

The BEACON

October 2011



"A new beginning"

Anniversaries in October

Congratulations

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

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CEO Corner

by Dave Barnard

Here is a letter that I want to share with you, the owners of Aurora, that I sent to Governor Walker this past week.

Dear Governor Walker,

When you were elected I was very pleased to see that the State of Wisconsin would finally be administered by someone committed to private enterprise and small business and to the reduction of government growth.

As you are aware Family Care is suffering financial turmoil with the lack of funding and the massive expansion of services over the past several years. In many cases the Managed Care Organizations (MCO's) have simply passed down a unilateral edict cutting provider rates in an effort to balance their budgets. At one point we were notified by an MCO to cut 20% from our budget within 30 days because they planned to begin paying us 20% less in 30 days. They also indicated that they expected no reduction in service quality because the contract said we were required to provide quality services.

When we have requested DHS to step in to assist we were told that "this is a problem between the MCO's and the Providers and we don't feel we can interfere". Governor Walker, we are very willing to deal with a problem with anyone - if - we have some authority to do so. Unfortunately we are powerless to the MCO's. They hold the purse strings and therefore have a position of power that can bring providers to their knees. DHS, the State contractor with the MCO's, is literally the only authority we could turn to for assistance. When we did we were told, sorry that's your problem.

Governor Walker, we provider agencies are the ones who moved thousands of

individuals from the State and County run institutions into community based homes resulting in millions of dollars in savings to the tax payers of Wisconsin. Provider rates are a fraction of the cost of operating the publicly run institutions. We are more efficient, more effective and provide the best life style for those with disabilities.

Over the past several years we have had 0% annual increases in our operating budgets and in many cases have been forced to take dramatic reductions in our budgets to help stabilize MCO administrative costs. This week, we received a memo that outlined the 2011-2012 rates for cost of care at the State run institutions for the Developmentally Disabled as well as Mendota and Winnebago Mental Health Facilities. Considering the rate slashing we have experienced in the private sector over the past two years, hearing of these public sector rates was a slap in the face to provider agencies like Aurora that have been providing the highest quality services for (in our case) over 25 years for the citizens of Wisconsin.

Here is just one example of fiscal and service facts that we received this past week. This information comes directly off of the Southern Wisconsin Center's website.

As of 2010, Southern Wisconsin Center (SWC):

*Cares for 177 people - 9 in short term care on May 12, 2010.
Services 16 counties.
Employs a total of 617 permanent staff and 49 limited term
Has an annual budget of \$40 million.*

CEO Corner cont'd

Here are the related facts about Aurora Residential.

As of 9-2011, Aurora Residential Alternatives:

Provides residential services for 455 people
Provides Day Center and Employment Support services to 290 participants
Serves 50 counties through MCO's and direct contract
Employs a total of 1077 employees
Has an annual budget of \$29 million

Sir, Aurora Residential placed hundreds of individuals out of the State Centers over our past 25 years. They are still living their lives in their communities and are served at a fraction of the cost of SWC and other publicly run facilities. Union wages, benefits, pensions and staffing requirements have inflated the costs to ridiculous levels. If we had half of their budget we could provide "Taj Mahal" quality services to those 177 plus many others. And we would do it in smaller, better quality, more family like settings.

Additionally this past week we received notification that Mendota and Winnebago, State run Institutions, were receiving a 1.6% increase in their operating budget. Again over our years we have placed many individuals out of both of these institutions at a mere fraction of what the taxpayers were paying to have them housed there. This notification from the State further deepened the insult to us as it was announced at the same time we received notice that some MCO's were using new rate setting methodologies that would be further reducing the rates that we and other providers have been receiving.

Governor Walker, Wisconsin at one time was on the right path to providing high quality, person centered, efficient and cost effective services to those citizens with disabilities. Then something went terribly wrong. Government decided they could do it better and wanted to move away from private sector efficiencies and expertise. From that point forward regulatory departments, administrative tiers, the concept of Family Care and all of its related administrative expense has pushed our State into the crisis we face today.

Individuals with disabilities are currently being threatened, cajoled and coerced into selecting models of service delivery that are antiquated and have failed multiple times over the past few decades. I fear that if we stay on this same track eventually the professional provider agencies will disappear and when the outdated models of service delivery fail the State will have no where to turn but back to the horribly inefficient publicly run institutional settings.

Aurora is currently providing residential services at an average daily rate of \$185.46 for all of those we serve.

The state publicly run facilities currently charge between \$500 and \$1300 per day. The most cost effective and best quality of life is through the private sector. I ask that you give serious consideration to having DHS get involved to ensure that those services remain a viable option for those citizens of Wisconsin with disabilities.

All we are asking is that we be given a voice to help solve the crisis we are in. We have many ideas and our decades of experience of providing successful service in the community are tried and true - but we have been left out of the planning and decision making process for years. Today bureaucrats are trying to figure out a solution to something they really do not understand.

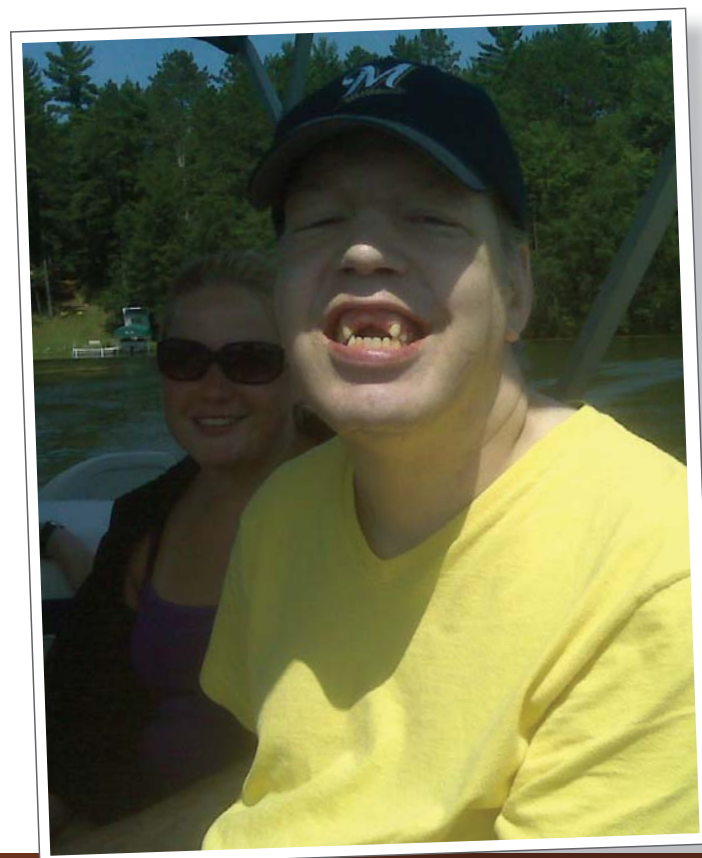
I would be happy to meet with anyone to discuss my comments and/or to offer our experience and recommendations for consideration.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

David A. Barnard
Chief Executive Officer

Life Photo of the Month



Employees of the Month

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 – **Lynn Johnson**. Lynn is an awesome employee who started working with us on the third shift. She has recently moved to the day shift. She is great with all of the consumers, and responding to their needs. She goes above and beyond, coming in early or staying late, if need be. She picks up shifts when needed and she is dedicated, dependable, and reliable. She is always in a great mood and proven to be a great asset.

Central Region's Employee of the Month - **John Eslinger**. John is the PM-II at operation 098, where we serve two very high spirited consumers that have State approved BSP's. Both of the consumers in this home have been around the block many times. Neither has landed and could call where they live home, until now. John has been a pivotal component to their success. He has developed great relationships with both. He has helped them feel like a part of something their community and have developed good relationships with people with in the community. John has coordinated mini vacations for both consumers and has participated in those vacations with them. He sees the good in each of them and accepts the bad days for what they are, "bad days", not bad people. This is the attitude that John and the entire team shares. Each MCO has recognized the success of their consumer and attribute it to the great staff in the home, starting with John.

Eastern Region's Employee of the Month - **Chuck Lechmaier**. He was nominated by his co-workers from operation 128 in Edgar. Chuck has worked for Aurora for three years. He has trained at many of the Aurora homes in the Wausau area and can step in whenever needed. Staff said that Chuck has been a valuable employee since the day he started. He is cheerful and is always willing to help out when needed. The consumers adore Chuck and his personality. They will request and ask when Chuck is working next. Chuck recently planned a trip to Wisconsin Dells with a behavioral consumer and the trip was a huge success. His co-workers wanted to say thanks and that they appreciate all your hard work and your willingness to go the extra mile.

Congratulations to all of you!



Safety Spotlight of the Month

Operation 093/193 in Wisconsin Rapids is the Eastern Region's winner. They have added another step to medication safety. When a new medication is ordered for a consumer, it will be checked in correctly and a purple or red label will be placed on the front of the individual's medication drawer stating, "STOP read medical entry"; this additional procedure was developed and implemented by the program manager; an excellent idea.

Operation 011 in Menomonie is the Central Region's winner. 011 is a large home with a variety of different men. Staff utilizes creative thinking and trained techniques on a daily basis to assure the guys are safe and comfortable. As you can imagine, a large house with many men has a potential for raised emotions and escalated behaviors. The staff here have worked without injury to themselves and to the consumers in the past year.

Operation 70001 in Chetek is the Northwest Region's winner. This site is home to a gentleman that following his Vietnam tour, was involved in an accident leaving him with a traumatic brain injury. The staff assist with weight maintenance following an extensive stay at a local nursing home and assist with many pivot transfers in his bedroom and the bathroom. With only 13 hours of staff per day, the good relationship the staff have created has been key to him staying in his home and remaining safe.

A Day in the Life

by Scott Jacobs

While working with Aurora's maintenance department, Joe Felling, a 15 year Aurora veteran, did the following: investigated alarms needed at an operation, checked on a new shower system, reinstalled some flooring, bought and installed parts for a refrigerator, researched a planned office expansion, installed grab bars, unplugged a bathtub drain, and checked the tires on a company van.

There are many reasons that Joe was drawn to this job in the first place. The skills needed to effectively manage a maintenance crew for a company like Aurora, the creativity and planning required for remodeling work, as well as the satisfaction of seeing people enjoy their homes (and greater freedom), all appealed to Joe, and keep him going strong to this day.

In his pre-Aurora life, Joe built and remodeled buildings; on top of that, he also did custom audio/visual design and installation work. Working for Aurora has not only been meaningful, but has also helped him learn more; each new maintenance challenge provides a chance to grow in his skills.

The new data system for identifying and tracking maintenance needs has allowed Aurora's dedicated team to efficiently plan and carry out the many projects that are a part of their "typical" day (if what was described above could be called typical!).

When Joe isn't working to solve a maintenance concern, he uses his other talents at home to garden, fish, cut wood, and make home brewed beers, as well as wines. He also enjoys playing with his two grandchildren; Joe, and wife Sally, have three grown sons and enjoy having two of them nearby, and visiting the third in Portland.

Thanks, Joe, for giving your talents to the people we serve at Aurora!



Operation Spotlight

by Sadie Bygd



Operation #061 is located in Aurora's eastern region, and is filled with creative solutions to potentially challenging situations; because of this, we feel this house should be spotlighted for its' efforts in providing a fun and amazing environment for both consumers and staff.

The individuals living in this home have varying abilities and needs. To accommodate these needs, staff has been able to creatively develop solutions, while having fun in the process! For example, some individuals have a sunlight sensitivity issue, and are unable to adequately protect themselves from the sun. Staff brainstormed to find a solution to this issue, and came up with a great one: an indoor patio!! The garage made a perfect place for the patio.

As you can see from the picture, the indoor patio is complete with flowers, patio furniture, and all other necessities required enjoying the outdoors. The patio even comes complete with a Tiki Bar, Aloha! This impressive display is another indication of how resourceful and innovative our employees in Aurora are. Kudos to all of you at Operation #061! You've done an awesome job!

Excellent Everything! *by* Lauren Miller

The Baker Street Grill in Wisconsin Rapids is known for their excellent food, friendly attitude and atmosphere.

While enjoying this great place to eat, AVS began talking with the owner about employment opportunities at the restaurant and our employment program for people with disabilities. The owner of the Grill, Jason became more and more interested in the program, its benefits and decided to hire someone through our program. Together with AVS a list of duties was created. The list included janitorial and cleaning duties that needed to be completed regularly, but just never seemed to get done with his existing employees. A position was created within the restaurant to meet these unmet needs.

Now, AVS needed to find an employee that could perform the given job duties and match the environment. It didn't take long to find that perfect match.

Kaylee a sweet, outgoing and talkative young lady seemed like the perfect match. When the Baker Street Grill owner and Kaylee met, almost immediately the match seemed to be perfect for the "Grill". The Grill decided to temporarily hire Kaylee under one of the incentives AVS has to offer. The incentive will pay Kaylee's wages for a designated amount of time, while allowing the employer to observe Kaylee's work skills.

Kaylee began the job with the newly created duties at the Grill with the assistance of a job coach. Prior to starting her job, it was presumed likely that she would need a job coach with her nearly 100% of the time and for an extended amount of time. Kaylee hit a couple of obstacles along the way as every employee does, but always found a way to recover and move forward very successfully. Kaylee's work is excellent; she commented many times that she would "love to have a job forever."

To aid Kaylee's independence and success, AVS prepared a picture book of her tasks for her to use as a "list". This picture book proved to be very valuable, as Kaylee can now complete all her tasks with little direction.

The employees at the Grill have also personally taken interest in Kaylee, they assist and redirect her as needed. Kaylee has found many new friends at work.

When the incentive program ended, Baker Street Grill decided to hire Kaylee! She was a great fit for the job. Again Kaylee commented, She was "so happy to have a job forever!"

When asked how things were going with Kaylee at the Grill, Jason stated, "She turned my staff into better people. Kaylee has raised the moral among my staff. She was one of the best things that happened to us."

After asking Kaylee what she thinks of her job she said, "I love my job and my boss. I'm lucky, right?" Yes, Kaylee, you are lucky! Keep up the great work!

Realize and Embrace Authentic Living

It's a *long* way down.

Standing at the top of the 10 foot diving board, I realize, it's a long way down.

A lot farther down then I remember when I was a child. I jumped without concern then, but I stop and hesitate now.

Why?

I've watched people young and old jump all day. They were just fine. I'll be just fine, too.

I step back, embrace my former 10 year old self, fearlessly move forward, and **jump** off the high dive.

I was just fine. You will be, too.

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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.

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Safe Winter Driving

by Juan Gordillo

- **Watch out for deer!** The majority of deer-vehicle collisions occur in the fall and early winter when deer are most active during the breeding phase.
- **Clear snow and ice from all windows and lights** - even the hood and roof - before driving.
- **Pay attention.** Don't try to out-drive the conditions. Remember the posted speed limits are for dry pavement.
- **Leave plenty of room for stopping.**
- **Leave room for maintenance vehicles and plows.** The law requires you to slow down or move over when approaching emergency or maintenance vehicles, including snowplows, parked on the side of the road when they have their flashing lights turned on. If you approach a parked emergency or maintenance vehicle during a winter storm and decide to change lanes be extra careful. The passing lane may be in worse shape than the driving lane. There may also be a snow ridge between the two lanes. Avoid making an abrupt lane change.
- **Know the current road conditions.** Call 511 or log onto the winter road conditions report Web page. <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/travel/road/winter-roads.htm>
- **Use brakes carefully.** Brake early. Brake correctly. It takes more time and distance to stop in adverse conditions.
- **Watch for slippery bridge decks,** even when the rest of the pavement is in good condition. Bridge decks will ice

- up sooner than the adjacent pavement.
- **Don't use your cruise control in wintry conditions.** Even roads that appear clear can have sudden slippery spots and the short touch of your brakes to deactivate the cruise control feature can cause you to lose control of your vehicle.
- **Don't get overconfident in your 4x4 vehicle.** Remember that your four-wheel drive vehicle may help you get going quicker than other vehicles but it won't help you stop any faster.
- **Do not pump anti-lock brakes.** If your car is equipped with anti-lock brakes, do not pump brakes in an attempt to stop. The right way is to "stomp and steer!"
- **Look farther ahead in traffic than you normally do.** Actions by cars and trucks will alert you quicker to problems and give you a split-second extra time to react safely.
- **Remember that trucks are heavier than cars.** Trucks take longer to safely respond and come to a complete stop, so avoid cutting quickly in front of them.
- **Go slow!**

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

- John Wayne

REALiving Awards: Featuring the REAL Stars - YOU

Thursday, November 3, 2011 from 5 - 8:30 p.m.
Florian Gardens, 2340 Lorch Ave., Eau Claire

Please join us on the red carpet as a guest at our REALiving awards show! **YOU** are the celebrity, the star, the REAL personality. We want you to join us as we celebrate REAL women across the Chippewa Valley.

Holly Hakes, our Executive Director, will be sharing tips, ideas, and inspiration for living your best REAL life. Holly will be joined by REALiving award winners who will inspire all of us.

Tickets are \$25.00 and include a red carpet reception, dinner, photo ops, shopping with vendors, prizes, loads of inspiration, and fun! Wear your "red carpet" best and come as the STAR you are.

Seating at the event is limited. You can purchase tickets by calling: 715.235.1839 (toll free 1.888.301.5897) or go to www.REALiving.net and click on the link to register!

We hope to see you there!!



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.