

# The BEACON

January 2012



*"A new beginning"*

## Anniversaries in January

### *Congratulations*

to all of you who have been here for 5 years or more!

Avis Wolske-Baker	24
Donna Ernst	18
Marni Waznik	18
Susan Wheeler	18
Andrew Wolf	16
Debra Brown	15
Sharon Moss	15
Sadie Bygd	14
Terri Evans	14
Joan Hauck	14
William Stone	14
Vicki Ellis	13
Sheryl Planque	13
Melissa Conner	10
Jennifer Dippmann	10
Linda Dalland	8
Debra Dolney	8
Richard Knudtson	8
Jude Nellessen	8
Julie Dotz	7
Sarah Mohr	7
John Stearns	7
Jacqueline Brenizer	6
Joy Christner	6
Darren Cox	6
M. Jane Funk	6
Sue Laier	6
Chris LeClair	6
Katherine Mozer	6
Scott Offerosky	6
Wendy Prigge	6
Anjuli Simon	6
Warren Stouffer	6
Donald Wheeler	6
Elizabeth Wilcox	6
Dawn Connell	5
Leona Guider	5
Mandy Haessly	5
Scott Krause	5
Paige Meier	5
Leigh Wahlen	5

## CEO Corner

by Dave Barnard

Remember the statement - "Stuff Happens!"

(Actually I replaced the first word with "stuff" to maintain a G rating for this article). When that phrase was first uttered it ran through our culture like wildfire. It seemed to become the standard response to every problem that arose. Well, now we have a new phrase that allows us a quick way to deal with all of our problems - "It is what it is!" - and the fact is I have a problem with this one. I've got to be honest with you; I have been known to use the "stuff happens" phrase myself. The reality is that "stuff" does happen - but the statement leaves the listener with a sense of "OK - it happened" now what do we do about it? The problem I have with "It is what it is" is that too many people seem to use it as the final statement - the end of the issue. The sense following this statement is one of "yup, you're right, it is what it is, and so there really isn't anything we can do about it".

All right, so now you're thinking, Dave,

what is your point? My point is that nothing ever has to remain what it is. In fact, we have the ability to affect change on anything that happens to us. This company was raised on the premise that the best way to predict the future is to create it and the only way to create the future is to take action. When faced with a situation that could be sloughed off with a simple "it is what it is," we need to take action to make "it" what it can be and not simply stand by and wring our hands in anguish of what "it" is.

In Aurora's 25 years of existence and there has not been one situation that we stood idly by simply accepting "what it is." We have stepped up and gone to work to make "it" what is best for the consumers we serve and for the company that we own.

I charge all staff of Aurora to understand that stuff happens, but it never has to remain what it is. This quote is one of Robert F. Kennedy's famous statements, "There are those that look at things the way they are, and ask why . . . I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?"

Our dreams and our actions are what have made us who we are, and will continue to shape who we become for a long time in to the future.

Thanks for all that you do to make our future one of continued success!

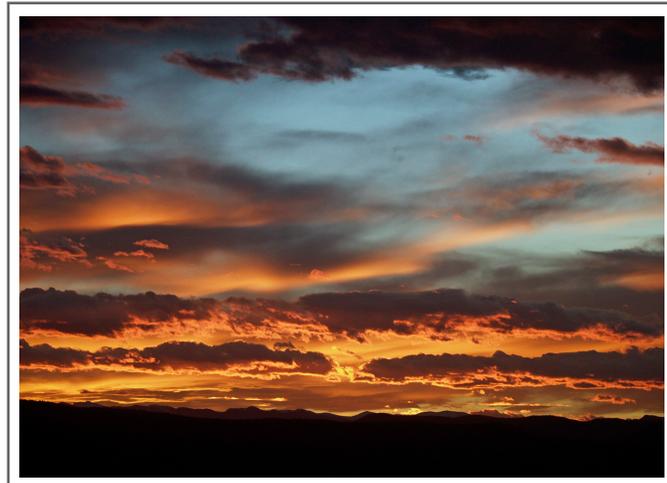


Photo by Dave Barnard

**Aurora**  
community services

Dave

# Employee of the Year

by Donna Ernst

The employee of the year is chosen for his or her outstanding work performance and awesome attitude in working with consumers, their co-workers and their job. What you may not know is this:

## Central Region's Employee of the Year - Afton Simpson.

Paige Meier, Program Director says, "Afton is the PM2 at Operation 011 in Menomonie and has worked there since Dec. 2005. When I asked for some testimonials on Afton's work with the guys at 011, it didn't take long for them to come pouring in from case managers, guardians, consumers and Afton's family. They all shared their observations and gratitude for all she does for the gentlemen living at this home. Afton mixes her professional and personal life to assure that each guy knows the meaning of family. If they desire a family holiday, then they simply go home with her for the holiday. One guardian listed the following words, which remind her of Afton: diligent, industrious, caring, kind, thoughtful, considerate, compassionate, tactful, supportive, steady, serene, calm and committed to her goal." I am very proud to have Afton on our team! Congratulations and thanks for all you do Afton!

on call management but the call center as well with the assistance he provides in filling open shifts.

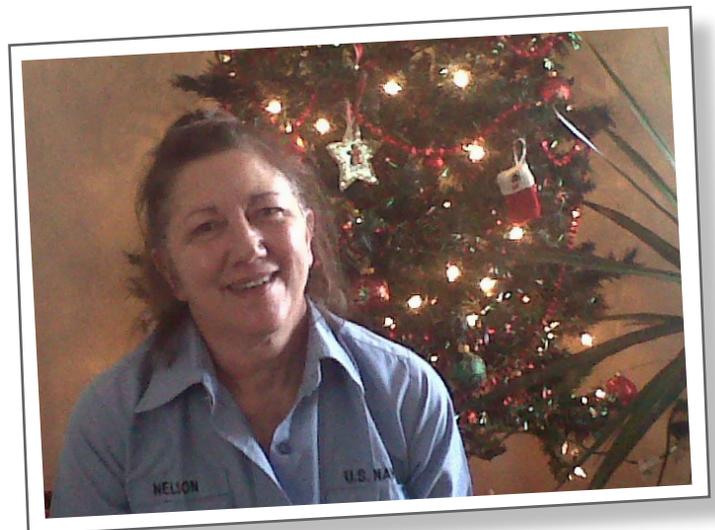


## Eastern Region's Employee of the Year - Patrick Ryan.

Patrick has worked at a number of operations in the Eastern region, and was an integral part in opening up a new operation this summer. He is always willing to lend a helping hand and jump in wherever he is needed. Patrick does everything he can to ensure that the consumers have the opportunity to live their lives to the fullest including taking them on vacations. He can be relied on to manage tough situations, and is an asset to not only the

## Northwest Region's Employee of the Year - Lorrie Nelson.

Emily Mujwid reports, this year's Northwest Region Employee of the Year goes to a staff that has worked for Aurora since December of 1998. She is reliable, picking up shifts for other staff, working oddball shifts to make sure that the operations schedules are filled, at times with little to no notice. Not only is she reliable but is also detail oriented. Her attention to cleaning and organization is amazing. Her attention to the consumer cares is equally wonderful. She works in a medically involved home with total cares and doesn't blink an eye at providing these cares, always with an upbeat, happy tone. She has also worked at a home with high



continued on next page

behavioral needs for the past year. She does not hesitate to take on the challenges of working with individuals with communication issues, self injurious behaviors, destructive or aggressive behaviors. She does not give up, and readily takes suggestions and does not hesitate to add some of her own knowledge to various situations, always with an upbeat approach and a smile. I am very honored and proud to present the award to Lorrie. Thanks for all you do Lorrie, we appreciate you. Congratulations!

**Vocational Department's Employee of the Year - Sherri Pierce.** Due to her long tenure with the Center, Sherri knows how to work with every consumer on an individual basis. Cheri Butkiewicz, Center Program Coordinator says, "Sherri has a different plan or technique when working with each consumer. Whether it's engaging a consumer in an activity, de-escalating a behavior, or motivating a consumer she job coaches, Sherri has a way of enhancing the life of each consumer at the Center." Within the last six months, there have been many changes at the Plover Center. Sherri remains the one constant. She prides herself on being the first one with her key in the door, and the one who also locks up at the end of every day. Each consumer knows when he/she walks in the door, Sherri will be there with a warm greeting and an upbeat attitude. Another constant is Sherri's calls and text messages to the Program Coordinator. At 6 a.m., "I thought of a way to make the route work." At dinner time, "Can we switch the lunch outing to Wednesday?" At night, "What do you think of this art project for tomorrow?" Sherri lives and breathes her job, it is much more than an eight hour shift or a paycheck every two weeks. Sherri herself reiterates the sentiment by stating, "This is not a job, they are not just consumers, but my family."



## Spine Care

When getting out of car, first open the door completely, then swing your legs out to the side and pivot on the buttocks, so the entire body moves as a unit. Do not twist the lower back. Place one hand on the seat and the other hand on the car frame. Scoot forward and place feet under the hips, lean forward and push with one hand while pulling with the other hand, and use your leg muscles to come up to a standing position. To sit down, reverse the procedure.

When retrieving things from a low shelf, instead of bending over and twisting, it is better to kneel down or squat in front of the shelf, pick up the objects while holding them close to body, and then stand up using the strong leg muscles, remembering to keep the back straight.

Many activities require standing for a while such as brushing your teeth, ironing, washing dishes, or folding laundry. To avoid fatigue, first try to break these duties up into smaller time periods. Second, place one foot on a step or ledge. Do not bend at the waist, instead bend at the knees and keep your back straight. Third, use one hand to provide support, using the other to complete the task. Lastly, try to do the activity at a comfortable height.

When doing activities that are above chest level such as washing windows, painting, changing light bulbs, or hanging pictures, always use a stable step stool so that these activities are at a more comfortable level. Another alternative is to use a long handled reacher or brush. These are several things to remember when performing duties such as vacuuming, sweeping, shoveling, or raking. Stay close to the work area. Use your arms and leg muscles while keeping your back straight. Avoid twisting movements, and use your body weight to help with the job.

**Pulling:** Remember, try to think of a way to push first. First, test the load to see how easy it is to pull. Make sure the path is clear. Stand facing the object, placing your hands on the object. Place one leg behind the other. Bend your knees and keep your back straight. Tighten the abdominal muscles and slowly pull with your arms and legs. Once moving, continue to pull in a slow and steady manner. When ready to stop pulling, slowly ease up, and return to a standing position.

**Carrying:** When carrying things like boxes or other items that can be held, hold the object close to your trunk, do not twist while in motion. If carrying things like suitcases or handbags, observe the following rules: Try to carry equal weight in both arms. When picking up bags, keep back straight and bend at the knees. Do not twist while carrying the bags. Lower the bags by bending at the knees, not the back.

**Pushing:** First, test the load to see how easy it is to push. Make sure the path is clear. Stand facing the object, placing your hands on the object(s). Place one leg behind the other, bend at the knees and keep your back straight. Tighten the abdominal muscles and slowly push with your arms and legs. Once moving, continue to push in a slow and steady manner. When ready to stop pushing, slowly ease up, and return to a standing position.

\*Aurora's topic of the month for January is BODY MECHANICS. Check your safety calendar and see what you can do to improve and/or maintain body mechanics personally and professionally.

(Information provided by: [www.painpointpillowsource.com](http://www.painpointpillowsource.com))

# Happy Holidays from the Eau Claire Day Center

Consumers from the Eau Claire Day Center have been busy over the holidays. The annual trip to the Mall of America has become a tradition for consumers to check out the decorations. We will also spent time at Oakwood Mall in Eau Claire, the holiday display at Irvine Park in Chippewa Falls, a holiday dance, baking holiday cookies, and making the Center look like Santa's workshop. We had a great time!



## Life Photo of the Month



Realize and Embrace **Authentic Living**

# Don't do it!

Resist the urge! Don't do it!

**Don't** make a negative comment. **Ignore** the commentary that points out, and engages in, conversation about the perceived inadequacies of other people.

Negative energy is **toxic**.

**Don't** give it a chance to come in contact with you.

Stay resolved in your belief that people are **REAL** and **perfect**, just the way they are.

**Keepin' it REAL**,  
Holly and your friends  
at REALiving

**REALiving**  
A Call to Live Your LIFE

[www.REALiving.net](http://www.REALiving.net) • [blog.REALiving.net](http://blog.REALiving.net)



## Introducing... your **NEW**

### Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Resource Website!

We are excited to announce a new website is now available for **ALL Aurora employees** that is meant to give you some tools in managing the "bumps" that sometimes come along in life.

We are passionate about helping you live your **BEST** life. That means we are committed to providing **accessible, responsive and creative tools** for you to use.

The tools are meant to build strengths within you, including highlighting and fine tuning the **REAL** assets you already have, which is the key to **REALiving** (realize and embrace authentic living).

You will be receiving a card, shortly, that has your login information to the new EAP website:  
**[www.EAP.AuroraServices.com](http://www.EAP.AuroraServices.com)**.

# Vocational Spotlight

by Jody Kreuger

When starting with the Aurora Vocational Services team in January 2011, I had no idea what to expect. I had never worked with individuals with disabilities before and knew that I had A LOT to learn. After sitting through several meetings and soaking up as much information as I could, it was time for me to meet my first Aurora consumer.

Patti was referred to Aurora Vocational Services in January 2011 for a Supported Employment Assessment. Patti had worked in a sheltered workshop for the past 23 years and after a very successful assessment process, it was determined that Patti was ready to start looking for community employment opportunities.



After months of searching, filling out applications, and even a few disappointments along the way, a great opportunity arose for Patti in July 2011.

Having previously contacted the manager at Highland Fitness-EastRidge a few months back about any open positions, it was a pleasant surprise to get a call from him looking for someone to fill a cleaning position. I immediately thought of Patti. She had done great during

her cleaning assessment and would be a perfect fit for the position. I brought Patti in for an interview with the manager, and he offered to have her start the following week. Patti started a four week work experience, working six hours per week.

In order for Patti to be successful at her new job, she would need to learn a new bus route. After riding the bus to work with Patti for her first two shifts, she tried it by herself and had no problems. Patti worked with a job coach for the four week work experience. During this time, Patti's speed and attention to detail improved greatly. A visual task list was also used to assist Patti to be as independent as possible. This consisted of pictures of Patti completing all job tasks. At the end of the four week work experience, I had the pleasure of the telling Patti that she would be hired on as a Highland Fitness employee. She was very excited about the news. Patti had also reached the goal of no longer needing a job coach.

Patti takes much pride in her job and enjoys going to work. Recently the manager even added an extra shift each week to Patti's schedule because of the hard work she has put in. Patti feels like she is a part of the team at Highland Fitness and I know they feel the same way about her. James, the manager at Highland Fitness-EastRidge had this to say about Patti, "Cleaning and customer service coincide with everything a business does. If you are not clean and happy, anything else you are doing will be overlooked. It is not easy to find someone to fill both of these roles. Patti came to us and exceeded all of our expectations. Her bubbly attitude toward everyone and enthusiasm to do an outstanding job cleaning are a joy to watch every day. Thank you so much Patti for everything you do. It is a pleasure to have you here."

# Consumer Spotlight

by Brian Anderson

This month's Consumer Spotlight goes to Robert at Operation 039. Robert has recently moved to the home in Hudson, where he currently lives with three roommates. Robert is one of those people who can bring a smile to anyone's face, and he has been doing just that to the staff of ARA ever since he started with us in July of 1992.

Robert is a multi-faceted individual who aside from his great sense of humor, also possesses a great talent for craft making. Robert has an undeniable creative streak in him, and he manifests it in the things he makes. Be it pot holders that he makes with his wooden loom, or the various things he crochets (like hats and small blankets), Robert brings his creativity and passion to the table each and every day. When he isn't creating things, or using his humor to brighten someone's day, Robert enjoys browsing garage sales, keeping his eyes peeled for great deals, something I think we can all relate to! Robert loves to visit with staff as well, and enjoys doing a whole

slew of other activities with his Aurora friends. Playing video games, listening to music or simply watching TV (especially game shows and Westerns) highlight some of these fun activities. How could you not enjoy that? For the more technically minded, Robert also enjoys restoring radios back to working order, making him a wizard with his hands.

Robert is a prime example of a driven, genuine individual, who simply loves living life to the fullest. With the holiday seasons rapidly approaching and New Years right around the corner, we can all take a page out of Robert's book. Finding something you are passionate about that brings you joy and improves the lives of others around you, is one of the greatest gifts we can be given. We should savor every opportunity to do these things, as Robert clearly demonstrates by example. So with that being said, we congratulate Robert for being our Consumer Spotlight winner, as well as thank him for showing us how to better ourselves!

# A Day in the Life

by Sue Wheeler

Bucky Hinz describes himself as "kind of a geek." He likes super heroes, X-Men movies, and a variety of video games.

Bucky works at operation 129 in Wausau with 4 guys in their early 20's and 30's but works primarily one-on-one as a life coach with one consumer. If you read the Consumer Spotlight article in last month's Beacon, Bucky was pictured with the consumer in that article. He says



he loves to work with the guys at this house because they can do a lot of different activities. Bucky and one of the consumers once walked from the bottom of Rib Mountain to the top 3 times in one week. Now, he says, the consumer doesn't care to do that again! He states the guys are good conversationalists and can talk about a lot of different things. They enjoy going to the mall, going out to eat, and shooting baskets, weather permitting.

Speaking of basketball, at 6'6" tall, Bucky used to play a lot of basketball but states that he doesn't have as much time anymore with work and demands of home life. He is a Miami Heat fan and likes to watch LeBron James play; however, he also has a daughter, so some of his "off" time is spent with her doing activities they both enjoy.

Bucky says he definitely sees a connection between his personal and work lives. He's an active guy, and so are the consumers he works with. They not only enjoy some of the same things, but are willing to try new activities too. He says he sees how people can change. Learning how Aurora works, he has seen first hand that progress takes longer than some people may think. Working with a highly behavioral consumer, he now knows that it will take time for some people to realize that the staff will be there for them and that they can trust the staff.

Bucky says that working with consumers has shown him the value in being more patient with his own child. He says that he doesn't sweat the small stuff anymore – it isn't worth the power struggle.

That's for sure a super-hero outlook on life!

## Safety Contest

Program Managers were asked to encourage their team to make a creative, visual reminder about safety, getting all team members involved.

The winners are:  
Eastern region - Op 122  
Central region - Op 026  
Northwest region - the Day Center

Each winner will receive \$50 from to purchase things they need at their site. Congratulations to everyone!

If you have any questions or comments about the Beacon, please send them to: [Beacon@AuroraServices.com](mailto:Beacon@AuroraServices.com) or mail to: Stavroula at Aurora Community Services, P.O. Box 68, Menomonie, WI 54751.



by Kathi Tollefson