



CHRISTMAS AT HOME

CELEBRATING TOGETHER ACROSS OUR RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

Across our Residential Program, the holiday season was marked by meaningful moments as individuals celebrated Christmas Day together in the homes they share.

Christmas celebrations reflected the importance of stability and shared traditions. Whether enjoying a special meal, opening gifts, or spending quiet time together, the day centered on togetherness. These moments, while often modest, carry deep significance and help create lasting memories.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the Residential staff who worked throughout the holidays to support these celebrations. By showing up—especially on holidays—you make it possible for traditions to continue and for the individuals we support to experience the season with dignity and joy.

Steven, Ray, and Jim shared another joyful Christmas Day together (pictured right).

Thank you to all Residential teams for your continued commitment, professionalism, and care. Your work makes a difference every day—and especially during moments that matter most.



NATIONAL
DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT
AWARENESS MONTH

October marked National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), and we were proud to celebrate by highlighting several of our amazing clients on our Facebook page. We also recognized the Elsberry School District with our Employer Award for their outstanding partnership and continued support of Cauy, who has been thriving in his role there for the past two years.



The Employment Team and Cauy
honoring his employer, Elsberry School District!



Jeramy working on the job!

This quarter brought exciting growth within D&E Services as we welcomed six new individuals: Aryanna, Hunter, Lacey, Maria, Ricky, and Sam. We also celebrated four individuals who successfully completed their 90-day employment milestones. And a special congratulations goes to Jeramy, who began a new position with the Lincoln County Health Department. Way to go everyone!



 **DID YOU KNOW?**

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), celebrated in October, began in 1945 as "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week," evolving from a focus on physical disabilities to include all disabilities, becoming a month-long observance in 1988, and now promotes the value and contributions of workers with disabilities to the American workforce. Administered by the [U.S. Department of Labor's](#) Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), NDEAM encourages inclusive practices and celebrates the talent of individuals with disabilities through annual themes.

<https://guides.loc.gov/national-disability-employment-awareness-month/legislative-history-overview>

CASE MANAGEMENT

Sonya DeMerchant
Director of Case Management



Highlighting Samantha L.



This is Samantha, sitting in her new P-Pod Postural Support beanbag chair. She is a 15-year-old girl who lives with her family in Troy and attends the Ninth Grade Center three days a week. Samantha loves school and enjoys being around other kids. Samantha has complex medical needs and due to the limitations of Medicaid, she only receives the minimum equipment and supplies to cover her very basic needs. However, during the holidays, a family reached out to Community Opportunities and asked if somebody could use their daughter's equipment they'd like to donate. They had a new-used electric, cordless Hoyer lift and accessories, a Tub seat, a P-Pod and other equipment. Needless to say, Samantha's mother was ecstatic

when the equipment was delivered. Her current Hoyer lift was too big to easily transfer Samantha from her bed to the bathroom and couldn't get through the door frames. Before getting the portable lift, her mother had to transfer Samantha from bed to her wheelchair, and then wheelchair to her shower chair; or she would just carry her and risk back injury over and over. Her new lift is a Godsend, thanks to the kind generosity of strangers!



In Memory of Joey Genzling

It is with great sadness that we share the passing of Joey Genzling, who passed unexpectedly on Tuesday, November 3, 2025. Joey had been part of the Community Opportunities family since 1983, beginning in House 1 (now 17 Opportunity Ct.) and later moving into Community Skills services.

A dedicated worker, Joey spent 43 years at Earthwise Industries, taking pride in his role as a fork-lift driver. He was also an avid bowler, loved hosting BBQs, and enjoyed attending the Lincoln County Fair. Joey was a friend to many, and his warmth and friendship will be deeply missed.

His kindness and friendship will be remembered by all who knew him.





A Multi-Generational Workforce and Artificial Intelligence

I am an embarrassingly proud member of AARP. It's the Over-50 Club that sends out a great monthly magazine to its members and provides lots of useful tips and resources and studies about aging. The name of the club – American Association of Retired Persons - is a misnomer.

Many of our members are not planning to retire until they're well into their 70s; some because they can't afford to and others because working gives them a sense of meaning, productivity and extra spending money. As a result, we now have 5 generations of people working together! By 2022, over 35% of the "essential" workforce was over the age of 50, and the percentage continues to rise every year.

At Community Opportunities, we have a diverse age range of employees. Many of our younger employees are adept at technology and will likely adjust and embrace the movement toward the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the workplace with ease. While our older employees - maybe not so much. If you were born in or before the 1970's, you might have seen episodes of the Outer Limits, The Twilight Zone or Star Trek that took pages out of Science Fiction writer, Isaac Asimov's short stories. They depicted fictional, human-like androids in various forms being taught to behave and think like human beings, and in dramatic, cinematic fashion, discussed the legal and ethical implications. That was some scary stuff!

And, that fear of AI hasn't gone away for many people. Nor has age discrimination in the workplace, despite organizations like ours that have a clear anti-discrimination policy against agism. One AARP report, in reference to the 1967 Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), found that older workers believe that age discrimination should be taken just as seriously as other forms of discrimination. I spoke to one supervisor who said they observed a younger staff question why an older staff completed a task differently than they did. The obvious reason is because they were taught differently when they started working, and their way makes the most sense and works for them. **The new way isn't necessarily the right or only way.** However, it's a proven fact that AI has the potential for increasing everyone's efficiency with documentation, and using the Setworks AI program protects our risk of violating HIPAA. It may take some extra time to learn a new system or process, but it could be worth the effort in the end.

Another point that needs to be made is despite the challenges a generationally diverse workforce brings, it also brings all of these benefits:

"Both younger and older workers are more productive when they work in companies that have mixed-age teams compared to companies without mixed-age teams... Age-diverse teams generate better discussions, analysis and problem-solving. Age-diverse teams mirror the perspectives of an age-diverse customer base. Recruiting across a wide range of ages helps stabilize the workforce and slow turnover. Retaining older workers preserves your knowledge base and allows time for knowledge transfer to occur on the job. And fostering intergenerational connections signals to younger workers that they will continue to be valued as they age."

The point of this brief article is to say that with an ongoing expansion of an aging workforce competing with younger bodies and minds, we need to be mindful of communicating with each generation in the way that is most effective for them.

Contact Sonya for information on more great resources and trainings provided by AARP on "Creating an Age-Inclusive Workforce".



'Tis The Season For Viral Illness

If you see your Primary Care Provider for an upper respiratory illness , you may not receive an antibiotic. Antibiotics are only for bacterial infections, such as pneumonia, and will not help with colds, flu or most sore throats.

So, what can you do to help with those viral symptoms?

Here are a few tips:

- Drink Plenty Of Fluids- Water, juice, clear broth or warm lemon water are good choices. Avoid caffeine and alcohol, which can dehydrate you.
- Rest- If possible, stay home from work or school if you have a fever or a bad cough, or are drowsy after taking medications. This will give you a chance to rest and reduce the chances you'll infect others.
- Adjust Your Rooms Temperature and Humidity- Keep your room warm but not overheated. If the air is dry, a cool-mist humidifier or vaporizer can moisten the air and help ease congestion and coughing. Keep the humidifier clean to prevent the growth of bacteria and molds.
- Soothe Your Throat- Perform a saltwater gargle. Dissolve one-quarter to a half teaspoon of salt in a 4- to 8-ounce glass of warm water. This can relieve a sore or scratchy throat temporarily.
- Use Saline Nose Drops- To help relieve nasal congestion, try saline nasal drops. You can buy these drops over the counter, and they can help relieve symptoms
- Take Over The Counter Cold and Cough Medicine- For adults and children older than 5, over-the-counter decongestants, antihistamines and pain relievers might offer some symptom relief. However, they won't prevent a cold or shorten its duration, and most have some side effects. Experts agree you shouldn't give these medications to younger children. Overuse and misuse of cold and cough medications can cause serious damage.



Even though colds are usually minor, they can make you feel miserable. It's tempting to try the latest remedy, but the best thing you can do is take care of yourself. Rest, drink fluids and keep the air around you moist. Remember to wash your hands frequently.

Learn more about us at
www.commopps.org

and follow us on

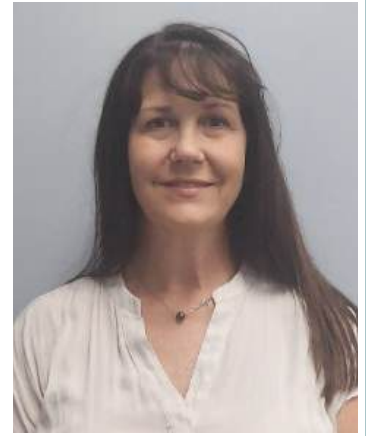


Our offices and
Community Services
will be closed on

President's Day

February 16, 2026





Curriculum SharePoint

As we step into the new year, we're excited to introduce a fresh approach to sharing resources from the **Curriculum Community Team**. In December, our team completed training on **Microsoft SharePoint**, a powerful platform designed to streamline communication and collaboration across the agency.

What is SharePoint? SharePoint is a secure, web-based solution hosted by Microsoft that serves as a centralized hub for storing, organizing, and sharing information. It replaces traditional file servers and integrates seamlessly with other Microsoft 365 tools like **Teams** and **Word**, enabling real-time co-authoring and smooth workflows. Think of it as a shared digital workspace where teams can collaborate, access files, and stay informed through features like news posts, lists, and custom pages.

What's Changing? The Curriculum Community Team will now upload and maintain all created materials on the **Curriculum SharePoint site**. This site will serve as a go-to resource for curriculum content and updates.

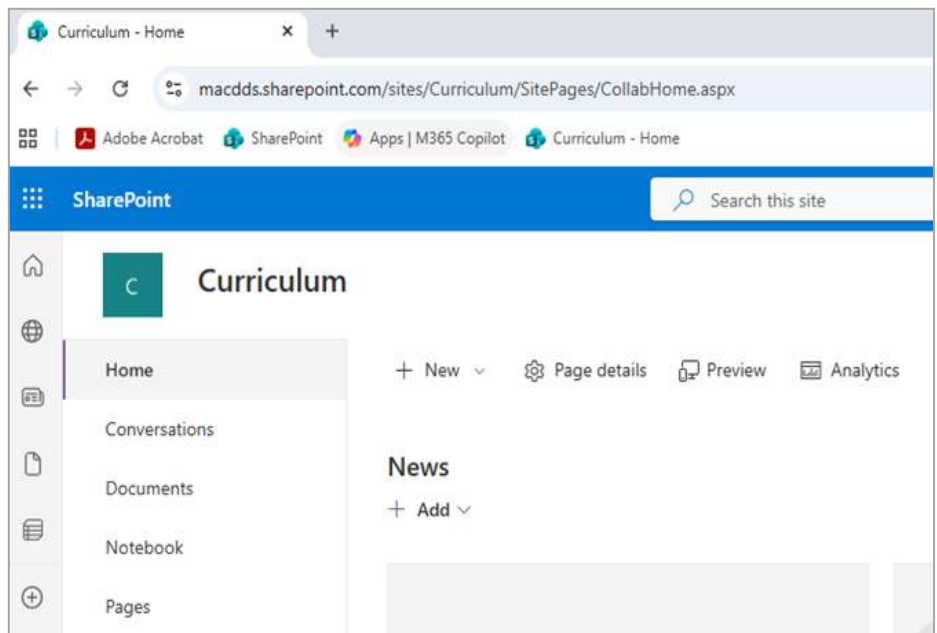
But that's not all—the site also includes a **group email inbox**, making it easier than ever to connect with the Curriculum Community. If you need ideas, guidance, or support, simply email **curriculum@commopps.org** with your request. Every inquiry will be reviewed by the team and responded to promptly, ensuring you have the assistance you need when you need it.

Why This Matters

This new process is designed to:

- **Centralize resources** for easy access
- **Enhance collaboration** across teams
- **Provide quick support** for curriculum-related questions

We're thrilled to offer this improved system and look forward to working together to make curriculum resources more accessible and effective for everyone.





The DSP of the 4th Quarter of 2025 is Kalista (Kali) Dunlap!

Kali is a newer DSP, working in Day Program since July. She quickly settled into her role as a DSP and is a natural!

The person who nominated Kali said, "Kali has been a breath of fresh air! She is creative, caring, proactive, fun, and an amazing coworker! Kali doesn't just talk about ideas, she takes action and makes it happen. She takes the time to really listen and get to know the clients' personalities and needs. She's a rockstar!"

Congratulations Kali and thank you for all that you do to support individuals with disabilities!



Congratulations to **Madison Borden** for earning the \$250 Employee Referral Incentive for referring Kalista Dunlap!

Congratulations to **Cyndy Reynolds** as well, who will receive the referral incentive for referring Heidi Stone!

A BIG SHOUT OUT to **Kalista** and **Heidi** on successfully completing your 3-month trainee orientation period!

Reminder: Our employees are our best recruiters! You can earn a \$250 incentive when a referral is hired and completes their initial 3-month/520-hour trainee period. Feel free to share our hiring posts on Facebook and remind applicants to list you as their referral.

We're **HIRING**, and your referrals make a difference—thank you for helping our team grow!

Employee Anniversaries

Lauren Brooksher, 1

Cameron Huddleston, 1

Dustyn Briggs, 2+

Mary Mitts, 2

Paul Arseneau, 3

Quinton Burks, 4

Jamie Chambers, 4

Allison Harmon, 5

Nathan Honerkamp, 5

Jenny Grotewiel, 8

McKenzie Aubuchon, 9

Jennifer Bultena, 10

Tim Gilman, 10

Angela Schnuriger, 16

Mike Robinson, 26

We are thrilled to celebrate this quarter's work anniversaries and recognize the outstanding commitment of our team members. Each of you bring unique skills, dedication, and passion and we appreciate your hard work!

Hats Off to...

... Jerry for jumping right in and taking initiative. Your efficiency, strong skills, are greatly appreciated!

... Madison G. for making delicious homemade meals and treats for your team! So good! Your extra care attention to detail and your generosity make a difference!

... Angela H. for all that you do behind the scenes, selflessly working to make things better for the rest of us - you're amazing! Thank you for organizing the agency shirt orders, cutting the drywall, setting up special breakfasts, and for everything you do!

... Kelsey C. for all of your hard work coordinating the Halloween party! Your effort and dedication made it a great success—thank you!

... Jason for giving an incredible motivational speech to CS Staff during Flex Day! Your message is inspiring!

... Dustyn for helping Jason prepare for his speech and for being such a supportive friend!

... Jane for encouraging our agency to make better use of the apps and AI tools available to us!

... Grace H. for bringing a consistently cheerful disposition each and every day. Her positive attitude, kindness, and welcoming presence make a meaningful difference for those around her and contribute greatly to our workplace!

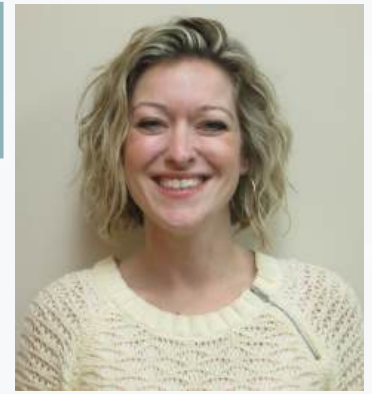
... Gina who on her day off (Saturday) received a message from a client who needed help with a very difficult situation. Gina spent many hours helping her client navigate police interviews and housing referrals, and on the following Monday, she was able to get her client - who was suddenly without housing - into the Bridge of Hope Shelter. Pray that Gina is successful with getting residential services approved, while her client is successful complying with the many rules at the shelter!

Hats Off to each of you for making a difference!

Do you know someone who deserves a "Hats Off" recognition?

Email your anonymous nominations to ebony@commopps.org and we'll feature them in our next newsletter!





Winter Travel Preparedness Checklist

As winter weather sets in, it's essential to make sure your vehicle is ready for cold temperatures, snow, and ice when traveling. Being prepared can help prevent breakdowns and keep you safe during unexpected conditions. Here's a simple checklist to ensure your vehicle is winter ready, especially if you are traveling a distance.

Check Your Tires

- Ensure tires have adequate tread depth.
- Consider switching to winter tires for better traction.
- Check tire pressure regularly—cold weather can lower it.

Inspect Your Battery

- Cold temperatures reduce battery power.
- Test your battery and replace it if it's weak.

Top Off Fluids

- Antifreeze/coolant levels should be sufficient.
- Use windshield washer fluid rated for freezing temperatures.

Examine Wipers and Lights

- Replace worn wiper blades for clear visibility.
- Make sure all lights are working for safe driving in low visibility.

Pack an Emergency Kit

- Blanket, gloves, and warm clothing.
- Ice scraper and snow brush.
- Jumper cables, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Non-perishable snacks and bottled water.
- Basic first-aid kit.

Keep Your Fuel Tank Full

- Helps prevent fuel line freeze and ensures you have enough fuel if stranded.

Check Heating and Defrost Systems

- Ensure cabin heat and window defrosters are working properly.



Store a compact shovel, traction aids (sand or kitty litter), and a phone charger in your vehicle—small items that make a big difference in winter.

Welcome Our New Team Members!

We are excited to introduce our newest team members! Please join us in giving them a warm welcome as they embark on this new journey with us.

Jerry Krause, 10.15.2025
Maintenance

Miranda Ponce, 12.02.2025
Community Skills Teacher

N O W
HIRING

3rd Shift
Direct Support Professionals

Apply at:
[@commopps](https://www.instagram.com/commopps)



FRIENDLY FACES

Meet Madi Graff!

Madi is a Life Skills Teacher at Community Opportunities and has been part of the team since August. She has two siblings and two step-siblings, and although she doesn't have pets of her own, she's a big animal lover. Madi draws inspiration from her college cohort and truly values the meaningful connections she built during that time.



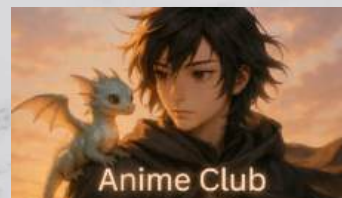
One of her favorite vacations was a trip to Disney World. Madi has a creative side and enjoys arts, crafts, and drawing in her free time. When she's not creating, you'll often find her going for walks or hiking and enjoying the outdoors.

Madi has a strong passion for social work and enjoys learning other languages—something that often surprises people! She is currently working on a Communicative Thai certificate. While she doesn't have just one favorite quote or song (there are simply too many great ones), her favorite meal is butter chicken.

If she ever won the lottery, Madi would love to travel the world. Her favorite family tradition is wrapping presents with her mom, and her biggest pet peeve is being interrupted.

Madi's favorite thing about working at Community Opportunities is how supportive the people and environment are. She also finds great joy in watching her clients grow and learn new things. We're so glad to have Madi as part of the Community Opportunities team!

CLUBS & ACTIVITIES



Join us for our fantastic clubs and activities!

There's something for everyone, so don't miss out! Be sure to check our monthly activities calendar on our Facebook page for dates and times. Space is limited, so RSVP to your CLS, CSS, or Case Manager to save your spot and join the fun! Support staff is not provided during classes or clubs. If you need assistance a support person will need to attend with you.