

The BEACON

September 2011



"A new beginning"

Anniversaries in September

Congratulations

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

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CEO Corner

by Dave Barnard

Last month in the CEO Corner I discussed the concerns I have with what is going on in the delivery of services to individuals with Developmental Disabilities in the state of Wisconsin. As I have said before I have been working in this field for nearly forty years and over that time I have always been very proud of our State and the way it was committed to serving those with disabilities.

A few decades ago Wisconsin made a strong commitment to quality services for those with disabilities. Unfortunately the State ended up creating a huge expansion of governmental oversight which led to an increase in state and county departments and ten different Managed Care Organizations being formed in Wisconsin. All of this administrative growth within the past twenty years has chewed up many of those dollars that were previously earmarked and spent on direct care services. As I said last month the providers like Aurora are essentially operating on the service dollars we had been provided many years ago. Rarely we would receive a minimal 1-2% annual increase with the majority of the years receiving 0% annual increases. Not only have we operated with minimal budgets, but in the past 18 months service dollars to Aurora have been cut more than 20% and there are indications that there may be more cuts in the future for Aurora and other providers like us.

Today the State of Wisconsin is saying that they are faced with limited dollars and need to cut back on services to the disabled, but at the same time the State is attempting to "pretend" that it is fully committed to "individualized, quality based, self-directed services that will not affect the individual's outcomes or upset their life".

I'm sure you are familiar with the old fable of "The Emperor's New Clothes". A quick summary of the story is that a tailor was commissioned to make the Emperor the most glorious new clothes in the land. The tailor could not think of anything original so he came up with a scheme. He pretended that he had made the finest clothes in the land, but the one thing about these new clothes was that only intelligent people could see them - the clothes were completely invisible to fools and stupid people. So the Emperor and his entourage all acted as though they could see the clothes so as not to be thought a fool. Eventually the Emperor walked out of his palace to show off his new clothes to his people when a child along the parade route yelled out, "the Emperor has no clothes!"

I'm afraid it is time that someone yell out that "the Emperor has no clothes" here in the State of Wisconsin. We are being asked to "pretend" that dramatically cutting service dollars that have been in place for decades will have no negative effect on those individuals being served. Some are even trying to persuade us that the cut in service dollars will lead to "better" quality because families will need to provide more of the services and they are the ones who know the consumers best.

One of the most insidious of the plans being implemented at this point is the use of an alleged assessment tool that is used to determine the cost of care. Many organizations are using what is known as the Long Term Care Functional Screen (LTCFS) as their assessment tool. The LTCFS has been used for many years in Wisconsin to

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5th Annual Challenge

CEO Corner cont'd

determine eligibility for certain programs or services but is now being used for purposes outside of its original intent. Other organizations are using a different assessment tool that is not the LTCFS, but has many similar questions. These "tools" essentially place a numeric value to a variety of characteristics, abilities and behaviors of an individual. After the assessment is completed it generates a final numeric value that then determines the residential service dollars available to that person. Years ago I did psychological testing and one of the reasons I quit was that I found when you try to metrically measure a human being the ultimate result is the pigeon holing of a person. When I did Intelligence Quotient (IQ) testing invariably someone working with an individual would ask me "what is so and so's IQ". I would ask "Why do you want to know?" and they would respond with something like, "I want to know what I can expect from them". The sad reality of all psycho/social metric testing is that it can never tell you the realities of an individual's abilities, capacities, insecurities, functional potential or true limitations or capabilities. Metric Testing does however provide a nice clean statistical methodology to replace having to know and truly understand an individual. Punch in your data, get your final value and voila . . . you know everything you need to know to determine what that individual needs.

Sorry, but that is horse hockey. The only way one can truly know a person is to get to know them; talk to everyone who knows them, give them true opportunities to demonstrate what they can and cannot do right now and then determine (with the input of the individual and everyone who knows them) what the best situation is for them to flourish and grow. Aurora has been doing exactly that for 25 years. We threw out metric testing years ago because we learned that it really tells you nothing of significance. In reality it is usually used to come up with a "result that the tester wanted to come up with from the beginning". In this case that result is a reduction in support service dollars.

Aurora, and other providers like us, has been around for over a quarter century. Before that there were State and County run institutions that "housed" those with disabilities. We provided "a new beginning" for countless individuals who have lived their new lives fully in their own communities where they belong. We continue to fight for the rights of those we serve and we will remain a voice for those who cannot speak out for themselves. We are hopeful that our advocacy, along with others, including you, will help turn around the negative direction that the State is choosing to go for those with disabilities.

I cannot tell you how important it is to Aurora that you, the staff and owners of this great company, keep doing the wonderful things you do every day to help those we serve thrive in their communities. Together we will make a change!

Thanks for all that you do!

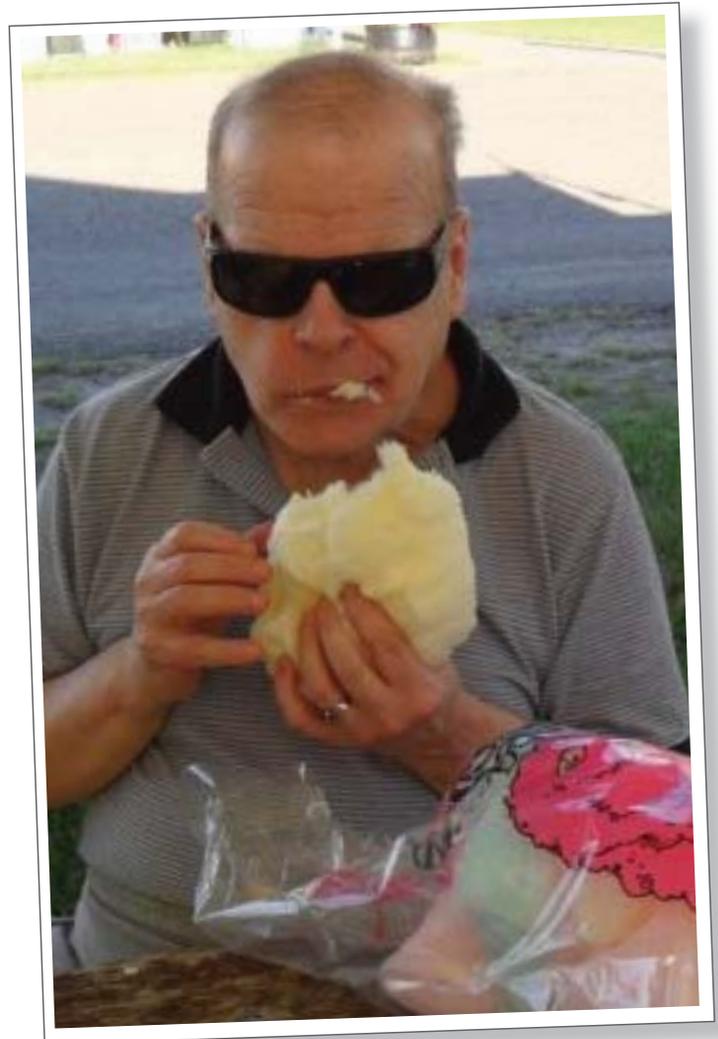
Dave

The 5th Annual Virtual Mile Challenge was a success! We had 11 teams throughout the company and collectively walked **6,309 miles**.

The winner of the first half of the event (with the most miles) was the Luscious Ladies from Operation 008 and the winner of the second half of the event was the Movers and Shakers from the Call Center.

Thanks to everyone for their participation and commitment to living a healthy lifestyle!

Life Photo of the Month



"None of us is as smart as all of us."

– Ken Blanchard

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 – **Lorrie Nelson**. Lorrie has been with Aurora for 12 ½ year as a lead staff at #082 in Spooner as well as two other sites in the area. Emily Mujwid, Program Director says: Lorrie has been an amazing support to her co-workers as well as the consumers. She has been a great support for her teammates following the placement of a new consumer with challenging behaviors at #095. Lorrie has really stepped up to the plate, offering to pick up hours in a time when we have experienced many crunches. She is a valuable asset to our team.

Central Region's Employee of the Month - **Mya Fellenz**. Jill Mattson, Program Director has this to say: Mya has been working for Aurora since July of 2007. She has worked at 2 different homes in the Eau Claire area. Mya has a very positive energy that she brings to any team of which she is a part. This energy is contagious for both consumers and co-workers. She is very creative when assisting consumer's involvement in their communities. Mya is very consumer focused and takes time to do the little extra things to make a consumer feel good. As a co-worker Mya takes initiative, is one step ahead of the game, and never seems to stop. Thank you Mya for every thing you do and for always going above and beyond because it is the right thing to do.

Eastern Region's Employee of the Month - **Mike Muhvic**. Mike works in a home in Wisconsin Rapids with 3 young men who present some very challenging behaviors. There are also many staff on the team at this home. Mike is described by his Program Director, Joyce Anderson, as a real team player and someone everyone can count on. When struggles are occurring, Mike looks out for everyone in the home. Because of the relationships he has developed with the consumers, he is the person who attends doctor's appointments, home visits and other important programming appointments. Thank you Mike for the support you provide the consumers and teammates.

Congratulations to all of you!



Safety Spotlight of the Month

Operation 099 in New Richmond is the Northwest Region's winner. This home currently serves 5 consumers. Everyone has done a great job working safely and reporting safety concerns as soon as they are present. Safety is discussed at every team meeting with input from all staff. Everyone works with safety in mind and does a great job of sharing safe working techniques.

Operation 083 in Eau Claire is the Central Region's winner.

Operation 061 in Plover is the Eastern Region's winner. They are a very creative team. Thinking of the safety of the consumers they serve, they vacated the garage and turned it into an **indoor** patio! This area keeps the consumers from direct sunlight and appears to be a motivator for going outdoors and enjoying the fresh air. This is proof health and safety are number 1.

Shattering the Stereotypes:

by Seth Boodle

Employing those with disabilities in our local communities

After meeting with local businesses and talking with countless business owners and human resource professionals through the job development process, there seems to be many preconceived notions about hiring peoples with disabilities. Many businesses think if they hire someone who is "disabled" they will be "doing them a favor", or that it will require excessive amounts of their valuable time. For this reason, many businesses shy away from offering employment to these individuals. One of the goals at Aurora Vocational Services is to break down the social typecasts and bring a new understanding not only to businesses, but also to the general public about the benefits of hiring those with disabilities.

From the business and employer standpoint, it is vital to recognize how employing peoples with disabilities can actually increase their bottom line. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 1 in 5 Americans have some form of disability. This is equal to 50 million Americans which in 2002, the Census Bureau estimate had over \$188 billion in disposable income. Edith Weiner, president of the consulting group, Weiner, Edrich, Brown, Inc. said: "Pay attention to persons with disabilities. They are a big market. If you can serve that market more effectively than your competitors, you may be able to capture a loyal and lucrative customer base."

In order to enter this existing and lucrative market, employers must first break down their own stereotypes about employing people from within the disabled community. For this reason, it may be beneficial to share what some of the businesses are saying about the people

with disabilities we helped to employ. The following is one of the responses received from a local business owner who hired one of our consumers:

"Hi Seth,

Just wanted to give you an update on [John Smith]; We are so very glad to have him as part of our team here at Jock In A Box; he is a very considerate and dedicated worker, and has a great deal of aptitude for the tasks he's taken on, he's gone beyond what I initially expected, and any limitations on him would be strictly in my mind, not his! I did not fill out the forms for wage compensation for hiring him, I treat him just like any other valued employee, he earns his pay, he's gotten a raise already, and he's very dependable. A model employee in so many respects.

Just wanted to pass that along,

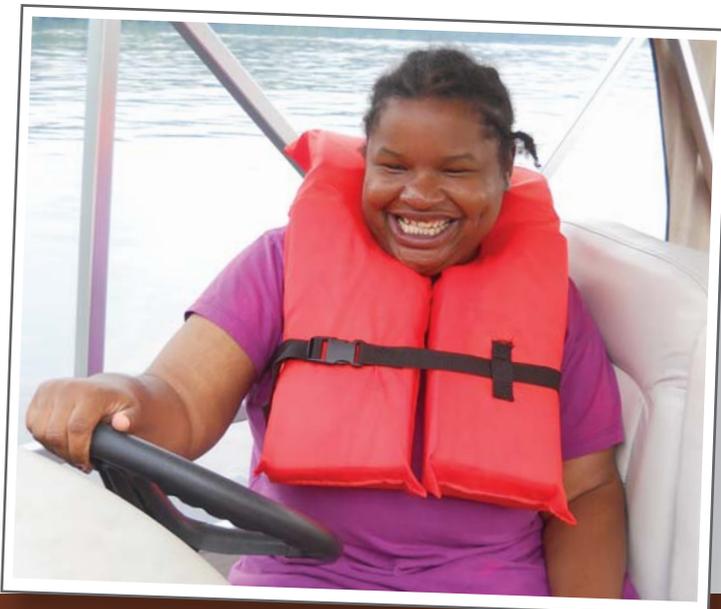
Regards,

*Bobby Amann,
Jock In A Box DJs, Inc."*

This letter exemplifies the benefits so many businesses can experience for themselves if they are willing to take the first step by employing those with disabilities; allowing them to become the contributing members of our community that they deserve to be, and are capable to become. By doing the right thing, these businesses may also see a significant increase in revenue from a largely untapped market.

Consumer Spotlight

by Sadie Bygd



Six years ago, the EC Vocational Day Center began its' annual pontoon ride that was a one-day affair which blossomed into a five-day adventure this year.

Sarah Mohr, who works at the Eau Claire Voc Center, initiated the idea and made it a reality and has been building on ever since. In the beginning, the crew pontooned on Lake Wissota for one day with only 12 consumers. This year, over 45 consumers took part and a pontoon was rented for five days which meant everyone was able to spend a whole day on the mighty Chippewa River, drive the boat and have a picnic lunch. A special thank you to Sarah Mohr for her meticulous planning and organizing of this event!

The Center staff have plans to rent even a bigger boat next year and it seems that with all of the enthusiasm, community support and creative ideas, these plans will become a reality.

Fire Safety

by Sara Bembenek

Follow these safety guidelines to reduce your risk of experiencing a house fire:

- Test smoke alarms monthly
- Test windows and doors, do they open easily?
- Place fire alarms on each level of the home and in hallways
- Replace smoke alarm batteries twice a year i.e. at the beginning and end of day light savings time
- Replace smoke alarms that are ten years or older

Cooking Safety Tips:

- Keep an eye on what you're cooking. If you must leave the stove while cooking, take a spoon or potholder with you to remind yourself to return to the kitchen.
- Roll up sleeves and avoid loose fitting clothing while cooking.
- Don't store cooking supplies or utensils directly over or behind the stove.
- Turn pan handles inward.

Electrical Cord and Lighting Safety:

- Don't use an electrical cord if it is stiff or cracked.
- Inspect electrical cords for frayed wires, replace worn, old, or damaged cords immediately.
- Install additional receptacles when needed. Extension cords should not be used on a long-term basis.
- Avoid placing electrical cords under rugs or furniture.
- Use correct wattage bulbs for each fixture. Too high of wattage can cause fixtures to overheat and cause a fire.
- If an appliance has a three prong plug, use it in a three slot outlet. Never force a three prong plug into a two slot outlet.

If a Fire Breaks Out:

- Stay as low to the ground as possible.
- Touch door knobs to determine whether they are hot. If so, do not use that as your exit.
- Don't waste time saving property. Once out, stay out!

Flu Season is approaching!

Aurora will be holding flu shot clinics in the Menomonie, New Richmond, Eau Claire, Spooner and Mosinee Offices and the Marathon and Plover Centers in October. We will be announcing the dates and times for the locations soon. Look for the information in our area offices, then sign up for your flu shot. The flu shot clinics are a convenient and inexpensive way to be healthy during the flu season. The vaccination is free to all employees who have Aurora's health insurance. If you don't have our health insurance the costs is \$10 per person. Family members (must be 18 years old) are also welcome to take advantage of this at the same cost.

If you are not able to attend Aurora's flu shot clinics you can go to a clinic of your choice and provide us with proof of payment, Aurora will then reimburse employees a maximum of \$10 for the flu shot.

Don't let the flu be a part of your fall and winter. Take advantage of either Aurora's flu shot clinics or go to a clinic of your choice and receive a reimbursement. We want you to be healthy.

Realize and Embrace Authentic Living

Use your energy wisely.

Have you ever heard that the energy you send out into the world impacts the energy that you get back? If you project **negative** vibes, you will attract **negative** vibes. And if you project **positive** vibes, likewise, you will attract **positive** vibes. This idea suggests you have the power and influence over the experiences in your life (and you do!).

Do an experiment and see if it works. For example, send out an "I'm happy with my life" vibe, see if you find yourself bumping into more happiness. On the flip side, if you don't like the energy you are receiving, take a minute to change the vibe you are sending out. You need to bend and shape the energy to make it work for you!

Try it! Post a positive statement on Facebook (resist the sarcastic or judgmental one); pay your bills while feeling thankful for the money you have (rather than fear the money you don't have); feel confident in your pro-fessional skills (rather than anxious about perceived inadequacy). Use your energy wisely and it will result in a more satisfied REAL you.

Keepin' it REAL,
Holly and your friends
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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.

Contact us today.

Aurora
community counseling

888.261.5585 | www.AuroraServices.com

Meal of the Month - Healthy and Budget Wise

Main Course:

Chicken-Penne Florentine Bake

prep time: 25 minutes; 6 servings, 1 cup each



For dessert:

Better-for-You Pudding in a Cloud

prep time: 10 minutes; 6 servings

2 cups thawed Sugar Free Whipped Topping
1 pkg. (1.4 oz.) Chocolate Fat Free Sugar Free Instant Pudding
2 cups cold fat-free milk

SPREAD 1/3 cup whipping topping onto bottom and up side of each of 6 dessert dishes.

BEAT pudding mix and milk with whisk 2 min. Spoon into center of whipped topping in each dish.

REFRIGERATE 1 hour.

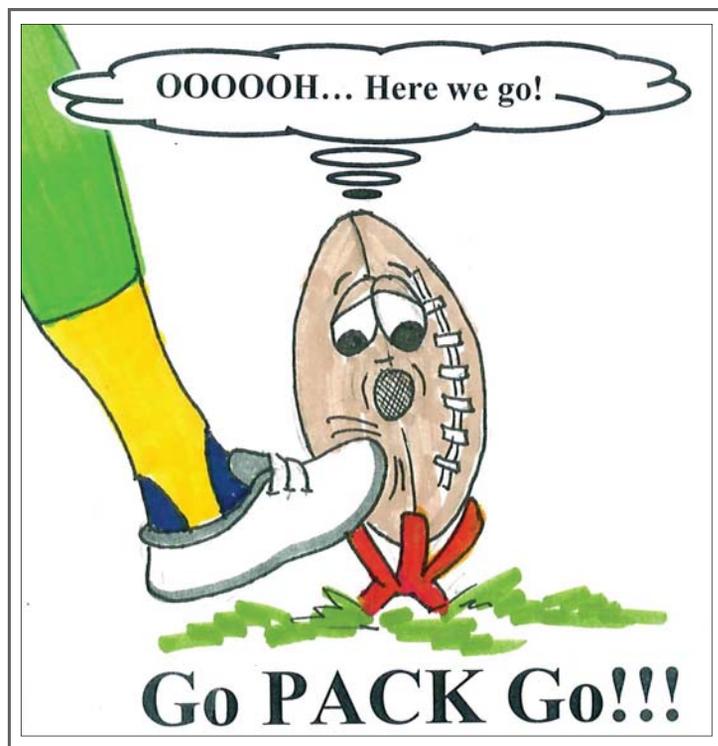
2 cups multi-grain penne pasta, uncooked
1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut in bite-size pieces
2 Tbsp. flour
2 Tbsp. Sun Dried Tomato Vinaigrette Dressing
1 cup fat-free reduced-sodium chicken broth
2 oz. (1/4 of 8-oz. pkg.) Neufchatel Cheese, cubed
1 pkg. (10 oz.) frozen chopped spinach, thawed, well drained
1 cup Shredded Mozzarella Cheese
2 Tbsp. Grated Parmesan Cheese

HEAT oven to 375°F. COOK pasta as directed on package.

MEANWHILE, toss chicken with flour. Heat dressing in large skillet on medium heat. Add chicken; cook and stir 3 min. or just until evenly browned. Add broth and Neufchatel; cook 3 min. or until Neufchatel is melted, stirring frequently. Stir in spinach.

DRAIN pasta. Add to chicken mixture; mix lightly. Spoon half into 2-qt. casserole; top with 1/2 cup mozzarella. Repeat layers; sprinkle with Parmesan.

BAKE 16 to 18 min. or until casserole is heated through and mozzarella is melted.



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.