

# Orange woman finds dream job with Easterseals in Maplewood

By Amanda Valentovic on June 5, 2021 · Comments Off



Photo Courtesy of Terese Kelly Greer

Nichelle Oglesby, of Orange, has found her dream job with Easterseals in Maplewood, where she helps those who are deaf or hard of hearing, just like she is. **ORANGE / MAPLEWOOD, NJ** — Nichelle Oglesby was looking for a new job six months ago, when she reconnected with the Easterseals New Jersey office in Maplewood, a place that had formerly helped her in her previous work in retail. Oglesby is hard of hearing, so working with customers was difficult, because she and the customers couldn't easily communicate. Now an administrator for the disabilities nonprofit's employment services for the deaf and hard-of-hearing program, she's on the opposite side of the coin and helping people like her find work and communicate while doing it.

"I had been a client," the Orange resident said in a May 28 phone interview, using an interpreter, about Easterseals New Jersey, which helped her find and use assistive hearing technology while she worked with job coaches. "So everything makes a lot of sense. Now the job coach I worked with is my coworker. I knew people here. It's my dream job."

Working with people is Oglesby's favorite part of the job, and she's good at it now that she's been both a client and an employee of the same company. She had a good experience with Easterseals as a

client, so it was an easy transition.

“I didn’t think people would be able to help me in depth,” she said. “Prior to that, I felt as a deaf person that I had no identity. My manager (at Easterseals) is also deaf, and I had never thought about that before. I’ve always had a can-do attitude, but now I’m where I never thought I could be.”

Oglesby has been deaf since she was 4 years old and found ways to adapt in school; she always sat in the front row, so she could be as close to the teacher as possible. She also reads lips. But her hearing loss still presented challenges.

“In school you have to listen, but how do you listen if you can’t hear?” she said.

At other jobs, Oglesby made and wore a label that said “I am deaf,” to alert customers, and they would use a pencil and paper to talk or find another way to show each other what they were saying. She also reads lips with her husband and daughter, who are both hearing. The COVID-19 pandemic has made lip reading harder, of course, now that masks are covering mouths.

“When masks started it caused some anxiety,” Oglesby said. “I was thinking, ‘What do I do?’ Nothing has been normal, of course. But I’ve been able to use the phone and I’ve had a lot of help.”

She’s also been working on her sign language skills, which are improving as she keeps practicing. Her husband, whose sister is also deaf, is learning with her.

“I’m always learning,” she said. “Right now I’m conversational with sign language. It’s like learning any other language — you just have to keep using it. If you don’t use it, you lose it.”

Oglesby works in Easterseals’ Maplewood office, but the nonprofit organization helps deaf and hard-of-hearing people all over the state. The most important thing, she said, is to give people with disabilities the chance to do whatever kind of job they want to do.

“Remember that people with disabilities can achieve,” she said. “They can do whatever job they want. We can do anything. It’s important for others to give them opportunities. If an interpreter

is needed, go with it and figure it out. Just give them the opportunity.”

👉 Easterseals, FEATURED



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