

B the BEACON *June 2012*



"A new beginning"

Anniversaries in June

Congratulations

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

Linda Aton	20
Thomas Pedersen	20
Cindy Merkel	16
Tamara Johnson	15
Deedee Morris	14
Cindy Wolbert	14
Linda Liebzeit	12
Cyndi Johnson	11
Paul Simpson	11
Mark Eidson	10
Holly Hakes	10
Kelly Johnson	10
Walter Knudtson	10
Andrea Kraklow	10
Cornelia Bohn	9
Elizabeth Kuehn	9
David Anderson	8
James Korb	8
Andrea Olson	8
Jacqueline Smith	8
Jamie Adams	7
Donna Woellner	7
Justin Boiteau	6
Christopher Dudley	6
Edward Gengenbach	6
Heather Johnson	6
Sharon Myszka	6
Chiara Andahazy	5
Angela Mandera	5
Chelsea Moen	5
Amanda Yaeger	5

CEO Corner

by Dave Barnard

(Reprint from Dec. 2004)

As one year comes to an end, another begins – providing a time for reflection and renewal. With this time, we look back on our accomplishments, as well as look forward to new challenges. At this juncture, it would be easy for me to use this column to list the many accomplishments we have achieved this past year, and begin to list the objectives we look forward to accomplishing in the year to come. However, rather than listing past and future accomplishments, I've decide to take this opportunity to address the single most important factor that allows Aurora to realize these achievements: you.

Recently, Holly Hakes, Aurora's Executive Director, called one of the Aurora homes to get some information on a fire evacuation variance she was writing for licensing. When she called into the home, and asked the staff member to identify themselves, he said, "My name is Joe (not actual name), I'm just a CLA (Community Living Assistant)." What?? Just a CLA, you say?? I hope "Joe" did not intend for his words to be taken in a literal sense. However, this does present an opportunity for me to address the importance each member has, as part of the Aurora team. I believe one of Dr. Martin Luther King's quotes nicely creates the foundation of this issue. Dr. King stated, "All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance..." Please think about the work that you do each day; your efforts truly uplift humanity by assisting others to achieve and experience a greater quality of life than they ever had the opportunity to achieve before. There is no greater, nor nobler, effort that one can put forth than to help a fellow human being.

When Holly told me of this brief conversation, I immediately thought of the countless times that I have been humbled by the thought of what the staff of Aurora does each day. I have often found myself, when awaking in the middle of the night, or perhaps sitting around a holiday dinner table, thinking of all of the wonderful Aurora staff like you who are working at that very minute throughout Auroraland – providing so many individuals the opportunity to live their lives in their community.

I have worked in this field for over 30 years with hundreds of professional, paraprofessional, skilled, and semi-skilled staff over those decades. Believe me when I say to you that none of those people are "just" anything; most importantly, I assure you that a CLA can never be considered "just a CLA." The CLA is the single most important element in the final delivery of service. Administrators plan and budget, Managers schedule, train, and supervise, Case Managers coordinate – but the CLA makes it happen. The CLA is where (taking from a very old tire commercial) "the rubber meets the road." I cannot express how deeply you are appreciated, and I can assure you that everyone understands the importance of what you do.

We come to the end of another successful year, and we stand at the base of the New Year. In this new year we will achieve many goals, face new challenges, and venture forth into new territory. All of these things are possible because of you, and the invaluable services that you provide "lifting humanity." I ask that you always remember, as Dr. King said, your work is

Continued next page

CEO Corner continued

filled with “dignity and importance,” and to trust that you are deeply appreciated for that.

I would like to end with a quote from our 28th president, Woodrow Wilson, which speaks clearly to the work you do. He was speaking to the people in an effort to lift them up to achieve a greater good for society when he said, “You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order

to enable the worked to live more fully, with greater vision and with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.”

Dave

Consumer Spotlight

by Ashley Huber (OP 116)

This past weekend I was lucky enough to get to take a very special consumer, Mitchell Solie, to the Special Olympics state competition in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. The week leading up to the event was pretty nerve racking for his staff as we tried to make sure we had everything packed and prepared for him to go. When the day finally arrived, we were all up extra early finishing last minute details. Finally, everything was ready and we were off.

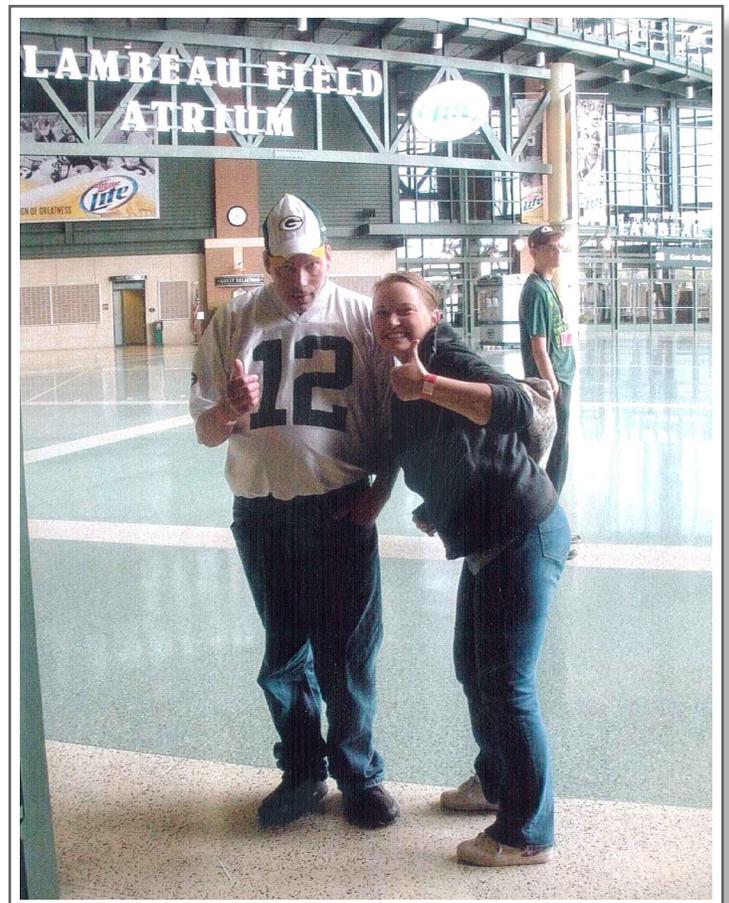
The worst part of the trip was definitely the car ride there, but Mitchell was an awesome road trip buddy. He didn't complain about sitting in the car for about four hours (the trip would have been much shorter if the second staff hadn't driven like an old lady!). He joked around with me, and had a great time listening and singing along with the radio.

We arrived in Oshkosh, and Mitch had just enough time to eat lunch before getting ready to go to the gym to compete. He was in one of the last divisions, so we had a long time to wait. The gyms were hot and loud, but when he was feeling nervous, Mitch was great about talking to staff, asking to sit outside and relax if it became too much. Finally, Mitch got called. He competed in basketball skills which consisted of three parts: two timed runs down the gym while dribbling the ball, bouncing the ball against the wall inside a square while maintaining control of the ball, and a shooting part where he had two chances to shoot the ball from six different spots on the court. Mitch did fantastically during them all! I've never seen him run so fast, and he maybe missed two shots. After the competition was done, the athletes were sent to a different room to find out their results. Mitch took first place, and the entire room went crazy cheering and clapping for him.

After his long day, Mitch crashed, and slept for about 12 hours straight. The next morning he was up bright and early for another drive, this time to Lambeau Field in Green Bay, to see the Packer Hall of Fame. The trip was supposed to be a special surprise, but someone (Pete) had blown the surprise the morning before. Mitch still had a great

time; he bought himself a new hat in the gift shop, and took lots of pictures with memorabilia of his two favorite players, Brett Favre and Aaron Rodgers. His day ended with another long drive full of singing to music on our way home to Eau Claire.

This trip was an amazing experience for Mitch. It was just as exciting for us, and I know I feel incredibly lucky and honored to have been there with him, as well as helping make this amazing trip possible for him.



Training Spotlight

By Brian Anderson

If you work for Aurora, you have had the pleasure of meeting and learning from our wonderful Training Department. The fine folks there are responsible for all trainings in the company, and are therefore great sources of knowledge on all things Aurora. However, some of you may be less aware of the origins of the department, or of some of the finer points about it. Thankfully, I was able to sit down with Gina, to hash out a little about what they actually bring to the table.

Originally, Aurora did not handle trainings for staff; instead, training was done by various other organizations. This model was very problematic for a few reasons. To start, these trainings were very expensive, often charging per person, per training. This cost added up to multiple thousands if a company wanted to train a larger group of people. This problem was compounded for smaller mom-and-pop care giver companies, as \$1000 is nothing to sneeze at! With this issues laid forth, we thought, "why not do it ourselves?!" Originally, Aurora trainings had around 10-15 people over the course of a month. Now, we have more than quadrupled our monthly attendance, and things are looking good!

For example, Aurora has taken the steps to start training individuals to be Peer Specialists. There are very few sites that

offer training (only 1 in the entire Midwest!), and the cost in terms of time and money are great (\$1000/day for a week of training). Despite the difficulty presented in training, these positions are highly sought after. Therefore, we thought, why not do it ourselves?! Gina said that a proposal had been drafted, and was in the approval process already. Hopefully, with such a proactive approach, Aurora can add yet another entry to its already illustrious list of "things we do well here!"

So, how does Gina feel about all of this? Well, she said that she couldn't be happier. Being able to impart knowledge on others, as well as work so closely with consumers, brings her great satisfaction. She enjoys the ever-changing faces in the training rooms, and enjoys being able to share experiences with both new and old staff alike. Training in the Red Cedar building brings her close to the consumers in the Voc Center, and allows her to always be near her friends there.

I think I can speak for everyone when I say that the Training Department is a very integral part of what makes Aurora great! Thank you guys for your continuing diligence in making sure our company runs as well as it can, and continues to provide excellent service to all!

Safety team - Why home safety?

Unintentional home injury is a major public health problem in the United States. According to the Home Safety in America Council's research, preventable injuries in the home:

- Resulted in nearly 20,000 deaths.
- Caused nearly 21 million medical visits.
- Are the fifth leading cause of death overall.
- Are 2.5 times more likely to cause injury than car crashes.
- Cost our nation \$380 billion.
- Are largely preventable when home safety practices are put into action in the home.

These statistics are very large numbers; if we are not aware of our environment, and take action when it comes to safety, we have the potential to be a part of those numbers.

Take the safety quiz and see how you score!

- 1) Do you wipe up floor spills right away? Yes/No
- 2) Are your stairs free from clutter? Yes/No
- 3) Are all rugs and carpets secured down? Yes/No
- 4) Do you wear suitable and sturdy foot wear? Yes/No
- 5) Are you following medication procedures? Yes/No
- 6) Do you use a stepladder rather than climbing onto a chair to reach items? Yes/No
- 7) Do you store everyday things in easy to reach places? Yes/No

8) Do you use proper body mechanics such as bending at the knees, pushing instead of pulling, lifting with your legs not your back? Yes/No

9) Do you walk away when cooking to answer the phone? Yes/No

10) Do you follow G.O.A.L. every time you use the vehicle? Yes/No

11) Do you wash your hands between tasks? Yes/No

12) Do you communicate with others when working together? Yes/No

If you answered "yes" to all 12 questions, then congratulations! You are doing well and are less likely to have an accident. Keep up the good work but still take care.

If you answered "yes" to 10 out of 12 questions, then you are doing well but take another look at the home and your safety practices to see how you can improve.

If you answered "yes" to less than 10, then WATCH OUT! Look at your home and see what improvements can be made. Ask management or the Safety Team for help to make changes.

A Day in the Life *by* Paige Meier



"While I will miss my friends here at Aurora, I feel that it is time for a new challenge and experience."- Resignation letter written on 1/2/2012. In the pit of her stomach she knew she had made a mistake the minute she turned in her resignation.

Ryley recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin Stout with her degree in Hotel Restaurant and Tourism

Management. While going to school, Ryley enjoyed working at a couple of our Menomonie homes: 010, 011 and 007. Ryley had always been a reliable go-to staff, who would jump in and do anything her director and managers asked her to do. After graduation, she felt she owed it to herself to enter the field she had spent years studying.

Ryley started her journey in the hotel business in January of 2012; and by April 24, 2012, she was re-hired as a community living assistant with Aurora Residential Alternatives. She never imagined she would miss the homes and her friends as much as she did.

When asked why, she simply states "I missed my friends." She acknowledges she could make more money somewhere else, but says, "I wasn't happy." When asked why Aurora specifically, she gushes about Aurora allowing staff to be independent and creative. She acknowledged the challenges, but "I never realized how much Aurora offers us."

"Aurora lets us take a break when we need it, not because it is scheduled." She says she enjoys communicating with team members freely, and feels respected as an employee. She tells tales of being held to structured, timed breaks. She was allowed two 10 minute breaks, and a 20 minute lunch break, with no additional time added for any reason. In the hotel business "I definitely was not paid to take long lunch breaks at Burger King with my friends (consumers) like I am at Aurora!" Ryley states she does not feel judged when at work, and now enjoys the mornings she wakes up to spend the day with her friends.

Ryley also feels she is learning professional skills and life lessons from her employment at ARA. She states her family and friends are constantly impressed at her knowledge and skills in the health and behavioral fields. She is able to share solution ideas for injuries, illnesses and even how to make a bed. She has learned to be responsive to concerns, and detailed in the solution.

In 2011 Aurora had 37 re-hires, and as of May 8, 2012, Ryley has been joined by 16 other re-hires, making 2012's total re-hires 17 so far this year.

Welcome back Ryley, your friends are glad to see you!



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.