

The BEACON

July 2011



"A new beginning"

Anniversaries in July

Congratulations

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

Deena Black	19
Barb Pedersen	19
Rhonda Buss	15
Christine Kirschbaum	15
Xang Chang	14
Karen Lieder	14
Patricia Luethi	13
Mary Schilt	13
Douglas Sessions	13
Emily Mujwid	12
Jason Cripe	11
Kimberly Purgett	10
Sharlyn Fellenz	9
David Jorsch	8
Joel Krause	7
Christiann Curley	7
Amy Bahr	6
Shannon Moberg	6
Kamie Hedrington	6
Gail Szarkowitz	5
Kenneth Mitchell	5
Nichole Johnson	5
Karen Palmerton	5

CEO Corner

by Dave Barnard



Last month's CEO Corner addressed Aurora's five year period from 1997-2002. This month's Corner should be addressing the 2003 – 2007 period. Since I just returned from our 25th anniversary picnics in Wausau and Chippewa Falls I decided to push off those years until next month and instead share some thoughts and commentary about the picnics.

It is always humbling and at the same time inspirational to see all of the consumers and staff of Aurora gathered in one place. On Thursday the 18th we held our Eastern Region picnic at Riverside Park in Wausau; over 250 individuals attended. On the 19th we held our Western Region picnic at Irvine Park in Chippewa Falls. We calculated that over 400 individuals attended this event. It was wonderful to see so many staff with their children, as well as the individuals we serve have such a great time together eating, dancing and socializing.

For me the fact that this year is our 25th anniversary held very special meaning. As I wandered throughout the picnic areas I saw individuals that brought back such strong memories for me. I saw Steve (name is changed) who was emergency referred to us nearly 20 years ago after being taken from his Adult Foster Home placement (a common program back then). Community families would simply take a disabled person to live in their home. Steve had behaviors that could be challenging and the family found him to be so irritating that they would shackle him to his bed without food in an effort to "teach" him to change his behaviors. I saw Jim (name is changed) who when we went to meet him at the State Institution where he had lived most of his life was in a pair of bib overalls with

Aurora's 25th anniversary summer picnic balloon release.

cont'd on next page



Safety Spotlight of the month

CEO Corner cont'd

nothing else on. He was so combative with the staff that the bibs were the only thing they would put on him. I recalled how the staff told us that Jim could never live in the community due to his severe combative behaviors. I spoke with Jim at the picnic and he looked and sounded great. It was apparent that he was loved by the staff that were working with him (just as it has been for Jim for the past 19 years that he has lived in his home with Aurora supports). Then I saw Jane (name changed) who was having a great time dancing the day away without any trace of the past where she had been sexually abused on a regular basis at the institution where she lived prior to moving into her home supervised by Aurora over 13 years ago.

These are just a few of literally dozens of individuals that I saw on those two days that brought back such great memories. Their lives have changed and they are today living the dream that was promised by our forefathers – that all are created equal and have the inalienable right to the “pursuit of happiness”. The other memories that rushed in as I spoke with other picnickers were of you, the staff of Aurora. It is Aurora’s staff that has for the past 25 years and counting made all of these individual success stories possible.

At one of the picnics I was approached by one of our staff who wanted to thank me for standing up and fighting for those we serve as various budget changes have impacted our company and continue to loom on the horizon. I assured her that we would continue the fight and I have once again been reinvigorated by you and those we serve.

I promise that we will double and triple our efforts and continue to fight the right fight to ensure that those who were once promised by the State that they could live their lives as they wished in their communities will continue to have that opportunity.

Aurora is ever emboldened by you, who every day “do the right thing” in serving those that we made that promise too 25 years ago; we will keep that promise as we move into our next 25 years.

Thanks for all that you do!

Dave

*“Courage is being scared to death...
and saddling up anyway.”*

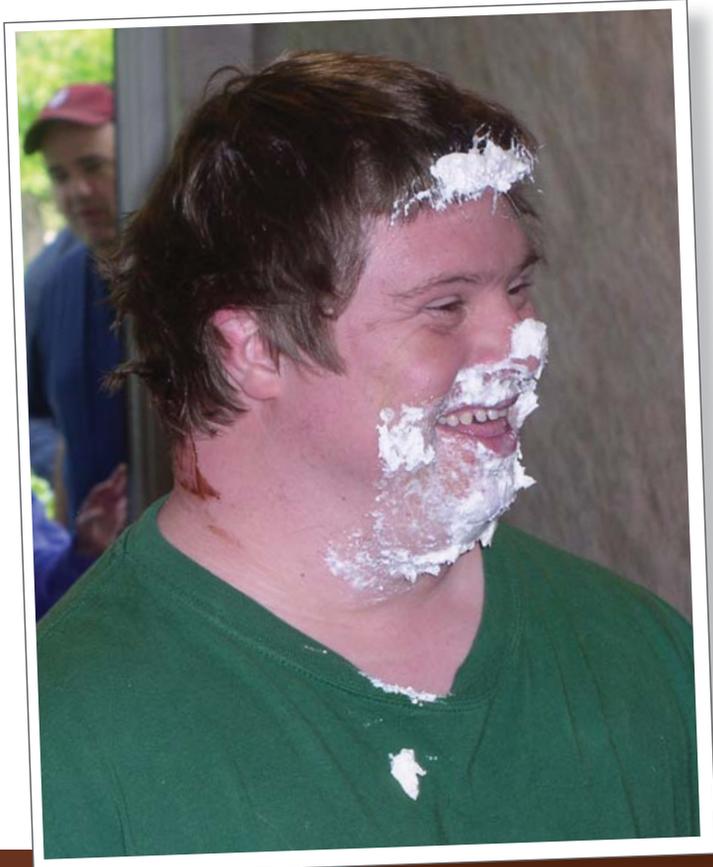
- John Wayne

Operation 039 in Baldwin is the Northwest Region’s winner. This very busy house currently serving 4 consumers. The staff have great communication skills and make good team decisions concerning safety issues. Safety issues are discussed at every team meeting with input from all staff. Equipment is maintained regularly and used properly.

Operation 116 is the Central Region’s winner. This is a team that serves 4 men. They encounter behavioral issues and handle each situation safely. Communication among team members is one of the key factors for their success in remaining safe and utilizing many proactive approaches. They take care of the home to ensure everyone is safe, often in a difficult environment. Thanks to the 116 team for all their hard work and dedication.

The Eastern Region’s winner is the **Wausau Day Center**. The day center is a happening place and on a daily basis they encounter many safety concerns that require quick adjustments. They assist with numerous transfers, medication passes and medical issues, behavior issues, and use tie downs and transportation safety. This all takes place in a very fast pace environment. Serving multiple consumers in one day is a challenge, but they do a great job individualizing the services and ensuring everyone is safe. Keep up the good 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 – **Deanna Washburn**. Deanna started with Aurora in September 2009 working part time at 084 in Spooner and now 095. She has been trained at all of the Spooner and Shell Lake operations as well as Chetek. Emily Mujwid, Program Director says "Deanna has been a valuable employee with a cheerful disposition and I can honestly say I have never heard a negative word from her. She has been flexible with scheduling; some times at the drop of a hat going to a different operation to work. She has a calming way about her that is very helpful at all of the houses." We appreciate all you do.

Central Region's Employee of the Month - **Samantha Sterbenz**, otherwise known as "Busy Bee, Organization Queen, Getter Doner and Consumer Protector" is the Central Regions choice for EOM. She has been with us about 1 ½ years and she is a real asset to site # 038, not only with consumer care, but she is depended upon by the PMII and the Program Director. Recently, the PMII went on a vacation. Sam stepped in and took care of the medical appointments, paperwork and whatever else she could help out with. She is a true consumer advocate and is not afraid to speak her mind if she feels the consumers are not getting what they need. She is also a great teammate and is always looking for ways to make everyone's day easier. Sam has an eye for detail and a heart of gold-two things that make a terrific employee.

Eastern Region's Employee of the Month - **Robbi Waters**. Robbi works at operation #058 in the Stevens Point area. He is a very active employee who ensures consumers are involved in their community and with all aspects of their daily lives. He has taken several consumers on vacations in recent years allowing them the opportunity to experience far away places. Rob can be counted on to think on his feet and trouble shoot problems with minimal direction from his supervisor. He is also extremely helpful to the management staff throughout their on-call rotation providing scheduling ideas and solutions for problems that may arise. Thanks for all you do Robbi!

Congratulations to all of you!



Tech Edge

by Dustin Doornink

In the next few months, watch for the launch of the new Aurora employee website. For the past few months we have been working on creating an internal website for all Aurora employees to access updated information and links as well as some new features that will help speed up communication between all Aurora homes and offices. One of the first improvements will be the maintenance database is going online. This will allow Program Managers and Directors to enter in maintenance requests at the homes and the maintenance workers will immediately receive all requests as well as be able to interact with them on their Blackberries and reassign jobs as needed. Currently this database is in testing and should be launching soon. Some of the other improvements that are under development include "online forms" that will allow you to fill out some of the Aurora forms online rather than using paper and faxing it to your local office or the call center. Many of these improvements will allow for better tracking and management of these processes as well as saving time and costs for Aurora. Watch for more information on these exciting new services in the next few months!

A Day in the Life *by* Dave Schoenrock

Sharlyn Fellenz works part-time with "the guys" of Operation 116 in Eau Claire and owns Myatalisha's Dream Therapeutic Riding Center. Her work life and personal life are wonderfully intertwined, which seems to keep her very, very busy!

Sharlyn's life is one of those stories that gives you hope and inspires you. She is one of 19 children, 13 who were adopted into a family who clearly embraces, well, everyone! (Of her family members, at least 6 have worked for Aurora Community Services at one time or another.) As she was growing up her passion for horses grew, too. She became a successful local horse trainer, and the genesis of Myatalisha's Dream which creates individualized riding experiences for those with disabilities, just outside of Eau Claire. She currently has 21 horses at the facility.

Sharlyn's personal passion for horses and work life became one. She speaks of "the guys" visiting her home for holidays, calling her mom, "Mom" and when a reclusive young man emerged from his often solitary days to become as she describes "a natural" with her horses, the world of work and family became one, and the dream was born. This consumer is a frequent visitor, and his bond with horses is something Sharlyn states she "had never seen before. He rides on his own, and has a way with horses that is just amazing".

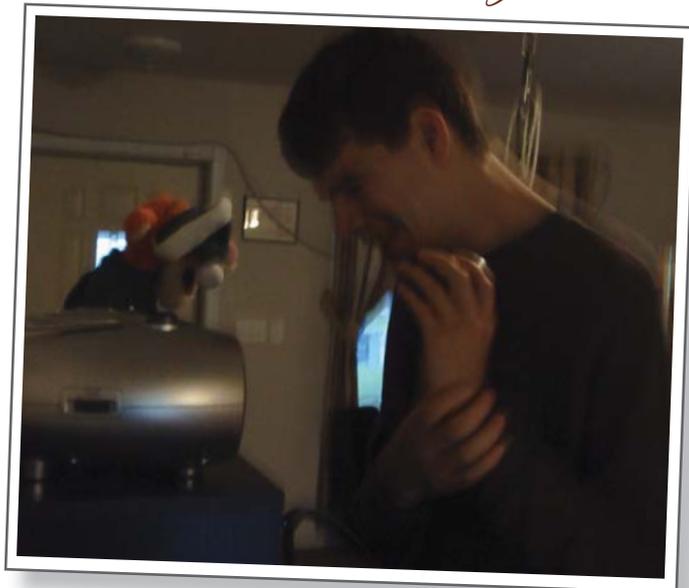
When asked how she balances the stressors of life and work, one word says it all for Sharlyn. Riding! Sharlyn jokes about having a "horse for every mood", and as for her favorite Aurora moment Sharlyn states, "There are so many! I think it was the Open House", held in May for Myatalisha's Dream. "All 4 guys from Folsom came out. Sometimes they just don't get along with each other, but that day they worked together!"

She looks to the future with the same modest determination that has already changed the lives of so many with Aurora. Nothing seems to stand in her way, including the challenges of converting a "cow barn" to an accessible, warm therapeutic environment, or proving the idea that ANYONE can ride and have a meaningful experience with a horse! Sharlyn's success proves there are no limits to what the gentle spirit of horses and those who face daily life challenges can do together. Inspiration? 100%



Consumer Spotlight

by Sue Wheeler



The Northwest Region recently welcomed Kenneth to his new home in Spooner. Kenneth came from the Excel Center at Northern Center in Chippewa Falls.

He is from the Dallas, WI, area where his parents own and operate a dairy farm. The transition seems to be going well – he has been able to walk the property line at his new home, has walked to the park, and is generally getting to know the Spooner area.

He enjoys building puzzles as well as doing piece work, and swinging. Kenneth is a bit of a car buff and has already checked out the vehicle, having staff comment on the engine size, the tire size and other information about the vehicle that are of interest to him.

Kenneth seems to enjoy being able to make his own choices. Including having a radio that he can control – turning the volume up and down. (The radio is now in Kenneth's room!)

He, also, paid a visit to the Spooner office recently. We are anticipating many more visits in the future and welcome Kenneth to his new home in our region.

Attention SCRAPBOOKERS!

Time to organize our photos! Aurora has a huge collection of photos from our 25 years of history.

If you are a scrap booker and would like to be involved, contact Holly Hakes at 715.235.1839 or HHakes@AuroraServices.com. More information on this creative opportunity will be sent out to those who want to join in the fun!

Carnival Night

by Sara Bembenek

The Plover Day Center hosted its' first annual Carnival Night on Thursday, June 2nd. Everyone was very involved in all aspects of the planning phase. Consumers helped staff paint a large refrigerator box for the "Go Fish" game, made trips to the local dollar store to select prizes, and to the grocery store to get items for the carnival treats such as snow cones and popcorn. The day of the carnival everyone pitched in to transform the Center into a Carnival for almost ninety attendees.

In addition to staff efforts' many homes brought in yummy baked goods for the cake walk. One house made an elaborate carousel cake. Needless to say, that was one of the first prizes selected that evening. Chris said, the highlight of the carnival was winning a plate of brownies to take home!

Other highlights of the event included a face painting booth. 'It was great to see the reaction of consumers when they looked at their reflection in the mirror,' stated Natasha. One of the most popular images painted was the Green Bay Packers "G". In addition, Terri Bollinger sported a star man on her face.

An area game farm and kennel brought snakes, ducklings, a hen, tortoise, and even a wallaby to create a petting zoo in the front parking lot. Almost everyone commented on the variety of animals at the petting zoo. Lauren even placed a snake around her neck and encouraged others to join in on the fun. She didn't get many takers!

Every half hour, an announcement invited all to gather in the back patio. A few good sports (vocational staff Jim, Sherri, and Sara) put on safety goggles and had a pie thrown in their face by a lucky consumer as the crowd erupted in laughter and smiles.

Overall, the Plover Day Center staff agreed that the best part of the carnival was the great turnout and the good time that was had by all. Joanne said she thought it was the best ARA and AVS group celebration she had been a part of.

We would like to give a special thank you to all the dedicated ARA staff who helped to make this evening one of the most memorable events. Everyone is already looking forward to next year's carnival!



Realize and Embrace Authentic Living

Dip your toes in the water.

The water is too cold, too hot or just right. It's murky or clear. Calm or rough. It's hard to judge it from its appearance - you have to test it out to be sure.

Life is like a body of water. It's a bit of a challenge to know for sure what it is like from afar. To live a full and **REAL** life, you really have to stick your toes in and test it out. New relationships can be scary. Unfamiliar experiences, even if they seem like they might be "fun", often result in feelings of anxiety. Making changes can easily result in a feeling of seasickness. To reach your **REAL** goals in life, the toes, very simply, have to be dipped in. Once you have a sense of what the water is like, and you give yourself a chance to acclimate to it, then you can venture in deeper. Once you've stepped into the water, well geez, you might as well dive in! Just like water, once you dive into life you are most likely to emerge and think to yourself "that was refreshing"!

If you never dip your toes in, you'll never know for sure. Make it your summer goal to dip your toes in the water, literally and figuratively...often.

Enjoy them both!

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Holly and your friends
at REALiving

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Sometimes...
you just need a
Listening Ear.



Aurora Community Counseling understands the importance of privacy and professional confidentiality. Located just a short drive from Eau Claire in Menomonie, **Robin Abraham, Psy.D.** is now accepting clients. Robin specializes in treatment of individuals with eating disorders.

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Ergonomics

by Gina Krueger of the Safety Team

Ergonomics is the scientific study of the efficiency of people in the workplace. Online Etymology Dictionary, © 2010 Douglas Harper

What Causes Pain?

- Awkward Positions
- Repetition
- Static Positions (same position for long periods)

Cumulative Trauma

Results from tissue damage due to repetitive poor body mechanics. You accumulate damage faster than your body can repair it. *Where do you have fatigue?* This could indicate a need to change your body mechanics with that area of your body.

Tips

1. Neutral Position of spine – keep the natural curves of your spine (chin forward, shoulders back and aligned with hips). Slouching or leaning forward causes back fatigue.
2. Telephone – if you are on the telephone more than 2 hours per day, you should use a headset to ensure the neutral position.
3. Seated Position - When seated, the curve of your back should be filled in with either the back of your chair or a cushion to keep your back straight.
 - a. Relaxed shoulders

- b. 90 degree elbow angle
 - c. Straight wrists
 - d. 100 – 110 degree hip angle – slight “lean back” in chair
 - e. Thighs should not hang off the chair and feet touching the ground. (Should be able to slide your hand underneath your thigh and touch the chair seat. If your thigh is too firmly against the chair, your seat is incorrect and must be lowered so your feet touch the ground more).
 - f. Hips should be all the way back in the chair.
 - g. Back of knees are 2 – 3” forward of the front edge of the chair seat (about 2 or 3 fingers wide).
 - h. Arms should be able to rest at a 90 degree angle to prevent forearm pain or fatigue.
4. Avoid turning neck continually. Turn whole body whenever possible.
 5. Alternate tasks to avoid sitting or standing for extended periods of time.
 6. Do frequent stretching (remember we encourage you to stretch at the beginning, during the middle and at the end of every shift).
 7. Utilize adaptive equipment safely and use the safety methods incorporated in training, at all times.
 8. Encourage co-workers, management, and consumers to use good ergonomics.

Wellness Team

The Wellness Team would like to thank those who participated in the Focus on Fitness challenge and congratulate the following winners:

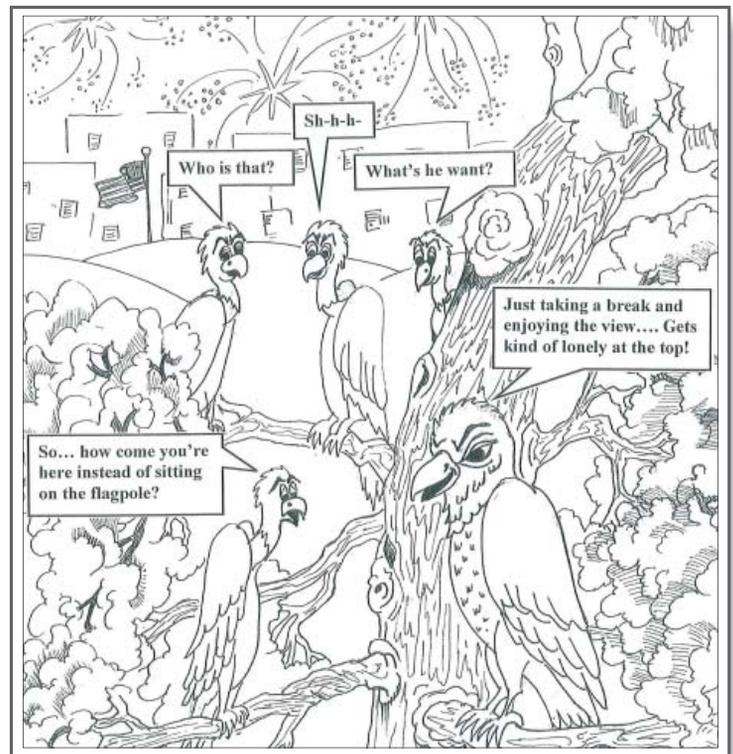
Recipients of a \$5 Subway Card:

Judy Bates	Sadie Modawell	Cyndi Johnson
Rondelynn Olson	Heidi Sacia	Donna Bignell
Carol Miller	Karen Kaufman	Jamie Clark
Kamie Hedrington	Kristie Heckendorf	Kim Schreiner
Rhonda Buss	Amy Wojciechowski	Michelle Seehafer

Recipients of a \$50 pre-paid Visa:

Terri Evans	Kim Schreiner
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The wellness team wants to thank the Teams that are taking part in the 5th Annual Virtual Mile Walk. These teams have made a commitment to track miles, have fun and improve their health. If you have not joined a team we encourage you to find a friend and walk today.



by Kathi Tollefson