



# NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2023

**IN THE ISSUE:**  
Our Mission in Action

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

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

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Veridian Credit Union

JORDAN ALBORN - Vice President  
Financial Advisor

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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  
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KYLE ROED  
CPM Holdings, Inc.

STACEY SMITH  
Mercy Health

DODIE YOUNG  
Volunteer

## EXCEPTIONAL PERSONS FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Volunteer

FRANK ESSER - Vice President  
Volunteer

HEATHER GUNDERSON - Treasurer  
BerganKDV

MATTHEW GARY - Secretary  
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PDCM Insurance

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Financial Advisor

STACEY BENTLEY  
Community Bank & Trust

FRANK DARRAH  
Volunteer

ELIJAH LEE  
Lee Wealth Management

DEB LILLY  
Hawkeye Community Foundation

STEVE LINDAMAN  
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DAVE MASON JR.  
Redfern Mason Larsen & Moore, PLC

HILLERY OBERLE  
UNI Foundation

SUSAN ROLINGER  
Iowa Educational Services for the  
Blind and Visually Impaired

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**Have we, Americans/Iowans, become desensitized to crisis?** For more than three decades, the Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce (and the “care” industry in general) has been one of the most *unstable* workforces nationwide. The data shows it continues to deepen reaching historic proportions.

**That’s not the only challenge facing providers in Iowa.** We must figure out how to serve more people, people on the waiting list for services, people in facilities missing the close connection of family and belonging to a community not to mention the closing of Glenwood Resource Center. While we face these challenges, what really matters is that we do a good job for each person we’re serving.

**I’m proud of the way this organization rises to the challenges before us.** For decades, we’ve focused on leading the market when it comes to wages for our DSPs and we’ll continue to do so (*we could use your help here, keep reading*).

**Recently, we evaluated and made adjustments to how we were scheduling staff.** Our first priority was to increase the consistency of staff working with each individual. Next, we had to find a way to offer our amazingly dedicated and hard-working DSPs real, scheduled down time by offering the opportunity to work three - four days a week (with three - four scheduled days off a week).

Finally, we wanted to free our managers from the continuous coverage calls allowing them to get back to intentional relationship building with persons served, staff, and families.

While we still have work to do, we’re making some great progress. We’re happy to share our early indicators are very promising. We’ve been able to reduce our DSP vacancy rate by half and holding steady. We’ll continue to do everything in our power to retain our incredibly talented workforce.

**We can’t do it alone.** Our ability to remain successful recruiting, training, and retaining an outstanding workforce providing high quality services relies heavily on our state and the rates approved to support Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). Our rates are simply inadequate and makes it difficult to compete for the limited workforce available in Iowa. If our industry has been in a workforce “crisis” for decades, what happens when the crisis is prolonged or exacerbated?

**If you count on and/or care about our Direct Support Professional workforce to provide high quality services for a loved one, please raise your voice with our legislators often and without apology. Ask your legislator to support rate increases to address the workforce crisis for individuals utilizing HCBS and Habilitation services. I believe, together we will.**

## KATIE’S CORNER

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



# PEOPLE ARE THE HEART OF EPI



## THANKFUL FOR YOUR FEEDBACK **BY** **KATIE SLADE**

Each fall we ask for your feedback on our services (we also ask for feedback directly from the persons we serve all year long). Your feedback is very important to us. It helps us see what we're doing well and what need to work on. We are grateful for your thoughtful consideration and honest responses.

### Results? What happens next?

Overall, we were so pleased stakeholders felt our top agency strengths were confidence in employee's skill, responsiveness, and listening/respect. Our areas for improvement include communication and employees working together to provide effective services.

As our survey results come in, we work to share results throughout the organization, engage in honest conversations, and then we put together action plans.

When we started evaluating these opportunities for improvement we began dreaming of a world where stakeholders could have an online portal for secure access to information, communication,

and more for their loved ones. Much like you have when you visit your primary healthcare professional these days. This dream has prompted us to look into a new Electronic Health Record system that we hope will have a similar capability. Stay tuned!

Please be on the lookout for our annual survey to once again come out in the fall. Can't wait? We welcome feedback 24/7/365 on our website, just scan this QR code to share your thoughts today.



### NEW MANAGED CARE ORGANIZATION AVAILABLE SOON

Soon Iowa will have three health insurance companies to help run its Medicaid Program.

On July 1, 2023, Molina Healthcare is expected to begin providing services. The Iowa Medicaid team is currently working on member reassignment to ensure a successful MCO onboarding.

# 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).

### What does this mean for me?

Members will be distributed between the three MCOs as equally as possible. Around 33% of Medicaid members will be assigned to Molina Healthcare of Iowa, 33% to Iowa Total Care, and 33% to Amerigroup. Meaning approximately 67% of members will be able to remain with their current MCO.

### You have options.

If you would like to change your MCO, please call the IME Member Services Unit at 1-800-338-8366 or 515-256-4606 (when calling from within the Des Moines area), Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For telephone accessibility assistance if you are deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind, or have difficulty speaking, call Relay Iowa TTY at 1-800-735-2942.

### You do not have to change your MCO.

If you choose not to change your MCO, you do not need to contact Iowa Medicaid. Your coverage with your current MCO will continue without interruption.

### Who will EPI sign with?

EPI is contracted to work with all three MCOs - Amerigroup Iowa Inc., Iowa Total Care, and now Molina Healthcare.

If you have any questions on how to choose your MCO, visit the frequently asked questions section on the HHS website by scanning here or visiting <https://bit.ly/4228Wby>.

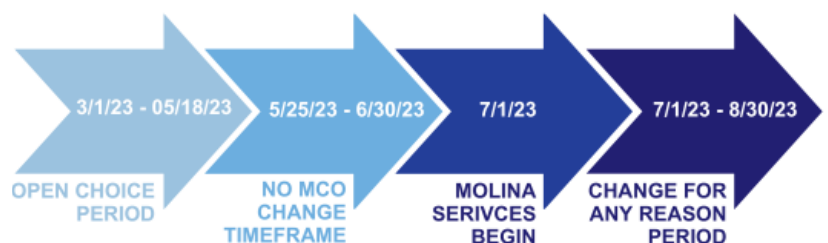


### When will your choice take effect?

Your choice will not take effect until your annual enrollment date - based on when you first began enrollment in managed care.

As long as your Medicaid eligibility does not change, your benefits will remain the same no matter which MCO you select.

#### IOWA MANAGED CARE ORGANIZATION TIMELINE



# SERVICE EXCELLENCE



## OUR MISSION IN ACTION BY NICOLE ERICSON

As we wrap up our very first quarter of our *My Life, My Way* supported community living service enhancement, we celebrate how individuals have been living their lives - just like you and I do. Individuals are participating in the community in new ways and at a pace we have never seen before.

This person-driven, integrated community experience has astronomically increased individual opportunities to experience *more! More* activities, *more* experiences, *more* environments, *more* natural connections, and build even **more** life skills, anytime of the day, any day of the week!

Through all of this we are honored to have found a progressive, innovative and successful approach to connecting people, creating opportunities and nurturing growth in a far more natural way. A way where all people are recognized, valued, encouraged and supported to live, work and grow in their communities.

We are consistently reassured by our community and the people we serve!

***"We are very grateful to have individuals supported by EPI regularly volunteer with us. We love our individual volunteers and miss them when they are not here. Thank you EPI for supporting dedicated volunteers whom support our mission to meet all basic human needs without discrimination! Thank you EPI,"*** shared Kathy, Salvation Army Food Service Manager

Bob, EPI Supported Community Living Program Manager, shared, ***"Joe is man who is shy, reserved and not very outgoing. Many times, we worry about Joe's isolation tendencies and have really struggled in the past to motivate him to leave his home. As we rolled out My Life My Way, Joe reviewed the community opportunity calendar, and with continued DSP support he found there was a local writing class happening in the evenings at the library. After attending the class faithfully, Joe invited his professional supports to a public poetry reading where he independently stood up and read his own written poetry with the support of...his new friends, peers of the writing class instructor and***



# 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.

*other community members. It was so motivating to see how proud Joe was of himself, and to know that for all anyone in that room knew, we were all just his friends coming to observe this pivotal moment in his life!"*

We are excited to continue to share the progress with you as this service continues to evolve.



## WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

Each year, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) sponsors the Week of the Young Child taking place the first full week in April. This celebratory week is spent focusing public attention on the needs of young children and their families while recognizing the

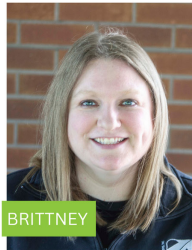
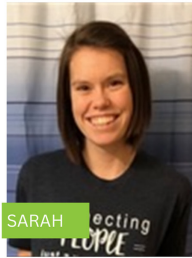
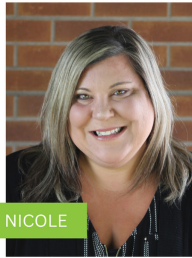
early childhood programs and services that meet those needs.

The staff and kiddos at EPI's Hawkeye Child Development Center - ALC celebrated by expanding the following themed days.

- *Music Monday:* Staff pulled out musical instruments for children to explore and asked parents to submit their child(ren)'s favorite songs.
- *Tasty Tuesday:* Teachers picked out tasty food for children to make.
- *Work Together Wednesday:* Children used cardboard boxes, recycled materials and tape to build and create something new (pictured to the left).
- *Artsy Thursday:* Teachers picked out an activity and weren't afraid to get messy!
- *Family Friday:* Staff welcomed families for a grab and go breakfast.

Though the first NAEYC Week of the Young Child was established in 1971, today we know more now than ever about the importance of children's earliest years in shaping their learning and development. Children learn so much through music, exploring food, building together and creating art.

# STAFF EXCELLENCE



At EPI it's our mission to help employees feel connected, create opportunities and nurture *professional growth*.

As we are always careful to do, we recently took time evaluating our changing environment, opportunities before us, and corresponding agency needs to best position us for success.

With that being said, we've recently been celebrating some pretty great professional growth within our agency.

**Crystal Anfinson** has been with EPI for seven years working as an integration specialist and DSP, she is now a Program Manager.

**Amanda Benson**, Lead Teacher since 2022, has now become the Child Care Center Assistant Coordinator.

**Nicole Ericson**, who has been with EPI since 2010, stepped into a new Community Development Director role. Through her time spent at EPI she has fearlessly advocated for the people we support.

## NURTURING PROFESSIONAL GROWTH BY SARA DRISH

**Sarah Errthum** has become the new Child Care Center Coordinator at the Hawkeye Child Development Center - ALC. Sarah has been with the center since it opened in 2019.

After eight years with the organization, **Bethany Giachino** is stepping into the role of Senior Communications Specialist focusing on increasing our communication efforts.

With over 18 years of experience in human services, **Aimee Irvine**, is now an Area Residential Director.

**Bonnie Kipper** has accepted a position as our Community Services Director, previously a Program Director. Bonnie has been with the agency for over 25 years when she began as a DSP.

A part of the EPI family since 2006, **Brittney Montross** has now accepted a position as our Workforce and Response Center Director.

Please join us in welcoming these staff into their new roles when you see them!

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### RETENTION BONUS

One of our biggest priorities here at EPI is supporting our workforce. They work with such compassion and commitment supporting



# MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

## MILESTONE YEARS OF SERVICE

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



the people we serve, directly or indirectly. We're excited to share we have received a one-time grant through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) solely to assist in our efforts of recruitment and retention of direct support professionals and those who support our community services programs and the people we serve in these programs.

The EPI board acted swiftly to approve the distribution of these funds to community services support staff in the form of retention bonus payments. This means eligible employees may receive up to two retention bonus payments distributed over the next year.

Thank you to our staff for their ongoing dedication in fulfilling our mission of connecting people, nurturing growth, and creating opportunities.

## MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES FROM SEPTEMBER - MAY

### FIVE YEARS...

- ALLISON BENDER
- LUDELL BENNETT
- BRIANNA GATES
- CARRIE GLEITER

- HETHER GUSTAFSON
- FALIKU KAMARA
- DEBRA KLINGER
- NULEE MOMO
- BETH PALS
- EMMA SCHEIDLER
- MALLORY SCRIBNER

### TEN YEARS...

- MELISSA ARNOLD
- TRUDY BREITBACH
- ASHLEY BURKEY
- AMBER DIVENEY
- AIMEE IRVINE
- REBECCA LONG
- NAOMI MACKE
- RACHEL MOSES
- TANNEISHA ROBINSON
- MELANIE SULLIVAN
- KIMBERLY TIEDT

### TWENTY YEARS...

- SARAH BOLEYN

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



# HEALTH & WELLNESS



## CREATING HEALTHY OPPORTUNITIES BY **MAGHAN BOWMAN**

People are enjoying all this community has to offer by way of health and wellness through our Supported Community Living enhancements.

We challenge ourselves daily to ensure the persons we support know it's their life and they can live it their way. Along with that, we work hard to educate and support them in taking part of the endless opportunities this community has to offer.

### **Let's talk about some of the health and wellness activities people are taking part in:**

- Walking clubs
- Bowling
- Kickboxing
- Basketball
- Pickleball
- Yoga
- Chair Yoga
- Swimming
- Ping Pong
- Tai Chi
- and so much more!

**“It has been so fun hearing of the activities people are enjoying. Our biggest goal is to improve the health and well-being for the people we support, and with *My Life, My Way*, we are able to do just that,”** said Katie Slade, EPI’s Executive Director.

Studies have found, people with differing abilities are less likely to get preventative health care services they need to stay healthy.<sup>1</sup>

### **Here are the physical and mental health benefits of exercise found on the CDC website:**

- Can improve stamina and muscle strength
- Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Improves mood
- Promotes general feelings of well-being
- Helps control joint swelling and pain associated with arthritis
- Helps reduce high blood pressure

One small way to improve well-being of persons served is to provide activities they enjoy and support them in getting there.

# INNOVATIVE THINKING

## MY25/MAINSTAY

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.

We've noticed, having a social support makes completing physical activity much easier to complete. Staff and persons served end up partnering on healthier lifestyles together.

## What we as a community can do.

We must work together to ensure environments and facilities are available and accessible to people with disabilities, such as offering safe, accessible, and attractive trails for bicycling, walking, and wheelchair activities.

Encourage health care providers to talk routinely to their patients with disabilities about incorporating physical activity into their lives.

## CEDAR VALLEY SPORTSPLEX PARTNERSHIP

Exceptional Persons, Inc. is now partnering with the Cedar Valley Sportsplex in Waterloo to provide free access to the facility for the people we support.

While accompanying a direct support professional with an EPI badge, persons

served will have an opportunity to walk the track, swim, play pickle ball, basketball, use exercise equipment, and attend a variety of classes offered.

Free activities are available any day at any time. The staff and other members have been very welcoming and we appreciate being able to provide a free way of staying fit and healthy.

Thank you to the Cedar Valley Sportsplex for making this possible.

1. Marrocco, A. & Krouse, H.J. (2017). Obstacles to Preventive Care for Individuals with Disability: Implications for Nurse Practitioners. Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, 29(5), 282-293. DOI: 10.1002/2327-6924.12449

*Scan here to learn more about our innovative ways in keeping the people we support healthy!*





# VISION. MISSION. VALUES.



EPI's Quality Improvement & Outcomes Director, Maghan Bowman, has been elected as American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)'s Board of Representatives co-chair.

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.

The Board of Representatives consists of state leaders, up to three community provider staff per state. The co-chair becomes elected by majority votes cast by members. This is a three-year term election, with re-election available after.

As an ANCOR Board of Representatives co-chair, Maghan will help with facilitating the board's core objectives - serving as a communication liaison with ANCOR members across the nation, share state

## MAGHAN BOWMAN EARNS ANCOR BOARD OF REP CO-CHAIR **BY BETHANY GIACHINO**

initiatives, provide updates and insight with other like community providers, participate in ongoing "State Share" environmental scan, assisting ANCOR with current advocacy efforts on a grassroots level, primarily with U.S. Congress.

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.

***"I am grateful and humbled to get to learn from the best in the service industry. Not only does co-chairing allow me the opportunity to grow both personally and professionally, but it gives EPI the opportunity to hear firsthand what's working for other states and utilize these ideas to help shape services in Iowa,"*** shared Maghan Bowman.

***"We are excited for Maghan to represent EPI and its mission of connecting people, creating opportunities, and nurturing growth to a network this large who is known for their advocacy efforts in improving the lives of people with differing abilities,"*** said Katie Slade, EPI's Executive Director.

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# LIVING OUT OUR VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

## OUR MISSION

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

## 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



### JEOPARDY: AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

When OneVision reached out to us looking to raise awareness for Autism while making a person's dream come true, we jumped at the opportunity.

Seth Ashland, diagnosed with Autism at age four, watches jeopardy every day and has developed quite a skill of hosting the show. His dream is to become a game show host and one day have a local station broadcast his event.

On Friday, April 14 Seth got one step closer to his dream. EPI hosted Seth and our friends at OneVision in the Jeopardy challenge.

Kayla, Jeff, and Emily represented EPI in the match quite impressively displaying their knowledge in many obscure

categories. While Lisa from OneVision took home the title, Seth was the real MVP.

His hosting quips and corresponding knowledge to each category answer had the crowd on the edge of their seats.

You can catch the livestream recording on our Facebook page or read more about it by scanning the QR code found here.



Awareness and inclusion starts with you. Whether you choose to be an advocate, ally, or friend start by educating yourself - together we can work to increase acceptance for all.

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*Scan here to learn more about EPI.*



# EXCEPTIONAL PERSONS FOUNDATION



We are so thankful for everyone who joined us for an unforgettable night for our ninth annual *More Than You See* benefit.

Guests, friends and families enjoyed a night filled with food trucks, laughter, dancing, and so much more. Auction items ranged from family fun days, date nights to everyone's favorite - a Panther's men's basketball suite and football tickets.

*More Than You See* was created as an opportunity for people of all abilities to come together, enjoy common interests and see beyond first impressions to the unique qualities and talents within.

**With your help, we were able to raise over \$36,000 to support EPI's mission!**

Proceeds raised at *More Than You See* support persons in living their lives independently, being a part of their community, and making their own choices.

Thank you to all of our donors, volunteers, committee members, vendors and guests who joined us this year. Your generosity is astounding!

## MORE THAN YOU SEE 2023: A NIGHT TO REMEMBER **BY** **MADI RUMMEL &** **NICOLE ERICSON**

We also wish to extend a tremendous thank you to those who sponsored this year's event - the impact of this event felt by those we serve would not have been possible without your support!

### Presenting Sponsor

- Dan Deery Motor Co.

### Technology Sponsor

- Scheels

### Entertainment Spotlight Sponsor

- Community Bank & Trust
- PDCM Insurance

### Pack the Plaza Sponsor

- Hogan & Hansen, CPAs

### Friend Sponsor

- Chad Shepard, Auctioneer
- Dennis Kruger
- Levi Architecture
- VGM Group, Inc.

### Supporting Sponsor

- Air Services, Inc.
- Alive & Running
- Banklowa
- Bergen Plumbing Inc.
- Harris Cleaning Services & Sales, 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).

- Kelley Contracting, LLC
- Magee Construction
- MercyOne
- Veridian

### Contributing Sponsor

- Big Acai
- Cedar Valley Handyman
- Hawkeye Alarm & Signal
- Lamar
- Montage
- Signs by Tomorrow
- Urban Pie

### Greatest Needs:

- \$5,000 from Veridian
- \$5,800 from the Community Development Block Grant provided by the City of Cedar Falls

### Accessible Housing:

- \$10,000 from the Waterloo Housing Trust Fund

Thank you for your investment in ensuring EPI's critical programs and services remain available to those who need them most.

### RECENT GRANT AWARDS

With the support of the following grant awards, we can continue offering key services for persons served to follow their dreams of finding and keeping a job in our community, aid in the effort to assist with crucial housing needs, and help fill a need for quality childcare in the local community.

### EPI's Employment Services:

- \$15,000 from the Otto Schoitz Foundation
- \$15,000 from the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa
- \$7,500 from US Bank

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



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Waterloo, IA 50704 - 4090

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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 than twice a year!



## QUESTIONS?

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