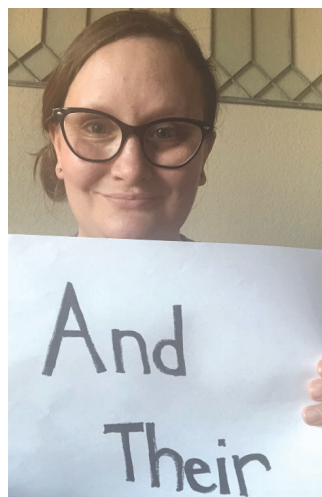


## NEWSLETTER

FALL 2020



Exceptional Persons, Inc.



### LIVING OUR MISSION

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

**WWW.EPISERVICE.ORG**

760 Ansborough Ave. Waterloo, IA 50701 | (319) 232 - 6671

# ABOUT US

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

SANDY COLLINS  
Human Resources Director

MARY JANSSEN  
Children & Family Services Director

DEB JUNGLING  
Chief Financial Officer

KATIE SLADE  
Organizational Development Director

CHRIS SPARKS  
Executive Director

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DEB LILLY - President  
Hawkeye Community Foundation

STEVE LINDAMAN -Vice President  
Veridian Credit Union

JUSTIN STOCKDALE- Treasurer  
Dike New Hartford Schools

GIA SHANNON - Secretary  
Short's Travel Management

SUE FANGMAN - Past President  
Volunteer

JORDAN ALBORN  
Farmers State Bank

MEGAN FEREDAY  
Attorney

KYLE HENDERSON  
Doerfer Companies

DAN LEVI  
Levi Architecture

DAVE LYMAN  
VGM

BRUCE MEISINGER  
Volunteer

JOHN MONAGHAN  
PDCM Insurance

STACEY SMITH  
Mercy Health

GINA WEEKLEY  
Waterloo Community Schools

BARB WISE  
Volunteer

## EXCEPTIONAL PERSONS FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHRIS FEREDAY - President  
PDCM Insurance

LARRY K. FOX - Vice President  
Discerning Wealth

FRANK ESSER - Treasurer  
Volunteer

HEATHER GUNDERSON - Secretary  
BerganKDV

KIM FETTKETHER - Past President  
The Veridian Group, Inc.

STACEY BENTLEY  
Community Bank & Trust

KRISTEN JUHL  
Redfern Mason Larsen & Moore, PLC

SUE FANGMAN  
Volunteer

BRIAN GABEL  
Panther Sports Properties

MATTHEW GARY  
US Bancorp Investments

WADE ITZEN  
Banklowa

DEB LILLY  
Hawkeye Community Foundation

STEVE LINDAMAN  
Veridian Credit Union

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## FORGOTTEN FACES

by Chris Sparks

The critical work of a Direct Support Professional often goes unnoticed. Wages are simply too low, it is difficult to hire and retain workers, and they work evenings, weekends, and holidays. Agencies offering community services struggle with inadequate and outdated funding which makes rectifying this problem quite challenging. This struggle has been going on for years and the pandemic has made everything more challenging.

**As we experience the pandemic we are able to calculate a human impact and a financial impact - with the human aspect being the most devastating.**

The coronavirus has critically changed how our services are offered, creating new and unique struggles for staff. Further, we have experienced significant lost revenue as major services alternate between operation, closure, or partial closure due to the pandemic. We anticipate this will continue.

Additionally we are experiencing significant increases in our expenses due to staffing in our residential services and the cost of personal protective equipment for staff and persons served.

From mid-March to June 30 our organization has experienced a financial impact of \$847,000 from the pandemic. Sobering yes, and more so as we look to the future, but it pales in comparison to the three people we served whose lives have been lost.

As the pandemic continues we anticipate ongoing challenges and changes in our organization. We believe we will likely be managing the financial impacts and residual effects from COVID-19 for the next three to four years.

One of the motivators for EPI and agencies like us seeking improved funding is so we can pay our direct support staff and front line supervisors a higher wage - which they very much deserve. We continue to hold up and celebrate their efforts. We will not rest until our staff are paid more fairly for the important work they do.

In the midst of challenges this year, we have seen some supplemental funding from both the State of Iowa and from federal sources. This is due to the efforts of legislative champions and state department officials who understand the importance of our services. And it is due to the tireless public policy advocacy of agency and association staff. The additional funding is helpful and appreciated, but more will be needed depending upon how long this pandemic continues.

As a society we need to be critically invested in making sure organizations like EPI stay healthy for the people they support. We must continue to share their stories and tell our lawmakers they can no longer overlook people with disabilities and the critical services they rely upon.

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





# PEOPLE ARE THE HEART OF EPI



## YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS **BY** **KATIE SLADE**

We know you are an important person in the life of someone we serve, that's why you should have recently received our survey via letter or email.

We ask for a few minutes of your time to answer the survey questions and provide us with your feedback - to see how we're doing. What we are doing well and what needs to be improved to provide the highest quality of services.

Space will be provided for comments within the survey. All responses are held in the utmost confidence. Your participation in this survey is important to us because it helps us grow.

### **What do we do with the feedback?**

We ask for feedback across many areas of our organization - from the people we serve to our employees. Your feedback is a gift to us and truly matters.

### **Next, we listen.**

We look for specific areas where we need to follow up as well as overall - or systemic - themes where we're doing well and where we can improve.

### **Then, we put together a plan.**

We share the results throughout the organization. Then, we focus on finding solutions and create an action plan to use your feedback to provide the very best services.

In our last survey we learned we could improve our communication and responsiveness. So that's an area we've been intentional around setting expectations and creating action this year.

We sincerely appreciate your time, thoughtful review, and trust as a community partner.

*Email is one of the best ways we can get information to you quickly. Do we have your preferred email address? Drop us a line at [communications@episervice.org](mailto:communications@episervice.org) with your first and last name so we can verify.*

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# 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](mailto:communications@episervice.org).



## THE KINDNESS ROCKS PROJECT

"Smile every day." A small line of encouragement that carries a much bigger punch when you learn just how it got there.

Our community based Day Habilitation groups had to get pretty creative when businesses began to open back up but the threat to exposure still remained. Our staff never back down from a challenge, and have come up with a number of ways to continue living program's mission while also promoting safety. One of the ways all program members enjoyed was playing a new role in of The Kindness Rocks Project.

This project asks community members to find a flat rock and paint an inspirational quote on it, then hide it somewhere within the community. You can take a rock when you need one, share one with a friend who needs inspiration, or leave one for another to find.

These colorful rocks of inspiration began on the coast of Cape Cod where Megan Murphy would secretly paint and drop rocks in areas along the beach. As people found them it quickly took off all over the United States becoming a widespread trend through the hashtag, "#TheKindnessRocksProject".

The mission of this project is simple...

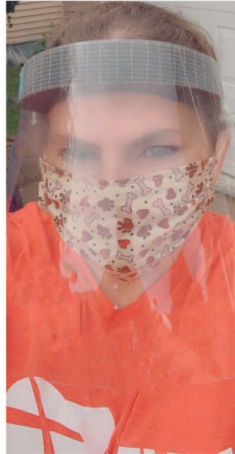
"One message at just the right moment can change someone's entire day, outlook, life."

"When we were told about it I got really excited. I like painting. I like making people smile and it will make people smile", said one Day Hab attendee.

Persons served enjoy any opportunity to give back to their community and they understand that right now everyone needs a little help cheering up.

While we don't want to ruin any surprises, you can expect to find rocks throughout various parks in the Cedar Valley placed there by Day Hab. We hope you find one and stop to think of us if you do.

# SERVICE EXCELLENCE



**Each year we take one week to celebrate and recognize our outstanding Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and others like them throughout the world.**

While we celebrated differently than previous years, much of what we celebrate yearly remained the same.

In 2020, when talk of the COVID-19 virus became spread within our community, **our Direct Support Professionals once again proved their commitment** in ways we never knew possible. Not only did they continue to show up to work during a pandemic, but some of them even stayed at work - some in quarantine with persons served for as long as 20 days and nights straight.

**Our Direct Support Professionals again proved their ability to be strong advocates** - some having to drive the people they support to receive emergency care the DSP knew they

needed. We all know during this time, it has been hard to get into a doctor.

**Our DSPs have yet again proved they are compassionate** - some lending their shoulder to cry on after losing a decades old friend to COVID-19. They began wearing their face coverings within the home and some continue to wear them off the clock, to better protect the vulnerable population that we serve.

**Our DSPs have again proved they are fearless** - when the majority of the world stopped or worked from home, these essential employees continued. Some even entering COVID-19 positive homes. They took on multiple changes to our protocols and did so effortlessly.

**Our direct service staff have again proved they are creative** - whether explaining the importance of social distancing and mask wearing or coming up with new daily routines when their day habilitation programs closed and they still needed to stay active.

# COMMUNITY INCLUSION

## THANK YOU TO OUR DIRECT SERVICE STAFF BY MEGAN HENNING, BONNIE KIPPER, & NICOLE RAND

### **Our DSPs have again proved they are team players** - through and through!

Our staff have stayed positive, worked together, and covered for each other in the middle of a pandemic. Need we say more?

Lastly, our appreciation for our staff has not dissipated in the slightest bit but instead, grown drastically. We literally could not do it without these amazing staff and are so thankful to have them with us as we walk together through these uncharted territories.

### **SPECIAL SHOUT OUTS...**

- Kim Bumgardner-Bergman for quarantining with persons served for 17 days.
- Jason Yaunk for quarantining with persons served for 20 days.
- Bradon Trimble for quarantining with persons served for 14 days.
- Bobbie-Joe Kattelman for quarantining with persons served for 17 days.

- Eyleen Estrada quarantined with persons served for 12 days.
- Reece Thurmond quarantined with persons served for 14 days.
- Kerrie Burroughs quarantined with persons served for 10 days.
- To all Direct Support Professionals who stepped forward volunteering to quarantine with COVID-19 positive homes or for potential COVID-19 exposure homes.
- To all Direct Support Professionals who have accepted and implemented various state/CDC mandated protocol changes effortlessly and efficiently.

Your dedication and perseverance has not gone unnoticed.

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# STAFF EXCELLENCE



## EPI RECEIVES EMPLOYERS OF CHOICE AWARD **BY SANDY COLLINS**

We are honored to have been selected for the 2020 Employers of Choice award. This is the fourth time EPI has been selected for the acknowledgment and we do not take this award lightly.

**We thank our team members for nominating us and for believing in the mission of connecting people, creating opportunities, and nurturing growth since 1957.**

We take pride in what we have to offer - when you work at Exceptional Persons, Inc. you will experience personal growth opportunities through career advancement and connect to a community that leads to a greater purpose.

EPI offers competitive pay and great benefits, from generous paid time off to 401(k). We offer yearly wellness screenings and free meal planning, health, dental, vision, and even pet insurance. EPI provides an employee assistance program with a 24 hour call center connecting you with person, legal, or financial counseling.

On top of benefits, we have opportunities to fit your schedule! Our flexible hours, various shifts, and full and part-time availabilities give staff an opportunity to pick a schedule that works best for them.



2019 DSP Recognition Ceremony



2019 Soup Day Staff Event



# YEARS OF SERVICE

JANUARY 2020 -  
SEPTEMBER 2020



## SERVICE AWARDS

EVERY YEAR COUNTS

### FIVE YEARS...

- **REBECCA COLLINS** DSP2
- **KATELIN GINAPP** Intermittent Services Specialist
- **JENNIFER GLIDEWELL** DSP4
- **CRYSTAL ANFINSON** Integration Specialist
- **BRADON TRIMBLE** DSP2
- **KRISTIN HOFF** Intermediate Accountant
- **DANIELLE KNAVEL** DSP4
- **ZACH MOYE** DSP4
- **AMBER BURNS** DSP2
- **ZOIE WHEELER** DSP4
- **BRIDGITTE DUFFY** Authorization & Records Specialist
- **MAGHAN BOWMAN** Quality Improvement & Outcomes Director
- **DAWN VANCE** Integration Specialist

### TEN YEARS...

- **KENNETH RASMUSSEN** DSP4
- **WILSON OBURRA** DSP4
- **TONY MOREHEAD** DSP2
- **RACHEL KLEMKE** DSP4

### FIFTEEN YEARS...

- **LISA FRANK** Operations Analyst
- **SHANNON HAMES** Child Care Consultant

### TWENTY YEARS...

- **LISA STEERE** Child & Adult Care Food Program Coordinator
- **MARTY BAHLMANN** DSP2
- **LISA WOOD** Child Care Consultant

### TWENTY YEARS...

- **JENNY WESTPHALEN** DSP2
- **DAWN LAMMERS** Program Manager

### TWENTY-FIVE YEARS...

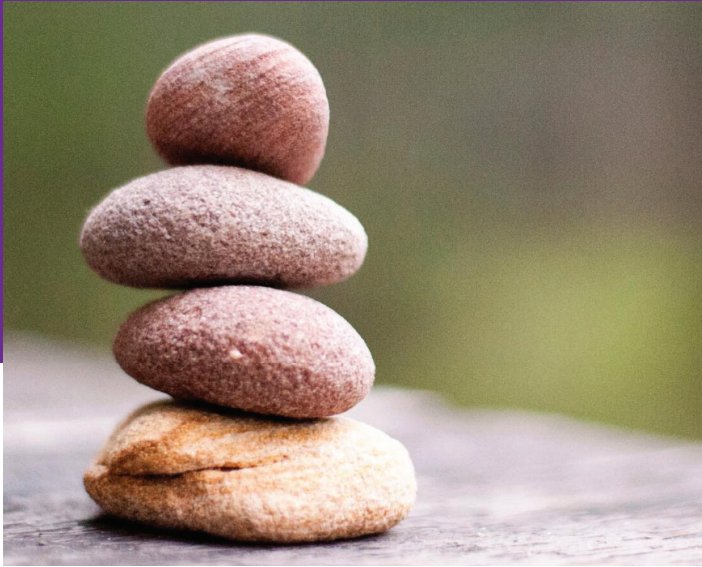
- **CHU CONRAD** DSP4

### THIRTY YEARS...

- **LORI DEVIRES** Permanent Planning Inc. Coordinator

*Thank you for connecting people,  
creating opportunities, and nurturing  
growth through the years!*

# HEALTH & WELLNESS



## DEVELOPING A SELF-CARE PLAN **BY MAGHAN BOWMAN**

In the current state our world is in, we believe self-care is not only just as important as your physical health, but it is more important than ever before.

In a recent staff meeting, Chris Sparks, Executive Director, shared tips on developing a self-care plan. Our staff have responded so well to these methods that we wanted to share them with you.

- 1. Know who you are.** Caregivers have a predisposition to helping and tend to lean in to a problem to support others. *Cultivate self awareness of your own emotional state.* Do not suppress your own needs. Recognize and prioritize your needs. Listen to yourself and trusted others.
- 2. Quiet your limbic system.** Your limbic system is made up of nerves and networks concerned with instincts and mood. Recognize, process, and realize your irrational fears and ideas.

*Practice a technique called centering.*

Centering helps you calm your emotions, manage your breathing, and slow your mind so you can feel and think clearly. Take a moment to close your eyes, breathe in and out for 60 seconds and consider a focus word.

- 3. Practice normalization and reassurance.** When you are facing challenges it is helpful to see them as real and objectively stressful. Anyone going through what you're going through would likely be stressed out. Your reaction is a typical reaction.
- 4. Ask yourself the partialization question.** Break the multi-system problem down into manageable parts. For example, how to eat an elephant... by taking one bite at a time.
- 5. Establish clear priorities.** Sometimes you need to tackle the easiest thing versus the biggest thing to get traction. Choose things only in your circle of influence and your circle of control. Complicated systemic problems play out over long periods of time.

# 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.

**6. Take care of yourself.** This makes all other habits possible. *Eat well.* After the pandemic, people will emerge from this lighter and healthier or sicker and heavier. *Get sleep.* Establish good sleep schedules. *Exercise.* Exercise is the most clinically effective treatment of depression and stress (more effective and quicker than medication).

*Sharpen the saw - Take care of yourself and manage what you can.* Habit 7 of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, suggests renewing the four dimensions of your nature (physical, spiritual, mental/cognitive, and socio-emotional). Consider learning something new or journaling to document this historic time and potentially relieve some of the hold that the challenges have over you. Take time for yourself, your family, your friends, and do things that matter to you.

**7. Conserve your emotional energy.** Considerations: social media, people that are an undue burden, destructive habits, avoid things that take your energy versus replenish your energy.

Don't sit around and admire/fixate on the problem. If something hasn't worked in the past, stop and try something different. Build out your response repertoire of options and build better habits.

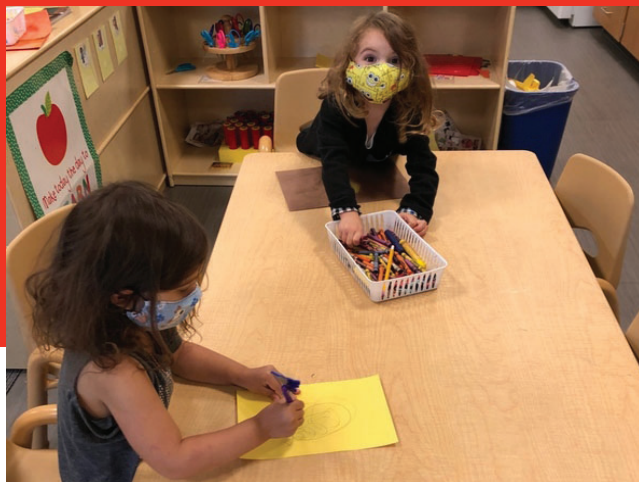
**8. Objectify, don't catastrophize.** Understand and focus on what is in your control.

We hope these tips help you develop your own self-care plan because taking care of yourself makes all other habits possible.

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# CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES



## CHILD CARE THROUGH A PANDEMIC **BY MARY JANSSEN**

We recently spoke with family members and staff at the Hawkeye Child Development Center - ALC (HCDC-ALC) to share their stories on how the pandemic has impacted them.

Like many families across the Cedar Valley and beyond, they felt a vast sense of uncertainty take over. Especially, those who were deemed the essential workers.

The Cedar Valley was already in a child care crisis pre pandemic, but when the COVID-19 virus forced many centers to close their doors, the worry for families everywhere grew.

With multiple new protocol changes put in place, like temperature checks at the door and providing personal protective equipment (PPE) for all staff and children 2 and over, the HCDC-ALC was able to continue its care. Not only for current families in need, but also for new families of essential workers without other options.

As a manager of a Human Resources department, HCDC-ALC parent, Holly, opted to continue to stay at work. “I wanted to keep employees informed and calm throughout the pandemic,” said Holly. Without the HCDC-ALC, Holly is unsure where she would’ve been able to find care.

For another HCDC-ALC parent, she knew that she would not have been able to work without the HCDC-ALC staying open. When asked what she would’ve done had the center closed she answered quite simply, “I would’ve lost my job, since we wouldn’t have had anyone else to watch our daughter.”

For staff, they felt comfortable. Tessa shared with us, “we were all given masks to wear and we continue to hold weekly meetings to make sure everyone is up to date on ever changing procedures and precautions”.

You can imagine, getting 2 - 5 year olds to wear masks has been a bit of a challenge. Our staff had to get creative! Through reading many social stories and keeping conversations open during the start of the pandemic gave staff the chance to

# HAWKEYE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER - ALC

## CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL

Our Child Care Resource and Referral staff are here to help families throughout the Cedar Valley.

Help with:

- Opening a new child care
- Car seat checks
- Finding care for your family
- Training for providers and more!

Don't hesitate to give our staff at Child Care Resource and Referral of Northeast Iowa a call at 319-233-0804.

reassure them about their worries. Staff also fit in a few video chats with friends who chose to stay home during. This allowed children still attending to see their friends were okay during this time too!

Another staff shared the more she talked about cleaning surfaces and washing hands while letting the little ones help really made them feel better.

Staff member Tierra, shared the quote she used to reassure herself, "Be strong now, because things will get better. It might be stormy now, but it can't rain forever".

We are so thankful for our staff and family members support in these difficult times.

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## CHILD CARE SERVICES

If your family is in need of child care services, reach out to our Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) staff who are just a call or click away!

We realize, now more than ever, is a difficult time to find child care. Through help with our parent referral hotline

(855-244-5301), parent specialists are waiting to offer you referrals for information on child care openings for in home and center based child care. As well as, no cost education and guidance on selecting the best child care program for you and your family. All information can also be accessed referrals through our website, [www.iowaccrr.org/families](http://www.iowaccrr.org/families).

Visit <https://bit.ly/344FreB> to see a list of vacancies within communities and child care program contact information. Families are welcome to call the child care programs listed to learn more.

Lastly, CCR&R provides many resources for child care businesses, whether you currently run a child care or are looking to start one. From the home screen of our web page, click the "resource" button and you'll find quick access to information that may be needed to support your child care business and educational tools for children.

Let us help you find the resources you need to stay on your feet while navigating through these unprecedented times.

# EXCEPTIONAL PERSONS FOUNDATION



## CONSIDER A QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION GIFT FROM YOUR IRA **BY STACEY LANCOUR**

There are many benefits to using an individual retirement account (IRA) to make a charitable contribution. For starters, if you've reached the age where you need to take required minimum distributions (RMDs) from your IRA, you can avoid paying taxes on them by donating that money to charity.

The Qualified Charitable Distribution qualifies as a non-taxable distribution. While you will not receive a charitable gift tax deduction, the distribution will count toward your required minimum distribution without increasing your adjusted gross income.

Most significantly, you will be helping an organization that you care about, like The Exceptional Persons Foundation, by providing financial resources that will enable it to better achieve its mission.

**For a gift to fully count as a Qualified Charitable Distribution, the following factors must be satisfied:**

1. You must be at least age 70 1/2 when the gift distribution is made.
2. You will need to submit a distribution request letter to your IRA administrator.

3. The distribution must transfer directly to a qualified charity. The Exceptional Persons Foundation and other 501(c)(3) organizations qualify.

Now is a great time to talk to your financial professionals to find out if Qualified Charitable Distributions are right for you.

\*This information should not be viewed as financial/tax advice, please consult your financial advisor for details.

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### GRANTS AWARDED TO SUPPORT EPI'S MISSION

The Otto Schoitz Foundation recently awarded EPI \$15,000 to support our employment program. With the support of grant funds, we can continue to offer this crucial service for individuals following their dreams of finding and keeping a job in our community. Thank you to the Otto Schoitz Foundation for your investment to ensure EPI's critical services remain available when needed most.

EPI was also awarded \$350 from Iowa Team Nutrition for a Farm to Early Care program. This program will allow EPI to



# 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](http://www.episervice.org).

implement farm to table learning objectives into daily activities at the Hawkeye Child Development Center. Funds will be used to establish a garden to grow fresh vegetables and engage children in hands on activities to explore the process of preparing, planting, and harvesting food. Thank you to the Iowa Department of Education - Team Nutrition for your investment to enhance learning opportunities for our little ones!

## DO YOU HAVE “STUFF” TO DONATE?

We've all been spending a lot more time at home these days, which means it's the perfect opportunity to clean out the closets and other areas of the house to get rid of the things we don't need! It feels so good to fill bags of these items, it feels even better to donate them to benefit people in need. That's where EPI comes in!

Did you know that EPI has an account at Stuff, Etc. Quality Consignment in Waterloo and your donations can support the individuals we serve?

While the individuals we serve do have many needs and we greatly appreciate donated items, the majority of the items we receive don't immediately match up

with the specific needs of the individuals we serve. Unfortunately, we simply don't have the space to accept items that don't have an immediate home. Donating to Stuff, Etc. is the perfect solution!

### Here's how it works:

- Drop off your donations (clothes, furniture, household items, etc.) to Stuff, Etc. in Waterloo and let them know that you'd like the proceeds to go to Exceptional Persons, Inc.'s account.
- When your items sell, EPI will receive 50% of the proceeds. The proceeds are then passed on to the individuals we serve in the form of vouchers to shop for items that match their specific needs - like cookware or an outfit for a job interview.

We are so excited about this opportunity for the individuals we support to have the ability to shop for and choose items that match their preferences. The ability to choose is an extremely valuable gift.

So, as you're purging through your house, consider donating your items to Stuff, Etc. to benefit the persons served by EPI!

Exceptional Persons, Inc.  
760 Ansborough Ave  
PO Box 4090  
Waterloo, IA 50704 - 4090

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Waterloo, IA

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.