

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2020

IN THE ISSUE:

Reserve Your Seats for
More Than You See
April 3, 2020.

Use discount code
“**EARLYBIRD**” until
February 29!

Exceptional Persons, Inc.



LIVING OUR MISSION

Connecting people, creating opportunities,
and nurturing growth since 1957.

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Human Resources Director

MARY JANSSEN
Children & Family Services Director

DEB JUNGLING
Chief Financial Officer

KATIE SLADE
Organizational Development Director

CHRIS SPARKS
Executive Director

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TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TRANSITIONING

by Chris Sparks

EPI began providing transportation services in 1961, mainly taking children with disabilities to school. The program grew over the years to include adults with disabilities going to work or day habilitation programs. At its height there were nearly 50 routes operating per day and we traveled over one million miles each year.

As an adjunct to daily transportation we provided thousands of affordable and reliable charter trips per year to day cares, schools, UNI, and many other customers. In our 58 year service history we've seen first gradual then sweeping changes causing our services to adapt.

A funding change in the last half of fiscal year 2018 resulted in dramatically reduced revenue, lost riders, and subsequently increased our per trip

costs for our remaining riders. This has placed a significant financial strain on our transportation services and has necessitated the search to find alternative solutions. Over the next few months we will be phasing out our route based transportation services with an ending date of June 30, 2020.

It has truly been our pleasure to be of service to you through our transportation program. We also offer a sincere thank you to our drivers and other transportation staff. They are dedicated and caring professionals.

Our goal is to make the transition as easy as possible for each rider and will work with you to the best of our ability. If you have questions about your transportation services after June 30, contact your case worker.

CHRIS' CORNER

CATCH THE LATEST NEWS FROM
OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CHRIS SPARKS.



MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS



A FOND FAREWELL BY DIANE HOLMES, LISW

In 1990 I became the MS Counselor for the Area 7 MS Service League, an affiliated agency of Exceptional Persons, Inc. (EPI). Since then the agency has gone through a series of evolutions eventually merging with EPI. When I left EPI as an employee to go into private practice, I continued as Counselor and Director of what became the Multiple Sclerosis Services program. Now, 29 years later the time has come for me to retire.

As I look back over the last 29 years I am humbled by our accomplishments. I say “our” because, while I have been the counselor-director, those accomplishments were only possible because of the behind-the-scenes work of many people. I had supervision by Al Nativg, LISW who helped me develop my Social Work skills. Gary Mattson, LISW, the Executive Director of EPI when I was hired, introduced me to budgeting and administration, followed a year later by Chris Sparks, LISW who has provided administrative supervision for the

last 28 years. And, there were members of the Board of Directors who volunteered their time and expertise to assure people affected by Multiple Sclerosis had services that fit their needs. Working with these dedicated and caring people has been an honor and privilege.

And then, there were hundreds of people whose lives were profoundly changed by Multiple Sclerosis. They trusted the Multiple Sclerosis Services program to provide the services they needed, often during their most difficult struggles. Back in 1990 there were no disease-modifying drugs. Treatment was limited to medications to treat symptoms and steroids to speed recovery from exacerbations. There was no MRI so people struggled with symptoms for a number of years before they had a diagnosis. People affected by MS were my most effective teachers. *They helped me learn what living with MS was really like.*

We, the MS Services program have a number of accomplishments to look back on during the last 29 years.

"It has been a professional highlight to work with Diane and the MS Service League. Diane's therapeutic skill, knowledge of resources, dogged advocacy, and loving support has made an enormous difference for thousands of people affected by MS. We are grateful and she will be missed."

- **CHRIS SPARKS**

WHAT'S NEXT? Over the last several years the number of people with MS requesting support has steadily declined. With this fact in mind we are working - along with Diane Holmes and former members of the MS Board of Directors - to determine the appropriate use of the endowed monies. The focus will be on determining how the monies can continue to support the needs of people with MS and/or research.

- People with MS had emotional support to help them cope with life affected by MS from diagnosis throughout the disease process, in some cases for the remainder of their lives.
- People developed an understanding of ways to modify their lifestyles to accommodate their symptoms and live fulfilling lives despite MS.
- Caregivers - family members and professionals - had the information they needed in order to provide appropriate care.
- Communities are more accessible because of my work on the ADA Compliance Commission in Waterloo. I shared what I learned with people in other communities who advocated for themselves, improving accessibility in their community.
- People have a stable income and healthcare coverage because of assistance with applications for Social Security. At times that

included working with their attorneys and testifying at SSDI hearings.

- People have accessible homes and vehicles, in-home healthcare, and job training because of collaboration with other agencies.
- Community members have a better understanding of MS because of the many educational presentations to groups and organizations.

And, there is the human side of my work. Funny experiences like being pinned between a person in a wheelchair and the wall, trying to help them get into an inaccessible restroom. I've attended joyful events and grieved with families at funerals. I've been at people's sides as they have overcome hardships with dignity and courage. I am deeply honored by our work together and the relationships that grew out of it. I owe you all my deepest gratitude.

Thank you and farewell.

STAFF EXCELLENCE



INTERNSHIPS, VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES, AND MORE!

Exceptional Persons, Inc. employs close to 350 employees, but as the need for support grows and new services develop - like our Hawkeye Child Development Center, we need more help.

Did you know? We offer internships and a variety of volunteer opportunities! Keep reading to learn more.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

EPI's internship program is designed to provide students pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree with an opportunity to learn about the field of non-profit community based disability services, Child Care Resource and Referral, and the supporting areas of our organization.

Internships may be available in Community Services, Children and Family Services/Child Care Resource and Referral, Accounting, Communications & Development, Quality Improvement and Outcomes, and Human Resources.

These internships are educational hands-on opportunities that integrate participants with career professionals emphasizing mentor-directed, degree-related, real-world task completion.

Through an internship at EPI, the participant can increase his/her professional capabilities and clarify their short and long term career goals.

A candidate must be a student in either an undergraduate or graduate program. The intern's field of study must be appropriate to the EPI internship opportunity for which they apply.

EPI's internships are unpaid and may be offered during Summer, Fall and Winter/Spring semesters. Interns may receive academic credit if an agreement is made between EPI's Human Resource Department and the intern's college. All interns are subject to applicable EPI policies.

If you are interested, Intern applicants must complete an online application which includes submitting a current resume.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

EPI encourages the participation of volunteers who support our mission of connecting people, creating opportunities, and nurturing growth. Volunteer opportunities are available for the following.

- Events
- Fundraising
- Administrative
- Technology Special Projects
- Supporting Community Services for Persons with Disabilities
- Supporting Child Development Center for Children (infant to school age)

JOIN OUR TEAM

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES:

- Administrative Project Associate
- Child Care Center Assistant Teacher
- Child Care Consultant - Allison, Iowa
- Direct Support Professional 2 (C.N.A.)
- Direct Support Professional 2
- DSP2 Night Attendant
- DSP2 Weekend Package
- Direct Support Professional 4
- Health & Wellness Professional
- Integration Specialist
- Job Coach
- Maintenance Worker II

This is working at EPI - connecting people, creating opportunities, and nurturing growth.

REAL CAREER. REAL PURPOSE.

Apply at www.episervice.org

If our mission connects with you and you'd like to volunteer for EPI, we encourage you to complete the application found on our website www.episervice.org under the "You Can Help" - "Volunteer Opportunities" page.

All volunteers will be interviewed and trained in our procedures.

The information on the application will be kept confidential and helps us learn more about you so we can help find the most satisfying and appropriate volunteer opportunity for you.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

When you work at Exceptional Persons, Inc., you're working to make the world a better place for children and persons with disabilities - starting right here in Iowa.

It takes a strong team to continuously build on the 60+ year legacy EPI has developed. We employ nearly 350 staff in a variety of positions. Because we're rapidly growing, we're always on the look out for great new talent.

We're looking for hardworking, energetic, compassionate and trustworthy role models to join our team. Both full-time and part-time positions are available, as well as a variety of work hours. Take a look at our career opportunities online at www.episervice.org.

To stay up to date with the latest job openings, internships, or volunteer opportunities, follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, or Twitter!

You can also subscribe to our weekly email list by clicking "Sign up for Email Updates" at the bottom of our homepage.

JOIN US AT THE FOLLOWING JOB FAIRS

University of Northern Iowa Career Fair

2501 Hudson Road, Cedar Falls
February 17, 11 AM - 3 PM

Wartburg Career Expo

100 Wartburg Boulevard, Waverly
February 25, 11:30 AM - 2 PM

Walk-In Interviews at IowaWORKS

3420 University Avenue, Waterloo
April 14, 1 PM - 4 PM

HEALTH & WELLNESS



YOUR HEALTH IS IMPORTANT TO US **BY** **MAGHAN BOWMAN**

We're interested in the persons we support living a long and healthy life - full of the activities they enjoy.

Becoming aware of health risks and preventatively acting on them, is something we take very seriously.

EPI uses a Health Risk Screening Tool (HRST) to promote health and mitigate risk.

This early detection the HRST provides saves lives.

This simple screening tool provides objective data about health and allows us to monitor destabilization. Learning about a person's risks helps promote optimum health and eliminates unnecessary health complications or life-threatening risks.

Ultimately, the goal is to provide the team with guidance in determining the person's need for further assessment and evaluation to address identified

health risks and determine the need for professional medical services.

This Health Risk Screening Tool provides measurable data in a number of categories from eating habits to falls.

Once a person served is fully screened, HRST produces service and training considerations tailored specifically to the individual's needs. These considerations are powerful for early detection and action.

This screening tool is updated at least annually, but is also important to update with any change in a person's health status.

We view this program as a way to educate and empower direct support professionals, families, and staff with talking points while visiting doctors and helps doctors discover the root cause of important health risks.

INNOVATIVE THINKING

MY25/MAINSTAY

Getting the food right - in other words, changing our eating habits - gets us closer to sustainable good health. Our experience using My25/Mainstay

with our staff and persons served has resulted in persons moving towards their ideal healthy weight and a reduction in preventable health medications.

My25/Mainstay isn't a diet - rather it provides nutritional resources and tools to enhance weight management, mealtime habits, and independent skills.

ENCOURAGING THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology is all around us. We embrace and support persons served in utilizing their technology of choice. We see smart phones, tablets, video chat, and more increasing independence and connection with friends and family.

We identify the use of automated sensing technology, such as door sensors and home panels to call if assistance is needed. These programs act as a solution to enhance quality of life, increase options for greater independence and privacy while maintaining safety.

We recently talked with one of our Integration Specialists, Rachael, who spent a few years with a person served who truly benefited from the use of technology.

Rachael said when they began their journey together he was unable to communicate with others within his day habilitation program. This was causing him to become easily agitated and leave the room frequently.

After learning he was hearing impaired and non-verbal, Rachael began to work diligently with him on his communication skills. Her goal was to help him connect with others by helping him communicate with them.

Rachael advocated for him to receive a communication device that speaks for him. Once he was approved, she was impressed by how quickly he took to the device.

After becoming more confident in using this form of communication, other persons served attending the day program with him were happy that he could now join in on daily conversations.

Rachael noted his progress and suggested he expand his interactions with others when he was in the community. While he was shy at first, he now greets members with zero prompting from anyone.

PEOPLE ARE THE HEART OF EPI



A NEW CHAPTER BY KATIE SLADE

With the new year, Ron welcomed a new, exciting chapter in his life.

He begins this new chapter with a new job as a lobby attendant at a local restaurant. It's going extremely well and he looks forward to work each day.

Now he's planning a move. Ron has lived in the same home for a number of years. So when good friends, John and Lee, invited him to move in it would have been natural for Ron to be unsure.

After seeing the home, Ron's reaction was quite the opposite - he was ready to start packing and hoped he could move in the same day!

The smaller home size appealed to Ron. He shared he feels like he can truly make this house feel like his own and is excited about less space to keep clean. He went on to share he feels overwhelmed at times with the size of his current home and the amount of people he shares it with.

Ron is looking forward to having more time with his staff and choosing what he wants to do with his time each day. Some days, he says, he'll want to go bowling and other days he'll want to get together with his old housemates.

The sense of pride Ron has in this journey to a new home is a true delight.

LET'S STAY CONNECTED



LIKE US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Just by sharing our posts you help engage others with EPI!



SIGN UP FOR OUR EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Stay up to date on the latest happenings around EPI.



SEND US YOUR EMAIL

If we don't currently have your email, we'd love to! Send an email with your info to communications@episervice.org.



HAWKEYE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER - SCHOLARSHIP

EPI is committed to helping families find safe, reliable, and affordable child care. Through the support of the Guernsey Charitable Foundation and R.J. McElroy Trust we are able to offer qualifying families scholarship funding to help with the expense of child care.

Scholarships funds will be distributed on a first come first serve basis after review by EPI's Leadership Team. Funding will be approved for one calendar year from application award date. Applications can be resubmitted each year. Funds awarded will be provided directly to the Hawkeye Child Development Center - ALC for assistance and distributed evenly throughout the award year. Scholarship approval will be based on funding availability.

To qualify families must meet income guidelines, have applied for DHS Child Care Assistance, and attend the Hawkeye Child Development Center - ALC.

Families interested in applying can visit our website at www.episervice.org and click on "Child Care". We are excited to be able to offer families this new opportunity.



SERVICE EXCELLENCE



ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE BY NICOLE RAND

Have you ever had to race through a crosswalk trying to safely reach the other side before the time runs out? It's common for people to feel rushed when the seconds start to countdown and a big orange hand starts to flash.

For someone like Joe, who is in a wheelchair, he's trying to cross the busy intersection as quickly as he can to meet the bus he takes to work.

Most of the time going through a crosswalk turns out to be a somewhat easy task, but it's the road right before the bus stop that causes problems, the one without curb cuts. Without curb cuts, Joe cannot easily access the crosswalk.

First, he has to push his wheelchair hard, but slowly, to get down the curb and onto the crosswalk. Getting himself safely over the curb puts him only as far as the middle of the crosswalk by the time the cars start honking and the light turns green. He presses on only to meet another curb.

Now, he has to get over it, but the bus he was trying to catch leaves as he's finally made it to the stop.

A barrier to accessibility is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully taking part in society because of their disability.

The goal of EPI's Accessibility Committee is to influence a barrier free environment from both within and outside of our organization.

At the end of Joe's day, his direct support staff tells him he missed a call from his boss and asks him why he was again late for work. Joe explains how the curbs just before the bus stop cause him to struggle.

Joe's direct support staff tells their supervisor and ultimately, this becomes one of the topics at the next Accessibility Committee meeting.

The committee then develops a list of crosses that are in need of curb cuts throughout the community, starting with the road Joe crosses, to present them to the

COMMUNITY INCLUSION

DAY HAB VOLUNTEER LOCATIONS

- Americans for Independent Living
- Angel's Park
- Bickford Senior Living
- Catholic Worker House
- Cedar Falls & Waterloo Libraries
- Cedar Falls Main Street
- Cedar Falls Schools Foundation
- Cedar Valley Arboretum
- Cedar Valley Trails
- Waterloo Center for the Arts
- Grout Museum
- Habitat for Humanity ReStore
- Hartman Reserve
- House of Hope
- Humane Society
- Kingdom Kids
- Lakeview Lodge
- Northcrest Specialty Care
- Northeast Iowa Food Bank
- Prairie Lakes Church
- Salvation Army
- Senior Center in Cedar Falls
- St. Vincent DePaul
- Sunrise Children's Petting Zoo
- Waterloo Schools
- Windsor Care

Waterloo Building Inspectors Department, City Sidewalks Department, and the ADA Compliance Commission.

In this case, the issue becomes resolved, and now Joe can safely and quickly cross without any unnecessary obstacles or barriers in his way.

If you see or hear of a barrier, fill out a contact us form on our website at www.episervice.org or give us a call at 319-232-6671.

BELL RINGING THROUGH THE SEASON

EPI's Day Habilitation (Day Hab) program spent time over the holiday season giving back to their community by volunteering to ring the bells for the Salvation Army.

Though some days were cold you could still catch persons served and staff twice a week throughout local businesses collecting donations with a smile on their faces and festive hats on their heads!

Day Hab looked forward to this activity as a chance to connect with many community members and share the joy of the giving season together.



Staff and persons served bundle up for ringing the bells!



EXCEPTIONAL PERSONS FOUNDATION



FRIDAY, APRIL 3
6:30 PM | HILTON GARDEN INN
7213 NORDIC DR. CEDAR FALLS

MORE
THAN YOU *see*

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO RESERVE SEATS
WWW.EPISERVICE.ORG

~~\$40~~ **\$30**
PER PERSON

USE DISCOUNT CODE **"EARLYBIRD"**
UNTIL FEBRUARY 29!

THANK YOU TO OUR PRESENTING SPONSOR: **DanDeery Motor Co.**

Exceptional Persons, Inc.
EPI

More Than You See is right around the corner! Make plans to join us on Friday, April 3 for a night of dueling pianos, silent auction, and so much fun!

More Than You See is about celebrating the value persons of all abilities contribute, and it's an opportunity for people of all backgrounds and abilities to come together, enjoy a common

EPI RECEIVES GRANT FUNDING TO FURTHER MISSION

EPI was recently awarded grants from numerous community partners to help further our mission of connecting people, creating opportunities, and nurturing growth.

The R.J. McElroy Trust and Max & Helen Guernsey Charitable Foundation each awarded EPI \$10,000 to initiate a scholarship fund for families who attend the Hawkeye Child Development Center - ALC and are in need of financial assistance.

RESERVE YOUR SEATS FOR SEVENTH ANNUAL MORE THAN YOU SEE **BY STACEY LANCOUR**

interest in live music, and see beyond first impressions to each person's unique talents.

Reserve your seats today by visiting www.episervice.org. Use discount code **"EARLYBIRD"** for a limited time. Don't delay - discount code expires on February 29. We look forward to seeing you there!

In addition, EPI received \$7,500 from US Bank and \$2,500 from the Grainger Foundation to provide critical accessible housing updates to an EPI owned home.

Grant funding is critical to ensure EPI's services remain available when needed most, and we are so grateful for the above partners and their investment to support our mission.

YOU CAN HELP



Cornerstone Giving

Please include the

Exceptional Persons Foundation in your will and estate planning to ensure EPI services will live on forever.



Qualified Charitable Distributions

Consult with your financial advisor on how to make a tax free donation to EPI as part of your IRA required minimum distribution!



Want to Make a Donation?

Your generosity means so much - thank you! Donations allow us to fulfill our mission when other funding runs short. We accept donations anytime. Visit us online at www.episervice.org.



ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR FOR EPI'S GIVING TREE

EPI's Giving Tree serves as a way to meet the modest needs of those we serve while ensuring that everyone has a gift to open for the holidays. The Giving Tree has been an EPI tradition for over fifteen years with the number of needs growing exponentially over the last few years.

This year, with the help of our amazing community, we were able to fill over 350 needs for individuals served by EPI that would otherwise have gone unmet.

Thank you to all who supported EPI's Giving Tree by fulfilling a tag or making a cash donation. You brought joy to so many

this holiday season, and for that, we are extremely grateful.

We also want to offer a special thank you to the following businesses for supporting our mission and for hosting Giving Trees this year.

- Canadian National Railway
- CBE Companies
- Discerning Wealth 📺
- Harrison Truck Centers
- Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church
- PDCM Insurance
- Veridian Fiscal Solutions
- Waterloo Police Protective Agency 📺

📺 Denotes 5+ year Giving Tree partner!

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ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

Exceptional Persons, Inc.



OUR MISSION

Connecting people, **creating** opportunities, and **nurturing** growth since 1957.



OUR VISION FOR TOMORROW

Working together we will realize a future where all people are recognized as valued citizens – encouraged and supported to live, work, and grow – in their communities.



GET SOCIAL

Follow, like, add us on social media! We have Facebook, Vimeo, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram. This is a great way to keep up with the latest news and events for EPI!



QUESTIONS?

Contact our Communications Specialist, Bethany Giachino, with any questions about our newsletter.