



# NEWSLETTER

FALL 2022

## IN THE ISSUE:

Celebrating **65 Years**  
**DSP Recognition**

Meet EPI's New  
**Executive Director**

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  
Quality Improvement & Outcomes  
Director

SARA DRISH  
Human Resources Director

MARY JANSSEN  
Children & Family Services Director

KATIE SLADE  
Executive Director

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

STEVE LINDAMAN - President  
Veridian Credit Union

JORDAN ALBORN - Vice President  
Financial Advisor

GIA SHANNON - Treasurer  
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MIKE ISAACSON - Secretary  
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DEB LILLY - Past President  
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JULEA NEHER  
Volunteer

KYLE ROED  
CPM Holdings, Inc.

STACEY SMITH  
Mercy Health

DODIE YOUNG  
Volunteer

## EXCEPTIONAL PERSONS FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

LARRY K. FOX - President  
Volunteer

FRANK ESSER - Vice President  
Volunteer

HEATHER GUNDERSON -  
Treasurer  
BerganKDV

MATTHEW GARY - Secretary  
US Bancorp Investments

CHRIS FEREDAY - Past President  
PDCM Insurance

JORDAN ALBORN  
Financial Advisor

STACEY BENTLEY  
Community Bank & Trust

KIRSTEN JUHL  
University of Northern Iowa

WADE ITZEN  
BankIowa

DEB LILLY  
Hawkeye Community Foundation

STEVE LINDAMAN  
Veridian Credit Union

HILLERY OBERLE  
UNI Foundation

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**IN CASE YOU MISSED IT!**  
SCAN HERE TO READ EVERYTHING  
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## **Important Message from EPI Board President: *Join me in Welcoming EPI's Next Executive Director***

After an extensive search by the Executive Search Committee, I am very pleased to announce ***Katie Slade has been appointed as EPI's Executive Director.***

She becomes our fourth Executive Director in EPI's 65 year history.

Katie has been with EPI for more than 14 years - she is experienced, deeply dedicated to the mission of the organization, and has built strong relationships on behalf of the organization.

Her time with the agency has been spent advancing the mission working closely with the leadership team including EPI's previous Executive Director, Chris Sparks.

**EPI is in an incredibly strong position for this leadership transition.** They are financially and programmatically stable, have talented and tenured leadership,

and the board is engaged and experienced.

***"It's my honor to serve this great organization as Executive Director. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this journey,"*** shared Katie.

I am extremely excited to have Katie continue to lead the organization in providing support in the community for a range of people with differing abilities and helping families find safe, enriching child care. **Please join me in congratulating Katie and welcoming her to this new role.**

Thank you for allowing EPI to serve you,

**Steve Lindaman**  
EPI Board President

## **KATIE'S CORNER**

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



# PEOPLE ARE THE HEART OF EPI



## EPI CELEBRATING 65 YEARS **BY BETHANY GIACHINO**

EPI started with a preschool, housed in a church basement, for a handful of children with disabilities. This was prior to the enactment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Now we serve close to 400 individuals throughout the Cedar Valley, providing support to a wide range of people with differing abilities and to families in need of child care.

**We believe to be successful we need to connect people, create opportunities, and nurture growth, and here's how we are doing just that...**

Sixty-five years ago in 1957, nothing existed in terms of community based services for people with disabilities. Families had two options, they could keep their children at home with little to no support or the compassionate advice at that time was to place a child in an institution - hours away.

***“In 1957 Exceptional Persons, Inc. was created by a few visionary people with a ‘can do’ attitude and a determination to make the community a better place for everyone.” - William E. Brown, Executive Director, 1957-1983***

Our beginning was fairly simple. These visionary people, a group of moms, dads and community leaders, set out to create an organization focused on offering community based services.

**We connect people to our community in variety of ways.** We connect families looking for child care to child care providers in NE Iowa. We connect persons served with differing abilities to places and people that share a common interest - perhaps a favorite restaurant, recreational activity, entertainment, place of worship.

**We create opportunities by helping employers find employees** - the people we serve have so many gifts, abilities, and they are ready to work! We have partnered

# 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).

with over 150 businesses throughout the Cedar Valley, to help match employees to businesses.

**We believe every day, every moment, is an opportunity to nurture growth.** From supporting someone in their home while teaching a new skill, supporting our staff in their profession development, all the way to assisting child care providers with the best resources to foster and support early childhood development.

We have a vision for the future - *we believe, 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.*

***“The EPI of the future could and should look very different than the EPI of today, just like we look very different from the EPI that was created in 1957,”*** shared Executive Director, Katie Slade. ***“What will always remain, is our deep commitment to the people we serve, our families, and our staff.”***

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## YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS TO US

You are an important person in the life of someone we serve. That's why we ask for your feedback on a regular basis to see how we're doing.

We kindly ask you to be on the lookout this fall for our next survey as your feedback helps us ensure we are providing the highest quality of services.

**We don't stop there** - we listen to the feedback given by you, the people we serve, our employees, the community, and the list goes on. While we certainly appreciate your kind words and encouragement, we take careful note of the areas we can improve. **Scan the QR code below to learn more about what exactly we're working on.**

Thank you for the time previously spent on your thoughtful responses. We are grateful for the opportunity to improve.

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# SERVICE EXCELLENCE



## EPI ACHIEVES CQL ACCREDITATION BY MEGAN HENNING & BONNIE KIPPER

We are pleased to announce Exceptional Persons, Inc. has been awarded Quality Assurances Accreditation from CQL | The Council on Quality and Leadership. The notable achievement indicates that EPI has strong organizational systems and practices that positively impact the lives of people with disabilities. Quality Assurances Accreditation is an important designation embraced by organizations that pursue the highest standards in the human services field.

***“CQL was honored to work with everyone from EPI throughout the Quality Assurances Accreditation process,”*** says Mary Kay Rizzolo, president and chief executive officer of CQL | The Council on Quality and Leadership. ***“This is an impressive accomplishment and they should all be very proud of the work they put into it.”***

Exceptional Persons, Inc. is excited to share this accomplishment with their 65th year anniversary. Since 1957, EPI has been connecting people, creating

opportunities and nurturing growth right here in the Cedar Valley.

***“CQL accreditation continues to be an indicator of extraordinary service quality. This accreditation clearly indicates the dedication and commitment of our staff and it’s a recognition of their efforts. Finally, this clearly illustrates our commitment to great service outcomes on behalf of our customers,”*** says Katie Slade, Executive Director of EPI.

***“This accreditation was more than an accreditation for EPI. It was a way for us to make measurable progress towards improving our services and setting strategic goals. It offered us insight from experts who have traveled the globe and offered firsthand knowledge to EPI as an ongoing partnership. We will continue to push the envelope as a top service provider in the area,”*** shared Maghan Bowman, EPI’s Quality Improvement & Outcomes Director.



# COMMUNITY INCLUSION



## VEHICLE REPAIR SERVICES

Call Exceptional Persons for a free quote to service your vans, buses, or vehicles today!

We offer very competitive pricing for:

- Oil changes
- Tire repair, rotation, alignments
- Brake pad replacement
- Brake repairs

- Heating/cooling repairs
- Exhaust repair

Open Monday - Friday.

Give our vehicle repair team a call at (319) 235-9058.

Quality Assurances Accreditation is a three-year accreditation term intended for organizations that are looking to implement responsive, person-centered supports and services. It involves numerous planning meetings, the validation of a Basic Assurances® Self-Assessment, review visits, focus groups, the use of Personal Outcome Measures® interviews, as well as ongoing support and consultation from CQL staff. With insight gained from the initial review visit and additional check-ins, EPI is developing and implementing action steps to continuously improve its services.

***“Through its Quality Assurances Accreditation, EPI is sending a clear message to people receiving services, family members, employees, and other stakeholders that it is deeply committed to individualized supports and personally-defined outcomes,”***

adds Katherine Dunbar, vice president of accreditation of CQL | The Council on Quality and Leadership.

## **IAble (IOWA’S ACHIEVING A BETTER LIFE EXPERIENCE)**

There’s no limit to what people with disabilities can do. Now, that includes savings too. With IAble, you can save for qualified disability expenses without losing your eligibility for certain assistance programs, like SSI and Medicaid.

### **What are ABLE accounts?**

ABLE accounts are tax-free savings accounts for people with disabilities and their families.

### **Who is eligible?**

To find out if you are eligible to receive this service, fill out the quiz found here:

**[www.iable.gov/eligibility](http://www.iable.gov/eligibility)**. This service is not limited to people receiving EPI’s Payee Services. However, a member in our Payee Services can help give you more information about this service and walk you through filling out the application if needed. You must have a guardian present to fill out the application.

Learn more about IAble by visiting **[iable.gov](http://iable.gov)** today!

# STAFF EXCELLENCE



## CELEBRATING DSP RECOGNITION BY SARA DRISH

Emmett, DSP since 2021, is described as being universal. His supervisor thanks him for his ability to provide support to new people with disabilities like he's known them forever. He's said to make a positive difference in the lives of not only the people he supports but his coworkers and leadership.

Karol, DSP of 15 years, is described by her supervisor as selfless, compassionate and in-tune with the needs of the people she supports.

Each year, we celebrate these hardworking individuals like the ones listed above during Direct Support Professional Recognition Week. This nationally celebrated week takes place annually during the second full week in September.

**How do we celebrate DSP Recognition Week?** We say thank you, we celebrate our staff with a ceremony, a meal, and a gift. However, our most important recognition is through continuously fighting for more funding to pay our direct support professionals a wage that truly represents the many "hats" they wear. We will always

advocate for better pay in their honor. We invite you to help us celebrate and raise awareness of this incredibly important profession throughout the whole month of September.

### Here's how you can celebrate.

- *Help us raise up the profession by telling their story.* Submit your stories on social media using the hashtags **#DSPRecWeek22** and **#WeAreEPI**.
- *Send a simple thank you.* Whether this is through text, email, or by mailing a letter to EPI. A heartfelt message can go a very long way.
- *Give a gift in their honor.* Scan the code below or visit [www.episervice.org](http://www.episervice.org) to make a gift in honor of an outstanding direct support professional that has touched your lives.

Regardless of how or when they're celebrated, we know the career they lead with passion is one worth celebrating every day.





# MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

## MILESTONE YEARS OF SERVICE FROM JANUARY - AUGUST

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



### STAFF RECEIVING NEW COMPENSATION

We remain committed to offering fair and competitive wages and benefits for our employees. While revenue availability always has some uncertainty to it, this fundamental commitment remains our priority.

Annually we conduct an extensive comprehensive wage review to see how our positions compare in our markets. We are happy to share, EPI's Board of Directors approved market-based pay increases for many positions.

More specifically, for our direct support staff, both current and new hire pay grades have increased by \$2.00 per hour. The \$2.00 will be added to your base rate - \$16.50 - \$19.00. Night attendant (sleep) pay will increase to \$9.50 per hour.

Whether our staff directly or indirectly support those who are served by EPI, we recognize their dedication to the mission and values of the agency.

### FIVE YEARS...

EVERY YEAR COUNTS

- BECKY ANDERSON
- DANIEL BROWN
- RANDY KLUG
- SARA PITTMAN
- CECILIA RUHLMANN
- MIATTA SIEH
- TRACY WINKELPLECK

### TEN YEARS...

- KATIE BAUMAN
- THOMAS ENGELBRECHT
- CALLIE JOHNSON
- CARRIE JONES
- CERIE KENNEDY
- SHERI KENT
- TARA RODDICK
- STEPHANIE VANGROLL

### FIFTEEN YEARS...

- MICHELLE DENNIS
- MICHELLE FINK
- KAROL LINDER
- TERESA ORR

### TWENTY YEARS...

- KIMBERLY BUMGARDNER BERGMAN

### TWENTY YEARS...

- BONNIE KIPPER

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



# HEALTH & WELLNESS



## ACT NOW, GET BOOSTED. **BY MAGHAN BOWMAN**

In summer of 2022, the CDC recommended a second booster dose for adults ages 50 and older. So far, only about 12.4 million Americans have received a second booster dose - making millions of people more vulnerable to the new Omicron strains.

Data suggests these strains, BA.4 and BA.5, have been on the rise for weeks and are associated with hospitalization rates and once again death rates.

The good news is with a second booster, you can restore your vaccine protection against hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

### **Act now to protect yourself and others around you.**

- Talk to your doctor to find out if you are eligible to receive a booster.
- Monitor your local community levels and the levels of communities you may be traveling to.

- Follow CDC's testing and isolation guidelines if you are exposed or have symptoms.

### **General Community Guidance Still Applies:**

- Continue to wash your hands frequently.
- Maintain improved ventilation. Avoid large crowds.
- Continue to follow CDC guidelines.

### **Following the CDC, we ask that you continue to:**

- Monitor your symptoms before arriving to an EPI office or home of a person served. **Stay home if you are ill or showing any symptoms.**
- **Seek testing when needed** (tests are readily available consult with your healthcare professional or visit [Testlowa.com](https://www.testlowa.com) for an at-home kit)
- Remain strong in your efforts of taking **general precautions** such as avoiding crowds, washing your hands/don't touch your face, heighten cleaning routines.

### **Vaccine & Booster Information.**

Increasing the rates of persons fully vaccinated continues to be our best line

# INNOVATIVE THINKING

## LEARN MORE

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

Find out just how we are doing this by scanning the QR code here.



of defense to protect the people we serve and yourself from this virus.

- Use the CDC's Vaccine Finder at **[vaccines.gov](https://vaccines.gov)**
- Visit Vaccinate Iowa - **[vaccinate.iowa.gov/providers/](https://vaccinate.iowa.gov/providers/)**
- Coordinate by dialing 211

## Why is this still important?

This far into the pandemic it's easy to get relaxed as many people and places are doing so. However, these actions remain important for all for the following reasons:

- Protecting yourself
- Protecting others, including those we serve
- Preventing new variants
- Breaking the chain of transmission
- Keeping hospitals and health care workers safe

***Thank you for your continued efforts each and every day. Together, we will come through this.***

*This article was written in August with the help of the CDC website. We realize some information may have evolved since mailing. Visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus) for the most recent information.*

## READY TO WORK

Work is crucial to feel that sense of belonging - being a part of the community. The mission of our employment services is to prepare participants for a competitive job in the community.

We believe in matching person served's skills and interests to employment opportunities - earning at or above minimum wage.

Individual placements can include a variety of options including working in a supermarket, retail store, or restaurant, just to name a few.

**We have over 150 business partners in the Cedar Valley.** Here's a list of our most recently added partners.

- George's Local
- Sayer Law Firm
- Lost Island Theme Park
- Aloha Pet Resort & Spa

You can find the full list at [www.episervice.org](https://www.episervice.org). If you or someone you know is interested in hiring a qualified employee contact us at 319-232-6671.



# CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES



*Building quality environments one block at a time*

## THE LEADING INDICATOR OF QUALITY CHILD CARE **BY MARY JANSSEN**

Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) is Iowa's new Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for DHS licensed Child Care Centers and preschools, registered Child Development Homes and programs operating under the authority of an accredited school district or nonpublic school.

IQ4K provides five levels of quality (building blocks) that programs can achieve and continue to improve on. By implementing Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), IQ4K allows programs to assess their current grade across all areas of programming and devise a structured plan to increase the overall level of program quality.

### ***Why should programs participate?***

- **Better overall level of program quality.** Get structured guidelines to directly implement into programs. These include nutrition plans, staff development opportunities, educational plans, goals for kids, and much more.
- **Bonus payments and reimbursement rates.** Programs will receive a bonus payment upon achievement of each IQ4K level. Bonuses can be used for any area of the business. The higher

IQ4K level your program achieves, the higher your Child Care Assistance (CCA) reimbursement rate may be. Several grants and other funding opportunities require a program to have a QRIS rating.

- **Specialized tracks for accredited programs.** Suppose a program is already meeting enhanced standards through alternative DHS-approved entities (i.e., NAEYC Accreditation, NAFCC Accreditation, Head Start Performance Standards, Iowa Quality Preschool Performance Standards). In that case, IQ4K® will provide specialized tracks to avoid work that has already been completed.
- **Less Paperwork!** IQ4K has a brand-new electronic database that will drastically reduce paperwork requirements.

If you or someone you know needs help participating in IQ4K, contact a Child Care Resource & Referral consultant today at 319-233-0804.

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# CHILD CARE REFERRALS JUST A CALL OR CLICK AWAY

## 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.



***“We are so excited to share the news that we have moved up to a 4 on the Iowa Quality Rating System (QRS),”*** said Nicole Reese, Child Care Center Coordinator.

She continued, ***“I want to thank all the staff here at the Hawkeye Child Development Center-ALC for your hard work and dedication that made this possible and to Child Care Resource & Referral of Northeast Iowa for your help and guidance. We are all thrilled with this achievement!”***

## HAWKEYE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER - ALC RECEIVES HIGH RATING

The Hawkeye Child Development Center - ALC has recently received a four star rating from the Iowa Quality Rating System!

The Iowa QRS provides five levels of quality that programs can achieve and continue to improve. By implementing Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), QRS allows programs to assess their current grade across all areas of programming and devise a structured plan to increase the overall level of program quality.

We are so proud of their hard work that has paid off. Congratulate them when you see them!

*Scan here to learn more about our child care services!*



# EXCEPTIONAL PERSONS FOUNDATION



## MORE THAN YOU SEE; RECORD-BREAKING YEAR! BY MADI RUMMEL

EPI's eighth annual *More Than You See* benefit was another record-breaking year! We are so thankful for everyone who joined us for this unforgettable night in support of such an important cause.

*More Than You See* was created as an opportunity for people of all backgrounds to come together, enjoy a common interest (music!) and see beyond first impressions to the unique talents within. This year was extra special as we also joined in celebration of EPI's 65th anniversary - and celebrate, we did!

We packed the plaza full with fun and people of all ages! The evening was filled with food, laughter, dancing, live auction battles, and so much more. Guests enjoyed the musical stylings of Brad & Kate, delicious food from Here's What's Poppin' and Wilbo Burgers & Brats, and bid on live auction packages ranging from brewery and spa gift certificates, to activities for the whole family to enjoy, and a suite for a UNI Panther basketball game next season.

We were able to raise over \$38,000 with your support of EPI's mission! Funds

raised will support critical needs such as employment services, critical housing improvements, and the essential needs of individuals supported by EPI.

Thank you to all of our sponsors, donors, volunteers, committee members, vendors, and guests who joined us at this year's *More Than You See*! We continue to be blown away by your generosity and are so grateful for your ongoing support.

Be sure to follow EPI on Facebook to see more photos from the event!

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### MORE THAN YOU SEE 2022 SPONSORS

Thank you to our 2022 *More Than You See* sponsors!

#### Presenting Sponsor

- Dan Deery Motor Co.

#### Entertainment Spotlight Sponsor

- Community Bank & Trust
- PDCM

#### Spread the Word Sponsor

- Pixel Labs
- POS Professional Office Services, Inc.



# YOU CAN HELP



## Planned 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).

### Pack the Plaza Sponsor

- Scheels
- Kittrell Family

### Friend Sponsor

- Dennis Kruger
- Judy Benson
- Levi Architecture
- VGM

### Supporting Sponsor

- Air Services, Inc.
- Banklowa
- Harris Cleaning
- Hogan & Hansen
- Kelley Contracting, LLC
- Magee Construction
- MercyOne
- Ryan Backes
- Veridian

### Contributing Sponsor

- Hawkeye Alarm
- Lamar
- Montage
- Wilbo Burgers, Brats, & Beers

### RECENT GRANT AWARDS

EPI was recently awarded \$21,500 from the Duroe Family Foundation to provide crucial accessibility updates to the homes of

persons served, \$10,000 from the Waterloo Housing Trust Fund in support of housing, \$15,000 from the Otto Schoitz Foundation for employment services, and \$1,000 from Lincoln Savings Bank in support of employment services.

With the support of these grant funds, we can continue offering these key services for our persons served to follow their dreams of finding and keeping a job in our community, as well as to assist with crucial housing needs.

Thank you to the Duroe Family Foundation, the Waterloo Housing Trust Fund, the Otto Schoitz Foundation, and Lincoln Savings Bank for your investment in ensuring EPI's critical services remain available when needed the most.

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*Scan here to be directed to our donate now page!*



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

## 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 above if you'd like to receive our latest news faster!



## QUESTIONS?

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