

SAVE THE DATE

Dodge for Dollars

DODGEBALL TOURNAMENT
a fundraiser to benefit Mainstream Living.

Saturday, May 16, 2015

9:00 AM

Boys and Girls Club of Story County

*Check Mainstream website and Facebook
for details and to register.*

this is a project of Leadership Ames Class XXVIII

Mainstream Connection

SPRING 2015

Celebrating Our History

MAINSTREAM LIVING

MORE THAN A "JOB"



ainstream Living was established in 1975 by a small but determined group of parents and persons with disabilities in Story County. While these folks took the first, and perhaps most difficult steps, many others since have picked up the banner and helped carry it down the field. Mainstream will soon celebrate 40 years, and this newsletter is dedicated to those who are still carrying that banner forward.

I started with Mainstream Living in 1980 as a direct care worker at a children's group home in Des Moines. At the time, there were fewer than 50 employees. Now there are 580! I was attending Drake University and was planning to become an attorney. I was twenty years old, engaged and needed a job.

My starting rate of pay was \$3.15/hour. At the time, training consisted of on-the-job interactions with a few seasoned staff for support. I had no idea what to expect and was soon "schooled" by six kids from our group home, who, on my first day of work (actually my first hour of work), managed to lock me out of the house! In a heartbeat I understood that the job was tough, demanding and frustrating all at the same time. But, I quickly understood

that it was both essential and very rewarding. I came to know that my efforts were greatly appreciated by the people we served and by their parents.

After a short time, I was hooked, because this job showed me that I could make a difference. I was young and had no experience working with people with disabilities. I had a lot to learn but I was determined. I changed my major to psychology and sociology and dug into my studies. I worked as many direct-care hours as I could while attending school full-time, and forming a family with my wife and our two boys. I also grew a beard so I wouldn't look so young (not a problem anymore). Along the way I had the chance to work my way up in the organization at several jobs. I managed and opened group homes as Mainstream Living grew. I became the director of programming. And, I started and ran Community Support Advocates, a partnership of Mainstream Living and three other agencies. Later I was asked to be the First Vice President and when Reno Berg retired I was honored to be offered the position of President and CEO.

For me, Mainstream Living has always been more than a job. For 35 years my life has been entwined with the growth and development of Mainstream Living

and the people we serve. Mainstream was there when I needed a job, they were there when I finished my first degree in psychology, and later my master's degree in social work. I would like to thank all of those who have been there for me then, and who are with me now. Mainstream is a great place to work and I believe our vision to be "the premier human services employer" is absolutely true. Many employees share a similar story. The road has not always been easy to travel, but as we look at where Mainstream Living is in its 40th year, the journey has been very rewarding. People with disabilities enjoy more freedom of self-determination and empowerment than ever before. They live in supportive and safe environments and they live and work in their own community. The fact that we have played a small part in this journey is something that makes us all proud.



BILL VAUGHN

Mindy Hetland

Too often when someone is given the label of a disability, they can be denied opportunities from the start. In the twenty years Mindy Hetland has been a Mainstream employee, she has come to understand that her role in a consumer's life is to challenge this mentality. She has learned to find where people are being limited, and help them break free of these limitations.

Early on in her career, Mindy witnessed a dramatic shift in the residential program from large group homes, to smaller homes and apartments, with fewer residents. She describes the old homes as restrictive and buttoned down, saying that "everything had to be locked up."

"Downsizing the group homes was exciting," said Hetland, "because it was more like a regular home." Witnessing this change gave Mindy the confidence to help break down other barriers.

One example of this stands out clearly in Mindy's mind. Sarah, for whom she provided residential services, rarely spoke and often became frustrated and physically aggressive. Mindy was convinced that staff needed to verbalize to Sarah in order to give her the tools to express herself. She worked together with her team to ask Sarah questions while "coaching" her to arrive at the correct responses. While others may have written Sarah off as "non-verbal" or "incapable", Mindy and her team were delighted to see that Sarah began using more and more words. Because of Mindy's efforts, Sarah was able to have more control and gained a new connection to her world.

Mindy has continued to empower participants in several ways throughout her career with Mainstream. For the past three years, she has worked at the MELC day habilitation program in Ames. She prides herself on building peoples' confidence in the kitchen. Many participants were probably told at some point in their lives that they should not use sharp knives. Thanks to Mindy's teaching and guidance, participants may be able to better control their diets, and expand their horizons regarding what they can prepare for themselves and eat. Without Mindy, this never would have happened. Mindy is a wonderful example of those who continually work to achieve the Mainstream Mission to enhance opportunities, create success and fulfill dreams.

BETH BURJA

Growing up, Beth Burja was very involved in the lives of people with disabilities. After attending Iowa State University with a double major in psychology and social work, it was only fitting that she would work in a field that would allow her to care for others. And while both Beth and Mainstream Living were in their infancy in 1975, it seemed as if Beth was destined to have a long, rewarding career with the organization.

Beth began her journey with Mainstream Living, while fulfilling her requirements as a practicum student for her social work program with Iowa State University. At the time, Beth chose Mainstream because it was a local organization, and one of the few that offered a wage for practicum students. Since her time as a student, she has served in a variety of roles at several sites and also in administration. Some of Beth's favorite memories with Mainstream include taking the children from the Hunt Street home on day trips to Adventureland. She also recalls great times with her co-workers, especially her baby shower during her first pregnancy.

Overall, the greatest change Beth has seen in the years she's been with the organization have been with the use of technology. In the past, all documentation and communication existed only in paper form. If new information needed to be added to the communication books, it was time consuming and often delayed due to lack of fax machines or Internet. Today, information can be provided quickly and more efficiently than ever before.

Just as she did growing up, Beth loves to play a role in caring for individuals and their families. She feels fortunate to work for a company that has allowed her flexibility as her life has changed throughout the years.



LYNDA
MCCALLEY
★ 30 YEARS ★

Mainstream is like my second family. I love the flexibility to be with my children and parents as needed and Mainstream "gets" that! In return, I'm willing to work above and beyond to do the best I can for Mainstream.

★ MARY LORENZEN ★

In my 35 year journey with MSL, I have garnered friendships that will last a lifetime, and appreciate that my work has meant far more than the receipt of a monthly paycheck.

35
YEARS



★ ★ ★ Dale Bayliss ★ ★ ★

Dale Bayliss began his career with Mainstream Living on July 17th, 1992. He had previously worked with individuals with intellectual disabilities when he heard about Mainstream from a friend. Based on the positive things he heard about the organization and his interest in pursuing a career in the field, he applied for and was hired as a Supported Living Technician. His first position was at the Park Avenue home where he was also able to assist in opening the home for the first time – an opportunity that would prove to be valuable in his years with the organization.

Dale knew that Mainstream Living was a special place when he started and he has remained a part of the organization because of the rewarding work. He says that he has always been "sold" on our mission, vision, and values and really appreciates what we do as an agency. Dale values the relationships he has with his co-workers and feels it is a privilege to work with so many consumers. Dale now works full time at the Glenstone home, but still has a strong passion for helping others even after all these years.

BRIDGET
KEARNEY

★ 19 YEARS ★

At Mainstream, everyone is always glad to see you and sometimes they even cheer your name when you walk into the room. It's a pretty great feeling. I think about other people who dread going to work or dislike their co-workers or don't believe that what they're doing has value and it makes me feel really glad that I found this place.

JOHN FRAKES

In April of 1993, John Frakes was at a time in his life where he wanted to make a change. Through the suggestion of a friend he applied at Mainstream Living and soon became an official member of the team. He began his career at the 75th Street house, working with five individuals. In his time with Mainstream, John has worked with many different consumers at a number of Polk County homes, and is currently at the Roseland site.

John is well aware of how different things are compared to when he started. He says the group home "feel" is less apparent and now appears as more of an independent living atmosphere. There have been obstacles over the years, but John believes he has been successful because he works to place himself in the consumer's position when learning how to best support an individual. Some of John's successes include helping a male consumer diagnosed with obesity and other chronic health issues, as well as a gentleman who moved to his first home and needed significant supervision with hygiene. John, worked with other staff members to help each of these gentlemen with becoming healthier and more independent.

John is proud to have been a part of Mainstream Living for more than 20 years. He says, "It is rewarding to work to build rapport with consumers through consistency of service, longevity and dedication. At the end of the day, knowing a contribution has been made to promote independence makes it all worthwhile."

★ MARCANNE LYNCH ★

On a daily basis I have the opportunity to watch the growth and success of both our consumers and employees. I'm proud to be a part of it. Like the saying goes, "if you love what you do, you'll never have to work a day in your life."

28
YEARS



My favorite memories of Mainstream are of managing the South Duff house, which had a swimming pool in the late 80s. On most days the children's homes would come out to swim and after work or center, the adults had their turn. In the 90s, the emphasis was more on full inclusion in the community and people started coming to the pool less. The insurance costs for the pool kept going up and the pool itself started leaking water faster than we could put it in so the decision was made to close the pool and fill the hole.

Bill Mekemson

32
YEARS

**KAREN
FULCALORO**
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★ 22 YEARS ★

The most important factor in my decision to stay with Mainstream is my enjoyment in working with the consumers we serve and my co-workers.

KENT MEIER

When Kent Meier started with Mainstream Living in 1987, he had no experience working with people with disabilities. His first weekend on the job he witnessed a seizure and had to quickly deal with the pressure of a new job, no experience and no idea what this person was going through. "It was very overwhelming," said Kent when asked to recall his first experiences at Mainstream.

In the 28 years since this first experience, Kent has come to know, care for and love Mainstream and the clients served. He has seen many changes in his time with the agency, especially the size of the staff and number of persons served. The organization has expanded from having one home, serving six individuals to many homes in multiple counties, while also adding additional services such as mental health programs and the Mainstream Employment and Learning Center (MELC).

Kent says that he has continued working for Mainstream Living because of the people he works with each day. He says "I don't see the participants as people with disabilities, I see them as my co-workers." Kent loves to see his co-workers succeed, learn new skills and reach their goals. And while Kent may have not had experience with the people with disabilities when he started, he has clearly developed the passion and caring for our clients that they deserve.



Over 20 years ago, Tracie Arkland experienced a particularly eventful week – graduating with a psychology degree from Iowa State University and beginning her career with Mainstream Living at the same time! She started as an MR Tech I, working at the home on Clark Avenue, which served eight individuals. Although Tracie would eventually leave the Clark home to work at a number of other locations, she is fond of the memories of her time there.

Much has changed since Tracie first began her work with Mainstream. Learning technology has become a very important aspect in communication, as the organization has grown in both locations and persons served. The use of technology allows the organization to keep up with information and communication at each site. And while cellphones have been in use for a number of years, texting is the latest way in which Tracie can provide information to her supervisors. These technological changes have made for more effective and consistent delivery of services.

Traci is thrilled to have recently returned to the Clark Avenue home – although due to changes over the years, the home now only serves four individuals. One of the residents she served more than ten years ago remembered her and said, "I've missed you." Traci says this particular moment was very heartwarming and rewarding and is a reminder that she has made a difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

**SHIRLEY
LARKINS**

★ 20 YEARS ★

I have made the choice to continue to work with Mainstream because of the rewarding relationships I have with team members and consumers.



★ MICHAEL JURY ★

I continue my employment here because I like the work, enjoy being with the people we serve, and because the hours are flexible.



**21
YEARS**

