

# Visions

A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS OF OPPORTUNITY MATTERS INC.

SUMMER 2018

## A Workplace of Smiles

Forbes.com recently reported on a study of 500 HR managers who voiced strong support in promoting fun in the workplace, and how the impact can benefit both the individual employee and the organization as a whole. The leadership of Opportunity Matters works hard to foster a work environment with a foundation of team work, positivity and fun. This is aided by team building activities such as participation in; OMI's Adopt a Highway clean-up, National Red Nose day and by

holding clothing and food drives for local shelters. The employees also enjoy having fun around the office by participating in creative celebrations such as Bubble Day, National Chip & Dip day and National Ice Cream day. Recently, OMI hosted a throw back to High School by having a Spirit Week (hat day, favorite color, etc), designating how to dress up for each day of the week. The next time

you stop by OMI's administration offices you are sure to hear people sharing a laugh while completing their daily work. Just don't be surprised if they are dressed a little bit funny. ■



*Having fun in the break room*



*Red noses on to aid in ending child poverty.*



*Everyone brought in their favorite dip recipe to share.*

# thank you

Thank you to all the vendors who helped make our Wellness Fair a success!

- Infinite Eye Care
- Profile by Sanford
- St. Cloud Federal Credit Union
- 360 Chiropractic
- VITAL Worklife
- Christensen Group
- Health EZ
- Flagship
- The Standard
- Colonial
- Young Living
- Isagenix

# The Little Things

Amanda Niemeyer, Program Director

Since I started working at Opportunity Matters I have enjoyed getting to meet everyone and being a part of the Gals Club. It doesn't take you long to realize that the activities are great but it is the little things that really make a difference in the lives of the individuals served by the organization.

For example, one of our individuals asked me if I could paint her nails when she comes to the office with her staff. I said, "Absolutely!" She came the next week and I painted her nails and put sparkle polish on too. She smiled from ear to ear! I love making people smile and seeing them have so much joy!

One of our male clients comes to my office on Monday and Tuesday afternoons to visit and always asks to watch "Journey to Ernie," on my computer. He sings with Big Bird and claps his hands and I join in too. It's so heartwarming to see how happy he is.

Another client stops by my office on his walks to say "Hi" and he knows I always have a mint or candy for him. He is always polite and says thank you and then resumes his walk with staff.

This job is so rewarding, my heart is filled every time I leave here at the end of the day! It really is the little things that often put a look of pure enjoyment on the faces of the individuals we serve. I feel the same way; it is so great to do something for them that is such a small part of my day but makes them so happy. ■



Showing off her freshly painted nails

## Organization Hires Recruiter/Trainer



In an effort to recruit, train and retain high quality employees, Opportunity Matters developed a Recruiter/Trainer position for the organization at the start of 2018. In January, Jennie Sutcliffe was hired for the position and has been working diligently to meet the employees, and help them achieve their career goals. Since this is a new position, Jennie is able to create and implement some new ideas to better support employees, and individuals served. A referral bonus has been introduced and is offered periodically to current employees for the successful referral of their friends and family to a position within OMI. In addition, a pick-up incentive has also been introduced giving employees added incentive and recognition for picking up open shifts. Jennie has introduced video into the organization's recruitment and training efforts. Working closely with the site employees videos were developed that detail expectations and skills necessary to successfully work with the individuals served by Opportunity Matters. Jennie has also kept some of the recruitment techniques used in the past such as OMI's walk-in interviews, which are held on Mondays from 1pm-4pm.

Jennie will continue evolving the Recruiter/Trainer position with OMI by; continuing to visit and learn more about the organization's different sites, interacting with the individuals to better understand their staffing needs, and lending support in anyway employees may need to ensure continual training. ■

## Promoting Positivity

This spring, the Leadership Team of Opportunity Matters attended a presentation by the international bestseller Jon Gordon for his new book, "Power of Positive Leadership." Jon Gordon is the author of 15 books, including 5 best sellers that have inspired readers and assisted in developing positive leaders, organizations and teams. Jon and his tips have been featured on The Today Show, CNN, CNBC and include clients such as The Los Angeles Dodgers, Campbell Soup, Dell and Southwest Airlines. In 2013, Opportunity Matters began integrating the philosophy of positivity inspired by Gordon's bestselling book, the Energy Bus, throughout the organization's culture and core values. Our leadership team is excited to utilize additional concepts from his new book into OMI's work environment. ■



# Thank you

## TO EVERYONE WHO ATTENDED OUR 2018 Great Get Together!

More photos on our website at [www.opportunitymatters.org](http://www.opportunitymatters.org)



# Supported Apartment Program Continues to Grow

*Drea Metcalf, Program Coordinator*

Introduced in the spring of 2017, OMI's newest service, the Supported Apartment Program, continues to grow and serve more individuals in our community. Recently, Chris joined the program. Chris moved into his own apartment in the beginning of June from a residential home in the area. Chris, who has been looking forward to moving out on his own for a very long time, is independent in taking his meds, cooking, and self care. Chris is currently looking for a job to help pay the bills that come with living on his own. Chris enjoys getting to know new people and has met a lot of people in his new apartment complex in the short couple of weeks he has lived there. The Supported Apartment Program has been a great fit for Chris.

Gail, the first individual who joined OMI's supported apartment program, is doing so well that she is able to live in her own apartment (she previously had a roommate when she initially started in the program) and only has staff coming over Monday through Friday. Gail continues to have access to the programs emergency on call system if an issue were to arise over the weekend when no staff is there. Gail is really enjoying living by herself. She loves rearranging her furniture whenever and however she wants. Gail says that she loves her apartment so much that she never wants to move again.

Travis recently moved to a new apartment. He's been doing very well and becoming more independent by filling his own medications, figuring out how to navigate the bus lines and self advocating when things aren't going the way he would like.

Jackie continues to grow in her independence. She has been going to the VFW for bingo every Sunday on her own, utilizing Dial-A-Ride services to get there and back by herself with no staff assistance. Jackie enjoys visiting and spending time with the many people she has met in her apartment building. She is learning how to budget her money and make wise purchasing decisions to ensure she can cover her living expenses. Jackie and Gail now live in the same apartment complex and enjoy getting together to play pool and have dinner.

If you know someone who would thrive in an independent living situation with supported apartment services please contact Sam Pierskalla, Program Services Director, at (320) 240-1900 for more information. ■

## Avengers for Autism

On Sunday, May 20th, a few OMI individuals were treated to a complimentary showing of the new Avengers movie at the Parkwood Theater. Tickets were donated by local comedian Adrian Washington, who set-up a Go Fund Me account to raise money to purchase the movie tickets. Adrian has family members with Autism and wanted to do something special to raise awareness. But why the Avengers movie?

Some of the heroes involved in "Avengers: Age of Ultron" didn't appear on-screen: they worked behind the screen. Four young adults with autism worked on post-production of the film. This included tracker-marker cleanup as well as the end title credits for the film, proving once again that what some individuals with autism might lack in social skills, they often make up for in visual artistry, focus, and attention to detail – or what some call the superpowers of autism. The post production team are 2014 graduates of the Exceptional Minds vocational school for young adults with autism. The school and working studio were created in 2011 for young adults on the Autism spectrum pursuing careers in visual effects and related fields.

Opportunity Matters would like to thank Adrian Washington and everyone who donated to his Go Fund Me account. Unique donation opportunities like this or other ticket donations are a great way to make a difference and give the individuals served a bit of summer fun. To donate movie tickets to individuals served by Opportunity Matters please contact Regan Stommes at (320) 240-1900. To read more about Avengers for Autism and the Exceptional Minds vocation school, please visit <https://www.autismspeaks.org/news/news-item/marvel039s-quotavenger-quot-superpowers-meet-autism-superpowers>. ■



*A quick picture before going in to watch the Avengers*

## Wellness & Benefit Fair

Employee health is something that is not taken for granted here at OMI. Each year we have the opportunity to meet with our health care insurance providers to stay in tune with our current health care plan. While this seems like a “norm” for many, it is something that is becoming more “ghost-like” in today’s companies. We are very blessed to have this as one of the priorities on the agenda for staff. Staying on top of understanding our benefit plan is a BIG part of making informed decisions and getting the maximum advantage from our health care plan. This year OMI employees will see a change in their Dental and Vision care providers. This will help to keep our costs affordable while providing quality services. HSA participation was another piece of keeping our health care costs down. HSA benefits of deferring costs and reducing taxes were explained, making it easy to see how it was another valued benefit.

OMI’s take on health is much more than just having the right health, dental and vision plans in place as options. Each year we have additional coverage options and other vendors who provide additional support options for obtaining good health year round.

Each vendor represented brings their piece to an overall balanced healthy lifestyle. Options are varied in order to best meet the individual needs of OMI staff. During our Wellness Fair there was a buzz of conversation around the various programs that individuals have gotten involved in this past year.

It is so refreshing to have vendors to talk to who really are invested in helping staff move toward healthy lifestyles in all aspects of life. One of the new services provided by HealthEZ is coaching. Through voluntary participation in the plan, you keep your rates at a reduced cost. This can be adapted to each individual’s preferred method of communication. We also had displays that helped you discover things like: how long a Big Mac stays in your system, what bottled beverage has the most sugar, between a yogurt and a Hersey bar which had the most sugar. (Yes, it was the yogurt not the Hersey bar and a Big Mac is not out of your system for anywhere from 24 to 72 hours.) In addition, the trans-fats from a Big Mac are not fully out of your system for 51 days. This information is something that stuck with staff that had not heard about it previously. There are many benefits to working at OMI, health and wellness is one of them. ■



## Donations/Grants

*We are grateful to the many individuals, families, businesses and foundations whose contributions are vital to the success of Opportunity Matters Inc. The following list reflects gifts received from April 1, 2018 to June 30, 2018.*

### \$600+

Arlene Phillips

### \$200+

John Skalla

### Donations

Mike's Dirt Work  
Brittany Davison  
Carlson Cleaners  
Mickey Thern  
Agustin & Rachel Guerra  
Adrian Washington  
Brenda Groseclose  
Keith Ritter  
Vital Work Life

*If you are interested in making a donation to Opportunity Matters, please contact Regan Stommes, CEO at (320) 240-1900 x210.*

## Board Members

### President

Anita Stoering, *Wolters Kluwer*

### President Elect:

John Skalla, *DeZURIK*

### Secretary

Kaylan Nelson, *Microbiologics*

### Treasurer:

Courtney Vorell, *Rum River Special Education Cooperative*

### Directors:

John Herges, *Falcon National Bank*  
Gary Sabby, *T & S Agency, LLC*

## A Familiar Face

Over the past five years or so, you may have heard Opportunity Matters' staff and individuals encourage folks to stop out at Coborn's Brat Sale fundraiser. Most years, Opportunity Matters is fortunate to get the opportunity to participate in this fundraiser two times throughout the summer. Money and tips raised go towards funding OMI's Guys and Gal's club activities, such as; trips to Valley Fair, manicures, pumpkin decorating and the popular Thanksgiving meal.



Stopping by the brat stand, you will see the faces of OMI employees and the individuals served working to deliver fresh brats, hotdogs and pop. More than just a good fundraiser, participating in the brat stand also helps individuals served work on skills such as making change and interacting with other members of the community. It also helps the employees get a better understanding of what it means to work for a non-profit and see the joy the individuals served can make in someone's day.

A familiar face you are guaranteed to see each time you stop by the brat stand is Tim. He looks forward all year long to the four days a year that OMI works the brat stand. If you know Tim, you know he can be an outgoing individual who loves to visit, joke and bring a smile to everyone's face. Tim has taken the brat stand quite serious and brainstorms how he can draw in more customers to the stand. Most years, he is excited to show off his newest homemade sign for collecting pop cans (his favorite past time) but this year he upped his game by debuting his new hotdog costume, much to the delight of individuals, employees and Coborn's customers. Throughout the day, Tim dances and sings, visits and jokes, all while wearing his costume and smiling the whole time. Tim is becoming a fan favorite and a familiar face behind OMI's brat stand. He frequently sees people he knows, often times, some he hasn't seen for a while.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support OMI's Guys and Gals club and stops by the stand the days it is OMI's turn to work the brat stand. The amount of money raised, dates that OMI will be working the brat stand and photos from the fundraiser are typically posted on OMI's Facebook page. ■