



NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2024

IN THE ISSUE:

EPI's 10th Annual
More Than You See:
June 13, 2024

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

MAGHAN BOWMAN
Executive Operations Director

SARA DRISH
Human Resources Director

NICOLE ERICSON
Community Development Director

MARY JANSSEN
Children & Family Services Director

BONNIE KIPPER
Community Services Director

JAMES PERRY
Chief Financial Officer

KATIE SLADE
Executive Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

STEVE LINDAMAN - President
Veridian Credit Union

JORDAN ALBORN - Vice President
Financial Advisor

GIA SHANNON - Treasurer
Guild Mortgage

MIKE ISAACSON - Secretary
VGM & Associates

DEB LILLY - Past President
Hawkeye Community Foundation

KIM FETTKETHER
The Veridian Group

JEFF HALVERSON
Volunteer

DAN LEVI
Levi Architecture

JULEA NEHER
Volunteer

KYLE ROED
CPM Holdings, Inc.

DODIE YOUNG
Volunteer

EXCEPTIONAL PERSONS FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FRANK ESSER - President
Volunteer

HEATHER GUNDERSON - Vice
President
BerganKDV

MATTHEW GARY - Treasurer
US Bancorp Investments

HILLERY OBERLE - Secretary
UNI Foundation

LARRY K. FOX - Past President
Volunteer

JORDAN ALBORN
Financial Advisor

STACEY BENTLEY
Community Bank & Trust

FRANK DARRAH
Volunteer

ELIJAH LEE
Lee Wealth Management

DEB LILLY
Hawkeye Community Foundation

STEVE LINDAMAN
Veridian Credit Union

DAVE MASON JR.
Redfern Mason Larsen & Moore, PLC

SUSAN ROLINGER
Iowa Educational Services for the
Blind and Visually Impaired

IN THE ISSUE:

PAGE 3.

*Katie's Corner:
Thankful for Your Feedback*

PAGE 4 - 5.

Advocating for You

PAGE 6 - 7.

*Creating Opportunities for
Greater Independence*

PAGE 8 - 9.

*Maghan Receives Rising
Star Award
Meet Kyla!*

PAGE 10 - 11.

*View a Sample of our
Community Report*

PAGE 12 - 13.

*Connecting People to
Opportunities*

PAGE 14 - 15.

*EPI's 10th Annual More Than
You See - June, 13, 2024
Creating Accessible Housing*

What a gift your feedback is to us! Each year we ask for your feedback - to share with us how we're doing, what's working and what's not. We are grateful for your thoughtful consideration to encourage and help us grow.

I was so pleased to see your overall satisfaction increased to 4.19 (on a 5 point scale). We also ask the people we serve directly (via interviews by staff that are not involved in their services), and they too gave us an overall satisfaction rating of 4.20.

The last few years have brought a number of opportunities as well as challenges. We were very curious to see what, in your eyes and the eyes of the people we serve, you had to offer us through these changes. I won't get into each service specifically, but know our teams have and have plans to put your feedback to use.

Overall, we learned we have strengths in listening and our staff are knowledgeable of each person they are working with. On the other hand, we learned while our overall agency communication appears to be striking the right balance, it's the specific knowledge of your loved one you'd like us to work on. As you can imagine, everyone's preferences are quite different on what this looks like, so look for us to understand your preferences and respond in kind. We also have opportunity to work on demonstrating our skill and have plans to address as well.

Your feedback also helped us see, we can't communicate enough on our vision for the

future and opportunities for your loved one. Thank you for that insight!

When our team sat down to review and discuss the feedback, we were pleasantly taken aback when we looked at the results from persons we serve in our daily services. Every single category improved this year - and by quite a significant amount - each well over 4.00 (again on a 5 point scale). This tells us we're on the right track with the adjustments we made in opportunities to access the community and how we schedule staff. We'll keep our focus on these efforts.

Speaking of opportunities to give feedback - Iowa Health and Human Services (HHS) has been working on a complete redesign of Community Based-Serves (effecting all members on a Medicaid waiver for Home and Community Bases services). They are calling this the Hope and Opportunities in Many Environments (HOME) project. For a while now, they have been seeking input and presenting their findings in townhall meetings. They would love to hear from you! Scan the code on this page to visit this website to learn more and/or get involved.



We provide important updates on our services as well as federal and state work that may affect our services more frequently in our eNews, please share your email address with us to get this important information in a timely manner.

KATIE'S CORNER

CATCH THE LATEST NEWS FROM OUR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, **KATIE SLADE.**





ADVOCATING FOR YOU
**BY MAGHAN
BOWMAN**

Disability service providers like Exceptional Persons, Inc. (EPI) are concerned about the rule from the Department of Labor (DOL) that will drastically impact our ability to provide care for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

At EPI, we believe in our vision of - working together we will realize a future where all people are recognized and valued - encouraged and supported to live, work, and grow - in their communities.

To offer high quality support to individuals with I/DD, EPI enlists in a dedicated workforce (of almost 300 people!) that go far beyond basic caregiving to empower people to fully participate in their surrounding communities and networks. Depending on an individual's needs, the supports provided in Medicaid-funded home and community-based settings can help individuals engage in health advocacy, financial management, housing

arrangements, job skill development, and other responsibilities enable them to maintain an independent life.


Direct support professionals, along with our administrative staff, work hard every day to expand the quality and enjoyment of life that individuals with disabilities can experience. While we actively seek to hire and retain a robust workforce, there is only so much we can do when our Medicaid service reimbursements rates are set by the state.

The DOL has now increased the nationwide salary threshold for overtime pay by as much as 70%. Without increased funding, providers will have to find ways to offset these new costs and will not be able to maintain our standards for service availability. Resulting in reduced access for people with disabilities.

While questioning how to appropriately compensate workers is progress, jeopardizing the services of persons with I/DD is not the answer. The DOL must collaborate with other stakeholders to determine a path that does not risk cutting care for our vulnerable patient population. The rule is admirable for its intent, but the

 **LIKE US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!**
Just by following us, liking, commenting or sharing our posts you help EPI engage with others!

 **SIGN UP FOR OUR EMAIL NEWSLETTER**
Stay up to date on the latest happenings around EPI. Scan the QR code below!

 **SEND US YOUR EMAIL**
If we don't currently have your email, we'd love to! Send an email with your info by scanning the QR code below.

potential consequences of this policy could inadvertently diminish the support systems it is intended to uphold.

Our staff at EPI will continue to advocate for the people we support, its staff, and other community-based providers like us. Recently, staff have visited Washington, D.C. and the Iowa State Capitol, meeting with members of congress, advocating on your behalf.

We can't do it alone. Our ability to make an impact relies on our reach and we need your help to make sure our voices are heard. Take a few minutes to participate in the action alert tools provided below.

- The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has a significant change in the overtime pay requirements under the Fair Labor Standards Act. While the intention to strengthen the nation's workforce is commendable, the potential repercussions without funding on community-based services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) cannot be understated. Encourage your representative to support the Disability

Community Act (H.R. 7267) to protect access to our services.

- The HCBS Relief Act of 2023 is vital for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). In particular, it extends much-needed support for the Medicaid Home and Community Based Services program authorized under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The bill would provide a 10-percentage-point increase in Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for home and community-based services during 2024 and 2025, enabling states and providers to strengthen the direct support workforce and ensure better access to I/DD services.

To take part in these actionable items and stay up to date with our public policy efforts, sign up for our electronic newsletters. Scan the QR code to be taken to <https://bit.ly/3wGvgNp>.





CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GREATER INDEPENDENCE
BY NICOLE ERICSON

Disability services in Iowa are undergoing significant change and evolution. Part of this service evolution is driven by the customer preferences and desires, part driven by regulations to serve people in the least restrictive environment possible, and part due to the high demand for people needing services (unfortunately the waiting list for people needing services in Iowa is growing).

Imagine a world where your loved one can thrive independently while still having access to the support they need.

You've likely met enough people in your life to know no two people are exactly alike. We each have different likes, dislikes, preferences, and life goals. Yet, for decades community-based services largely came in a "one-size fits all" model. You could receive supports in a home shared with roommates staffed 24/7 or staff could provide supports to you on an appointment basis. Not much was available in between.

As we spend time talking with the people we serve, we hear of life goals to live independently on their own or to have time to themselves without a staff member present. Our job, as a community-based service provider, is to help people gain the

skills they need to live safely in the least restrictive environment possible, gain greater independence, and achieve their life goals.

Ever looking for solutions, close to a decade ago we started offering remote night supports for persons who expressed a desire (paired with safety skills demonstrated). The response we've received from persons served, families as well as our state and funding partners has been very positive and has inspired us to grow our tech-enabled service offerings.

We're excited to share we've received grants from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Black Hawk County Gaming Association to expand our tech-enabled services including creating our own Virtual Connection Center right here in the Cedar Valley. This will allow us to connect personalized virtual supports and services to each individual as it aligns to their goals and desires.

EPI has partnered with iLink Technologies to create even more opportunities for greater independence through these tech-enabled services.

iLink Technologies is a cutting-edge platform of smart home technologies that seamlessly

CHILD CARE SPOTS AVAILABLE!

The Hawkeye Child Development Center - ALC is a program of EPI offering care to children from infant through preschool age.

Located downtown:
120 Jefferson Street
Waterloo, IA 50701

Open Monday through
Friday: 6:30 AM - 5:30 PM

Scan the QR code on the right to find more info online at www.episervice.org!



HAWKEYE CHILD
Development Center - ALC
A PROGRAM OF EPI

links homes to EPI's virtual connection center staffed by highly trained Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Empowering and accessible, iLink fosters a sense of freedom by connecting persons served to our DSPs to respond virtually or in person at the resident's discretion. Experience the joy of your loved ones thriving independently within a safety net of virtual and rapidly deployed DSPs.

Here are just a few examples:

- **Example 1:** Virtual DSPs can remotely help people live independently, reminding them of medication times and observing medication administration, helping coach a person to cook a meal, being virtually available for an intermittent need, and if necessary, deploying a DSP to offer in-person help.
- **Example 2:** iLink equipment can alert our virtual DSPs when a resident's stove is on, but no one has been in the kitchen for a specified period of time. It will also send an alert if the wattage is too high. If these scenarios require immediate intervention, DSPs can remotely turn off the stove and coordinate the deployment of staff as needed.
- **Example 3:** When someone gets up in the middle of the night for a drink of water and returns to bed promptly, this typical

behavior won't cause an alert; however, if someone gets up and doesn't return within a specified period of time (based on what's typical for them), iLink equipment will alert the virtual DSP who then will remotely check-in and/or deploy in-person supports.

Now, keep in mind, there is a strong demand for our services and staff dedicated to providing them.

Technology will never replace the need for our very talented DSPs to provide in-person supports; it merely gives the person served more choice in how they'd like their services to be delivered. And by doing so, allows our DSPs to offer their support to people currently waiting for services in the community.

We have so much to share with you, please look for a series of communications around this topic, scan the QR code to visit us online at www.episervice.org.





MAGHAN BOWMAN RECEIVES RISING STAR AWARD BY SARA DRISH

EPI's Executive Operations Director, Maghan Bowman, has been awarded one of American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)'s inaugural Rising Star Mid-Career Impact Award.

For over 50 years, ANCOR has been a leading advocate for the critical role service providers play in enriching the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As a national nonprofit trade association, ANCOR represents 1,600+ organizations employing more than a half-million professionals who together serve more than a million individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

This award comes from the ANCOR Foundation, a charitable counterpart of ANCOR. The Foundation's mission is to build the commitment and ability of providers and communities to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. The Rising Star Mid-Career Impact Award was created to make a public statement that conveys the appreciation their Foundation has for bold leadership

while recognizing value to their time and contributions.

"It's something special to watch a member of our team receive such a prestigious award on a national stage. Maghan is a quiet, humble servant-leader always asking how she can help and delivering results. It's no surprise to me that ANCOR and the ANCOR Foundation chose her as one of their inaugural recipients of this new award," said Katie Slade, EPI's Executive Director.

Winners of the Rising Star Mid-Career Impact Award represent the present and future of ANCOR. The Foundation gives this award in recognition of mid-career professionals who, despite the inherent challenges within our field, dare to make the inclusion of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in society their professional mission. We further define a mid-career professional as an individual who has earned experience and expertise, and still has significant time to gain more experience, advance their qualifications, and pursue leadership roles.



EXCEPTIONAL EMPLOYEES

Did you know? EPI

employs close to 300 individuals! Roughly 75% of our workforce are Direct Support Professionals (DSP).



SEVEN-TIME EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

EPI is a seven-time recipient of the Courier's Top 20 Employers of Choice. Our latest award was in 2023!



CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

When you work at EPI

you're working to make the world a better place - starting right here in the Cedar Valley. Scan the QR below to apply today!

Bowman's first involvement with ANCOR began in 2015 attending a conference with EPI. In 2019, she became a member on their Board of Representatives and in 2023 was elected as the Board of Representatives co-chair. In 2024 she became a graduate of ANCOR's Leadership Academy and is an active member of the Government Relations Committee.

"Receiving this award was truly humbling as there are so many people deserving of the Rising Star Mid-Career Impact Award. This award not only celebrates my achievements but acknowledges the support, guidance and endless professional opportunities EPI provides as an organization. As I continue my journey, I will remain dedicated to uplifting EPI and disability services on a national level," shared Maghan Bowman.



MEET KYLA!

Exceptional Persons, Inc.'s new Human Resources Generalist, Kyla Fangman.

Kyla's purpose is to help new and veteran staff establish and grow their career within.

The Human Resources Generalist's mission is to help staff feel connected, to create opportunities within their reach, and nurture their professional growth.

"I'm truly honored to be a part of EPI. I'm eager to support our dedicated staff members in their professional journeys. Together, we'll make a difference not only in the work we do but also in the lives of those we serve," shared Kyla.

Kyla will be one of the first faces you see if you're applying for a career or visiting us at a job fair! Give her a call at 319-232-6671 or email her at kyla.fangman@episervice.org to learn more about working and applying at EPI.

Know someone who would be a great fit at EPI? Scan here to view our career opportunities!




*Supporting people to live lives of greater independence through a variety of Community Services

SUPPORTING
410
PEOPLE
to live, work, and grow
in our community



 **ONE NEW**
tech enabled service
enhancement launched


253 PEOPLE 
benefiting from EPI's
Representative Payee services

reduced DSP
vacancies
by **22%** 

 **410 PEOPLE**
sought information & referral

337 PEOPLE
supported in homes **living**
throughout the Cedar Valley

159 HOMES
throughout the
Cedar Valley




285
STAFF 
all dedicated to living
our mission


 **75%**
of staff are
Direct Support
Professionals (DSPs)


Service Satisfaction rate
increased from
4.04 to
4.19 

48 CHILDREN
receiving quality child
care at the Hawkeye
Child Development
Center - ALC 

 **128**
PEOPLE
WORKING

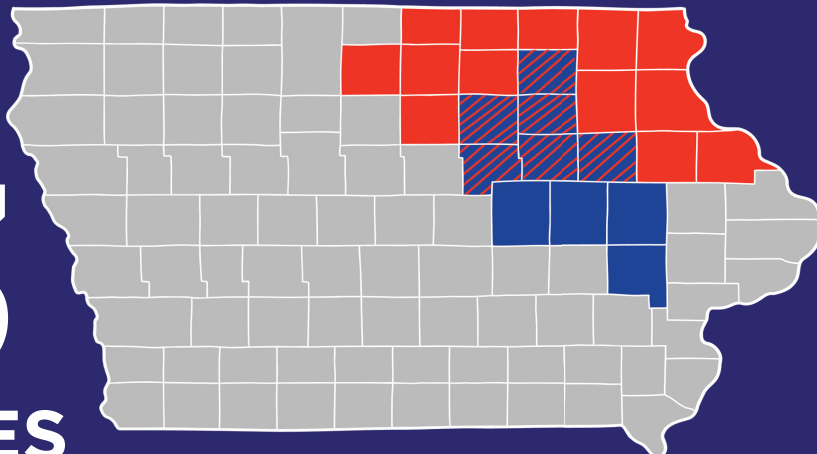
51
individual
placements
created



working an average of
16 HOURS WEEKLY 

 earning an average of
\$11.02 PER HOUR

proudly
serving

23
COUNTIES



 Community Services  Children & Family Services

Scan here
TO VIEW OUR
COMMUNITY REPORT 

10,709 with consultants
and community
VISITS 

***Children & Family Services supports community members in need of child care and the child care providers who support them**

1,000+ ACTIVITIES
A MONTH enjoyed through
My Life, My Way - helping people
grow in their community



MONTHLY COMMUNITY
ACTIVITIES CHOSEN...


- 35% Community Leisure
- 31% Entertainment
- 18% Health & Wellness
- 10% Volunteering
- 6% Church



1,691
UTILIZING
the Child & Adult
Care Food Program



1,882 
PROVIDERS
TRAINED 
to improve
the quality of
child care throughout
Northeast Iowa

952 PROVIDERS
SERVED 
with **starting,**
maintaining,
and **growing** their
child care business

 **349**
FAMILIES
referred to child
care providers

VISION. MISSION. VALUES.

LIVING OUT OUR VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES



CONNECTING PEOPLE TO OPPORTUNITIES BY BONNIE KIPPER

Since our transition to My Life, My Way we have witnessed persons served access the community in more ways than ever before. We have found person served find the most pride and value when they are giving back to their community.

Volunteering has become a top priority for person served for many reasons, not only are folks giving back and helping others, they are building real, natural relationships.

Full of pride ourselves, we watch person served from the sidelines, carrying on conversations with their fellow co-workers, volunteers, church-goers, and new friends we wouldn't have met without this opportunity. Instead of turning to an EPI staff to ask a question or find support, people are turning *into* the networks they have built in their own lives. That in of itself is quite the development.

Historically person served were surrounded by other like individuals and direct support professionals in facility-like settings. Today, you'll find the people we support building friendships with many

different types of people throughout the community in a variety of environments. The type of relationships some of us might take for granted, are everything to person served.

We are seeing a shift in the societal perception of a person living with a disability. Today person served are balancing life responsibilities with work, volunteering *and* a social life. We are seeing all people being valued for their abilities, what they offer the other side of those relationships, and in facilitating success of the community as a whole.

We continue to see our mission in action and could not be more pleased as we continue to connect people, create opportunities and nurture growth throughout the Cedar Valley.

Let me leave you with this heartwarming story, depicting why we transitioned to a service enhancement like *My Life, My Way*.

John is a middle aged male living with a significant intellectual disability. He has

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

spent his adult life living with his mother and attending a facility based day habilitation program for about 15 years. John shared during this time his greatest excitement was going on Saturday adventures with his hourly support staff.

His social network consisted of his mother, brother, nieces and nephews he would see during the holidays, his weekend support staff, day habilitation support staff and other individuals that attended the same program. John was quiet and kind to others, but really kept himself independently entertained.

When John's mother passed away, he moved into a home with other individuals served by EPI. As John was navigating his new normal, he struggled to make new friends, continued to keep to himself, completed his daily routines, but now his days became exploring and enjoying his community.

As he explored all this wonderful community has to offer, John began volunteering at the Salvation Army food give-away in Waterloo. He enjoyed the

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

OUR VALUES

- People
- Stewardship
- Creative Cooperation
- Integrity

activity and was excelling within! In that time we noticed John began to make life long connections and have more and more self-led conversations and relied less and less on his paid support staff.

Shortly thereafter he was asked to consider looking for a job. His only stipulation was to be able to still volunteer at the Salvation Army.

Today, John has been employed for 4 years, volunteers regularly and is able to keep an active social life with our enhanced *My Life, My Way* activities to choose from.

He reports to be happy, healthy and living the life he has built with the people he has chosen.



Scan here to learn more about our mission, vision and values.



TENTH ANNUAL *MORE THAN YOU SEE*: JUNE 13, 2024
BY MADI RUMMEL

The Exceptional Persons Foundation is ecstatic to announce our 10th annual *More Than You See* benefit for EPI coming this summer.

Friends, families (kids too!), and community members are all welcome to join us Thursday, June 13, 2024 from 6:00 - 9:30pm at the River Place Plaza in historic downtown Cedar Falls.

Guests can look forward to live music by Birdchild, food trucks, silent and live auctions, and plenty of fun at this free-will-donation benefit that is open to the public.

For the past 10 years, *More Than You See* has been our way to come together and celebrate the value persons of *all* abilities contribute, while enjoying a shared joy of musical entertainment.

The concept of this annual fundraiser was created after learning of a real situation we fear happens all too often. While attending the movies a couple of years ago, a person with a disability was called the R-word by another moviegoer.

Saddened and hurt, this person asked his direct support staff to help him approach

the group and ask them not to use that word again. Judging from the response they received....maybe they will and maybe they won't.

Upon learning of this situation, we were flabbergasted. "It's the 21 century," we thought, "Why is this still happening?" Then we asked ourselves, "What can we do about this?" One of our ideas was to create an event that would raise awareness that persons with disabilities are more than you see.

We invite all people of all backgrounds and abilities to come together on June 13, to enjoy a common interest (live music!), and see beyond first impressions to the unique talents within.

Proceeds from *More Than You See* support persons in gaining greater independence at home, at work, and out in the community.

Learn more about this event and its sponsorship opportunities by scanning the QR code to visit <https://bit.ly/4agVrtE>.



PLANNED GIVING

Please include the Exceptional Persons Foundation in your will and estate planning to ensure EPI services 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.



CREATING ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Many of those we serve face physical barriers within their homes that often require necessary changes, installations, or updates to ensure

full accessibility to every area of a person's home. These housing improvements also support individuals with greater self-sufficiency and total life independence.

We strive to create accessible housing equipped to support mobility limitations within EPI owned homes, and there are many different ways this can happen.

For example, Mark (pictured above) is proud of his home, and thanks to accessibility improvements ensuring everyone can safely move about the entire home, the opportunities for achievement and success are endless. The renovations made to his home include zero-entry showers, wheelchair-accessible ramps for greater independence in entering and exiting the home, replacing carpet with hard flooring for better mobility, and more. Mark has always loved to cook, but due to

his walker, accessing kitchen appliances and cabinet items were at times impossible to reach. So his favorite renovations were the updates made to his kitchen, including installing roll-under counters, large appliances and sink, lowering cabinet storage, and updating appliances with easier grips for those with limited mobility.

Because of the upgrades made throughout his home, especially those in the kitchen, Mark is able to grab his cook book, prepare his favorite meal (likely a casserole - those are his most favorite!), and even sit down to share this delicious, home-cooked meal with his housemates.

Accessible housing improvements are made possible by the generosity of donors, and funding is crucial in supporting critical updates to provide a safe space for persons served to thrive.

We can't do it alone. To make a gift today, visit our website today by scanning here.



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

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit # 1778
Waterloo, IA

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



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 and valued – encouraged and supported to live, work, and grow – in their communities.



QUESTIONS?

Contact our Senior Communications Specialist, Bethany Giachino, with any questions about our newsletter at bethany.giachino@episervice.org.

STAY UP TO DATE

Our goal is to stay in close contact with you by sending out bi-weekly email communications to help keep you informed.

Scan the QR code below to visit <https://bit.ly/43cayBk> and sign up online to receive our latest news faster than twice a year!

