

Visions

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

SUMMER 2019

Spring Fling 2019

Lynn Jacques, Human Resources

On April 24, OMI hosted this years Spring Fling and the theme was “Back to the 50’s.” We had a great time with poodle skirts, music and laughter. The

Fischer room transformed in to an authentic 50’s style malt shop and everyone enjoyed pictures with the creative props and we all feasted on pizza. A good time was had by friends and staff. We were even lucky enough for the weather to provide for a good time outside as well. We are all grateful for such wonderful attendance. ■



4 Ways Technology Tools Can Aid Group Homes

Natalia Sprung, Intern

Technology can be an intimidating thing. People are still veering away from this new way of life that relies on technology for every aspect of their day. That is not what this article is about; this is about how implementing technology in the group home environment can make it a safer place for the clients to be and about how the use of technology can aid in keeping clients as independent as they can be.

1. **Cordless, Electronic floor mat**
Provides additional safety for clients at higher risk for falls. This mat alerts staff when a client steps on it, staff know immediately if this client needs assistance. It was designed with a lower risk of falls in mind.
2. **iPad facilitated communication**
This technology gives a voice to those with no voice of their own. Integrating this into the group home setting could really change someone’s life by helping them to communicate their needs. This can then help to bring a decrease of behavior since staff will have a clearer picture of what the person wants to do.
3. **Vibrating Smoke Alarm**
When this device detects smoke it vibrates instead of the traditional alarms. It works in aiding those who may not be able to hear a standard alarm. Clients lay on this device which provides a vibration if activated. Upon purchase individuals are trained to use it and should have fire drills twice a month.
4. **Light up Wireless Door Bell**
This is another device that aides people who are deaf. It is a wireless door bell that lights up when someone is at the door. These can aid in helping a client continue to maintain independence.

With the use of these new devices, they can help keep clients safe and maintain independence at the same time. Implementing new technology can be intimidating, which can discourage people from using it, but it can be pretty amazing and helpful, when used appropriately. ■

Please Welcome to OMI's Board of Directors, Tracy Karl

I have been an Accountant at DeZURIK for the past 3 years, responsible for maintaining, analyzing and reporting financial data for the Sartell location, along with capital expense, fixed asset tracking and reporting for US locations. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in accounting from The College of St. Scholastica and have spent over 20 years in various finance and operations rolls.

I grew up in St. Cloud and now live in Sartell with my husband and son who is a senior at Sartell High School. My daughter is a senior at SCSU working towards her degree in accounting. I enjoy spending time with family and friends and working on outdoor projects in the summer.

My interest in OMI came at a time when I was looking to become more involved in the community. I am honored to be a part of an organization that provides meaningful and caring support through its programs and client services. I look forward to providing guidance and insight in line with OMI's mission through my time on the board of directors. ■



Remembering Colleen

Amanda Niemeyer, Program Director



On December 26th, 2018, Colleen Eilers, 61, passed away at the St. Cloud Hospital in St. Cloud, Minnesota. Colleen had been with Opportunity Matters for 14 years. Colleen will be remembered by her housemates and staff for her smile, kind heart, and sense of humor.

Colleen was born May 28, 1958 to Jerome and Dorothy Eilers. Colleen was the 4th of 5 siblings. She had 3 brothers and 1 sister. Colleen grew up on a farm in Foley, Minnesota with her parents and siblings. Colleen enjoyed riding horses with her sister when she was young. Her family helped her move to her new home at Manor 1 in 1994. She lived there with 12 peers until later moving to Manor 2 in 2004. After that, Colleen moved into Sterling Heights where she continued to live until her passing.

Colleen thoroughly enjoyed Sci-Fi movies, animals, family, and site seeing. She was known for her hard work, strength, and the ability to push herself to accomplish her goals. Colleen worked hard to keep her independence. Colleen had an amazing smile, sense of humor and brought, laughter and joy to her house mates, family and friends.

Colleen was proud of her family and loved talking about them. They were very important in her life. She will be missed. ■

Guys and Gals Club Brat Sales

The Guys and Gals Clubs of Opportunity Matters are hosting two brat sales this summer. They will be doing this to generate more funds to be used for different club activities. They intend to use their earnings towards different activities such as a Twins game, camp for a day, and potentially Valley Fair or the State Fair. The first sale took place on June 21st and 22nd. The brat sale was at Coborns on Pinecone Road in Sartell. The second brat sale is quickly approaching on July 12th and 13th at the same location. Staff and Club members are working to make this brat sale a success. ■

Please Welcome to OMI's Board of Directors, Tina Sobania

I am very excited to work with Opportunity Matters. I have Masters in Manufacturing Engineering with 20 years of medical device quality system and regulatory experience. Currently, I am a Director of Corporate Quality at Microbiologics, Inc. In my personal life, I enjoy coaching youth volleyball and Muskie fishing. I also enjoy reading when I get some spare time and riding horses as often as I can. I am a mother of three beautiful girls, one who is diagnosed with autism. I understand the challenges of raising and caring for special children. I look forward to meeting all the clients! ■





Let's Fiesta!

Natasha Folk, Program Coordinator

TACO 'BOUT A PARTY! This June, OMI invited all clients along with their families and friends to join us for our annual Great Get Together. This year's theme was "Fiesta." Several came in their best fiesta wear and walked in a parade for our judges to choose the best dressed. All were awarded certificates and those who won best dressed received gift cards. On the lawn, everyone had the opportunity to pin the tail on the donkey and play ring toss into sombreros. Those who participated got to choose from the prize bucket. We had a beautiful warm day, and to cool off everyone enjoyed ice cream treats donated by Kamps LLC in St. Cloud. Then it was time to dance. Our gazebo was transformed into a dance floor and everyone danced the evening away to the music provided by Chaz from DJ Blakk. It was an excellent celebration! ■

Coming to Prairie Hill in July 2019

Brittany Davidson, Program Coordinator

Prairie Hill presents monthly Bilingual Bingo. The idea started when an individual who is bilingual joined our home. Miriam speaks English and Spanish and this event is being done with her in mind. Bilingual Bingo will begin taking place the 4th Thursday of each month from 11:30am-1:30pm. A variety of food and prizes will be available each month. Food is served right at 11:30am. Bingo will start 12:30pm or once everyone has had their fill of the delicious food. This fun event begins July 25th! ■



Remembering Bill

Hayley Granzaw, Program Coordinator

Bill grew up in St. Cloud and graduated from Apollo High School. Bill worked at Wacosa over 30 years! In early 2019, Bill made the switch to Pathway to Opportunities, and he enjoyed going very much. Bill would always be making new friends and loved having new staff to joke around with and tease. Bill enjoyed all of his staff and would give them nicknames to show his admiration. His bold personality made him the star of the show most of the time. He loved to sing in concerts and along with his favorite show, “The Partridge Family.” Bill’s bubbly personality was infectious and brightened everyone’s day. He was always laughing and joking around. Bill was proud to be the loudest one at Foster 4 and his favorite part of the day was yelling “Wake up!” bright and early every morning. Bill was very close with his brother and enjoyed calling him everyday to talk about his day at PTO and discuss the latest reruns of “I Love Lucy.” Foster 4 was extremely lucky to be able to support Bill in his everyday life and lucky enough to get to hear his jokes and laughter every day for the past three and a half years. Bill’s laughter and shining positivity will be missed greatly at Foster 4 and PTO. ■



Direct Support Wage vs. Comparable Job Wage

Sam Pierskalla, Program Services Director

Over the past several years ARRM of MN and many Home and Community Based Service providers have been advocating for a 7% increase to the Disability Waiver Rate Setting System (DWRS) to help support wage increases to Direct Support Professionals (DSP). Currently it is estimated that there is a 17% wage gap between DSP’s and other positions competing for similar workforce talent. This substantial wage gap adds to the struggle for providers to fill DSP positions and for those who enjoy the profession to remain working in the field.

In the 2019 Minnesota Legislative Session progress has been made to help providers increase wages for DSP. Legislation approved the Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill which included a 4.7 percent increase to the DWRS system. This increase in the Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill is known as the “Competitive Workforce Factor” (CWF). This policy was crafted and passed by legislators with the explicit intention of supporting wage increases for DSPs. System wide, the CWF will add an estimated \$64.2 million to HCBS waiver revenue over the next four years, or an average 4 percent increase to service rates. The CWF is slated to go into effective January 1, 2020 once the Federal Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services approves the new DWRS changes, which include the CWF.

In addition, the Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill included a change to the inflationary adjustment from every 5 years to every 2 years. Beginning in 2022, component factors will automatically be adjusted every 2 years.

In summary, Opportunity Matters is please with the approval of the “4.7% - Competitive Workforce Factor”, but there is still a lot of work ahead to reduce the 17% wage gap between DSP and other similar positions. We encourage DSP’s, individuals we serve, and family members of loved ones to contact their legislators asking them to support increases to the DWRS so that providers can increase wages for Direct Support Professionals. A wage increase for DSP’s is much needed to continue to have qualified and compassionate individuals to work with those with disabilities in our communities. ■

Alexa Technology Newsletter

Beth Geis, Program Coordinator F11

"Hey Alexa.....Tell me a Joke!" Or "Hey Alexa, what is the weather like today?" That has been a daily conversation and giggles with Alexa among many other questions from the ladies at F11 since February. Individually the ladies here have found Alexa to be helpful in their every day lives and routines.

Kim, for instance, asks Alexa about 50 questions a day like "what is the temperature for the week", or in a certain state/country. Kim finds it fascinating to know these things. She loves it when Alexa tells her a Knock, Knock joke, shows a picture of an animal she likes, or tells her fun facts about the animals! Kim also enjoys looking up different foods and recipes. Kim uses the Alexa for a timer with exercising. She just says "Alexa set a timer for 30 minutes", 30 minutes later the timer will beep and Kim knows she is finished with exercising.

Katie, as well, uses Alexa for a timer with her hand stretching that she does 2 times daily. Katie is huge into music so she has Alexa play country music throughout the day. Katie has really depended on Alexa for the current temperature and weather forecasts so she knows if she needs to bring a sweatshirt or jacket when she leaves.

Colline utilizes Alexa daily as well with weather questions, timers, and recipes for cooking and baking. Colline loves jokes as well, so she asks for riddles and jokes.

F11 has the Echo Show which has a screen. This allows the ladies to see a picture right away. The staff enjoy using it for reminders on their shift or the next shift, as well as things that need to get done at a certain time or adding things to a list for shopping. Alexa has assisted with growth of positive attitudes through the education and independence it has brought to the ladies at F11. I highly recommend Alexa for everyone, she does wonders! ■



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 January 1, 2019 to June 30, 2019.

\$500+

MN Twins Baseball Club
Richard & Marlene Schlichting
Mark Eilers & Kathy Pullis
Jane Peterson Family
Carlson Cleaners

\$200+

John Skalla
Keith Ritter

\$100+

Susan Reiner & Allina Health
Christine Hurd
Jerymie Roberts
John & Mary Ann Woltars in Memory of William Nelson
Bruce & Melissa Nelson in Memory of William Nelson
Jason Hockley

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Celebrating the 4th of July!

OMI had strong representation at the St. Joe 4th of July Parade! Clients from Foster 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, Christensen House and Prairie Hill joined Foster 8 for some old fashion parade fun! Despite their parade getting rained on, fun was had by all. ■