

The BEACON

February 2012



"A new beginning"

Anniversaries in February

Congratulations

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

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CEO Corner

by Dave Barnard

Every January Aurora holds its' annual Winter Advance for our management team. It is at this gathering that we review the previous year's accomplishments and establish the course for our company for the coming year. As is the case every year I have the privilege of presenting the annual "State of The Company" address. I always like to share with all of you, the owners of this great company, a summary of that presentation.

In review, this past year was one full of challenges - primarily due to the Family Care Program. They continue to cut daily rates for those currently receiving services in an effort to fund those on who are on waiting lists as well as to balance their budget. We have worked hard with the seven Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) with whom we contract. We are striving to serve those we can at reduced rates without dramatically affecting the quality of care or compromising our standards to an unacceptable level. Unfortunately it appears that this will be an ongoing challenge for the foreseeable future.

Albert Einstein once said, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." Obviously rate reductions and budget cuts are

easily perceived as difficulties. However, within those difficulties we have, in our typical Aurora "can do" fashion, looked for opportunities. Through the many companies that make up Aurora and the multitude of services we provide to support the individuals whom we serve, we have also found opportunities that can benefit others outside of residential services community.

In 2011 we laid the ground work for many new programs and service areas for our future. One example is the provision of Community Support Programs (CSP). We have taken over CSP services in two counties where those services had previously been provided through the county. We see the CSP holding potential for positive future expansion. A second example is the establishment of new Crisis Intervention Programs to prevent unnecessary hospitalizations. These programs are being established to provide intervention for individuals requiring a higher level of supervision and/or therapeutic intervention than would typically be possible in a living situation. Another example of new development is through Aurora's twenty-four hour Call

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CEO Corner continued

Center services that can supplement supervised/semi-supervised or non-supervised community living situations. These Call Center services which help to economically assist individuals in living in their community have been established and are growing rapidly. One of our newer services that we have identified is for Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. These services are universally needed across all business sectors. Aurora, with our uniquely qualified services, is providing EAP through our newly branded company, REALiving, LLC. At the time of this writing Aurora is providing EAP services to multiple companies throughout our local area with plans for dramatic expansion in the future. These are just a few new concepts that we are implementing and are presently heating up. You will hear more about each of these new programs as we go forward.

In finishing my Winter Advance presentation I presented an analogy to our managers that I believe perfectly reflects where we are currently with our new programs development. I presented the concept that at 211 degrees Fahrenheit water is very hot. At 212 degrees water begins

to boil, and with boiling water comes steam and that steam can be used to power a 300 ton locomotive engine. Turning up the heat just one degree creates a powerful energy source. That one degree makes all the difference.

Many of Aurora's new programs are currently at 211 degrees; they have been warming up and are now very hot. All that is needed is to heat them up one more degree and we will be boiling with success. I then pointed out that I believe it to be more than coincidence that 2011 and 2012 minus the "0's" are 211 and 212. We established these new programs in 2011 and they are currently at 211 degrees. All we need to do in 2012 is turn up the heat one more degree and at 212 degrees we will generate the steam necessary to power this dynamic and successful steam engine we call Aurora well into the future!

Thanks for all that you do in helping us turn up the heat!

Dave

A Day in the Life

by Scott Jacobs

Julie Lifto, Aurora's Director of Accounting, enjoys her 30 minute commute to her home in Plum City, mainly because it allows her time to "switch gears" from her world of numbers to enjoying her family (husband Mike, and sons Derek and Brett). Leading a seven-person department that oversees all aspects of our company's financial world, especially in the midst of almost daily changes from MCOs (managed care organizations), as well as other contract agencies, gives "switching gears" a whole new meaning for Julie.

Here's just one example: some MCOs now require daily billing of service hours. In the past, hours of service provided in Aurora's Day Centers or for job coaching, would be tallied at the end of the month and submitted for payment. Now, those same service hours are billed on a daily basis; consequently, instead of one line of billing for a consumer, there would be 20 or more for a given month.

Julie speaks with pride of her department's ability to shift on the fly, look at the systems they have in place, and make the necessary changes—while keeping the goal of quality assurance, and minimizing the impact on our customers (consumers, contract agencies, etc.). "We're system's people," Julie notes, and it shows in the team's ability to adapt quickly to change.

Tracking every dime that comes into, and goes out of a company that now has an annual budget in excess of \$30 million is a daunting task, but Julie and her team manage it all in a seamless and efficient manner.

Here's a little known fact within the accounting world of Aurora: there are four mandated audits done each year regarding the company's financial world—Julie's team completes an additional 24 internal audits. Going "above and beyond" what is required is an Aurora hallmark.

It's not surprising that among Julie's interests (beyond family, friends, golfing, and scrapbooking) is her love of the CSI television shows. In her work, as in the shows, she must dig for clues, pay attention to details, and solve some pretty daunting puzzles.



Vocational Spotlight

By **Natasha Kroening**

Kevin has been an Aurora consumer for quite some time, and takes part in many activities at the Plover Day Center. In addition, he also helps out with cleaning, shredding, vacuuming, and many other tasks while working in the Vocational office next door. Many are familiar with his story, and I myself remember hearing "Kevin-isms" during my initial Aurora training. I didn't know at the time, but this infamous man would become an integral part of my life with this company.

At times, Kevin can be challenging, to say the least. In other instances, he is the most profound individual I have ever had the privilege to work with. I remember one particularly rough work day for Kevin, in which he was resistant to performing his tasks, often ignoring his job coach and interrupting meetings with Vocational staff.

Kevin and I had a meeting that afternoon to talk about his day, by which point he chose to not discuss his work performance. When our meeting was over and I'd finished writing in his book and got up to leave. Kevin grabbed my hand, looked me in the eye, and said, "I don't need help with some stuff. I just need help with some people." Our meeting went for a little longer that day, and we talked about how to express frustrations

appropriately. For those of us who know Kevin, this was monumental.

He seems to know when you need a pick me up. On one occasion, during a particularly tough day, Kevin handed a coordinator a home-made punching bag, and demonstrated how to use it. When we were having a team meeting to discuss difficult office decisions, Kevin walked in and sang us all a Christmas Carol. He loves to model a new outfit or show off a haircut, and enjoys giving gifts. When I was especially overwhelmed one day, he walked in my office, gave me a hug, and simply said, "I love you," and then carried on with his work day. Let me tell you, my day was sunshine and roses from that point on.

Kevin is an inspiration, and a testament to progress that can be made when people are given a chance to thrive. He is a product of what we can do at Aurora. This is clearly demonstrated in the video he helped make for his job coach, and our employee of the year. When asked to say why he likes his coach, Kevin uttered another succinct, loving statement: "She just helps. She makes it easier. I love her." Well, Kevin, my friend, you make it easier too, and I'm grateful to know you.

Consumer Spotlight

By **Brian Anderson**

This month's consumer spotlight is about Renee who has been with us since 2006. She was born in Milwaukee, then at age 11 she moved to Florida with her parents and brothers. While in Florida, at the age of 18, Renee was a passenger in a car driven by a drunk driver who crashed. Following the crash, Renee was in a coma for one full year; consequently, these hardships caused Renee to require the use of a wheelchair.

In spite of the accident and subsequent obstacles, Renee leads a life not dissimilar from any of ours. She appreciates the simple things in life; she enjoys a cigarette, and can be found listening to music almost 24 hours a day. Renee is currently employed at Ventures, which is a workshop.

Throughout everything, Renee's biggest wish is to maintain her independence. Renee's story truly serves as an inspiration to each of us and shows us that perseverance and tenacity can bring us through many hardships.

Life Photo of the Month



Recipe: Mallow Sweetheart Cookies

Valentine's Day is coming up! These easy, two ingredient cookies are sure to be a hit with your family!



Ingredients

1pkg. (20 oz.) refrigerated sliceable sugar cookies
12 JET-PUFFED Marshmallows
Decorating icingmake it

PREHEAT oven to 350°F. Roll out cookie dough to 1/8-inch thickness on lightly floured surface. Cut into 24 cookies, using 2- to 3-inch heart-shaped cookie cutters, rerolling dough scraps as necessary. Place, 2 inches apart, on ungreased baking sheets.

BAKE 7 to 9 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool 1 minute; remove from baking sheets to wire racks. Cool completely.

TOP bottom side of each of 12 of the cookies with 1 marshmallow. Place 4 of the cookies on microwavable plate. Microwave on HIGH 15 to 20 seconds or until marshmallows begin to puff; cover with 4 of the remaining cookies, bottom sides down, to make sandwiches. Repeat with remaining cookies and marshmallows. Decorate with icing as desired.

Nutritional info per serving

Calories 220	Sugars 19 g
Total fat 7 g	Protein 1 g
Saturated fat 2 g	Vitamin A 0 %DV
Cholesterol 15 mg	Vitamin C 0 %DV
Sodium 180 mg	Calcium 0 %DV
Carbohydrate 34 g	Iron 6 %DV
Dietary fiber 0 g	

Aurora Safety & Wellness Teams

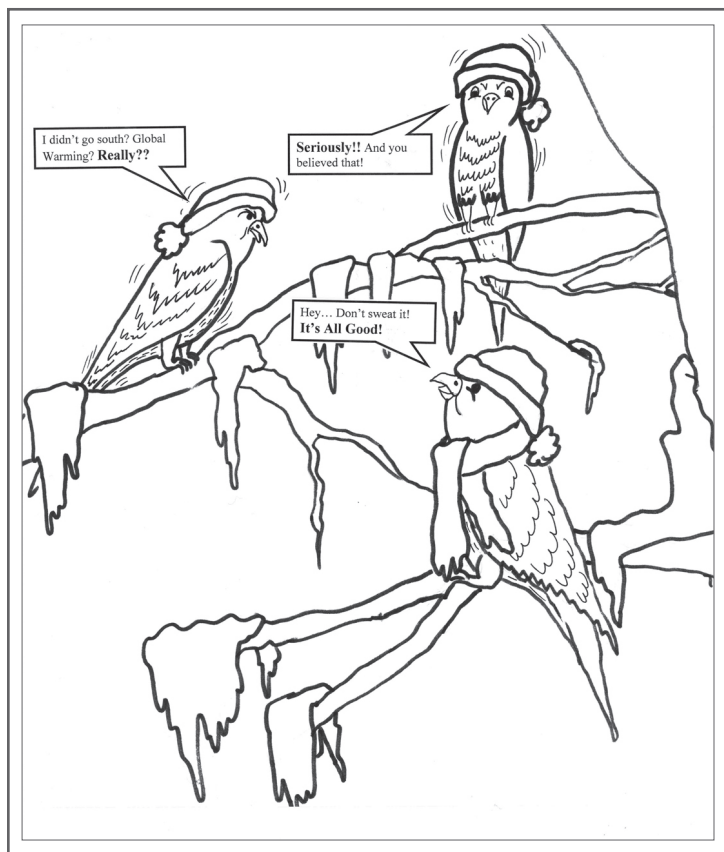
Coming soon...**Leap into Safety and Wellness.**

As safety and wellness is certainly not new to any of you, we feel that there are many great ideas that can come from your teams. Stay tuned for **Leap into Safety and Wellness** that will begin on February 29.

More information will be rolled out at the PM meeting on February 16. We're excited to see what the great minds of the company will develop!

"Let nothing dim the light that shines from within."

– Maya Angelou



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.