

# *B* the *Spring* 2015 **BEACON**



*"A new beginning"*

## *Anniversaries* in April, May, June

Dave Barnard	29	Justin Boiteau	9
Jim Neuman	29	Heather Johnson	9
Kelly McIntyre	25	Edward Gengenbach	9
Deborah Seibel	22	Jenafer Malzahn	8
Lynn Corrado	19	Julie Gumz	8
Melinda Stewart	19	Angela Mandera	8
Cindy Merkel	19	Chiara Andahazy	8
Marty Heitkamp	18	Amanda Yaeger	8
Dorothy Reed	18	Jennifer Brenn	7
Carrie Horn	17	Edna Juech	7
Terri Bollinger	17	Christina Kortez	7
Sue Hertz	17	Sandi Brooks	6
Kathy Doering	17	Dawn Brand	6
Cindy Leach	17	Scott Schulz	6
Theodore Belisle	16	Mikki Freeman	6
Jennifer Blietz	16	Amanda Rageth	6
Linda Liebzeit	15	Adam Little	5
Tammy Roskos	14	Emily Jones	5
Ronda Simons	14	Orlando Simon	5
Margaret Bauer	14	Krystal Richardson	5
Charlotte Olson	14	Kymerly Thompson	5
Cyndi Johnson	14		
Melissa Stoneburg	13		
Dawn Mashak	13		
Walter Knudtson	13		
Mark Eidson	13		
Cornelia Bohn	12		
Patricia Brown	11		
Carris Bible	11		
Heidi Schultz	11		
Sue Davidson	11		
Andrea Olson	11		
David Anderson	11		
James Korb	11		
Jacqueline Smith	11		
Rhonda Bungartz	10		
Michelle Benzel	10		
Donna Woellner	10		
Anna Johnson	9		
Elizabeth Dunaway	9		
Nancy Nauer	9		
Pamela Knetsch	9		

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

*Aurora*  
community services

## *CEO Corner*

*by* Dave Barnard

It's difficult for me to believe but on April 19th we, Aurora, celebrated our 29th Anniversary. After nearly three decades of being a part of this journey known as Aurora I am reminded of the quote from Aldous Huxley who said, "Experience is not what happens to you, it is what you do with what happens to you."

Over the past many years we have had a great deal of "experience"; some good and some not so good. We have learned from our mistakes and gained from our risks – in other words we, as an organization, have lived. An organization is much the same as an individual. There are good days and there are bad days. There are things that can be predicted and things that cannot. As with an individual, an organization has to deal with the hand it is dealt and as with an individual, the more experiences that can be drawn upon will improve the probability of success moving forward.

Aurora has certainly had its' share of ups and downs over the previous three decades. I am very pleased to say that we have done a very good job of drawing from each of those experiences, some good some bad, to make us a strong competent and dynamic organization.

Over the past several years we have had to navigate the ever diminishing dollars that the State has pulled from long-term care for individuals with disabilities. It has been a significant challenge but from our knowledge base drawn from our experience, we have been and continue to realign our company to operate within the new and ever changing landscape known as Family Care.

Because of the hand we have been dealt with the cuts in Family Care we have taken actions to ensure our future. You may have seen or heard of provider agencies that have closed up shop because of

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their inability to adjust to the new service model being demanded by the State. Because of our years of experience and our ability to make adjustments on the fly we are still here.

At our Winter Advance I explained to our management group that the changes we began and continue to make will take some time. Some of the new plans are now becoming reality. We have made consolidations in some of our homes to help deal with the shortage in the staffing market. We are increasing residential development in the area of service to those individuals with traumatic brain injury in Colorado. We have made adjustments in our vocational area with consolidations and renegotiations of our land leases. We established and are looking to expand our Crisis programs to accommodate the need for short term placement of those struggling to remain in the community and . . . we established REALiving. REALiving is our company that provides Employee Assistance Programs to other businesses, school systems, law enforcement agencies and county and city governments. REALiving draws from all of Aurora's professional experience with counseling, coaching, community health and training. It is the fastest growing element of our Aurora family and shows great promise for the future.

All of the above mentioned innovations and program development helps to support us as we realign Aurora

Residential to the new environment. The wheels are set in motion and we are seeing positive results from many of these newly implemented efforts. It will take some time but in the end Aurora will be a stronger more successful company than we have ever been. Once we have re-established ourselves the primary emphasis will be on improving wages and benefits for all of you who make the day-to-day lives of those we serve so positive. The State has taken budgetary steps that directly affect our ability to provide the compensation you so deserve. They have abandoned the previous view that individuals with disabilities have the right to live in their community as they wish. Aurora has not abandoned that view and we are taking the steps necessary to get us back in a fiscal condition that will allow us to reward you, the ones who make it happen.

We thank you for your dedication, commitment and loyalty to those we serve. You make it happen and we know it. We are doing everything we can to be able to provide you with the benefits you so deserve . . . and we will succeed!

Thank you for all that you do!

*Dave*

## Employee of the Quarter



### Erica Peterson, is the Employee of the Quarter!

Erica has been at 029 for over 4 years, starting as the overnight person and then the PM2 position over 2 years ago. She has a calm about her that carries over to the ladies that live there. Just walking into the home while Erica is working you can see how the ladies love and react to her. The staff at the site see that she works with them as a teammate. Erica has truly grabbed the "sensory bag" and run with it! Erica has purchased many sensory items that the ladies use throughout their day. She is very passionate about being an advocate for them. When one of the ladies was told by the dentist that all her teeth needed to come out; Erica flew into action advocating for the consumer to keep her teeth. She worked diligently with the dental office, guardian and care managers to help the consumer keep her teeth. Erica is very excited to get Residex up and running at the site. She realizes what a great transition this will be for the staff and the consumers as she knows the staff will have more time to spend with the ladies. Erica loves her position as a PM2 with Aurora and it shows!

# Star of the Quarter



Carla Treder, is the Star of the Quarter!

Carla began as a Call Center Specialist in July 2013 and was promoted to a Call Center Manager in October 2014. Due to Carla's excellent employee performance, she was recently promoted to the Call Center Coordinator position! Carla has quickly climbed the Call Center ladder due her dedication, hard work and many fantastic ideas. Carla absolutely loves her new position and excels with any project she is given. Carla has a strong determination to not only do a good job but a GREAT job! She recently shared that her goal is to one day be the Call Center Director (excellent goal!)



## A Day In The Life

by Sarah Mohr



Andrew Garr is a man with many talents. He was recognized by the ARC of Eau Claire on April 10, 2015, as he accepted the 2015 Outstanding Efforts On Behalf of Adults with Disabilities award.

Andrew is currently Program Director at the Eau Claire Day Services Program. His passion for working with adults with disabilities is unsurpassed. Andrew is always looking for ways to increase opportunities and quality of life for the members he serves in his programs. He has a thoughtful demeanor and advocacy.

Andrew has an extensive background and desire for helping and assisting people in many different areas of their lives. He began his journey working for the Eau Claire Academy. He then ventured off to Philadelphia to further his knowledge and

attended Temple University where he received his Bachelors Degree in Social Work. During his schooling, Andrew managed to find time to work at St. Vincent's Tacony as Group Life Manager and Director of their Summer Program working with kids ages 7-12.

Andrew explored and excelled in many opportunities in the care field before joining Aurora July 2013 as Program Director. Andrew now wears many hats and maintains many crucial positions within the Aurora family. He will be co-managing the Community Based Pre-Vocational Program in his area, he is a statewide approved trainer for the PROMISE Grant, is a member of Aurora's Safety Team and local C-COT. Additionally, Andrew has also ventured to the AVS world where he assists with manning the difficult task of Eau Claire and Chippewa County job coach schedule.

Andrew indicates his favorite part of the job is spending time with consumers on a daily basis. He has learned that even though you have a solid plan in place, anything can change at the drop of a hat. When changes are made, he is extremely helpful and communicative to solve the issues. He enjoys advocating for individuals with disabilities and assisting them with getting their voices heard.

With all Andrew's responsibilities, he still finds time for his own personal hobbies outside of work. Andrew is an avid wine maker, enjoys camping, canoeing, and spending time with family and friends. He is also a board member for "The Foster Closet" in Menomonie. His family has opened this store to give foster children an opportunity to receive items they may not otherwise be able to afford.

Andrew is truly one of a kind, and a huge impact for the individuals Aurora serves.

The New Richmond, Eau Claire, and Menomonie Day Centers held their 2nd annual "Aurora's Got Talent" competition. All participants performed their amazing talents in front of a panel of guest judges from the community. Each Day Center awarded three winners for first, second, and third place.

New Richmond awarded third place to Mr. Kevin Knott. Kevin showed the judges his bean bag skills. After each throw he would look at the judges and wag his finger with a smile. He continued to wow the judges after he returned to his seat by looking at the judges smiling while clapping his hands. Eau Claire awarded third place to Ms. Beverly Posta. Beverly wowed the judges and the audience with her amazing magic trick in which she pulled a rabbit out of a hat. Menomonie awarded Ms. Missy Retzloff the third place prize for her amazing magic trick. Missy was able to successfully make a small bear disappear in to a box. The crowd was stunned and Missy was very proud of her magic trick.

New Richmond awarded second place to Mr. Brad Boots. Brad along with his care taker told a story which included animated sounds by none other than Brad himself. The crowd found these sensory sounds mystifying. Eau Claire awarded second place to Mr. Thomas Schlosser. Tom took on the role of Johnny Cash and sang his rendition of "Folsom Prison Blues." Tom wore an inmate costume and really captured the audience with his vocal styling and creative approach to delivering his performance. Menomonie awarded second place to Mr. Dean Reis. He performed a dance and sing-a-long to Kermit the Frog's "Rainbow Connection." Dean really sealed the deal for second place with his spectacular dance moves.

New Richmond awarded first place to Ms. Linda Krohn. Linda played three wonderful songs on the piano for the judges. What is special about this is that Linda is blind. She taught herself to play all by sound. Eau Claire



awarded first place to Ms. Marilyn Johnson. Marilyn performed a show stopping performance of Alicia Key's "Girl On Fire." Marilyn brought down the house with her vocals and thrust herself into a first place performance with a repeat encore to follow. Marilyn had audience members in tears as she poured her heart and soul into her performance. Menomonie awarded first place to "The Happy Fun Band" as they displayed a smashing performance of "Turkey in the Straw." Bob Dominick and Randy Seitz were the two musicians with Bob playing the kazoo and Randy shaking the maraca. They performed the song perfectly and really got a good reaction from the audience.