

Progress in Process!

The agency has been hard at work implementing some strategic planning goals to increase much needed program space for our Day Program services. Several changes have already taken place in the last few weeks to start this process.

County Connections staff, Barbie and DeWayne, moved to a new office space in town (next to the UPS store) at 250 Magee Street. This opened 3 offices at the Administrative Office. Susan, Angie Ray, Candis and Misty move into the vacant offices at the Administrative Building.



Meanwhile, at the Program Building, the Community Skills Specialists have moved into the CLSs' previous offices at the Program Building and Susan's prior office is now a client use area. What was the 'small conference room' at the Program Building, is now the staff room (the mailboxes and forms sorter is located in this room as well). We are excited to see the final building remodel!



We have been meeting with contractors, members of our board and Program Building staff to best determine what physical changes will be needed to utilize the space most effectively and give our Day Program and Community Skills clients the area needed.

A HUGE shout-out to our awesome Maintenance person 'Duke' (Kevin Duke) for assisting with all the moves and Roger O'Connor, CSS, for drafting the remodel plans for the Program Building!



More exciting changes to come –we will keep you posted!



Employee Anniversaries

ONE YEAR

Allison Harmon
Nathan Honerkamp
Victoria Williams-Fisher

FOUR YEARS

Jennifer Grotewiel
Amanda Hall

FIVE YEARS

McKenzie Shannon

SIX YEARS

Jennifer Bultena
Millie Rhodes
Tim Gilman

TEN YEARS

Olivia Jacoby

TWELVE YEARS

Angela Schnuriger

TWENTY-TWO YEARS

Michael Robinson

TWENTY-FOUR YEARS

Lacy Wilke

Happy Anniversary!

FRIENDLY FACES

Name: Kelsey Mathews (Community Skills Teacher)

Family and pets? Kelson Phillips (son) Marco (dog)

Favorite vacation? Spending a week in a cabin in the Great Smokey Mountains

Who inspires you? Maya Angelou

What unique talent do you have or hobby? I love to draw

What is the best surprise you have ever received? My son

What is your favorite song? Running out of moonlight- Randy Houser

The movie version of my life should be titled? Crazy/Beautiful

My favorite physical activity is: Hiking

One thing people are surprised to find out about me is: I can sing

If I were a superhero I would be: Black Widow

What are you passionate about? Being the best version of myself

What is your favorite family tradition? Biscuits and gravy on Sunday morning

Pet peeve? When people do not courtesy wave

What is the best meal you have ever had? Red snapper, fried cabbage, and red beans and rice.



Welcome New Trainees!



Sheila Dove - 10.05.2021—Day Program (FT)

Tammy Mathews - 10.25.2021—Residential (FT)

Jamie Chambers - 11.01.2021—Residential (per diem)

Kevin Duke - 11.03.2021—Maintenance (per diem)

Quinton Burks - 11.29.2021—Community Skills Program (FT)

Diana Arseneau - 01.06.2022—Community Skills Program (per diem)

Judith Ebert - 01.31.2022—Day Program (FT)



Congrats DSPs of the 3rd & 4th Quarters!

The DSP of the 3rd Quarter was Olivia Jacoby!

Olivia has worked for Community Opportunities for 10 years as a direct support professional. She is currently a Community Skills Teacher in the Community Skills department, but has also worked in Residential and Day Program. Olivia's wide range of experience within the organization makes her a key player and a huge asset to the organization.

The person who nominated Olivia said that "She demonstrates that she sees value in each individual and conveys that through her interactions with consumers. The mutual affection between her and those she supports is evident."



The DSP of the 4rd quarter of 2021 is Victoria "Tori" Linneman!

Tori has worked for Community Opportunities for just over two years as a direct support professional. She is a Community Skills Teacher in the Day Program, but has also worked in Residential from time-to-time.

Tori is a favorite amongst her coworkers and the individuals she serves. The person who nominated Tori said that "Tori's clients trust in her to support them and to do it in a respectful and well-spoken manner".



Thanks Olivia and Tori for everything you both do to support individuals with disabilities and congratulations on your awards!



**NOW
HIRING**

Our DSP's are **THE BEST!** We are so grateful for our amazing team of DSPs and are currently looking to hire additional DSPs for our Community Services and Residential Services departments. Job postings are on our Facebook page, and interested individuals can apply either directly from our agency webpage at www.commopps.org, or call to schedule a time to complete an application and interview by calling Angela Hager at 636-462-7695 ext. 101.



Hats Off to...

- ★ ... Brady and Jon for bringing back Movie Nights!
- ★ ... Duke for taking care of so many things in recent months, including assisting with office moves and doing an excellent job!
- ★ ... Joanie for throwing away all of the science projects in the admin kitchen!
- ★ ... Angela H. for pulling a dent out of one of the vans! There is nothing you can't do!
- ★ ... All the staff that braved the Blizzard and provided supports throughout Residential! The dedication to your job and the clients we support is outstanding!
- ★ ... Donna O for always thinking out of the box and teaching new skills to the guys at 17!
- ★ ... Cyndy R. & Emily M. for their positive, upbeat personalities that are infectious and inspiring!
- ★ ... The Employment Team for getting things rolling with Job Club and working so well as a team!
- ★ ... Kelsey Mathews for receiving a \$100 referral incentive for referring her mom Tammy who was hired in October!
- ★ ... Roger O'Connor for drafting the plans for the upcoming Program Building remodel!



Upcoming Training & Events

CPI Re-Certification Training, February 15, 2022, 9a-1p, at Troy City Hall

CPI Re-Certification Training, March 16, 3:30p-7:30p at Troy City Hall



Please check your email regularly for automatic Relias required training



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

2nd Wednesday every month 4:30-5:30p Exercise Class in the Sunroom

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.





Equity &

How do we strive toward an Organizational Culture of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion?

The Aorta Consulting firm created a continuum for organizations to assess where they are with promoting EDI in all aspects and levels of the organization and how to move up the continuum.

At the far left of the continuum, an organization is known to be “**Exclusionary**”, which means the company openly maintains white group dominance, overt discrimination practices, exclusion, harassment, hostility, and is generally an unsafe work environment for People of Color (POC).

The next level is the “**Club**” culture, which means the company is white dominant and maintains traditionally held power and influence. Their way is the only way. This culture has a limited number of token POC “allowed”, if they have the right credentials, attitudes, and behaviors.

The third level is the “**Compliance**” culture, which is also dominated by a white majority. POC must assimilate to the organization’s culture, and they are often hired into lower level roles, which doesn’t impact or change the dynamics. The company may have a “race neutral” approach that minimizes/marginalizes differences.

The fourth level is the “**Affirming**” culture. This culture demonstrates a commitment to eliminating discrimination. Some cultural differences are acknowledged and celebrated. They actively recruit, hire and support POC. Staff receive diversity trainings, however, People of Color must still assimilate to a white dominant culture.

The fifth level is the “**Redefining**” culture. This culture is intentional about hiring, developing and retaining POC at all levels. These companies are starting to use a race equity lens to manage their organizations. They create safe space for conversations on race and provide ongoing learning. They engage and empower all staff in redesigning policies, practices and programs with EDI in mind.

The last level is the “**Equitable & Inclusive**” culture. This culture is extremely rare. This culture reflects contributions and interests of POC and acts intentionally to promote racial equity and inclusion. POC can fully express their authentic selves. These companies acknowledges systemic and institutional factors which contribute to oppression and privilege. POC occupy and retain senior leadership and decision-making positions. And these companies actively work internally and across communities to promote race equity and inclusion.

Where do you think our agency falls in the continuum?

Equity and diversity will be a regular feature in our newsletter. Email sonya@commopps.org for comments, feedback or request a topic discussion.

Health & Safety Corner

By Donna Jacobsen, H&S Chairperson

Avoid Winter Slip-ups

Winter months present additional hazards -specifically, slip and fall concerns. You run the risk of taking major falls, which can lead to serious injuries.



PREVENTION

Consider the following to prevent slip and fall injuries during the winter months.

- * Wear the proper footwear that provides traction on snow and ice.
- * Use caution when entering and exiting vehicles, and use the vehicle for balance and support.
- * Take small steps to maintain you center of balance, walk slowly and never run.
- * Use handrails, walls or anything stationary to assist in steadying your feet.
- * Look ahead to the path in front of you to avoid hazards.
- * Dry your shoes or boots on floor mats when entering a building.



Community Service –Day Program Update

In November, Cindy Stanek was promoted to Lead Community Skills Teacher in Day Program!

With the number of clients receiving Day Program services, Cindy agreed to take a lead role and is now supervising 5 staff. She also manages a small caseload of day program clients.

Janelle Ray will remain the Community Skills Specialist overseeing the program as a whole.

Congratulations Cindy on your new role! We know you will do an amazing job...as always.



Spooktacular Fun For Everyone

In October, Angela Ray hosted a Halloween (costume optional) bonfire for our Residential clients and staff. Our Day Program clients and staff joined in the Halloween festivities by dressing up and enjoying festive activities pictured on the following two pages.



HAPPY Halloween

Excellent!



Just like riding a bike...

Ray began sewing at the age of fourteen when he lived at Mill Creek Rehabilitation Center in Mississippi. He learned this skill from a nurse at the rehab center. The first item that Ray sewed was a country western shirt.

“Everything on the shirt was sewed correctly except the pocket, it was a little crooked. “I remember telling people that I needed to go around lopsided so the pocked looked straight” chuckled Ray. Ray continued his new skill making bags and purses for ladies. By far the shirt has been the most difficult thing he made because there are so many pieces in a shirt pattern.

Ray put the needle and thread away while his mother taught him how to crochet. He stuck with what he enjoyed making and crocheted purses, bags and baby blankets.

Recently, Ray’s Life Skills Teacher, Donna O., brought her sewing machine to Ray’s home to alter a few of his pants and rekindled his interest in sewing. After a twenty year break from sewing, Ray now has his own sewing machine and has completed alterations on two pair of his pants.

Ray’s future plans are to complete alterations on the rest of his pants, make a few shirts, wallets, purses and bags, “because you can make anything with a sewing machine!”

A well developed skill , just like riding a bike, you never forget how to do it.



Case Management Update

Johnnie Ruppert is a fifty-eight year old woman living on her own in Troy. She is very independent and her ultimate goal is to remain in her home as long as she is able.

When asked about her hopes and dreams, Johnnie said, "There's a lot of people who believe that disabled people can't have dreams – I'm tired of people thinking that. Put us up against so-called 'normal' people and see how far we can go. We can go the distance and more."



Johnnie has had some health issues the last few years, including two strokes, but she is still going strong and continues to believe that God has a plan! She receives PA support through Help at Home, some self-directed PA, and remote supports through Night Owl.

Night Owl provides a pager button she can use to call for help which she wears on her wrist, a smoke detector that is connected to their system, and a panel she can use to speak to someone at Night Owl any time she may need. She plans to use her Self-Directed PA supports to visit family in Campbell, MO – a town about 3.5-4 hours away. Johnnie would love to see her family in person more often, but she wouldn't be able to see them at all if it weren't for her Waiver services and her PA staff.

Art with Josh



Curtis in action, learning a bit about using background colors to set a "mood". The zombie theme was by artist request & Curtis certainly did a great job expressing his artistic view in his painting!

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



Busy, Busy Bees in Employment!

Things sure have been Buzzing in the Employment Department the past few months. We had 4 new clients start the employment process. We look forward to assisting them plan their journey towards successful employment. We were also VERY happy to welcome Brian Scott back as a full-time Employment Specialist in January!



Caleb started his first job in November at Troy Walmart as a Cashier! Abraham started his new job at Mercy Hospital Lincoln, where he is working as an Environmental Service Tech.

We also had an individual start their first job at Slim Chickens in Troy, MO. Great Job to all 3 of you! We know you all will achieve great things!

In the month of December, James and Vickie successfully completed their 90 days of Independent Employment. Vickie works as a Cashier at Wentzville Walmart, and James works at Daddy Ray's/Ronstadt-Moscow Mills. Congratulations to you both!

A continued thank you to local businesses, for example, Sonic, Pizza Hut, Walmart, Slim Chickens, Mercy Hospital Lincoln, for all your support!

Thank
you!

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: dala@commopps.org or ext. 150.

November brings... a Thanksgiving Feast!



Healthy Living



The 19th surgeon general of the United States, Dr. Vivek Murthy explains in his book, *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*, that loneliness has become a major public health concern and is the root cause and contributor to the many epidemics effecting millions of people across the globe, from alcohol and drug addiction, to violence, depression and anxiety and obesity. He cites many studies which have validated that loneliness is not just affecting our health, but how our children experience school, how we perform in the workplace, and the division and polarization in our society. He recommends these 4 strategies to combat our increasingly isolating society:

- 1) Spend time each day with those you love. Devote at least 15 minutes each day to connecting with those you most care about.
- 2) Focus on each other. Forget about multitasking and give the other person the gift of your full attention, making eye contact, if possible, and genuinely listening.
- 3) Embrace solitude. The first step toward building stronger connections with others is to build a stronger connection with oneself. Meditation, prayer, art, music, and time spent outdoors can all be sources of solitary comfort and joy.
- 4) Help and be helped. Service is a form of human connection that reminds us of our value and purpose in life. Checking on a neighbor, seeking advice, even just offering a smile to a stranger six feet away, all can make us stronger.

Together, we can overcome adversity and conquer the most difficult obstacles!