

The BEACON

May 2012



"A new beginning"

Anniversaries in May

Congratulations

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

Scott Jacobs	19
Deborah Seibel	19
Marlene Haessly	16
Lorene Miller	16
Melinda Stewart	16
Marty Heitkamp	15
Dorothy Reed	15
Terri Bollinger	14
Kathy Doering	14
Sue Hertz	14
Carrie Horn	14
Margaret Bauer	11
Charlotte Olson	11
Ronda Simons	11
Diane Steere	11
Ann Ellefson-Miller	10
Dawn Mashak	10
Diane Sorensen	9
Sue Davidson	8
Melissa Kuhlka	8
Tina Pawlowski	8
Heidi Schultz	8
Michelle Benzel	7
Gina Herman	7
Jordan Moses	7
Michelle Taylor	7
Michelle Thompson	7
Elizabeth Dunaway	6
Pamela Knetsch	6
Patricia Lock	6
Nancy Nauer	6
April Spence	5

CEO Corner

by Dave Barnard

Well here we are in the midst of a new political season. Things will be getting very heated and one thing you can be assured of is that you will hear more euphemisms in the next eight months than you can shake a stick at. One simple definition of euphemism is that they are unpleasant truths wearing diplomatic cologne. A couple examples that you will probably hear during the campaigns are, "revenue augmentation" (also known as increased taxes) and "I misspoke" (also known as lied). Politicians are especially skilled in the use of euphemisms because they don't like being perceived as bearing bad news – also known as being forthright and honest. At any rate prepare yourselves for the onslaught of sugar coating or blanketing of the truth.

I bring up this subject of euphemisms because of a sad situation that is happening right now in the state of Wisconsin. As the funding becomes tighter and the need for budget cuts increases we are hearing one particular euphemism that I find difficult to accept and am therefore using this opportunity to address it. As DHS and some MCO's move forward in cutting budgets for those individuals with developmental disabilities the push is to move people from their existing homes into "owner occupied" (previously called adult foster placement) settings. Some representatives of those organizations involved in making this happen are justifying those moves with their own euphemism, by saying they want individuals to move to a "less restrictive setting" (in reality this is a euphemism for cheaper).



When Aurora Residential Alternatives was established over 26 years ago you will note two critical words in our name, "Residential Alternatives." Do you know what we were creating alternatives to? Institutions and "owner occupied settings" (adult foster placements). That is why we started this company. Jim and I worked in an institution and prepared individuals for the opportunity to move out into the community. Unfortunately the ONLY options available for them were large CBRF's (known as group homes back then) or adult foster homes (owner occupied).

Part of our job was to help find community placements for those individuals who could "fit" into a CBRF and others who could "fit" into adult foster placements. Unfortunately there were many that couldn't "fit" into either of those models. We also found that with the adult foster placements many times

Continued next page

CEO Corner continued

the individual who was placed there did not match with the family dynamics; they would be rejected from that home, only to be placed in another adult foster placement. It was not uncommon for some individuals to be bumped from foster home to foster home until finally being re-placed into the institution from whence they came. It was from our observing the failures of what existed for community placement for those we worked with that stimulated our idea to create a company that literally designed the living situations around the needs and capacities of the individual.

Over our 26 year history we have created every conceivable community placement option . . . from one person with a full-time or part-time live-in to one individual with double and sometimes triple staff 24 hours around the clock. We also created every possible option with 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 individuals. . . from CBRF's, to Adult Family Homes, to congregate apartments. We also provide nearly 2,000 hours per month of what we refer to as Supported Living hours which can vary from a few hours per week to any number of hours per day for individuals in their own homes. In addition we have created a 24 hour call center that can effectively assist those individuals who can get by with minimal contacts and reminders.

The reality is that Aurora's objective always has been and always will be to create the least restrictive environment

for an individual to successfully live in their community and enjoy their LIFE with the lowest level of intervention necessary. Those individuals we serve are active and participate in every element of their personal and community life every day. I believe it is time for those making the funding changes to at least step up and call a spade a spade (be honest) – it's not about "less restrictive," it's not about providing "the right services, in the right amounts at the right time" it's about cutting the funding due to budget issues within the State. Budget constraints are a reality. Everyone gets that. If someone will simply admit this and quit the finger pointing and excuse making we can all sit down and determine the best path to make the necessary reductions that have the least negative effect on those we all serve.

I as always want to thank you, the Aurora staff/owners, for making the lives of those we serve your number one priority. Your commitment and dedication is deeply appreciated by me and I know especially by those you help to live their lives independently in their community.

Thanks for all you do!

Dave

Consumer Spotlight

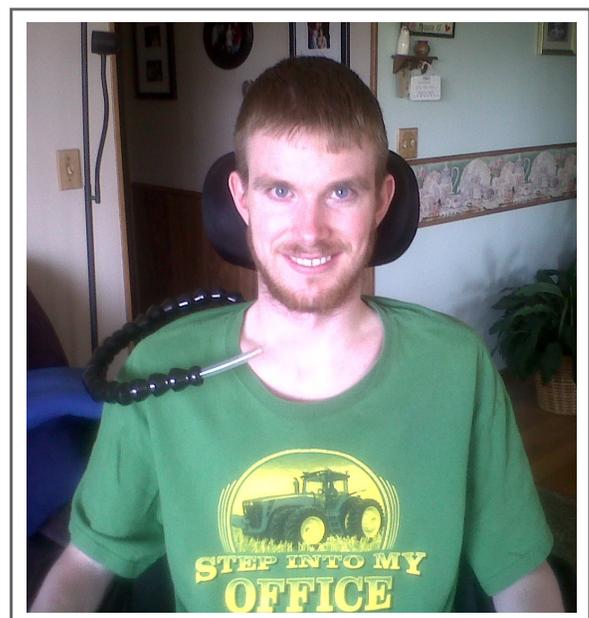
By Donna Ernst

Meet Aaron. Aaron currently receives services through Aurora Supportive Home Care for ten hours per day, five days per week. He lives in Pierce County with his mother, in the home he grew up in. Aaron is 25 years old and was injured in a snow mobile accident a little over three years ago.

While visiting him for the interview, I found out quickly he has a ready smile and a quick, dry wit. In addition, while talking with him and his staff, it was hard not to notice the playful and comfortable interactions between them. There were comments of him being overall laid back, but playful and funny, and that he is someone who appreciates honesty and intelligence. Aaron embodies Aurora's value words; in particular he shows he is resilient, provocative, and courageous. When asked what he hopes to do in his future endeavors, he states he was (and still is) really into farming, and hopes to one day get back to doing what he loves. We talked a bit about adaptations on tractors which may allow him to get back to what he once did.

Aurora currently assists him with his personal care needs, as well as community outings, emphasizing our LIFE program. He currently is active in his rehab, and goes to the pool twice per week to work out. In step with most of Aurora's individual supportive home care programs, Aaron self directs his services, and has no problems in communicating how

and what he needs done. Aaron enjoys watching TV and especially enjoys Wisconsin sports including the Brewers and Packers. He says he is looking forward to warmer weather and being able to be outside more.



A Day in the Life

by Kyle Schemenauer



Jill Mattson came to Aurora with a wide range of experience in many different settings. Before joining Aurora, she had worked in a variety of areas, from hospice to home care to nursing. Jill has been with Aurora for a total of 12 years over two different terms. She is currently serving on her second term of seven plus years and counting. During her time with Aurora, Jill has been on many ventures as a

Program Director. When looking back at her experiences, there may not be one as memorable as her current work with setting up Aurora's very first Crisis Diversion Home! Jill, along with many others, has been putting in tireless hours to make this happen, and as of April 4, 2012, it became reality. Aurora's Crisis Diversion Home is designed to be an option for individuals in crisis, rather than hospitalizations. The program

is voluntary and is designed to provide WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) Services. With WRAP Services, discharge is discussed upon admission, with the goal of overall safety of the individual. This includes decreasing symptoms, and providing them access to resources that further support the individual upon discharge.

When asked how things have been going so far Jill stated that "We opened on a Wednesday and there were two admissions on Thursday."

As for additional goals, Jill stated that the house will be looking to provide Residential detoxification monitoring in June, and hopes to expand Crisis Services throughout Aurora, with the first Crisis Diversion Home laying the groundwork for many more.

Lastly, Jill stated "I have a great team, fully staffed, we're ready to rock and roll, and looking forward to the challenges ahead."

Department Spotlight on La Crosse

by Deena Black

Aurora recently celebrated its 26th anniversary, and if you look back over the course of the last 26 years, our company has most certainly grown and changed! From our initial eight bed CBRF then, to a multi-faceted family of companies today, it is a challenge to stay on top of all the services available through Aurora Community Services. This month's Department Spotlight will focus on our newest service area, La Crosse.

In the spring of 2010, ARA responded to a Request for Proposal from Western Wisconsin Cares (WWC) a multi-county Managed Care Organization corporately based in La Crosse. We were awarded a contract to begin providing Community Based Mental Health Professional services to members of WWC who experience life challenges due to a mental illness. The services involve the face-to-face support of a Program Director, who assists individuals in achieving their desired outcomes, with a specific focus on wellness and recovery. When we submitted our proposal to WWC, we included the full range of Call Center Support Services. We believed that telephonic support from our talented group of Call Center Specialists would be the perfect wrap around service for people, and would give us an opportunity to showcase the benefit of Call Center supports. Shortly after we began mental health services, WWC also awarded us a contract to provide the same supports to individuals with AODA issues. Initially, these services were provided to consumers living in La Crosse County, but due to the success of the program, in 2011 the service area was expanded to include Vernon, Jackson and Trempealeau counties (and a few communities in between). Today, the Mental Health and AODA Outreach services are provided to 130 individuals by six full-time Program Directors and one Regional Coordinator.

In addition to the services provided to WWC members, we also provide Comprehensive Community Support (CCS) services to individuals through La Crosse County Human Services, and just recently we opened an Adult Family Home in La Crosse to serve three individuals. Aurora Vocational Services (AVS) added personnel to the La Crosse office in hopes of providing community based employment services, further rounding out the scope of services available to individuals in the La Crosse area. The rapid growth, and expansion of services, required us to secure additional office space which the La Crosse team moved into last month.

We look forward to continuing to grow and develop services in the La Crosse area, and appreciate the partnership with our contract agencies in that area. They have allowed us to provide the quality services we are known for to a new geographic area of the state.

Resource Library Reminder Notice

Open 24/7

Check out hundreds of available resources with the click of an icon on your desktop.

**Call Gina with questions:
715.838.7145 or 715.235.4696**



Safety Spotlight *by* Jessica Wilson

May is Employee Health and Fitness Month.

Most people spend a third of their day at work. With that being said, a fun way to improve your health is to start exercising with your co-workers. It's a great way to relieve tension, stay focused, have fun, and reduce work injuries. Here are some suggestions:

Form a walking group with co-workers. Even if you only have time to walk once a week, it is a great way to get to know each other! Plus having friends at work reduces stress and makes the workplace more enjoyable.

Take a stretch break. Designate a time and place on all shifts to stretch. Do neck rolls, over head stretches, leg stretches, and bend at the waist toward the floor.

Challenge each other. Have a contest with your co-workers to see who can climb the most stairs in a week. Have a jumping jack contest. A lunge race is great for gluts and hamstrings. Here's how you do it: Put your hands on your hips and bend at the knees. Then, take a giant step forward and then bring your other foot forward with your knees bent. The winner gets treated to a cup of coffee, a small prize, or bragging rights.

Involve the consumers when safe and possible. The exercise is great for our consumers and seeing everyone have fun as a team will brighten their day. If you would like additional health and fitness ideas contact a safety team member.

Life Photo of the Month



You're invited!

To: Annual Picnics

Date: Wednesday, June 13

Where: Copeland Park, La Crosse

Time: 1-3 pm (food served 1-3 pm)

Date: Thursday, June 14

Where: Irvine Park, Chippewa Falls

Time: 11 am-3 pm (food served 11 am-1 pm)

Date: Friday, June 15

Where: Riverside Park, Wausau

Time: 11 am-3 pm (food served 11 am-1 pm)

To: ACC Picnic

Date: Friday, June 22

Where: Southworth Memorial Park (Airport Park)

Time: 2-4 pm (food served 2-4 pm)

Come join the fun...

Help us celebrate with lots of good food and company!

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