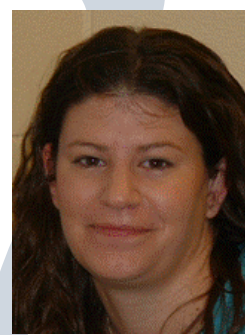


Something to Celebrate! ♥

Opportunities Unlimited has a lot to celebrate! At the annual staff Christmas Party, Opportunities Unlimited announced the staff member that has been selected to receive the Heart of the Mission Award. The award was established in 2004 by Stephanie Reinsch, President and CEO. The award is designed to honor the employee that exemplifies the mission of Opportunities Unlimited. The selected individual is one who is committed to excellence, goes above and beyond what is required, and who truly makes a difference in the lives of the clients on a daily basis.



Andy Posey is this year's Heart of the Mission recipient.



Jenny Walrod celebrates ten years of employment with Opportunities Unlimited.



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LEADER

A Quarterly Publication of Opportunities Unlimited

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

Many families feel very alone when a loved one sustains a traumatic brain injury (TBI). The truth is they are not as alone as they feel. Here are a few quick facts from the Centers for Disease Control:

1.4 million people a year sustain a TBI. That number is larger than Breast Cancer (176,300), HIV / AIDS (43,681), Spinal Cord Injuries (11,000) and Multiple Sclerosis (10,400) combined! Of those:

- 1.1 million are treated and released from the emergency department
- 235,000 are hospitalized
- 80,000 will experience the onset of long-term disabilities
- 50,000 die

The leading causes of TBI are:

- Falls (28%)
- Motor vehicle crashes (20%)
- Struck by / against (19%)
- Assaults (11%)
- Blasts are the leading cause of TBI in active duty military personnel

Highest Risk:

- Males are 1.5 times as likely as females to sustain a TBI
- 0-4 year olds and 15-19 year olds are at highest risk
- Certain military duties (i.e. paratrooper) increase the risk of sustaining a TBI
- African Americans have the highest death rate from TBI



Individuals gathered at Opportunities Unlimited on March 11, 2009 to commemorate Brain Injury Awareness Month.

Cost:

The estimated costs (including direct medical costs and indirect costs such as lost productivity) of TBI totaled \$56.3 billion in the United States in 1995.

Long Term Consequences:

There are currently at least 5.3 million Americans that have a long-term/ lifelong need for help to complete activities of daily living as a result of a TBI.

Frequent unmet needs include:

- Memory and problem solving
- Managing stress and emotional upsets
- Controlling one's temper
- Improving one's job skills

In order to raise awareness about traumatic brain injury, March has been declared as national Brain Injury Awareness Month. Opportunities Unlimited celebrates the month of March by shedding light on brain injury, locally. This year, Opportunities Unlimited invited Mayor Hobart to the Center to read a proclamation highlighting the city council's support of Brain Injury Awareness Month. The reception was held on Wednesday, March 11th at 4pm. The event was open to clients and their families as well as friends of Opportunities Unlimited. The day was commemorated with a balloon launch. 115 green (the color of Brain Injury Awareness) balloons were sent into the sky by those at the reception and refreshments were served. The afternoon was a great way to remind those in Siouxland and the surrounding area that TBI is more than just a 'silent' epidemic. ♥



Spotlight On Staff...

David Schonhardt joined the Opportunities Unlimited team in November of 2008. Since his arrival, David has been bringing his positive attitude and unique sense of humor with him. In search of a laugh, David has graced the staff with his version of a monkey dance and has petitioned to have his title changed from "Staff Accountant" to "Super Awesome Math Man."

David graduated from St. John's University with degrees in Accounting and Theology. David currently lives in Larchwood, Iowa with his wife Alicia and brand new baby girl, Catherine (born on October 20, 2008). David wakes daily at 5:40am to drive the 70 miles from his doorstep to the OU parking lot. On his drive David listens to audio books on tape to help pass the time.

David heard about Opportunities Unlimited from his sister-in-law who is a student at Briar Cliff University. When he came for his interview he said that he was sold on OU because he liked who he interviewed with and what the organization stood for. In his position, David is responsible for managing client trusts, accounts payable, bank reconciliation, and general accounting duties. ♥



David Schonhardt joined the Opportunities Unlimited family as the Staff Accountant.

Mr. Andy Posey has been employed with Opportunities Unlimited since 2006. Posey is currently serving as a Senior Waiver Specialist within the organization. In addition to serving as a mentor to new staff, Posey provides support services for children with disabilities. Posey is a senior at Morningside College majoring in Education. Posey said his advice for staff new to OU is to come to work with a great attitude and a big smile.

In recognition of his dedication to the mission, Posey received a Heart of the Mission engraved award and a check for \$1,000.

Also celebrated at the annual Christmas party are milestone anniversaries of staff. There was one individual in particular who reached her ten year anniversary with the organization. Mrs. Jenny Walrod started at OU in September of 1998. She began as a Residential Counselor, then served as a Residential Coordinator, then Assistant Director of Residential Services, and now as a part time staff in the computer lab. Throughout her tenure at Opportunities Unlimited, Walrod has seen major change.

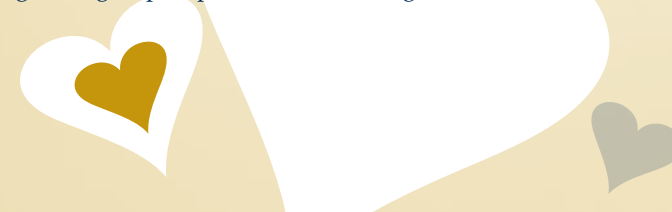
Jenny remembers when the therapies were conducted in the church on Pawnee with hallways barely large enough for one wheelchair. Jenny was at OU on the first day that they moved into the Center on Glen Oaks Boulevard. She recalls wondering what they were going to do with all of the extra space, now she wishes that we had more. When asked about other changes she has witnessed while working for OU, Walrod mentioned the concentration on the mission, the transparency of the organization, and the growth of Waiver.

Opportunities Unlimited has always been more than a job for Jenny. Her brother-in-law received residential services here, her dad and husband worked on the building in which we provide services, and her brother-in-law and sister-in-law have both worked at OU. The clients and staff have become her extended family. She has witnessed countless clients move on to achieve things that they had never thought possible.

January Group Respite- Ice Skating!

The 1st Group Respite of 2009 was held at the IBP Ice Arena on Friday, January 23rd. Waiver clients put on their ice skates and along with their staff and friends had a great time skating the night away! For some of the clients, this was their first attempt at skating, so having the adaptive equipment was very helpful. Although OU has participated in many community activities, this was the first time we've utilized the great ice skating facility

that is available and open to the public. "It is fun to see the kids do something different that they don't always get to do. They had fun skating with everyone else." stated Andy Posey, Senior Waiver Specialist at Opportunities Unlimited. We look forward to conducting more group respite activities throughout 2009! ♥



Third Annual Bike Helmet Giveaway

In addition to celebrating Brain Injury Awareness Month with a reception held at Opportunities Unlimited, the organization also went out into the community to promote increased awareness and prevention. For the third year in a row Opportunities Unlimited has partnered with the second grade classrooms at Irving Elementary. This year was the first time that OU has taken on a second school, Leeds Elementary. Students were challenged to write an essay on bicycle safety and many of the students chose to illustrate their work. Some of the children suggested wearing elbow and knee pads, some talked about using hand signals and cross walks, others talked about the importance of riding bikes with an adult. Each essay was judged and two students (a boy and a girl) from each classroom were selected as the winners. Between the two schools there were 10 classrooms and over 190 students involved.



Essay winners from Irving Elementary pose with their new bicycle helmets.

Stephanie Reinsen, President and CEO, and Amber Clausen, Director of Community Relations at Opportunities Unlimited, spent an afternoon at each school and delivered a presentation for the second grade classrooms. The assembly taught the students about brain injury and prevention. The students were led in a rendition of the song "Heads, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes." They talked about bike safety in general and the importance of helmet use. As the presentation concluded, they encouraged the students to go out and share what they have learned with their friends and family.

- Letsche's Bike Shop
- Siouxland Cyclists, Inc.
- Albrecht's Cycle Shop
- Target Greatland
- Pam Hansen- Irving Elementary School Counselor
- Bernie Hess- Leeds Elementary School Counselor
- Walmart - South Sioux City

Special thanks go out to the following businesses and individuals for making the bike helmet presentations possible! ♥

Superstars Celebrate the Superbowl!

The Waiver department hosted an early Superbowl party on Friday, January 30th, to gear up for the big game on Sunday. Clients and staff alike enjoyed the party snacks, music, games, and contests. Clients could participate in games including a football walk (similar to a "cakewalk"), football toss, and football bowling. Clients and staff were able to demonstrate their creativity and dance moves with the "Touchdown Dance" contest. It was great to see everyone supporting each other while they participated in the various games and contests! ♥



Waiver staff and clients perform their rendition of a touchdown dance during the OU Superbowl party.



OU Gets New Look

In challenging economic times, non-profit organizations are greatly appreciative of monetary gifts from their donors. In the Siouxland area there are many deserving organizations that are competing for funds from a smaller and smaller pool of availability. It can be very difficult to keep ones' organization at the forefront of the minds of its constituents. One simple way Opportunities Unlimited has addressed this issue is by revitalizing the image of the organization.

- Over the course of the year Opportunities Unlimited has:
- Installed a new welcome sign in front of the Center
 - Erected new billboards encouraging individuals to apply for positions and to become donors to our Annual Angel Program
 - Updated letterhead and other stationary used by the company in correspondence with the public
 - Redesigned the quarterly newsletter to become more reader-friendly and engaging

The goal of these changes has been to have our public image portray our internal commitment to excellence. The culmination of this project is currently underway.



Opportunities Unlimited has used billboards to recruit new staff and Annual Angels



New sign welcomes visitors to the Opportunities Unlimited Center.

Opportunities Unlimited is in the process of updating its website found at www.opportunitiesunlimited.com. In the upcoming months you can look forward to a new website that is informative, mission driven, and current.

The website will include information for families looking for residential placement or Waiver services for a loved one. It will include information on the therapies offered to residential clients of OU. The website will be easily updated to include PDF versions of the newsletter, any flyers for friends and family, and information on upcoming events. We are also very excited to include testimonials from some of the clients and families that are served by Opportunities Unlimited. Perhaps most exciting is the feature that will allow individuals to make donations online by utilizing a credit or debit card.

Look for the updated website in the near future! ♥

Save the Date!

Mark your calendars! Friday, July 17, 2009 is the 12th Annual Opportunities Unlimited Golf Shootout. This year's tournament will again be held at Whispering Creek Golf Club. Due to the fact that the Opportunities Unlimited Golf Shootout has long been recognized as one of the most prestigious charity events in the area, it fills up quickly! Please RSVP with your foursome as soon as possible. Opportunities Unlimited is also looking for businesses that are interested in becoming a sponsor for the tournament; sponsorship levels start at \$250 dollars. If you are interested in learning more about the tournament or would like to RSVP your foursome, please contact Amber Clausen at (712) 277-8295. Thank you. ♥



Annual Angels Make the Difference

Did you know that the average residential client served by Opportunities Unlimited has roughly \$50 to their name at the end of the month? The \$50 is what is left over after their nursing care, rehabilitation and therapeutic services have been paid for the month. Although Opportunities Unlimited is reimbursed for food, prescription medication, and very basic needs, each client is responsible for purchasing anything above and beyond. That includes purchasing toothpaste, shampoo, soap, personal care items, etc. if a client has a preference other than the basics that are provided. For those of you that purchase these items for yourself or your family, you realize that \$50 doesn't go far these days. With that \$50 each month, clients are also responsible for purchasing their own necessities like clothing and shoes. Some residential clients have families that can help provide some of the above mentioned items. Some residential clients take part in vocational therapy and earn a small paycheck of their own to help supplement the money needed to provide for items where their funding is lacking. Most, however, struggle to get by. That is where the Annual Angel program comes in. Although funding avenues for the services provided by OU are constant, they fall well short of the desired excellence we choose for our clients. Through the Annual Angel Campaign, members of the public, as well as staff, are encouraged to donate \$1 a day for a year, or any amount they are comfortable contributing. Pledges can be fulfilled monthly, quarterly, biannually, or in one payment.

The money raised through the Annual Angel Campaign is 100% utilized to provide our clients with opportunities and items otherwise unattainable. The Angel Funds have purchased winter coats, sheets, towels, shoes, and communications devices. They have allowed clients to see concerts and movies, to travel and to enjoy local restaurants among many other things. The Angel funds have helped Opportunities Unlimited to achieve its mission of "Maximizing Personal Potential through Dignified and Purposeful Living" for both the residential and Waiver clients we serve.

Opportunities Unlimited is pleased to share that nearly 85% of all people employed by the organization give back through the Angel Campaign. Recently staff donors were asked why they donate and one employee had a very moving story. She has granted permission to have her story printed.

My family and I had fallen on very difficult times. We had gone without heat for two months because we didn't have any money to pay our heat bill. Thankfully it was during the summer months so not having heat wasn't as dire a situation as it could have been. The hardest part about not having heat was not being able to use our hot water heater. I had to warm water in the microwave so I could give my two children sponge baths.

We sold our house and I had just started as an employee at Opportunities Unlimited when I went to visit my sister in Wisconsin. While I was there she pulled me aside and handed me an envelope with \$2,000 dollars in it. She said she could not tell me where it came from and that all they ask is that I "pay it forward" some day. The money was truly a godsend. I was able to catch up on past due bills and begin to provide for my family again.

When I returned to Opportunities Unlimited I enrolled to contribute to the Annual Angel Funds through payroll deduction. Money was still tight for me and my family but I knew it was something that I had to do. I had been blessed by an 'Angel' of my own and I had the opportunity to be that 'Angel' for the clients that I serve at OU. In 2008 I was recognized as a Full Angel because my yearly contributions had reached \$365 dollars. When you achieve the 'Full Angel' amount you are recognized with an Angel keepsake pin and your name on the honor wall as you walk into the Community Center. This past Christmas I was able to pull my sister aside and give her something. I gave her my Angel keepsake pin and told her that I had chosen to have her and my nieces name engraved on the Angel Wall. I reminded her that she told me to pay it forward and that I was doing just that.

I was at the worst point in my life when I started working at Opportunities Unlimited. Much of the turn around that has happened to me has been a result of this great organization and the people that work and live here. OU has been called a place where 'magic' happens and where lives are changed forever. For me, it has been just that. I have seen how the Angel Funds contribute to the magic of OU and that is why I have made the commitment to be an Annual Angel.

Are you an Annual Angel? If so, thank you. If not, please consider giving a 100% tax deductible gift to the clients served by Opportunities Unlimited. ♥

Become an Angel!

Yes, I want to pledge \$1.00 a day for 365 days in support of OU's mission.

I will fulfill my commitment:

Monthly Quarterly Bi-Annually Single Payment

Credit Card: Visa MasterCard

Account Number: _____

Credit Card ID Number (3 Digits on back): _____

Expiration Date: _____

I want to support OU with an alternative gift of: \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Clip and Mail to:
 Opportunities Unlimited
 3439 Glen Oaks Blvd.
 Sioux City, IA 51104

