

The BEACON

April 2011



"A new beginning"

Anniversaries in April

Congratulations

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

David Barnard	25
Pamela Barnard	25
Deborah Neuman	25
James Neuman	25
Kelly McIntyre	21
Lynn Corrado	15
Terrance Spangenberg	15
Judy Hidde	13
Robert Novak	13
Theodore Belisle	12
Jennifer Blietz	12
Tammy Roskos	10
Amy Peterson	9
Melissa Stoneburg	9
Jennifer Giedd	8
Patricia Brown	7
Donna Pickel	7
Rhonda Bungartz	6
Tonya Hart	6
Cheryl Kluz	6
Tammie Krutza	6
Celena Luchinski	6
Kyle Schemenauer	6
Margie Wakefield	6
Nicole Burdick	5
Tammy Huehn	5
David Schoenrock	5
Anna Schuster	5
Jennifer Todd	5

CEO Corner

by Dave Barnard



As I indicated in last month's Beacon I plan to use this forum for the next few months to give a brief history of your company, Aurora Community Services. Last month I explained what was behind starting Aurora and how we came up with the name. This month I'll touch on the first five years of our existence.

Legend has it that in April of 1986 two guys stood out in the pouring rain waiting to bid on two beds that would be used in a new CBRF (Group Home back then) they were starting in Menomonie, WI. That legend is true and was the very humble beginnings of this company a quarter century ago.

Typically when a new business begins there is some level of fanfare that whirls

around the "Grand Opening". Chamber of Commerce dignitaries, community members, business leaders, etc. gather around and have a ribbon cutting ceremony. Media is there for pictures and news articles are released. That was not the case with Aurora. We bought the beds, went to our original CBRF home in Menomonie and started contacting counties to let them know who we were and that we wanted to provide a new type of service; one with services designed around the individual.

As is typical with many new businesses we had doors shut in our face. The line we got used to hearing was "Thanks, but all of our people are fine in a



Focus on Fitness

by Wellness Team

CEO Corner cont'd

variety of institutions so no need for you. Good luck." We started our first home as a CBRF because it was the only thing people understood at that time. Our proposal for one, two or even three person homes were unknown commodities and therefore were not in demand.

As it turned out there was a need for CBRF's for individuals with Chronic Mental Illness so that was where we began. We received referrals for individuals who, in many instances, were in need of acute psychiatric hospitalization. Many were referred to test our abilities and to see what we were made of. We spent many, many hours making sure we were providing high quality services - daytime, nighttime, early mornings and seven days a week. We did what was needed to "do the right thing". It took from April 1986 to December of 1986 to fill our first CBRF. Neither Jim nor I drew a single dollar in that first year until just before Christmas of 1986. At that time we each drew a check of \$500 so we could buy our families some Christmas gifts. We had given up comfortable county positions with guaranteed income and benefits to receive our first year's salary of \$500 and no benefits.

Good fortune smiled on us in 1987 when St. Croix County referred two ladies to us to "try out this new concept of services designed for the individual". We had been very successful in our original CBRF with a consumer who had been very challenging. Due to our success they decided to give this new idea a try. Our very first two-person home was designed for two lovely ladies - Ruth and Millie (see the feature article on Millie in this Beacon). When we went to the institution to meet Ruth and Millie (both had lived decades in the institution) the staff told us they had a betting pool that they wouldn't last two weeks in this new community placement. Well, 23 years later we can only assume that the bets have been paid off.

When other counties heard of the success of this new model we utilized with Ruth and Millie the flood gates opened.

Dave

"An anniversary is a time to celebrate the joys of today, the memories of yesterday, and the hopes of tomorrow."

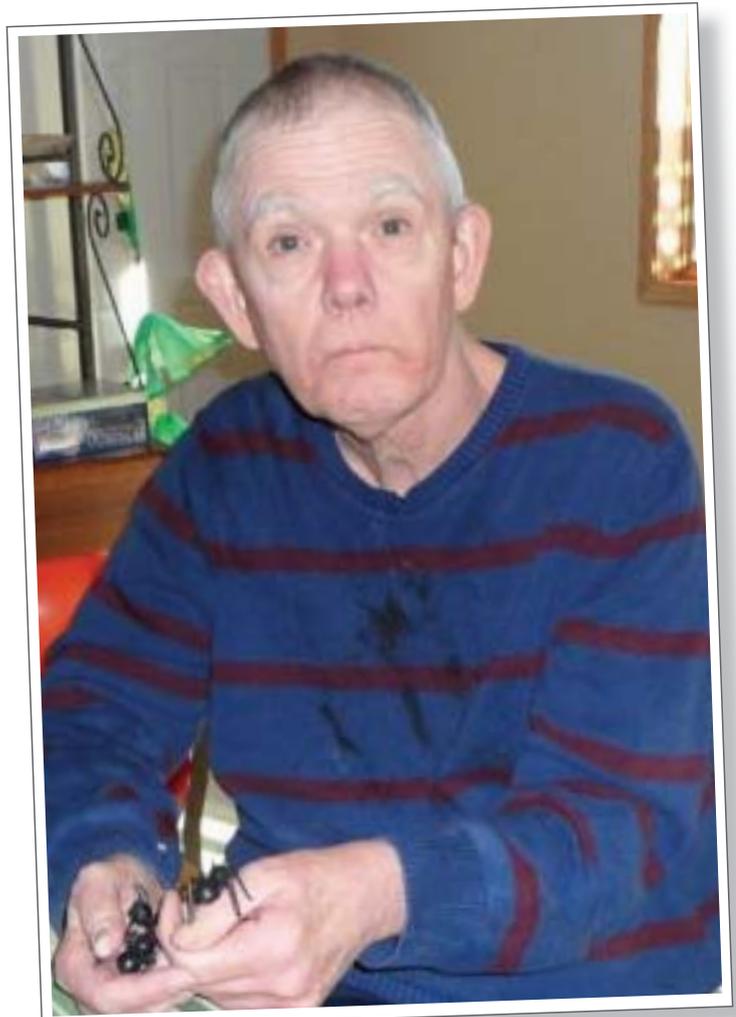
Author Unknown

It's time to **Focus on Fitness!** Good behavior needs repeating before it can become a "habit". The same holds true for healthy fitness behavior.

The 2011 Fitness Challenge is designed to help create new habits by encouraging participants to focus on one healthy behavior at a time. The challenge has been broken up into 4 different segments-allowing you to focus on only one key area of fitness at a time: fruits and veggies, water consumption, and exercise. The final segment is your opportunity to combine the healthy behaviors learned during the first three segments into a final "power focus". Each of these, and more, contribute to your overall well-being.

Focus on Fitness will begin on April 1st and run through May 31st. You may participate in as many segments as you like. There will be prize drawings for each segment with guaranteed winners from each region! Contact your local office for additional information!

Life Photo of the Month



Trivia Question: What kind of car was purchased as the first Aurora company car?

Employees of the Month

by Donna Ernst

The employee of the month 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:

Tanya Leisgang is the Central Region's choice for Employee of the Month. Sue Hertz, PD, says "Tanya is trained at all the sites in Black River Falls and never hesitates to work where she is needed the most. She always has a great attitude and spreads her positive vibe to others. Tanya is a great problem solver and can usually figure out how to get several things accomplished at one time. Tanya knows all aspects of her position and is a fantastic trainer with new staff and a true advocate for the consumers. Tanya seems to dominate the majority of the fish cards at team meetings & I hope she knows how much we appreciate her."

Jena Malzahn is the Eastern Region's Employee Of The Month. Jena is a caring and dedicated employee who has been with Aurora since April of 2007. Since starting her employment with Aurora Jena has worked at two different operations - 125 and 126. Jena currently works 2nd shift at site 125 with three ladies. When asked what her favorite part of her job is Jena replied, "Just being with the ladies, I learn something new every day and they are always surprising me." Jena had a hard time picking a "favorite" outing with the ladies but always has fun when they make a trip to the zoo. When Jena has free time she likes to spend it with her family and her dog Brio - a Chihuahua she adopted from the animal shelter. Thank you for all your hard work Jena—we appreciate everything you do.

Lisa Perez is the Northwest Region's employee of the month. Tom Pedersen, PD, says "Lisa is a very compassionate and dedicated employee who has been with Aurora for 17 years. Over these years she has worked in a variety of homes within the region. She has filled the positions of live-in, direct support professional and Program Manager. Lisa really enjoys working for Aurora and says she loves working with the consumers, taking them to events in the community, concerts in the cities and just enjoys her time with them. Lisa is a hard worker and a dedicated individual who is always willing to do whatever it takes to ensure the consumers she serves are safe and living life to the fullest."



Employee of the Quarter - AVS

by Pat McCombs

Rochelle has taken on the responsibilities of creating a monthly activity calendar, developing a one to one program for one of our difficult consumers, starting and implementing a 'Beauty Shop' program and a weekly swimming program.

To go along with her program development, Rochelle continues to transport consumers, work on existing programs with many other consumers, and even changed her daily work schedule to accommodate a consumer who needed someone to stay late.

Rochelle takes immense pride in her work with the consumer requiring one-to-one programming. This consumer came to the day service program directly from high school, could not communicate, and had a history of violence. Rochelle not only has eliminated the violence, but is able to effectively communicate with him. To see them interact is to watch our Day Service Program at its best.

As an Aurora Day Services representative, her conduct with outside agencies has always been very professional. She has been involved in staffings, is articulate, confident, and very informative. She knows her consumers well and is a strong advocate for everyone we serve. Rochelle not only develops a rapport with parents and guardians, but she has their trust in program development and trying new activities. Rochelle demonstrates how effective and important one staff can be in the life of people with disabilities.



Day in the Life *by* Jonathan Hefner

Aurora Salutes Kelly McIntyre

It's rare these days to find someone who stays at one job for more than a few years so when you find those folks who work at one place for more than two decades you know that they are invested in their work. One such person is Kelly McIntyre who works out of 006 and who has been with Aurora for 22 years. Kelly was interviewed to commemorate that he is the Direct Support Professional with the most years of service with Aurora.

How did you hear about Aurora?

"I had been working with a hospice organization in Menomonie for some time and heard about this business that "two young men were starting out of a closet". This sounded interesting so I applied and well, here I am 22 years later."

What roles have you served with Aurora?

"I started out as a weekend relief staff, then worked for a while in our Ladysmith operation, and then came to the Menomonie group home to work with Jim and Dave. I did a little bit of everything there from payroll and scheduling to tracking expenses. After a while I went to the New Richmond operation and worked with Avis - I ran the group home there and again did a little bit of everything. Over the years I also helped with the DD conference and did a lot of training of staff on various mental health issues."

What has been your most memorable experience at Aurora?

"A few years back we had a consumer who had very serious mental health issues and was a big challenge. She came from an abusive background so was self-abusive and had very low self-esteem. She also liked to create 'drama' by calling the police and telling them she was suicidal. They'd show up at the home and I'd have no idea what was going on. Anyway, Jim, Dave, and I attended a seminar on DRO (Differential Reinforcement of Other Behavior), and when we came back I set up a new program for this consumer. The transformation was incredible - she stopped hurting herself, started exercising more, started working on her GED, and started losing weight. She really became a different person and I was so glad that we'd been able to help her."

What keeps you working for Aurora?

"That's easy, the consumers. I enjoy working with them everyday and they keep me coming back."

What do you do in your free time?

"I work with several AIDS-related organizations such as the Aids Research Center of Wisconsin and I also run a fireworks business on the side. Whenever I've had a bad day, I feel a whole lot better once I blow something up."

Thanks Kelly for your dedication to Aurora's consumers and for serving in so many roles over the years!

The 25th Anniversary Team

April 2011 marks the official 25th anniversary of our company and there have been a group of people hard at work making sure that this milestone achievement is recognized and remembered!

Employee Appreciation Month - in honor of our anniversary, we have moved Employee Appreciation Month to April. Without all of the dedicated employees we have had over the last 25 years, we would not be who we are today! Throughout the month of April there will be special events and opportunities celebrating you, our employees. Each major area office and the corporate office will be hosting an Open House. The corporate office Open House will be held on our actual anniversary date April 18th from 11a - 1p. All are welcome!

Annual Company Picnics - will have a special 25th Anniversary theme and will be our official company-wide celebrations. The events this year are being coordinated by the team. There will be some of the same components as other years (great food, great music) and some new things to look forward too! The dates for the picnics are June 16th at Riverside Park in Wausau and June 17th at Irvine Park in Chippewa Falls.

In addition to these events, the 25th Anniversary team is working on a couple of commemorative creations which will be unveiled at the picnics.

Aurora Clothing Line - if you plan to purchase something from the Aurora clothing line, you might consider choosing the special 25th Anniversary logo for your item. Visit www.Logomos.net and check it out!

Tuition Discount

Rasmussen College is pleased to offer all **Aurora Community Services** employees reduced tuition rates through our **Employee Success Program**. This program allows all employees, spouses, and dependent children to receive an application fee waiver and a **10% tuition discount** while employed with **Aurora Community Services** over the life of their education at Rasmussen College. The same discount applies to our partner schools for online Master's degrees.

Rasmussen College is a private, regionally accredited college, offering career-focused degrees **on-campus** and **online**. With more than 100 years of experience preparing students for in-demand careers, Rasmussen College is dedicated to providing a high quality education that is focused on the needs of its students.

For more information:
Call Chris Severson 715.841.8042
or email chris.severson@rasmussen.edu

www.Rasmussen.edu

A sense of place. *by* Rick Kaiser

When you look at the many divisions of Aurora, it is often obvious what services they provide. "Aurora Residential" provides quality homes for the individuals they serve. "Supported Employment" finds and creates employment opportunities. But, what is a "Day Center"? They provides a variety of services for many people based on their interests and needs.

Who attends the centers?

Those who want to be here.

Those who cannot talk; those who can talk - some loudly.

Those who can walk; those who cannot walk.

Those who can see; those who cannot see.

Those who can hear; those who cannot hear.

Those who want to play.

Those who want learn.

Those with jobs; those without jobs.

Those who are high school students; those who are retired.

We provide:

A place to laugh.

A place to learn job skills and social skills.

A place to find friendship.

A place to find acceptance.

A place to be entertained.

A place to "grow up."

A place to grow old.

A place to learn how to advocate for ones self.

A place to find advocates.

A place to move on from.

A place to come back to.

A place to be safe.

A place where you can make mistakes.

A place where you are needed.

And, 'What do we do?'

We have fun. We build things. We sing. We play catch.

We cook. We hang out. We explore. We go shopping.

We go to zoos. We go fishing. We go sledding. We nap.

We hug. We yell. We do laundry. We cry. We draw.

We do calculus. We are wizards. We listen to music.

We make music. We watch movies. We exercise.

We take things. We give things.

We are more than just a list of people and activities. We are a place where people learn they belong. We are a place for a diverse group of individuals who have many unique needs and who do many activities. We provide each other with **a sense of place**.

To truly grow most of us need a community that goes beyond our own home. We need to share our lives with others; with our friends, family, and co-workers. For many of us the "day center" is that place where we belong. It is our church, our gym, our school, our club, our family reunion. It is that place where we learn how to learn, grow, have fun, tolerate things or people that frustrate us, a place to help those that need us, and a place where we belong.

Consumer Spotlight

by Dave Schoenrock



Dave Barnard and Millie

For the 25th Anniversary issue of The Beacon, there can be only one consumer featured in "Consumer Spotlight". Of course, that individual is Millie. She has been part of Aurora Residential Services since 1987, giving her the unique distinction of being the consumer served by Aurora the longest in our 25 year history.

Millie lives in New Richmond with her 5 housemates. Being one of Aurora's early consumers served, it is no surprise that she has made a life-long impression on one of Aurora's founders, Jim Neuman. Jim was happy to reflect on Millie's long history with Aurora.

"Millie is the gentlest person I think I have ever met. I remember taking Millie and her dear friend and roommate Ruth out to Beebe's Furniture store to pick out the furniture for their new apartment and how shy and demure the two of them were about being afforded a choice."

Jim also mentions the letters both himself and Dave Barnard would receive from Millie, which would chronicle the long walks she would take with her roommate, how their bird, "Dave", was doing, and what kind of weather they were having. The "simple things" in life - such as family and friends, is what Jim remembers Millie's letters reminding him to appreciate.

"I'm so glad that Millie had the courage to try and then immerse herself in living independently in New Richmond more than 20 years ago and that she is being recognized in this month's consumer spotlight. My life and the lives of countless others have been made richer for the pleasure of knowing her."

Why do I need sensory input??

Many of you have been hearing and talking about sensory programs for the consumers that you are serving. We have all been learning about ways to assist them in accessing needed input so that they will be better able to cope and adapt to the situations in their lives. If we apply these same ideas to ourselves, we can see that what we have been talking about is **Wellness For The Brain**. We all need it!

Recent research is showing that the aging brain continues to have a remarkable ability to grow, adapt, and change patterns of connections. Discoveries like these are the basis for new theories and ideas about brain exercise. Just as cross training helps you maintain overall physical fitness, brain exercise can help your mental fitness!

Our Vestibular systems - the apparatus in our inner ear-talks to and influences every other system in our brain. When we provide sensory input to this system its effects will last up to 8 hours! Yoga type body movements with its focus on stretching and strengthening, is an easy and powerful way

to "feed" our brains while at work. It can be done in a few minutes and even while you are having a conversation. **Brain Gym** is another type of exercise program that utilizes simple movements to "feed and wake up" our entire Central Nervous System. If we can be creative, we can find ways to integrate this little bit of wellness into our daily routines so that they become habit. Our brains will work more efficiently and we will be more likely to maintain safety for ourselves in our work day! The following is example of an exercise to stimulate your own brain to work at its optimum level.

The Pretzel

While sitting or standing, cross your legs at your ankles. Hold your arms straight out in front of you with palms facing each other. Cross your arms at your wrist, turn your hands so that thumbs face down and clasp your hands together snugly. Now draw hands towards chest so that your elbows fall down to sides and your clasped hands are resting on your chest. Take as many slow and deep breaths as you can. Smile and get back to work!

Safety Spotlight of the month

Operation 033 in River Falls is the Northwest Region's winner. This very busy house currently serves 8 consumers. It is estimated that the staff may be performing between 14-15 transfers per day, not to mention repositioning of consumers at night. I am very happy to say there have been no injuries recently and, in fact, very few injuries historically at this site. When asked, the staff says that it is because of good communication and good team decisions concerning safety issues. Safety is discussed at every team meeting with input from all staff. Equipment is maintained regularly and all staff use the equipment properly.

Operation 196 in Pittsville is the Eastern Region's winner. Staff has been working diligently showing good body mechanics when repositioning and transferring a consumer who recently had surgery. Using empathy during recovery staff assist each other in repositioning and transferring with a Hoyer or two assist by communicating and using the count system so that they move together in unison not to cause injury to themselves or consumer. Staff assures they are standing correctly and using their knees and legs. These taught and practiced body mechanics has kept staff and consumer safe.

Operation 078 in Eau Claire is the Central Region's winner. This is a team who has dealt with some changes in staff and also to the consumer's routine. The consumers at this home are very good about expressing their feelings even though they may not talk. The staff have to be in tune with the feelings of the consumers and able to read their body language and non-verbals to truly understand what they are trying to express. The team at #078 values their own safety as well as the consumers they serve!

