



Winter  
2012

on the inside

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## Filling the Need with Your Help

The fact is each year there are a few vitally important programs at EPI just simply under-funded - Children's Respite Services, Employment Services, Multiple Sclerosis Services have made this list in the past.

**Yet, we refuse to give up on these services for persons in need and we ask you to do the same.**

Refuse to let lack of funding stand between a person with a disability and their dream to work in the community. **A gift of just \$12 would fund one hour of supported crew employment** while this person learns valuable employment skills.

Refuse to let families go without respite - or a break in caring for a child with a disability. **A gift of \$32 would fund two hours for one child to attend group respite** while caregivers take a much needed break.

Refuse to let funding stop persons with multiple sclerosis from receiving the counseling they need.

A gift of **\$50 would fund one hour of counseling** for a person to get the help they need learning to live with a chronic illness.

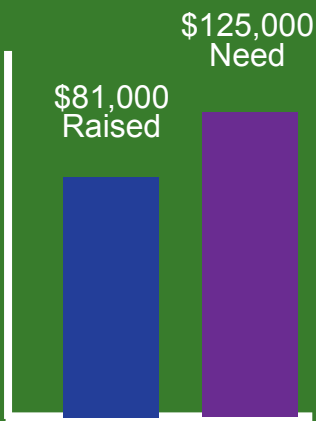
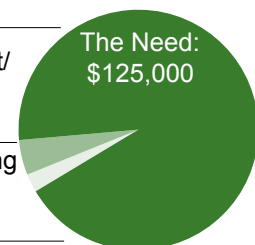
Rest assured your donation will make a positive difference for people living with disabilities – a full 93 cents of every dollar donated to this need is put right back to work supporting individuals with disabilities.

**Please consider making a donation today.** Donations are accepted by mail (Exceptional Persons Foundation, PO Box 4090, Waterloo, IA 50704-4090) or with a credit card online. Thank you in advance.

Supporting  
EPI's Mission  
93%

Management/  
General  
4%

Fundraising  
Expense  
3%





## Mental Health & Disability Services Reform Proposed

News Release Issued by  
DHS Director Palmer

### Want More?

Visit the Iowa Department of Human Services online at [www.dhs.iowa.gov](http://www.dhs.iowa.gov) or the Iowa Legislature at [www.legis.state.ia.us](http://www.legis.state.ia.us).

Department of Human Services Director Chuck Palmer recently outlined a phased five-year plan to redesign the state's mental health and disability service system, including grouping of counties into regional administration units, additional state aid to counties and performance-based contracts to assure quality.

Palmer endorsed nearly all of the recommendations emerging from workgroups that were appointed to study ways to replace Iowa's mental health and disability service system by the summer of 2013. He urged quick legislative approval.

"If our problems and shortcomings are not addressed, services will continue to be provided in an inconsistent and inequitable manner, and Iowa's mental health consumers will not be able to fully achieve their potential," he said.

**"History has taught us that minor tweaks will not work. It will also take more than new money to improve the system. There needs to be more effective services and greater accountability to both those being served and the Iowa taxpayer."**

Palmer said the current county-based method is not really a system at all, with each county's services based on varying resources, capabilities and values. Palmer endorsed the work groups' interim report recommending

that services be administered in five to 15 regional groups of counties rather than by the 99 individual counties.

Palmer also recommended the state assume the entire state share of Medicaid payments, which would require an additional \$47 million aid to counties beginning next fiscal year. The relief would enable counties to avoid a projected sharp reduction of services for people with mental illness, many of whom are not eligible for Medicaid.

Palmer said there will likely be savings as the plan is implemented, although he said there are too many variables to make an estimate. Some savings will come from the regionalization of administration, he said. There will also be savings when the crisis intervention system prevents unnecessary and expensive involuntary commitments or criminal charges.

And he said the federal Medicaid match rate will increase as Iowa proceeds with providing a greater percentage of care in community settings rather than in institutions.

Palmer said one of the more important improvements will be crisis intervention, including a centralized 24/7 crisis hotline, crisis mobile support, emergency walk-in capabilities, short-term residential support for people in crisis and jail diversion.



## What's Your "Dream Job?"

We all have/had an "ideal" job - that dream to which we aspire(d). Perhaps you're already doing or had the opportunity to spend many years at your "dream job." Wouldn't you wish that for all persons?

Persons with disabilities are no different. **EPI's Employment Services program works with capable individuals with a wide range of abilities searching for a job to best match their abilities and interests.**

We find it's this match which leads to success. Much like Mark (pictured above) who has been with Walmart for 14 years. Currently, we have individuals ready, able, dreaming and applying for work:

- with animals
- at greenhouses
- doing dishes or janitorial tasks
- as an office assistant
- in libraries
- stocking shelves
- and the list goes on.....

These individuals are seeking employment for a multitude of reasons: to give back to their community, to connect with people and find a purpose outside of their home, to earn a wage to pay bills and make ends meet. The training they have received with EPI has prepared

them for employment in our community. Now, they are working hard - scouring the "help wanted" ads, applying, attending interviews - to earn their chance.

We often come across employers who question their ability to hire and support a person with a disability in their workplace. Perhaps they have not had many interactions with persons with a disability and are simply unsure where to begin or what to expect. Questions such as this are natural and we welcome the opportunity to sit down and answer them.

**That's the great thing about working with EPI - you're not alone, you have a partner with us.** In fact, EPI is there for you and your applicant and/or new employee every step of the way until both you and they are comfortable (for example supporting with new employee training, on the job training, communication around job expectations, interviewing, etc.) in the new arrangement.

With our personalized service, our staff is there as much or as little as needed. So the next time you have a job opening, consider reaching out to EPI for our ready workforce.

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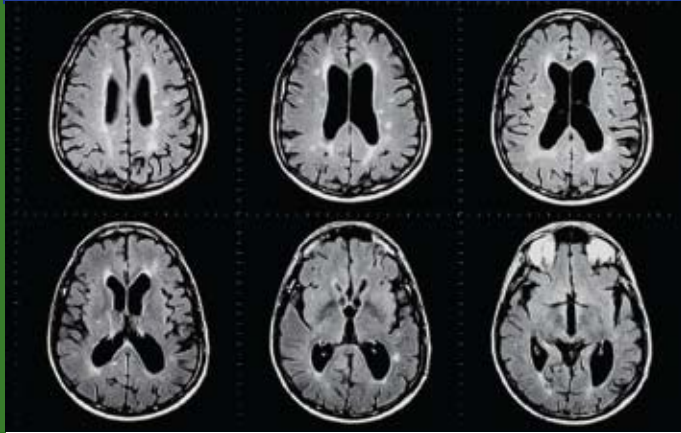
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## MS Matters: A Synopsis of the 27th Congress Presentations

by Diane Holmes, LMSW  
MS Services Director

The meeting of European and American Committees on Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis (ECTRIMS and ACTRIMS) held in Amsterdam was attended by 8,000 investigators. The following is a summary of presentations focused on stopping MS, restoring function, and ending MS.

Research to **stop the progression of MS** focused on medications. Research of the oral drug dimethyl fumarate (BG12) on relapsing-remitting MS, found reduced relapse rates and disease progression. Laquinimod, another oral medication for relapsing-remitting MS was found to reduce relapse rates, risk of disease progression and rate of brain tissue volume loss.

An IV medication Alemtuzumab, tested on early relapsing-remitting MS showed reduced relapse rates and brain volume loss but not slowed disease progression or reduced disability. Injected Daclizumab, tested on relapsing-remitting MS showed reduced relapse rates, brain lesions, and disease progression,

and improvement in one quality of life measurement, but may have caused the death of one study participant.

Botox injection, tested on upper limb tremor, showed improvement in writing, drawing and other functions. A daily capsule of Omega-3 Fatty Acid showed no benefit.

Presentations on therapies already used verified their benefit. After 12 months without relapse while on Tysabri, the drug was changed or stopped. After 12 weeks 30% showed disease activity on MRI. This finding may help doctors determine the timing of Tysabri treatments. Testing Interferon use for 3 months to 12 years did not show increased cancer risk.

With variations in the types of MS symptoms, pattern of progression and response to treatment, “biomarkers” which include blood analysis, profiles of immune cell genes, and in children, neurological abnormalities in brain MRI, may be used to personalize treatments.

**Restoring function** depends on understanding nervous system damage. One study found the brain has the capacity to rewire, compensating for the damaged area.

Research testing mental imagery found drawing a movement may develop the ability to perform the movement. Other research found when a memory was woven into a story, memory and learning improved. Testing of a surgical procedure to improve blood flow between the brain and the body to regain function, Chronic Cerebrospinal Vascular Insufficiency, showed mixed results.

**The ultimate goal of research is to end MS.** Research confirmed the risk of developing MS combines genetic susceptibility with environmental factors, including bacteria in the environment or intestine. Low Vitamin D levels may be a risk factor in adults and children and other risks for children may include viral infections, exposure to smoking and others.

Remember, you can only be an effective caregiver and loving family member if you take care of yourself. For more information, contact EPI's MS Services program at (319) 232-6671.

Sources: [www.nationalmssociety.org/news](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/news); [www.medpagetoday.com/Meetings Coverage/ECTRIMS/](http://www.medpagetoday.com/Meetings/Coverage/ECTRIMS/) [www.eurolink-tours.co.uk/Neurology\\_congress/ectrims-2011-27th-congress](http://www.eurolink-tours.co.uk/Neurology_congress/ectrims-2011-27th-congress); [www.msif.org](http://www.msif.org)

## MS Support Group Calendar

### February:

- Bremer/Butler, 2/8 - 10:30 am
- Waterloo, 2/15 - 11:00 am
- Tama, 2/29 - 9:30 am

### March:

- Bremer/Butler, 3/14 - 10:30 am
- Waterloo, 3/21 - 11:00 am
- Tama, 3/28 - 9:30 am

### April:

- Bremer/Butler, 4/11 - 10:30 am
- Waterloo, 4/18 - 11:00 am
- Tama, 4/25 - 9:30 am

### May:

- Bremer/Butler, 5/9 - 10:30 am
- Waterloo, 5/16 - 11:00 am
- Tama, 5/30 - 9:30 am

### June:

- Bremer/Butler, 6/13 - 10:30 am
- Waterloo, 6/20 - 11:00 am
- Tama, 6/27 - 9:30 am

## MS Support Group Meeting Locations:

### Bremer/Butler -

Redeemer Lutheran Church, 2001 W Bremer, Waverly

### Waterloo -

EPI, 760 Ansborough Ave, Waterloo

### Tama -

Senior Center Community Building, 103 S. Church, Toledo

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Communications &  
Development Director

Laura (left center) and Lynette (right center) from the Social Security Administration office dropped by with several gifts for the Giving Tree. Dee (left) and Candice (right) from EPI gladly accepted the gifts.



## Just Briefly...

Here's what's happened between newsletters.

**Giving Tree Fills Unmet Needs** - Many of the persons EPI serves have loving family members involved in their lives - meeting their basic needs, celebrating life's important moments together, perhaps exchanging gifts, and so on. However, there is a small number of persons served whose loved ones, for a multitude of reasons, are not in a position to help. More than a decade ago, the staff at EPI took it upon themselves and created the Giving Tree to see that these individuals are remembered around the holidays.

This year the Giving Tree swelled to 244 wishes - each representing a modest need that would otherwise go unmet. We sought the community's support to ensure each wish will be fulfilled. Not surprisingly this generous community stepped up with gifts and monetary donations. On behalf of all of us here at EPI - thank you!

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**Executive Director, Chris Sparks, Celebrated 20 Years at EPI** - Here's a piece of EPI trivia.....How many Executive Directors has EPI had in it's soon to be 55 years? The answer, three. (Now, if you can name all three, you get an extra point). EPI's current Executive Director, Chris Sparks, joined EPI in October 1991. He worked as the Assistant Director of the agency until he became the Director on January 1, 1998. We sincerely thank Chris for his 20 years and look forward to many more.

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**Healthy Choice-based Meals Partnership** - We are pleased to share with you a partnership we've developed with a company called Mainstay. Mainstay is a web-based software program developed to ensure choice-based nutritious meals are offered at each of our homes. Mainstay holds great promise for helping people with disabilities improve the quality of their health and life. It offers significant potential benefits to support EPI by promoting better nutrition, decreasing meal preparation time, and increasing the involvement of persons served in meal planning, shopping and preparation. Our intention is to pilot this program at selected sites first and then have all other sites on board with the program soon thereafter.

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**We're Hiring** - EPI has a variety of job openings to fit many lifestyles and skill levels. College students welcome. If you'd like to make a difference in a person's life, consider joining the EPI team - a three-time "Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier Employer of Choice."



## ...A Few More Briefs

◀◀◀ A day  
with Rep. Heaton.  
More pictures  
available on our  
Facebook page.

**A Visit from Representative Heaton** - Recently Representative Heaton spent a day at EPI learning about the unique challenges individuals with traumatic brain injury, mental illness and/or intellectual disabilities face with regard to funding, their work towards goals of greater independence and/or living in the community.

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**5K Run, Walk and Roll Results** - Over 113 registered for the September event and helped raise over \$12,500 to benefit two EPI programs: Employment and Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Services. Each of these programs has been impacted by funding cuts making these raised funds even more important this year. [We are grateful for our faithful volunteers and participants.](#) A big thank you to the MS Advisory Committee, UNI Student Athletic Training Organization, KWWL's Tara Thomas and all of our participants. (More photos from the event are available on our website.)

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**Medical Equipment Lending Program In Need** - Just when it seems our supply of donated medical equipment is adequate we see a rush of needs from the community. We ask you to [continue to think of EPI if you should no longer need items such as shower chairs, wheelchairs, tub transfer chairs, commodes, walkers, canes, crutches, etc.](#) EPI's durable medical equipment lending program provides critical equipment to those in need. Equipment donated to EPI is loaned to community members at no cost for as long they need - two months, two years, a lifetime.

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**Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) a Free Service You Need to Know** - Simply looking at price alone - the average annual fees for child care in Iowa are approaching the average annual tuition fees for an Iowa public four-year college (\$7,154) - parents have every right to want satisfaction with their child care arrangement. Yet, left alone, finding a successful child care arrangement - which is as unique as each and every child - is quite challenging. [Your local Child Care Resource & Referral \(CCR&R\) of Northeast Iowa professionals are your resident experts](#) in working to meet the increasing challenges of supporting families, child care providers, communities and employers with child care needs. CCR&R is a program of EPI, contact CCR&R today by calling (800) 475-0804 or visiting us online at [www.neiowachildcare.org](http://www.neiowachildcare.org).



## Our Mission

Exceptional Persons, Inc. (EPI) makes a positive difference for people living with disabilities, enhances community child care and strengthens families.

## Wish List

- Tickets to entertainment (hockey, baseball, basketball, festivals, theatre, bowling, etc.)
- iPads
- Wii and games (bowling)
- Durable medical equipment

A complete wish list can be found online. Bring donated items to our central office at 760 Ansborough Avenue in Waterloo. Gift-in-kind donation forms can be found online and at the central office.

## Connect With Us



(319) 232-6671 | [www.episervice.org](http://www.episervice.org)



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