

The BEACON

March 2011



"A new beginning"

Anniversaries in March

Congratulations

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

Julie Lifto	15
Marlena Bischoff	15
Carrie Blanchard	15
Joseph Felling	15
Kathi Tollefson	13
David Furst	13
Judy Koxlien	10
Rose Littlewolf	9
Dustin Doornink	7
Diane Powell	7
Maria Block	7
William Selenske	7
Brenda Flagge	6
Monica Walter-Belden	5
Georgia Hurt	5
Sheena Hitz	5
Lee Brusky	5

Anniversaries in February

The February issue of the Beacon anniversaries was not correct. Our apologies if this caused an inconvenience. This is the corrected version.

Gordon O'Flanagan	17
Debra Wilson	16
Barbara Olson	13
Sandra Kravcik	13
Lisa Cunningham	13
Rick Kayser	12
Debra Turner	12
Gail Glass	12
Kelley Seidling	9
Michelle Lieberg	9
Misty Gonsolin	8
Mary Banfield	7
MaryBeth Wachsmuth	6
Colette Spielman	6
Vicki Brenizer	6
Miranda McCarron	6
Amy Daniels	5
Erin Pascarella	5
Robbi Waters	5
Michelle Bergman	5
Shanna Sefton	5
Ginger Church	5

CEO Corner

by Dave Barnard



Last month I reported that 2011 represents Aurora's 25th Anniversary - a feat of which we are extremely proud! As I began considering my topic for this month's Corner it came to me that many of you may not have a complete understanding of your company's history. With that being considered I've decided to do a "brief history of Aurora" by covering five year increments in each of the next several Beacon's.

Obviously covering five years of a dynamic company like Aurora with the changes that are constantly occurring in our industry is impossible to accomplish in one column. Therefore, each of these articles will be a very basic outline of our history. I know that our Anniversary Team is planning many fun ways to get out more knowledge about your company over the coming year and I will leave it to them to fill in many of the details about our growth and development. This month's corner

will explain how we got started and how our name was created.

In 1983 Jim and I were working at the Dunn County Health Care Center together. I was the Program Director for the units where individuals with Developmental Disabilities and those with a Chronic Mental Illness lived. Jim was the Social Worker for the same units. It was in 1983 that I was asked to serve on a county wide group to oversee and implement a new funding option in Wisconsin known as the Community Option Program (COP). These funds were going to be used to attempt to prevent individuals with disabilities from having to be institutionalized. At that time when a child would graduate from a special education program the family had two options - keep them at home and bare the financial responsibility of their needs or place



Look No Further

by Nick White

CEO Corner cont'd

them in an institution where the State would cover those expenses. COP was created to provide another option – to provide minimal dollars to see if these individuals who were being institutionalized could be maintained in the community. The program was a major success. Families were pleased with an alternative to their child going into an institution, the individual lived a happier life and the cost to the State was much lower. Everybody won!

Within a couple of years talk began of trying to move people out of institutions and into the community using some of those same dollars. This program was called the Community Integration Program (CIP). It was at this time that I reported to my boss at the Health Care Center that I believed the new CIP program would have a major financial impact on through discharging of residents and reduction in revenues. He allowed me to begin planning to develop community based programs that the Health Care Center could operate. We proposed and gained approval of the County board, identified land, met with architects and began moving in that direction for the future. As fate would have it, my boss contracted a virulent cancer and passed away very quickly. The new administrator wanted nothing to do with the community integration and it was then that I said to Jim – somebody needs to do this. The rest, as they say, is history.

To begin at the beginning our name, Aurora, came from an evening discussion with Jim, his wife Deb, my wife Pam and me. We tried to think of a name that was indigenous to Wisconsin, and at the same time would let everyone know what we did. Many names were tossed about. We finally came to an agreement that Residential Alternatives should be in the name. Our intent was to create “residential alternatives” to what then was very limited living options available to those individuals with disabilities. Northern Wisconsin Residential Alternatives, Badger Residential Alternatives and similar variations were considered. At one point we decided to go for a walk in the neighborhood where the Neuman’s lived to continue our discussion. As we walked to the end of their street someone noted the name on the street sign where they lived – Aurora Circle. The light bulb went on! The Aurora Borealis was bright and unique to our location. We decided to look it up in Webster’s. Low and behold the definition of Aurora was – a Native American term meaning a new beginning or a new dawn. Bingo – we had our name!

Next month I will give you a brief summary of our first five years. One’s filled with growth, growing pains, challenges, accomplishments and some very interesting times.

In the meantime, always know that you are all deeply appreciated as you go about creating our company’s new history moving forward doing the great work that you do!

Dave

Job placement in today’s economy is no easy task. As challenging as it can be to find a successful placement, the rewards we get when we see one of our consumers succeed in the workplace are worth all the efforts.

By taking the consumer’s strengths and skills to place them in the right employer is a benefit for both. It gives the consumer a chance to work in the community and build a relationship with their co-workers. Although their can be hurdles and things don’t always work out; but when a consumer is able to come in and match the needs of the employer a success story is built.

One of those success stories comes from right here in Aurora. Paul came through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation after back surgery put him out of the workforce.

When working with Paul, we discussed his strong supervisory experience, and wanted him to be able to use those skills again. Look no further than Aurora. Paul was hired as a job coach in the Eau Claire area and with his work history we felt it was a great match. Paul has now expanded his job duties to include working at the Voc Center as well as working some job coaching shifts.

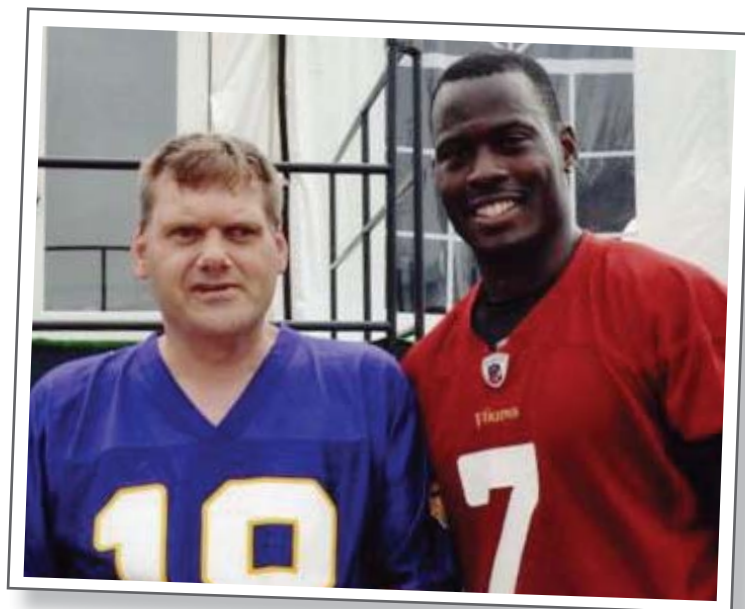
Paul is a great asset to Aurora, building relationships with the consumer’s at the center and the consumers he job coaches for. Paul was out sick for a bit and one of the consumers he works with stopped in my office to ask when Paul would be coming back to work because he “missed Paul”. You can’t ask for a better success story than that.



Consumer Spotlight

by Jonathan Hefner

Mike recently had a dream come true. An avid traveler and resident of one of Aurora's adult family homes in Hudson, Mike recently took a trip to the Vikings Training Camp in Mankato, Minnesota. Even though he lives in Wisconsin, Mike is a devoted Vikings fan and couldn't wait to see some of his favorite players in action, especially Vikings quarterback Tarvaris Jackson. Mike was thrilled to be invited onto the practice field as a special guest and to get the opportunity to meet many of the players in person and to get some autographs. Tarvaris Jackson was there as well and Mike decided to approach him to ask if he could get his picture taken with his Vikings idol. Jackson responded that Mike couldn't get his picture taken with him but that he would be honored to have his picture taken with Mike! Mike was ecstatic and now enjoys recounting this story whenever he gets a chance, proudly showing his pictures of his unforgettable trip to Mankato. Aurora is proud to have played a part in Mike's once-in-a-lifetime trip and we look forward to seeing Mike continue to live LIFE to the fullest!



Focus on Fitness - Coming in April 2011

by Wellness Team

The Wellness team is pleased to announce that they will launch their new challenge called "Focus on Fitness" in April. This challenge will be broken up into 4 segments that focus on creating habits that will improve your overall health. You will also have the opportunity to accumulate points that may qualify you for a prize drawing for each segment completed as well as a grand prize at the end.

More information and details on the challenge will be available in March. The challenge will begin April 1 and run through May 31.

Company Culture?

by Culture Team

The culture of a company is described as, "values and practices shared by a company and its employees." Culture is also described as an energy field that surrounds a company that is very powerful and becomes woven through thinking, behavior and identity.

What type of culture do you think we have at Aurora?

Each of us may answer that question in different ways, some positive and some not so positive.

We want to assure that everyone we work with receives the best quality services. To assure that happens, our company culture must be positive. The culture we create starts with all of us. We are all owners or soon be owners of Aurora so we need to create a positive culture that will create an environment to support the company and the work we do.

This year being our 25th Anniversary says a lot about our company and perhaps the positive culture that has been

created within. We have many owners/employees who have been with us for a long time and continue to influence our culture.

Years with Aurora	Number of Employees
5-9	211
10-14	86
15-19	42
20+	9

Over the next few months you may be asked for feedback about your thoughts about our culture. This will help us to establish a baseline of our company culture. This information will drive us to make changes or adjustments to create an even better culture that speaks for Aurora and the culture we want to have.

We look forward to your feedback and suggestions over the course of the year while we continue to review our culture and implement changes that may be needed.

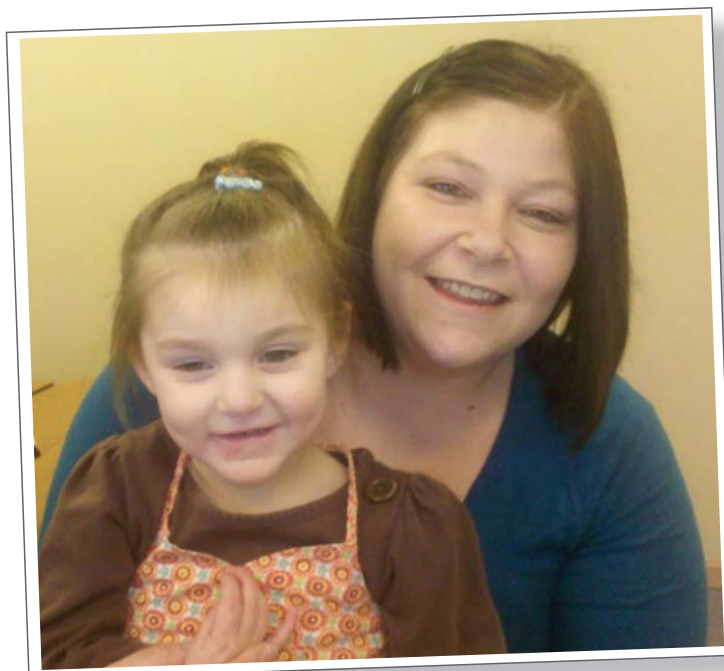
Day in the Life

by Dave Schoenrock

Misty Gonsolin has worked for Aurora for 8 years, and is a dedicated CLA at "Henry House" in Eau Claire. As one of several veteran staff at Operation 026 Misty is a familiar face, having worked almost exclusively at this Eau Claire home to John, Jason and Mike.

Misty and her delightful daughter Lily are a dynamic duo! They bound into the Eau Claire Office with great enthusiasm on a Friday to talk about their life together. "It's different; I hang with Lily and when it comes to hobbies I enjoy scrapbooking, sewing and cross-stitching." Watching Lily and Misty, one has the feeling they have fun doing almost anything together. Misty is amazingly positive when talking about her role as mother to a child with physical challenges. "We take it one day at a time. If we can get through today, we can get through tomorrow". Lily has limited use of her left arm due to nerve damage that occurred during childbirth. When asked how she remains so upbeat and cheerful, Misty answers immediately. "It's her, she's a built in friend". Lily laughs and explores the room. Misty speaks of Lily's father's involvement, as well as the involvement of both their families. "Kevin is a great Dad" she says. Lily perks up when she hears her father's name, then continues climbing office furniture.

When Misty faced life challenges with Lily's arrival, her attitude was everything. "I saw babies with life threatening injuries, and with Lily, I knew it was just her arm". Lily and Misty became involved with the Gillette Children's Hospital in St. Paul. Misty's gratitude is obvious, as Gillette was one of only 4 hospitals in the country that could help with Lily's unique challenge. She lights up when explaining how Lily has faced life with the wonder and innocence all children seem to possess. When asked what she thinks of her Mom, Lily says "Mom makes me happy" with a big smile. When asked why, Lily tilts her head and says "because she gives me hugs".



Misty's work with Aurora has been an evolving story. She speaks excitedly, about her 8 years with Aurora. She explains that her co-workers have been a big reason she has been part of the "Henry House" family for so long. Misty mentions her first day working at Aurora, and something she heard someone say, a philosophy one can imagine that she lives by. "People may not always believe what you say, but they always believe what you do". Misty Gonsolin's work with Aurora and her devotion as a parent show just how much you can believe in what people can do! Thanks Misty and Lily for sharing your story!

Trivia Question: What month and year did the first Beacon come out - it was called "Aurora News" when it started.

Life Photo of the Month



In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.

Albert Schweitzer

Employees of the Month

By Donna Ernst

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:

Phillip Schlosse is the Northwest Region's employee of the month. Emily Mujwid, Program Director says "Phillip has worked with Cliff for just over a year and always has an upbeat attitude! He has gone above and beyond to learn everything he can about brain injuries. This fall, Phillip also worked hard to assist getting a consumer's house windows sealed and ready for winter. Phillip is dependable, helpful and an asset to our team. I want to say thank you for always doing a good job and congratulations on being chosen for our employee of the month.



Randy O'Bryan is the Central Region's employee of the month. Paige Meier, Program Director says "Randy is a staff who enjoys every minute he spends with our consumers. He makes sure the consumers and his co-workers are having fun while participating in even the most ordinary tasks. It is amazing how fun house cleaning can be when you sing and dance your way through it. Consumer's light up the minute they hear his motorcycle pull up outside or they see his friendly face walk in the door. There are not enough words to describe the positive atmosphere when Randy is present. He makes sure all tasks are completed before leaving, or he simply stays until he knows everything and everyone is taken care of. To say he is their staff is an understatement. Randy is a member of their family."



Doug Thompson is the Eastern Region's employee of the month. Doug is the Program Manager for two of our Aurora operations in Waupaca. Amber, Doug's Program Director, states "I have had the honor of supervising Doug for the last year. His professionalism as well as his dedication to the staff and consumers that he works with never ceases to amaze me. Doug does an amazing job thinking on his feet and troubleshooting any problems that arise. He has managed to juggle the responsibility of overseeing two operations with ease while building strong relationships with guardians and case managers. Doug truly epitomizes the Aurora value words and is a true asset to our company. Doug shared that he felt this is the greatest job he's ever had. When he goes home he knows he has made a positive impact in someone's life. He appreciates the opportunity to watch the progress the consumers make. He stated that he feels he is blessed with great support from not just his team at the house but from the management staff he deals with on a regular basis. "It's amazing to know that we are all here for the same thing". When he is not at work he loves to watch old westerns. He also has a strong passion for music as he writes and plays in a band.



Good Food, Good Friends and a Good Samaritan *By Jonathan Hefner*

Several Aurora staff and consumers recently got a welcome surprise from a local Good Samaritan. The residents of O11 in Menomonie make an annual outing to the Old Spaghetti Factory in Minneapolis because it's "a great place to eat." During their most recent outing they found that the restaurant was packed and that they'd have to wait almost 45 minutes for a table but staff knew that an Old Spaghetti Factory meal was a special treat for the consumers so they waited.

After a great meal they attempted to pay their bill and were informed that someone had anonymously paid their entire tab including the tip! This act of generosity was greatly appreciated by Bob, David, Eugene, Travis, Ben, and Rick who only wished that they knew their benefactor's name so they could thank him or her. Thanks Good Samaritan whoever you are!



What are “Good Body Mechanics?”

by Safety Team

Good body mechanics involve moving and positioning your body in such a way as to prevent skeletal or muscle injury. To be effective, good body mechanics need to be practiced every day during all activities including working, resting and exercise. In essence good body mechanics are a “prescription” for keeping your bones and muscles healthy and free from injury.

1. Keep your body in a balanced, comfortable, and aligned position at all times. Movements and positions that cause poor alignment of the spinal column put strain on the nerves and should be avoided.
2. In general, pushing objects is safer than pulling.
3. Carry objects with two hands and at chest and shoulder level.
4. Keep objects close to your body when carrying them.
5. When lifting, squat down, flex your hips and knees and push the buttocks out. In this position, the large muscles of the thighs and buttocks carry the weight, rather than the back muscles.
6. Lift with your legs not your back.

7. Movements should be smooth and coordinated rather than jerky.
8. Use the arm and leg muscles as much as possible, the back muscles as little as possible.
9. When staff are assisting, coordinate (communicate) task.

Using proper body mechanics in order to avoid the following:

1. Excessive fatigue
2. Muscle strains and tears
3. Skeletal injuries
4. Injuries to consumers
5. Injuries to assisting staff members

Always think SAFETY when you are performing physical tasks. Be aware of your body and environment. Communicate!

Group Discussion:

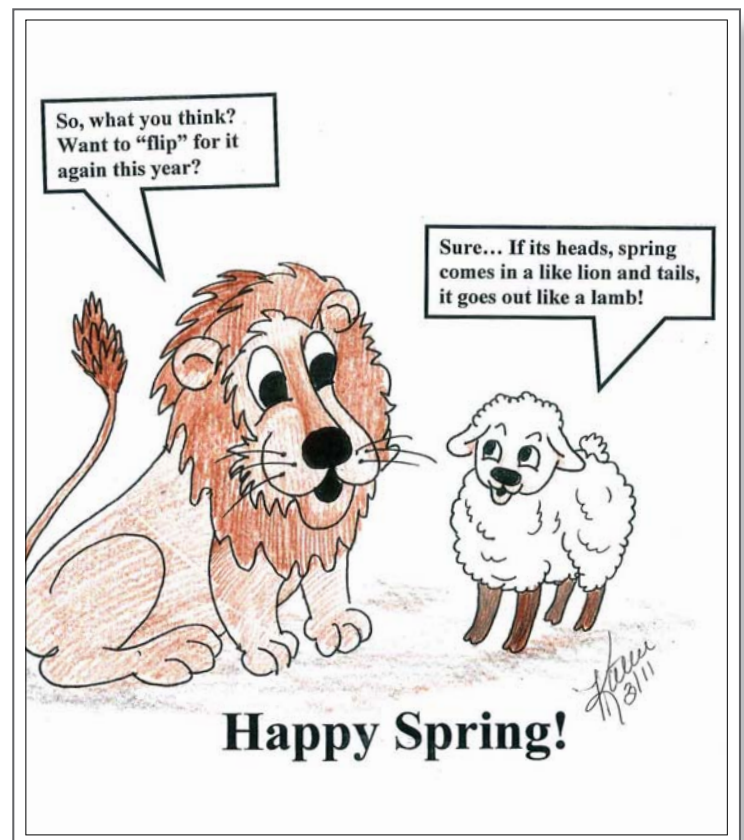
1. What things are in your work space that you recognize as being “worker friendly?”
2. What changes might you suggest that would make your work space more “worker friendly?”

Safety Spotlight of the month

Operation 050 in Prescott is the Northwest Region’s winner. This very busy house currently serves 4 consumers. It is estimated that the staff may be performing between 8-10 transfers on any given day. I am very happy to say there have been no injuries recently and, very few injuries historically at this site. The staff says this is because of good communication and good team decisions concerning safety issues. Safety is discussed at every team meeting with input from all staff. Equipment is maintained regularly and all staff uses the equipment properly.

Operation 061 in Plover is the Eastern Region’s winner. There are a number of reasons why this operation was selected. The 4 women that live there require assistance with all transfers and use a variety of transfer equipment. The staff are very safety minded and work as a team to assure that transfers are completed safely. Many of the staff have worked there for a long time with the newest person working there for over a year.

Operation 041 in Eau Claire is the Central Region’s winner. The team goes above and beyond on a daily basis to ensure that they are safe and the individual’s they work for are safe. This home has high personal cares, adaptive equipment, and transfers. Not only do they work safely with these tasks, but they look for and work on preventing safety issues such as wiping up spills right away, shoveling and sand/salting before the next staff comes in so they have a safe walk in and out of the house,



by Kathi Tollefson

Answer: September 1992

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.