



Spring 2014 on the inside

- Legislative Watch P.2
- EPI's Response to CMS's new Rule P.3
- Just Briefly P.4
- Make Payee Services Your First Call P.5
- CHOICE Wreaths P.5
- Memorials P.6
- Profile of a Five Star Club DSP P.7
- MS Matters P.8

NY Times Runs Story Close to Our Hearts

It's called "The 'Boys' in the Bunkhouse" and has a 30 minute video documentary to accompany the story. Author, Dan Barry, and his team spent months researching the story. They've captured both the hardships and successes of the men.

We've seen an out pour of support - from Tweets, emails, and donations - for which we are extremely grateful.

A special fund has been set up with these donations to support the unique interests and varied life experiences the men wish to take part in.



Your Gifts Make a Real Difference

It usually comes as a shock for persons to learn our annual revenue is right around 20 million dollars. Yes, that's certainly a lot of money. Aside from that, it's important to note for two other reasons... First, it's a testament to the financial expertise held within EPI - through our collective volunteer board members and staff responsible for its management.

Second, while this is certainly a great deal of revenue received for services, it alone unfortunately doesn't cover all of the needs and critical services persons with disabilities require to gain greater independence.

That's why it has become essential in recent years for the Exceptional Persons Foundation to fundraise to fill the gaps to keep critical services viable. **Thanks to you and your generous donations, last year we did just that.** Keep reading to see how your donation makes a difference.

Employment Services Program

Through this program we are helping persons with disabilities find meaningful employment in the community. EPI has recently cultivated new relationships with local businesses and that has resulted in

new jobs for persons with disabilities. Without donations this program would not be available.

Critical Housing Needs

As with any home, repairs and upgrades are often needed. The difference is the persons we serve are not able to afford such expenses. With your donations we can make a dent in the ever-increasing list of repairs and upgrades to make our homes safer and more accessible for persons with disabilities.

Essential Needs Fund

We saw over 35 requests from persons served last year for things like rent assistance, groceries, medications, clothing and more basic necessities. Half of those requests are loans where persons served will make payments when their government funding comes through, a roommate is found, or when they are able to find a new job.

Would you like to learn more about the needs of persons with disabilities? Give us a call; we're happy to talk about how you can make a difference today and beyond.

For more ►►►
information
visit ANCOR.org

“This rule sets a high bar with its definition of “community”, and with that definition comes an expectation that individuals who are receiving funding are allowed to live in the community and have true access to it.”

*Contact with
Newsletter
Questions:*

SARAH PAVELEC
Communications &
Development Associate



Legislative Watch

CMS’s New Definition of “Community” Released.

It’s a topic that been discussed for more than five years. Finally, on January 16, 2014, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published this long-awaited final rule for the definition of “community” for purposes of home and community-based services (HCBS). The rule describes the qualities that must be present in settings where Medicaid funded services are provided.

Further, the rule seeks to ensure individuals receiving HCBS have access to the community to the same degree as other individuals.

The rule’s impact is broad...let’s focus on the list of qualities that must be met in order for a setting to be considered home and community based. The list is as follows:

1. The setting is integrated in and supports full access of individuals receiving Medicaid HCBS to the greater community, including opportunities to seek employment and work in competitive integrated settings, engage in community life, control personal resources, and receive services in the community, to the same degree of access as individuals not receiving Medicaid HCBS
2. The setting is selected by the individual among setting options including non-disability specific settings and an option for a private unit in a residential setting.

The setting is based on the individual’s needs, preferences, and, for residential settings, resources available for room and board.

3. Ensures an individual’s rights of privacy, dignity and respect, and freedom from coercion and restraint.
4. Optimizes but does not regiment, individual initiative, autonomy, and independence in making life choices, including but not limited to, daily activities, physical environment, and with whom to interact.
5. Facilitates individual choice regarding services and supports, and who provides them.

In finalizing this rule, CMS sought to retain flexibility and choice for people with disabilities in keeping with the ADA and Olmstead mandate, while recognizing the practical challenges associated with earlier versions of the proposed regulation.

This rule sets a high bar with its definition of “community”, and with that definition comes an expectation that individuals who are receiving funding are allowed to live in the community and have true access to it.

So, what does all of this mean for EPI?
Continue to page three to see.



EPI's Response to CMS's New Rule

As you read the *Legislative Watch* on the previous page, you likely picked up on several themes within the new rule - "integrated," "choice," "individualized," "community access."

While these are new terms in CMS's definition of community, they've been words EPI has lived by long before a rule was made. Let's take a closer look...

Residential Services

We have developed housing in small settings - where three to four persons live in a home together. Persons choose where they want to live and with whom based on their individual preferences and needs.

Employment Services

Our organization has an "Employment First" mind-set. For anyone who is able and wants to work, we help them find a job in the community. We don't give up.

Work is an invaluable bridge to community membership

and social relationships. Our goal is to match the interest and desires of the persons we serve to a job in the community where they will receive a fair wage (at or above minimum wage).

Our success rate for helping persons find a job in the community is high. Some come to the program ready for support finding and keeping a competitive job integrated in the community.

Others may need support refining their skills first. Working through our training program on a crew helps individuals gain those necessary skills. Often within six months to a year they are able to move on to a competitive job setting in the community.

EPI's Employment Services Program is also a service provider for the Walgreens REDI (Retail Employees with Disabilities Initiative) program. This in-store extern training program aims to help people with disabilities gain

retail and customer service skills, and works closely with the community organizations and vocational rehabilitation agencies to train and develop candidates.

Day Habilitation

Our CHOICE program gives participants the independence to make decisions about the activities they wish to take part in during the day.

Individuals at CHOICE also develop and hone social skills in a variety of settings within the community.

Indirectly CHOICE helps prepare individuals with disabilities for future employment by offering consistency and continued opportunities to improve social skills and community ties.

Many CHOICE participants have used the program as a "wrap around" service after they get a job to provide welcome consistency.

◀◀◀ "EPI has done an exceptional job of getting people employed."

- Senator Tom Harkin

**Business partners
employing
individuals with
disabilities:**

Doughy Joey's
Waterloo Walmart
University Hy-Vee
Brown Bottle
American Color
Imaging
Rainsoft

For more information about employing a person with a disability, contact us at (319) 232-6671.

EPI Staff, ▶▶▶
Marsha
Gentry and Tammy
Miller, accepting
Covenant Medical
Center Award



Just Briefly

Here's what you might have missed between the issues.

EPI Board of Directors

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Levi Architecture

WADE ITZEN -
Vice President
Bank Iowa

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Treasurer
Bergan Paulsen & Company

VICKI PARSONS - Secretary
Volunteer

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Veridian Credit Union

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BH County Supervisor

CRAIG WHITE
BH County Supervisor

BILL WILSON
PDCM Insurance

Health Equipment Program Receives Covenant Award

In November, Covenant Medical Center's Rehabilitation Department awarded EPI's Health Equipment Lending Program their Community Achievement Award. This program has been used by people in the Cedar Valley since 1972. The program provides medical equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, or canes free of charge to those who don't have health insurance. Items can be used as long as they are needed. Last year alone 114 pieces of equipment were lent to those in need.

Three New Members Join 5 Star Club

EPI's 5 Star Club finishes the 2013 year with the following three members achieving DSP of the Month honors.

Mitch Tyler - October

"Mitch has always been a great DSP and supporter of those he supports, and helps them to realize their dreams."

Ludell Bennett - November

"Ludell has taken the time to get to learn more about the people she supports and attempts to add to the quality of their lives."

Deborah Praska - December

"Deborah seeks out preferences of persons served in planning and participating in new and different leisure activities in the community."

Giving Tree Fulfills 267 Wishes

We were again amazed by the support of EPI staff and community members who made it possible for us to fulfill ALL 267 wishes on this year's Giving Tree.

We would like to thank the Waterloo Police and Protective Association, Waterloo City Hall, PDCM Insurance, Larry K. Fox and Associates and Central Christian Church. We hope you'll visit our YouTube page to view a special video we've created to say "Thank you".

Employment Staff Become CESP Certified

Two of EPI's employment staff, Nicole Rand and Nicole Ericson, have become Certified Employment Support Professionals (CESP), which recognizes individuals who have demonstrated a sufficient level of knowledge and skill to provide integrated employment services to a variety of people. This certification adds them to a short list of only 27 certified in Iowa.

Jungling One of Two Honored as Top CFO

Deb Jungling, EPI's Business Director/CFO, has been honored as one of two Top CFO's in the Cedar Valley by the *Courier*. Deb has been our CFO for more than 20 years and is a well-known, highly respected leader who uses EPI's mission and values to guide her. We are very fortunate. Catch the whole story in the March 2014 issue of the *Cedar Valley Business Monthly*.



Make Payee Services Your First Call

Demand for EPI's Payee Services continues to grow. **We attribute this growth to the reliable, personalized financial assistance provided by our experienced staff.** We're not the only ones with great things to say....

"All of the beneficiaries were happy with the services EPI provides..." stated an auditor with the Kansas City Region of the Social Security Administration. He went on to say, "...the services your organization provides to Social Security and SSI

recipients are very important to the community."

EPI Payee Services' goal is increased financial independence for our client. **Our services are available to anyone who needs assistance managing their finances at a reasonable monthly fee.**

You can count on EPI to treat everyone with courtesy and respect, to be accessible to address questions or concerns, and work to create a viable budget addressing financial obligations while

ensuring day-to-day living needs are met.

Payees also maintain accurate, up-to-date records, complete monthly reporting requirements with funders, assist in finding and applying for additional benefits, negotiate with landlords or other creditors to establish feasible payment options.

In return, we expect our clients to be accountable for their responsibilities. **If you or someone you know would benefit from Payee Services, make EPI your first call.**

CHOICE Wreaths

Our CHOICE Day Habilitation program works to provide meaningful, community integrated activities.

For a while now their creative activities have focused on giving back to the community - like making treats for furry friends at the Humane Society, blankets for community members fighting cancer and more.

Now these talented folks are expanding their activities to include products you can purchase and enjoy in your home. Proceeds from the sales come back to the program to

help buy supplies for their community gifts as well as development of more products for you to enjoy.

We invite you to check out these CHOICE wreaths. Our hand-crafted wreaths are custom made to fit any occasion. Choose a size - small or large - and up to four colors. For more information or to place an order, visit us online.



◀◀◀ For more information about EPI's Payee Services, visit us online at episervice.org.

Exceptional Persons Foundation Board of Directors

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Roskamp Leasing

KATY WILLIAMS
Volunteer

FLOYD WINTER
Volunteer

In memory ▶▶▶
of those
we've recently
lost.



Ron Sherriff (1952 - 2013)

Ron, born in Vinton, loved to do many things. Among his favorites were playing pool, going on bike rides, listening to Johnny Cash, playing games and showing off his collection of belt buckles and watches.

Ron was known for his contagious smile and jolly laugh. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Regina Sessler (1961 - 2013)

Regina was born in Waterloo, and was known at EPI for her wonderful laugh and big smile. She always made the day of those she was around. Regina worked at Goodwill Industries and then North Star for several years.

Regina enjoyed spending time with her family and loved collecting photos of family and friends. She will be greatly missed.



Agency Leadership Team

MARY JANSSEN
Children & Family
Services Director

DEB JUNGLING
Business Director

LISA PATERNO
Human Resource
Director

SUSAN SEEHASE
Services Director

KATIE SLADE
Communications &
Development Director

CHRIS SPARKS
Executive Director



Jim Ostercamp (1953 - 2013)

Jim was born in Waterloo and worked at Goodwill Industries for over 30 years. He loved to fish and hunt, his favorite food was duck. Jim was a local celebrity having played the son of the leading characters in the movie "Country" in 1984. Those who knew him often spoke of his role and how he was a true star. He will be greatly missed by all.



◀◀◀ “ I am a better person because of the people I support. “

~ Kara Beatty, DSP, 5 Star Club Member (pictured)

Profile of a 5 Star Club DSP

Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) are the key to exceptional services for persons with disabilities at EPI.

We honor outstanding DSP's monthly through our 5 Star Club. Recently we caught up with 5 Star Club member, Kara Beatty, to learn what being a DSP means to her.

EPI: What do you enjoy most about being a DSP?

KB: It's seeing the individuals I work with learn new skills and overcome obstacles independently.

Being able to step back and watch an individual use their debit card at the grocery store or call to schedule their MET bus for work makes me feel like I am here for the right reasons.

A major responsibility for a DSP is to model self-advocacy so individuals can be as independent as possible in their communities. Seeing the men I work with interact with peers at their

church on Sundays and be recognized by their first name at the grocery store, movie theater, or a restaurant gives me an overwhelming sense of pride.

EPI: What have you learned from being a DSP?

KB: Working as a DSP has taught me patience, tolerance, how to be a positive role-model, and increased my communication skills. In my 4 years as a DSP, I have learned so much more from the people I support than I could ever teach them. I am a better person because of the people I support.

EPI: How have those you have worked with impacted your life?

KB: I was always taught to treat everyone equally no matter their race, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc., but working with EPI has really set this for me. I respect the people we support for the positive attitudes they have while dealing with daily barriers and struggles I can't

imagine taking on. No matter what is going on in my own life, every time I come to work and see them smile or tell me a story, it brightens my day.

As EPI employees, we are surrounded by a group of selfless people who put their own lives and interests on hold to support others' needs. It takes special people to do what we do on a daily basis, and I am so proud to be part of EPI and a profession that has come so far to provide a better life for individuals with disabilities.

Kara ended by saying...Being a DSP can be very rewarding, but you also need to be prepared to put the needs of others first.

If this is a career you're interested in pursuing, EPI is a great employer. They provide excellent training and give you the skills you need to be a great DSP.

*Current
Career
Openings*

Program Manager

Direct Support
Professional

Job Coach

Special Note from Diane:

I would like to thank all the well-wishers who called or sent letters and cards congratulating me on my move to Cedar Falls Counseling Associates (CFCA).

Thanks to the collaboration between CFCA and EPI funded by the MS Endowment fund, to which many of you contributed, I am honored to continue working with people affected by MS.

I hope you will continue to support the MS Endowment so that we can continue our work until that day we all hope for - the cure for MS.

Best wishes,
Diane C. Holmes,
LISW



Employment and Multiple Sclerosis - Part 2

by Diane Holmes, LISW

Note: Part 1 of this article (see EPI News, Winter 2013) provided information about the rights and responsibilities of employees with a disabling condition and employers. Part 2 is about retaining Social Security benefits while employed.

After being approved for Social Security Disability (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) due to disability, people are often reluctant to get a job fearing they would lose their disability benefits. Policy changes now allow people receiving SSDI or SSI due to disability to re-enter the workforce and keep Social Security benefits. In addition, employed people who earn \$1,040 or less, what Social Security defines as “Substantial Gainful Activity” can be approved for SSDI or SSI.

The Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation program offers services to help people gain employment by providing vocational testing to identify job skills. Vocational Rehabilitation may fund services such as job training, further

education, adaptive or other equipment, and assists with job placement.

Once employed Benefit Planners from the Iowa Work Incentives Planning & Assistance of Iowa Workforce Development help individuals develop a PASS Plan (Plan for Achieving Self Support) which excludes income used to purchase items needed to work. The cost of these items, called Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE) are deducted from gross earnings when calculating Substantial Gainful Activity.

People who receive SSDI benefits and are employed may also be eligible for Medicaid for Employed People with Disabilities (MEPD). MEPD premiums are based on income so premiums are affordable and for some there may be no premium. MEPD pays for prescriptions and other medical services and may pay Medicare premiums for people with low income.

Let me give you an example... Jim was diagnosed with MS 20 years ago after a severe onset of symptoms. After a long rehabilitation process Jim regained the ability to walk. Once able, he volunteered as a driver for a medical facility. After several years Jim wanted to re-enter the workforce. Jim knew the type of work he could do and the number of hours he could work without adversely affecting his health would be limited.

After attending a workshop entitled, "Employment Matters for Persons with Multiple Sclerosis" presented by the MS Services Program of EPI, Jim found a job with a private medical transport service. For the last 3 years he had earned extra income working part time and maintains Social Security Disability benefits and health insurance.

When asked how he accomplished his goal Jim said, "(I have learned how to) live within the parameters of the disease (MS)". Jim says it was the services from the MS Services Program that made it possible.

MS Support Groups

April

- Bremer/Butler, 4/9 - 10:30 am
- Waterloo, 4/16 - 11:00 am
- Tama, 4/30 - 9:30 am

May

- Bremer/Butler, 5/14 - 10:30 am
- Waterloo, 5/21 - 11:00 am
- Tama, 5/28 - 9:30 am

June - No MS Support Groups

July

- Bremer/Butler, 7/9 - 10:30 am
- Waterloo, 7/16 - 11:00 am
- Tama, 7/30 - 9:30 am

August

- Bremer/Butler, 8/13 - 10:30 am
- Waterloo, 8/20 - 11:00 am
- Tama, 8/27 - 9:30 am

September

- Bremer/Butler, 9/10 - 10:30 am
- Waterloo, 9/17 - 11:00 am
- Tama, 9/24 - 9:30 am

MS Support Group Meeting Locations

Bremer/Butler

Redeemer Lutheran Church, 2001 W Bremer, Waverly (2nd Wednesday)

Waterloo

EPI, 760 Ansborough Ave, Waterloo (3rd Wednesday)

Tama

Senior Center Community Building, 103 S. Church, Toledo (Last Wednesday)

Sources:

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Iowa Work Incentives Planning and Assistance

www.iowawipa.org

www.ssa.gov

www.ime.state.ia.us/HCBS/MEPD



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Our Mission

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

Connect With Us



Wish List

- Mini fridge
- Plates and silverware
- Green cleaning supplies
- iTunes gift cards
- Magic Erasers
- Swiffer dusters
- Tickets to entertainment (hockey, baseball, basketball, festivals, theatre, bowling, etc.)
- iPads
- Durable medical equipment

A complete wish list can be found online. Remember other items can be donated through EPI's account at Stuff, Etc. in Waterloo. Proceeds from these sales are passed on to persons served to shop for essential needs. Call (319) 233-8809 or visit them online at www.stuffetcwaterloo.com to set up an appointment.

Mark Your Calendars 2014

My Waterloo Days - Friday, June 13 at 6:30 pm, downtown Waterloo. We'll have an entry.

Sturgis Falls Parade - Saturday, June 28 at 10:00 am, downtown Cedar Falls. We'll have an entry.

More Than You See - Thursday, November 13

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 cash donations anytime. Scan the QR code to the left or visit our website at www.episervice.org and click "Donate Now".