



Susan Mudd, Director of Residential Services, celebrated a milestone anniversary this quarter – **30 years with the agency!**

During her tenure she has held several positions. When she began her career August 26, 1991, she was a Program Manager (QDDP) in the Residential Department. Susan was later promoted to Director of Children's Services for our Early Childhood Special Education pre-school program. When the local school districts began providing Early Childhood Special Education themselves, she transitioned to Director of Quality and Education. March 21, 2011, she returned to her roots in Residential Services, assuming her current role as Director of Residential Services.



We celebrated Susan's 30th Anniversary with an *open house* on her anniversary at the Program Building. Clients and staff came to visit her and wish her happy anniversary (and grab a delicious cupcake). Susan was presented with a beautiful pearl & diamond necklace and card from her co-workers. Susan is an instrumental leader in our agency and we look forward to her continued leadership!



Staffing shortages are affecting employers across the country, and our agency unfortunately, is no exception. There's no denying –the work of a Direct Support Professional is expansive! There has been a national shortage of DSPs the last several years; however, the pandemic has caused the shortage to become critical for many providers.

DSPs have worked courageously *on the frontline* throughout the pandemic. We recognize and appreciate their dedication to the individuals they serve, as well as to the agency overall. In effort to improve retention and recruit new DSPs, in June, our agency gave current staff a mid-year pandemic retention wage increase and increased starting wages. Although we have one of the most comprehensive benefits package, compared to other DSP organizations across the state, we continue seeking ways to improve retention of our most valuable asset.

Current staff can receive a \$100 referral incentive if someone they referred is hired, after completion of their 3 month/equiv. trainee period. We post job openings on our agency Facebook page –we encourage everyone to share those! Individuals can schedule appointments to complete an application/interview, or access our electronic employment application on our website at www.commopps.org.





ONE YEAR

Kailey Miller

TWO YEARS

Abygail Ruether
Jessica Comer
Tammy Tipton
Jennifer Winter
Tori Linneman

THREE YEARS

Jessica Carter
Cheri Nuss

FOUR YEARS

Sandy Wood

SEVEN YEARS

Sonya DeMerchant

NINE YEARS

Gina Gipson
Connie West

TEN YEARS

Margaret Hill

THIRTEEN YEARS

Misty Todd

FIFTEEN YEARS

Janelle Ray

SIXTEEN YEARS

Julie Privett

SEVENTEEN

YEARS
Kim Wester

EIGHTEEN

YEARS
Roger O'Connor

TWENTY TWO YEARS

Cynthia Stanek

TWENTY SIX YEARS

Joan Story

TWENTY FOUR YEARS

Angela Hager

THIRTY YEARS

Susan Mudd



Happy Anniversary!



FRIENDLY FACES

Name: Kim Brutsman (Employment Specialist)

Family and pets? Married with three children, eight grandchildren, five cats and three dogs.

Favorite vacation? Went back to Oregon with my husband and parents.

Who inspires you? God and my parents.

What unique talent do you have or hobby? I love to color, every night.

What is the best surprise you have ever received? That we were going to be grandparents.

What is your favorite song? I really have too many to choose just one.

The movie version of my life should be titled? What a long strange trip it's been.

My favorite physical activity is: Playing on the Wii.

One thing people are surprised to find out about me is: I used to drive a limo.

If I were a superhero I would be ... Mighty Mouse.

What are you passionate about? Helping people in any way I can.

What is your favorite family tradition? Thanksgiving.

Pet peeve? Oh, where do I start... people who drive slowly.

What is the best meal you have ever had? I have not had it yet.





Upcoming Training & Events

- ⇒ October 26, 2021 CPR & First Aid 1-3p at Program Building
- ⇒ November 17, 2021 Fire Safety Training –2 sessions: 2-3p & 3:15-4:15p
- ⇒ **Please remember to check your email for Relias & other scheduled training assignments!**

In Person Classes & Clubs @ the Program Building

1st Tuesday every month 4p-6p Sci Fi Club- hosted by Greg L.

2nd Tuesday every month 4p-6p Anime Club- hosted by the group

3rd Thursday every month 4:30p-5:30p Art with Josh – led by Josh Venable

4th Wednesday every month 4:30-6p Cooking Class- hosted by Jade and Lacy

November 4, 2021 @ 4pm –Craft Class (will be held 1x/month w/date TBD).

Space is limited. Contact your CLS or CSS if you would like to participate.



Case Management Update



Matthew is a 35 year man who is all smiles in his new ISL home in Columbia, MO. Matthew has extensive support needs and requires a ventilator to survive. Living with his dad and stepmom, he received nursing services through DHSS. However, because of the ongoing staffing crisis, his father was unable to work much in order to take care of Matthew. Requesting residential services was a hard decision for the family. Fortunately, his Case Manager, Anna Jaggie, found Elm Place and learned that it was the only provider in the state that served people on ventilators – AND they had an opening for him, The family knew right away it was obviously meant for Matthew, and he has since moved into his new home.

Congratulations, Matthew!

Healthy Living Corner

According to Joel Fuhrman, MD, who wrote the peer-reviewed article, *Negative Impact of Sugar on the Brain*:

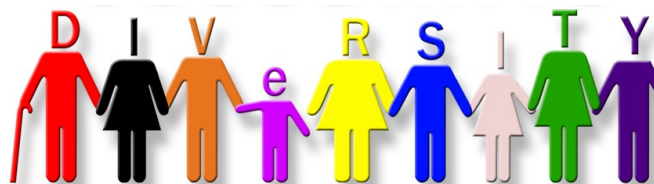


“The brain uses more energy than any other organ in the human body, and glucose is its primary source of fuel. But what happens when the brain is exposed to an excessive amount of sugars in the standard American diet? In this case, more is definitely not better. In the brain, excess sugar impairs both our cognitive skills and our self-control. For many people, having a little sugar stimulates a craving for more.

Sugar has drug-like effects in the reward center of the brain. Scientists have proposed that sweet foods—along with salty and fatty foods—can produce addiction-like effects in the human brain, driving the loss of self-control, overeating, and subsequent weight gain.

The behavioral and neurobiochemical characteristics of substance abuse and overeating are quite similar, and the idea of food addiction is gaining ground among scientists.” The bottom line: Stay away from the sweets!

Equity &



A few terms and definitions we should all know and understand:

Color Blind - The belief in treating everyone “equally” by treating everyone the same; based on the presumption differences are by definition bad or problematic, and therefore best ignored.

Equality – a state in which all people within a specific society or group have the same status, including civil rights, freedom of speech, property rights and equal access to goods and services.

Equity - a state in which an individual or group would be given the resources needed to give them equal advantage, but may not be the same resources that others receive. Equity takes into consideration social identifiers, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc. affect equality.

Institutional Racism – also known as systemic racism, is a form of racism that is embedded in the laws and regulations of a society or an organization. It manifests as discrimination in areas such as criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, education, and political representation. These institutions, which are meant to serve society, have the power to reward and penalize. The institutions decide who receives opportunities & benefits.

Intercultural Competency - A process of learning about and becoming allies with people from other cultures, thereby, broadening our own understanding and ability to participate in a multicultural process. The key element to becoming more culturally competent is respect for the ways others live in and organize the world and an openness to learn from them.

The topic of equity and diversity will be a regular feature in our newsletter. For comments, feedback or to request a topic discussion, email Sonya DeMerchant at: sonya@commopps.org, or call Sonya at ext. 105.



Welcome New Trainees!



April Jennings - 7.06.2021—Case Management (full-time)

Rebecca Honerkamp - 8.05.2021—Residential (per diem)



Referral Incentive Split 50/50!

Yep, you read that correctly....this is the first time we had an employee complete their trainee orientation period & state on their application that they were referred by TWO of our employees! Congrats to Kelsey Mathews for successful completion of your 3 month trainee orientation period! Referring staff Brandi Dowell & Miranda Gibbons received \$50 each.

Great job ladies, & remember...It pays to refer!



Congrats DSP of the Quarter!



The DSP of the 2nd quarter of 2021 is Brenda Workman!

Brenda has worked for Community Opportunities for over 21 years as a direct support professional. She is a full-time Community Skills Teacher in Day Program. Brenda's many years of experience make her a model teacher for new DSPs. The person who nominated Brenda said that "Brenda gives a voice to those that are unable to speak using words. Her patience to understand and interpret nonverbal communication has been instrumental in enhancing the lives of those she supports".

Thanks Brenda for everything you do to support individuals with disabilities and congratulations on your award!



Health & Safety Corner



Safety First!

**Donna Jacobsen,
H&S Chairperson**

I love this time of year! The leaves are changing colors, temperature is cooling down and wearing warmer clothes. However, I am not a big fan of it getting darker earlier. As I was driving home one evening, there was a jogger in our subdivision and it was hard to see him. That got me thinking of ways he could have been safer while getting in his exercise. Here are some safety tips that I came up with. Can you think of anymore?

1. Wear bright/light colored clothing and reflective materials.
2. Carry a flashlight at night.
3. Wearing glow lights are fun and drivers can see you.
4. Be alert – Don't wear headphones or talk on cell phones.
5. Do not presume drivers will see you. Make eye contact with the driver before crossing the street.
6. Walk on sidewalks when possible.
7. Walk/run in a well-lit area instead of subdivision without lights.



Stress, anxiety and panic ~ You are NOT alone!

As we all know, life can be stressful. When we feel stressed, we may have trouble sleeping, be in a bad mood or have other uncomfortable feelings. Usually, within a few days, we get through the tough time and feel like ourselves again.



Anxiety, though, doesn't go away in a week or two. Some of the following experiences may last for quite some time: • Feeling "keyed-up" or on edge, as if you must move constantly or can't stop the motor inside • Worrying about things you can't control • Feeling tired or irritable or having trouble staying focused • Aches and pains; especially in the neck, shoulder or jaw — you may also have frequent upset stomachs or diarrhea • Problems falling asleep or waking up a lot during the night, or, you wake up feeling anxious or worried.

Another form of anxiety is panic attacks, which may come on suddenly. Someone having a panic attack may experience fear along with sweating, shaking, choking sensations, pain or tightness in the chest, nausea, dizziness or confusion. Some people say they feel like something really bad is going to happen — as if they will have a heart attack or die.

Panic attacks are not uncommon. However, the problem can get worse. There are techniques you can use to help reduce anxiety and panic attacks. Sometimes, you may need to reach out for help. Remember, our employees & their families have access to free confidential services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through Resources for Living.

Resourcesforliving.com **User Name:** Community Op **Password:** EAP **Phone:** 888-238-6232

Kiwanis Park Playground is OPEN!



Kiwanis Park officially opened its playground to the public on Friday, Sept. 17 following the ribbon cutting ceremony.

The Troy Kiwanis Park Project has been several years in the making. This is a collaborative project between Troy Kiwanis Club, Community Opportunities and the City of Troy. The pandemic presented some challenges during the construction and development of the park, but those challenges were overcome by the dedication of those involved.



The new accessible playground is part of a 28-acre park. Phase 2 of the project is an accessible trail with exercise stations along the trail. The Park Project has been awarded over \$500,000 in grant money from the Department of Natural Resources; a \$90,000 grant from Toyota, as well as several donations from individuals and businesses alike.

The trail is currently being constructed, and there are plans for splash pad and disc golf in the future.

We are so excited to be a part of Troy's first accessible playground/park!

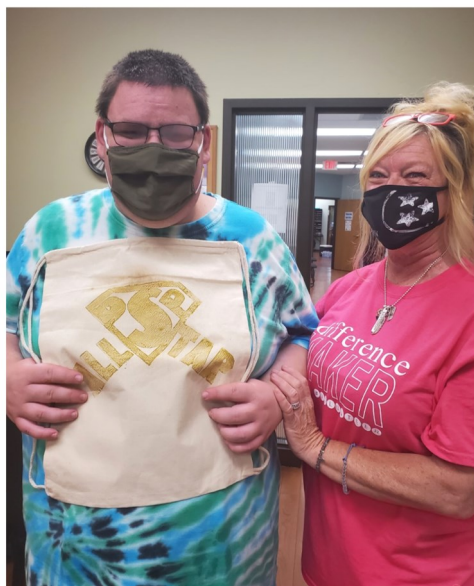


DSP WEEK 2021

Direct Support Professional Recognition Week was September 12-18th. Our celebration involved lots of activities! Throughout the week DSPs created Tote Bags with their clients. Josh made several stamps DSPs could choose from to personalize their own tote bags. We also had the opportunity to post "Shout Outs" (on our Shout Out board) to recognize all of the great work our DSPs do! Tuesday we tried a Cornhole Tournament but it was rained out after only a few practice throws. DSPs were still able to enjoy hotdogs & chips with friends. Thursday the LCR3 EduKitchen Food Truck was here and provided a delicious Mexican lunch. To windup the week Slim Chickens Dinners were delivered to our Residential DSPs & clients Friday evening.

Our DSPs are undoubtedly THE best! These amazing staff dedicate their lives to ensure our clients have the best quality services possible. Our DSPs go above and beyond so often because they truly care about the individuals we serve. We are happy to celebrate these remarkable Direct Support Professionals!

Enjoy the pics below & on the following page of some of our DSPs and clients participating in DSP week activities.





A word cloud of terms associated with person-centered care. The words are arranged in a circular pattern around the central text. The words include: CARING, RESPECT, SUPPORT, ADVOCATE, PERSON-CENTERED, MEANINGFUL LIFE, and DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL. The words are in various sizes and orientations, with some appearing multiple times. The background is a light blue gradient.



Excitement in Employment!

by Miranda Gibbons, Employment Specialist



Busy, Busy, Busy has been an understatement the past few months in the Employment Department. Not only did we keep up with the employment process, but the Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP) was also in full swing.

The program started the beginning of June and ran until July 26, 2021. This year there were 10 students participating in the program at County Market in Winfield, MO. The students are high school students getting ready to start their last year of high school. This program helps them gain work experience. They worked for a six week period from either 8a-noon, or 1-5p. This is a paid employment experience for the students.

The students worked in different areas as either a team or by themselves, depending on the department. They worked on stocking shelves, conditioning the store/facing shelves, produce, bagging groceries, cleaning/sanitizing, bringing in carts, dishes in the deli/bakery, and any other tasks asked of them.



The students learned to be on time for their shift, time management (taking a 15 minute break), and the importance of Team Work! The 2021 SWEP was a success!

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, we had two new clients start the employment process, Nadine and Tayler. We look forward to helping them plan their journey toward successful employment!



Between July and September, three individuals obtained jobs; James, Vickie, and Kim. Pictured bottom right (front &

center) is Kim at work at Slim Chickens in Troy, MO with her team members.

A big thank you to County Market for allowing us to do our Summer Work Experience at your store! Also a shout-out to Slim Chickens, Daddy Ray's, and Wentzville Walmart for offering employment opportunities this past quarter.

If you know anyone with a disability who would like help with getting a job, please contact Darla Gamble, Associate Director of Employment Services via email at: darla@commopps.org or ext. 150.



Busy in Residential Services



Green beans were in full supply this year. Nothing says summer like snapping green beans! Gardening is a lot of work, but definitely worth the effort! Jim is pictured getting some hands-on experience in prepping some garden vegetables for dinner. The fruits of labor can be sooo delicious!

Josh (pictured below) made homemade Pizone, which was a huge hit!



And don't forget dessert!

The guys at 17 have made quite a range of temptations, from homemade banana bread, homemade ice cream and even Josh's homemade donuts.

One lucky staff who got to try one of Josh's homemade donuts said they were "The best dessert I've ever had."

Great work guys ~ Bon Appetit!

Pictures submitted by Donna O.





Outdoor Adventures



Steven and Donna watched the Fair parade in July. Steven enjoyed waving at everyone in the parade.

Since it was such a beautiful day, they continued the outdoor fun by enjoying a meal under the pavilion at the city park.



Curtis, Jessica and Ray enjoying the car show in downtown Troy!

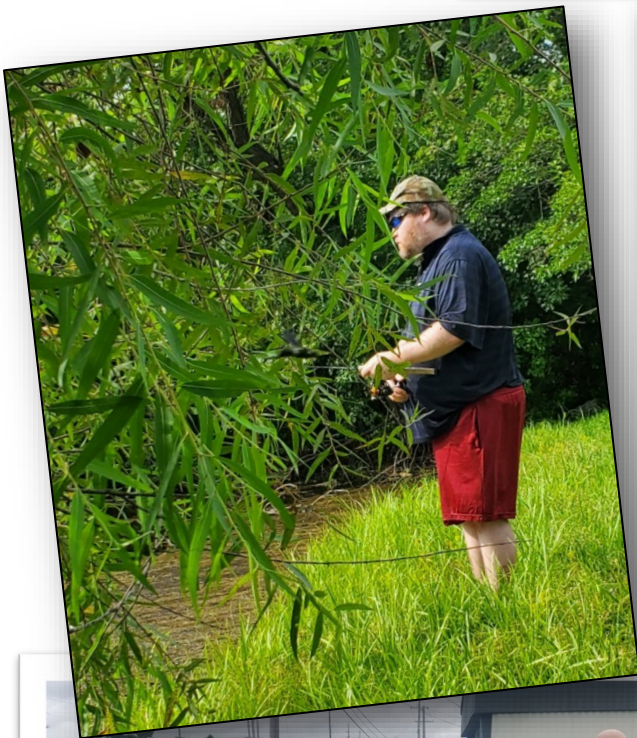
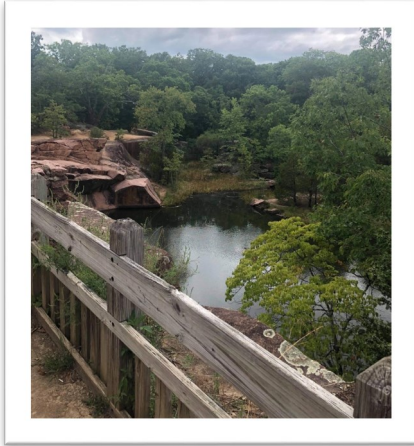


Josh & Jerry have been loving working out together.

Josh had been showing Jerry how to use a lot of his exercise equipment. And great job getting some Vitamin D from the beautiful sunshine while getting in a workout!

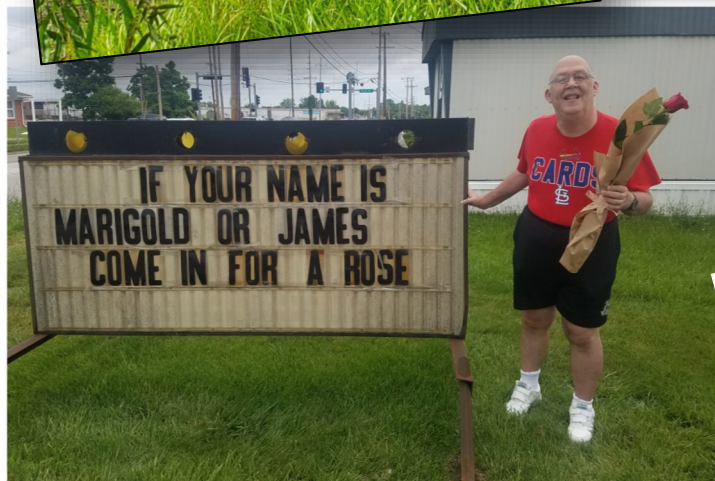


Josh, Curtis and Kaitlyn enjoying a visit to Elephant Rock State Park.



Tony did some fishing at the pond at Opportunity Court. With a little luck & some fishing skills, he managed to catch a fish.

Tony is quite the angler and has caught quite a few fish from this pond over the years.



A rose by any other name...might just be James!

Jim (aka James) is pictured after receiving his "name" rose from Troy Flower Shop.



Steven and Kaitlyn (pictured right) wearing their matching Svengoolie shirts (their favorite weekend show).



Crafty fun in Community Services

We have been getting pretty creative around here. We made homemade soap, watercolor paintings and Shelby and Brandi made a cute scarecrow.

With the beautiful weather, it was time for some outdoor karaoke!





Towne Park is the perfect place for an outdoor adventure. David's mission was to find a four leaf clover. After a bit of searching, he found one. He was so excited!

Robert certainly liked the park and beautiful weather. Adam even gave a couple of smiles. David gives the park two thumbs up!



It's fun to *Play* at the YMCA!

Terry, Steven, Brandi & Angel, pictured below, enjoying some refreshing fun in the pool. What a great way to cool off on a hot day.





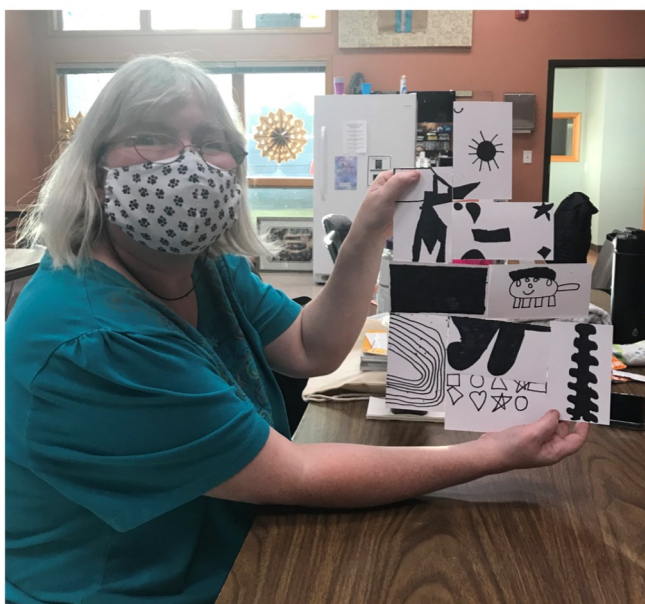
Art Class Creations



The top 3 pics were from a class that worked on wet blending colors and "atmosphere" in composition.

The class depicted in the 3 photos below worked on utilizing positive and negative space by making abstract shapes on index cards and then assembling them into a single piece.

Not everyone was interested in making abstract shapes but they made some interesting pieces! -submitted by Josh Venable, Resource Specialist & Art Class Instructor



Art Class with Josh is held the 3rd Thursday every month 4:30p-5:30p at the Program Building.

