COMMENTARY

disability was a factor when she applied for various jobs after graduating from Franklin D. Roosevelt High School and was turned down, time after time.

Career coaching provided

Then Amrod heard about an agency called Abilities First, a nonprofit agency that provides various services for people with disabilities — including helping them find and keep a job. With the help of an Abilities First job coach, she landed a job at a Marist College dining hall in 2006 before moving on to the Culinary Institute.

Amrod said she's grateful to the agency for giving her the tools and the confidence to succeed. She plans to enroll at Dutchess Community College in the fall, major-

ing in Web site design.

"[Abilities First] really helped me get my foot in the door and show what I could do," she said.

Abilities First is helping more than 300 men and women find and keep jobs in the community, and the agency serves more than 2,000 others with educational and residential programs throughout the county.

You can help Abilities First carry on its work by being a sponsor, or a participant, in the agency's unique annual fundraiser, the Women's Cup Challenge and Golf Clinic, to be held June 29 at Beekman Country Club.

In addition to the tournament itself, the event features LPGA touring pro Nancy Harvey, who will conduct clinics for female golfers of all abilities.

To sign up for the tournament and the clinic, contact Regina Fitzgerald Donato at reginadonato@abilitiesfirstny.org or call 845-485-9803 ext. 384.

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