

The BEACON

June 2011



"A new beginning"

Anniversaries in June

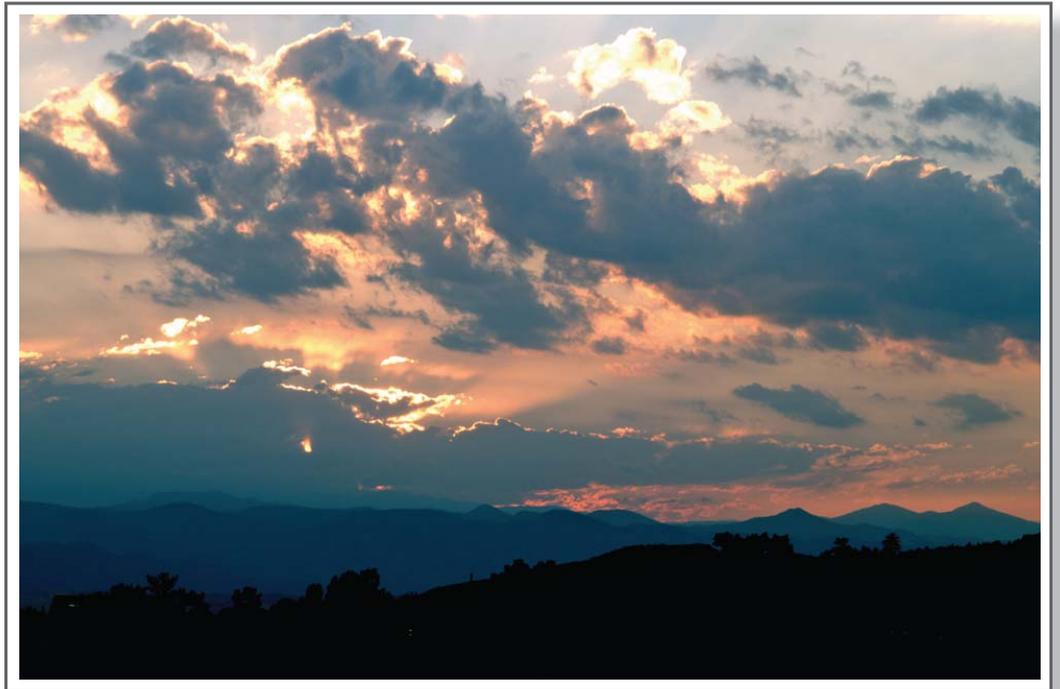
Congratulations

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

Linda Aton	19
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CEO Corner

by Dave Barnard



This month in my continuing series of columns about the history of your company, in celebration of Aurora's 25th anniversary, I am addressing a very a critical period of our development - the years from 1997 - 2002.

In the previous articles, I indicated that 1986 - 1990 was the period we established our solid foundation. That solid foundation would allow us to grow and develop services to compliment the community based residential services that had been the genesis of our company. The years 1991 to 1996 allowed us to grow and develop those new service areas. It was in 1997 that Aurora experienced a key period that caused us to change our business planning in an important fashion.

During the mid-1990's the United States economy was on fire. Businesses were doing very well and because of the positive economic environment many

were growing rapidly. This growth brought with it booming structural development which in turn brought with it the need for more staff. It was a very competitive time to try to attract and keep good employees. As you all know Aurora's total operating budget is extremely heavy in the area of staffing. We provide over 3500 hours of service every single day. That staff expense makes up nearly 75% of Aurora's total annual budget.

In 1997 we found ourselves in a very precarious position - we were running out of staff. Because of the growth in all facets of the economy, jobs were available everywhere and an individual looking for work would have many opportunities for employment. In addition, because the economy was booming, employers were offering higher wages and benefit packages to attract new employees. Aurora was at an

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Safety Spotlight of the month

CEO Corner cont'd

extreme disadvantage. Unlike a manufacturing company that simply would raise the price of their product to cover the additional cost of higher wages and benefits, Aurora was locked in to the budget we had with no chance of increasing service rates to cover new expenses.

As a result of this situation, 1997 brought a shortage of staff and with that the need for huge amounts of overtime expenses. Again, unlike other companies, Aurora couldn't simply reduce expenses by not providing service hours – we still needed to provide the contracted services. If we didn't have enough staff to do it at "regular" rate we had to pay overtime for existing staff to cover the hours.

At that time Aurora's annual contracts were actually established months before the new year began, so the 1997 contract had been established toward the end of 1996. This was the contract and budget we had to live with. We had not foreseen the major staff shortages that we experienced in 1997 back in 1996. By the end of 1997 Aurora had suffered nearly a three-quarter of a million dollar loss due to the record overtime we needed to provide to live up to our contractual requirements. This was not good.

Needless to say this was one of those "growing pain" learning moments for us as a company - a very big growing pain learning moment. From 1998 through 2000 we slowed our growth dramatically – keeping pace with our ability to staff. We became "very close" with our bankers and lending agencies. They were obviously concerned to see that large loss in one year. I spent a good deal of time allaying their concerns and giving them our plan of how we would work our way out of that situation. Through everyone's commitment, hard work and tightening of belts we were able to clear up this major problem within 3 years.

The period from 1997 – 2002 was a "character builder" for our company. As we continued our growth we learned to move forward with one eye on the future and one eye on the past - allowing us to know where we are going and to assure that we learned lessons from the past.

There is a saying from the Samurai (Japanese sword warrior) teachings that says, "The hardest steel is cast in the hottest fires". We endured some very "hot fires" during this period and from our enduring and coping with those "fires" we became a stronger company. All of our experiences, some good and some not so good, have allowed us to endure for 25 years.

Those lessons and others we have learned over the past two and one-half decades are what will lead us into our next twenty-five years of success.

Thanks for all that you do every day to make our success a reality!

Dave

Operation 006 in New Richmond is the Northwest Region's winner. This currently serves 4 Mental Health consumers. This home has not had any staff injuries over the past several years. 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. For these reasons, 006 deserves to be in the Safety Spotlight.

Operation 012 is the Central Region's winner. The team at 012 always works hard on being safe and following proper procedures. As consumers needs change the team continues to adapt safely. Keep up the great work team!

Operation 052 is the Eastern Region's winner. At this operation there is a consumer that needs to have insulin before supper. To ensure the consumer does not get it before, which would cause her blood sugar to rise, the staff decided to make signs and hang them on the refrigerator to remind all staff. This is a proactive solution to what could be a problem if not done correctly. Keep up the great work!

Life Photo of the Month



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:

Northwest Region's Employee of the Month – **Rosezanna Pratt**. Chandra Oscarson, PM2 says "Rosezanna is a great asset to the team at Op 035 as the full-time night staff. She is loving, caring, and compassionate, and always willing to help, both consumers and other staff. Rosezanna is always thinking one step ahead of the situation and takes charge. I bounce ideas off Rosezanna quite often, because she has great insight and perspective. Rosezanna is hard working and makes sure that all duties assigned be completed nightly. She is also trained at several different houses with Aurora, helping out as many consumers as she can." Congratulations and thanks for all you do.

Central Region's Employee of the Month - **Afton Simpson**. A few weeks ago she was informed that 4 of the 8 consumers she serves would be discharged from #011. Although very sad, Afton remained calm and professional. She not only supported the consumers she serves and their guardians, she was also a positive force for her supervisors. Afton consistently presents the "face" of ARA that we are all so proud of and which has become our reputation....that we will always strive to do our best no matter what is thrown in our paths! And in the midst of all of this...she threw a big Carnival at the house attended by all Menomonie homes and several families and guardians. Thanks Aftonfor being YOU!

Eastern Region's Employee of the Month - **Adam Little**. Jennifer Sandor, PD says "Adam has been with Aurora since May of 2010. Adam started his journey with Aurora at the Edgar home and currently works full time at site 124 in Mosinee. Adam is constantly going above and beyond to ensure the guys at site 124 are active in the community. A few months ago Adam received two tickets to see The Blue Man Group perform at The Grand Theater in Wausau. Adam decided this was the perfect opportunity to take one of the consumers to a show and they both had a great time. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication Adam!"



In memory of Douglas

by Stephanie Cogger, staff at 054

He was born to be Amazing
And to touch people's hearts;

Now he can run with the Angels
And that should cure our broken hearts.

There are girls, girls, girls
In the new place he calls home;

He's with Elvis, he's a Rockstar
We all should have known.

He is freed from his earthly body
His soul no longer misunderstood;

Because now he walks with Elvis
Just like a Hound Dog should.

A Day in the Life

by Dave Schoenrock

Each month, "A Day In The Life" focuses on an Aurora staff and what their life is like, not only at work, but outside of work. This month however, we're featuring a few "new" staff with some unique names, such as Moonbeam (aka Cowgirl Cookie), Emma, and Ginger. There are no last names for these mysterious staff. Moonbeam, Emma and Ginger are "Life Dolls" recently introduced by the Wellness Team as a unique and fun way for staff to have a little fun at work!

Ginger is currently part of Operation 041 in Eau Claire. In the very short time she has been there, Ginger has become incredibly popular with both consumers and staff. In fact, she is so popular, other sites in the Central Region have been trying to "steal her" for their home! We learned that this was part of the fun of the LIFE doll. Staff are encouraged to find creative ways of "acquiring" the doll from the homes that have one!

Moonbeam (aka Cowgirl Cookie) has been bouncing back and forth between Operation's 010 and 011 in Menomonie with staff being very creative at thinking of ways of getting Moonbeam to their home. Operation 011 named their LIFE Doll "Moonbeam" in honor of Earth Day, with the appropriate "hippie" attire. Operation 010 "stole" Moonbeam and the word got out that she had been "lost" after being hidden on top of a cupboard. Consumers at 010 also added Cowgirl-Cookie to Moonbeam's name! Staff from 011 later "rescued" Moonbeam who then went on to visit sites 009 and 008 in Menomonie.

Emma originally started out at Operation 080 in Black River Falls, and even went on vacation to Tennessee with consumers and staff from 054. Where Emily is now is anyone's guess! LIFE Dolls are at the least well traveled!

Despite repeated attempts to reach Ginger, Moonbeam and Emma for comments about their adventures, none were available. A spokesperson for the Life Dolls stated "They are out living LIFE and are too busy having fun" to interview for this story!

*"A thousand words will not leave
so deep an impression as one deed"*

- Henrik Ibsen



Moonbeam (aka Cowgirl Cookie)



Emma



Ginger

Featured Occupation of the Month

By Andrea Olson

Staff members at the Menomonie Day Center have been working hard at creating new and different programs for consumers. At the start of the New Year, the day center began inviting guest speakers to come in and talk about their occupations. Prior to each guest speaker coming the consumers are involved in activities, that pertain to the speakers occupation, conducting research at the local library, and brainstorming questions. In February, a Wal-Mart manager spoke about her position and the types of services Wal-Mart provides. Consumers had fun asking questions about her job and also enjoyed the Wal-Mart pins and cupcakes that were handed out.

The next visitors were two members of the Menomonie fire department. They discussed fire safety as well as answered many questions about the fire department. They even brought along a fire truck that consumers were able to check out after the presentation.

In April, the Menomonie Police Department was invited to share information about their occupation as officers. He discussed the appropriate times to call 911 and the consumers were able to ask many questions. The consumers then got the opportunity to sit in the police car and were also able to view the different devices that were in the trunk.

At the end of May, the Day Center will be host to a small business owner. He will be sharing personal experiences about what is involved in running your own business. He will also be talking about the steps he has taken to run a "green" and environmentally friendly business. If you know of someone with an interesting occupation, feel free to contact the day center with your ideas.



Consumer Spotlight

By Sue Wheeler



If you watched the royal wedding recently between Kate Middleton and Prince William, you may have noticed Sir Elton John in the audience. But did you know that one week later Sir Elton was on stage in Duluth performing at the Amsoil Arena?

In the audience was one of Aurora's own – Steve from operation 045 in Rice Lake, who was lucky enough to snag some tickets for the Friday night concert. Steve loves to dance and sing and states that Elton John is one of his favorite performers. About the concert, Steve just says, "It was GOOD!" Steve had an excellent seat in the front row of the first balcony! He states that he was able to see Sir Elton's face. There was also a large screen TV right in front of Steve so everything that was happening on stage was easy to see.

Steve decided to purchase a book (he's holding in the photo) because he thought, at \$40, the t-shirts were too expensive. The book has many pictures from Elton John's career as a musician and is a nice keepsake.

Steve really enjoyed the whole concert experience. He happily stated that they stayed in a nice motel and had pizza for dinner – one of Steve's favorites. He is now waiting for the next big rock star to come along!

Did You Know?

by Gina Krueger of the Safety Team

Approximately 400 Americans die each year due to summer's sweltering heat. Furthermore, excessive heat was the number one weather-related killer, causing more fatalities per year than floods, lightening, tornadoes, hurricanes, winter storms and extreme cold from 1994 – 2003, (according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Everyone is at risk when temperatures rise above 90 degrees.

Heat-related illnesses can cause serious injury or death. Symptoms may include sun-burn, nausea, dizziness, flushed or pale skin, heavy sweating or a sudden lack of sweating, confusion, and headaches. Victims of heat-related illness should be moved to a cool place, given small amounts of cool water to drink and ice packs or cool wet cloths applied to the skin (inside of wrists, under-side of knees, back of neck, armpits). If a victim refuses water, vomits or loses consciousness, call 9-1-1 immediately.

Safety Tips

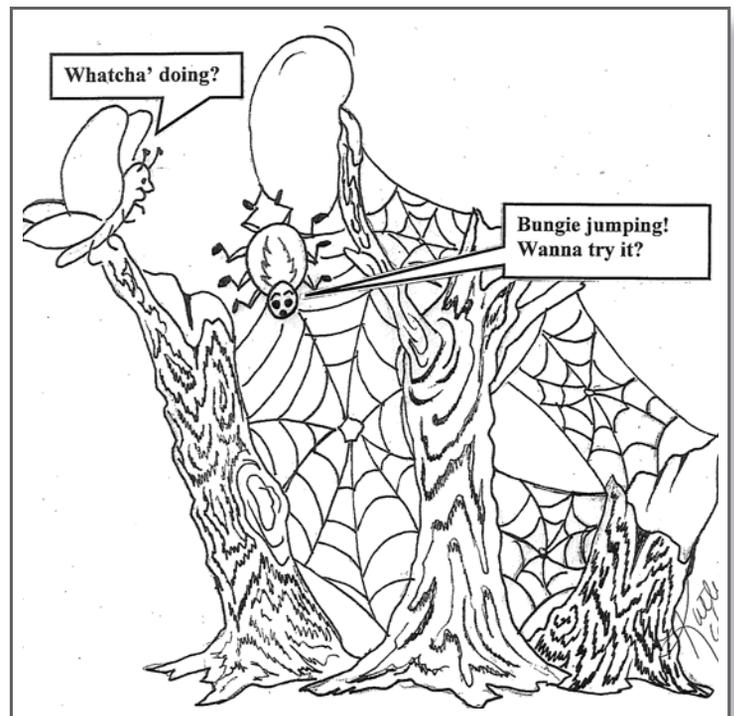
- Stay inside or in the shade during the hottest hours of the day (mid morning to mid afternoon).
- Dress light and in light colored clothing. When sleeping use lightweight breathable covers. Cotton clothing with a tight weave are recommended.
- Wear a hat with a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward, and sunglasses that block 99 – 100% of ultraviolet rays.
- Be sure to apply enough sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or greater that protects against UVB and UVA rays. Reapply every 2 hours or after swimming or sweating. NOTE: combination sunscreen/insect repellent products are not recommended because sunscreen needs to be reapplied every 2 hours, but the bug repellent should not be reapplied.
- Avoid areas where insects nest or congregate, such as stagnant pools of water, uncovered foods and gardens where flowers are in bloom.
- Use insect repellents containing DEET to prevent insect related diseases such as ticks, which can transmit Lyme

Disease, and mosquitoes which can transmit West Nile Virus and other viruses. (The effectiveness is similar for 10 – 30% DEET but the duration of effect varies. 10% DEET provides protection for about 2 hours – 30% DEET for about 5 hours – choose the lowest concentration that will provide required length of coverage.)

- As an alternative to DEET, Picaridin has become available in the US in concentrations of 5 – 10%.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, which dehydrate the body.
- Eat small meals and eat more often. Avoid high-protein foods, which increase metabolic heat.
- Keep blinds closed from morning until late afternoon to block extra direct heat from sunlight.
- When using a fan, place it so that it blows in the room and out the window, rather than placing the fan directly in front of a window. This may actually push hot air in.
- Move your exercise routine to early morning or later in the evening, to prevent heat exposure. SLOW DOWN & avoid strenuous activity.
- Never leave anyone or any pets in the car while you run to do a quick errand. It's NEVER safe. Cars can become overheated quickly and when overheated, become like ovens. People and pets can succumb to heat exposure and death very quickly in a hot car.
- Be a good neighbor. During heat waves, check in on elderly residents in your neighborhood and those who do not have air conditioning.

Wellness Team

Once again the Wellness Team would like to get Team's registered for the 5th Annual "On the Road Again" virtual mile challenge. This year we changed it to the Virtual MILE challenge, incorporating any movement that can be tracked by miles. This 6 week challenge will start June 20th and finish July 31st. Talk to your area office for a registration packet and details! The wellness team is excited to hear about your destination and look forward to hearing your stories.



by Kathi Tollefson

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.