

THE REM  
IOWA VOICE

November 2012

# TEAM DSP



...OUR HEROES!



**Lisa Pakkebieer**  
Executive Director

# In Celebration!

The 2012 National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week was

September 9 – 15. In celebration and in honor of our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) across Iowa I would like to take this opportunity to send each and every DSP (this includes all positions that have a direct care component) a heartfelt *thank you!* Your ongoing dedication, support, and commitment are to be commended. Thank you for all that you do to support the individuals in our services and for the tremendous difference you make in their lives each and every day. Without a dedicated direct support workforce we would be unable to fulfill our mission – “We enhance quality of life today and inspire hope for tomorrow by teaching independent living skills to people through a continuum of quality services”. You are the backbone of our organization.

The families, guardians, and individuals who allow us the privilege of taking care of their loved ones or themselves put a significant amount of confidence and trust in our organization as well as in each and every employee. They are putting the life of their loved one or their life in our hands. This is a tremendous responsibility and one that we do not, and cannot, take lightly. We recognize the vital role of DSPs in fulfilling this commitment.

While reflecting on this past year and the importance of the members of our team that provide direct care, I think not only of the people who are with us today, but also about the people, both employees and those receiving services, that are no longer with us. Not only do we, as employees, have an impact on the individuals in our services, but they also have an impact on us. With that, I would like to share with you a portion of a eulogy that a staff wrote at the request of family and from the perspective of the consumer.

*“I cannot say for sure, but I think if Deb were able to write a letter telling us about her life it would go something like this:*

*‘I want to thank you for helping make my life beautiful and fulfilling. I couldn’t have had the life I had without you. You and I saw my disabilities as a blessing and not a hindrance and we didn’t let them stop me from being*

*and doing the things that everyone else did. You gave me hope and fulfilled my dreams and aspirations. You allowed me to have all my boyfriends (Jerry, Duane, Roger, Rob, Jeff, Ishmael) to name a few. You allowed me to imagine being married to (Michael, Forpah, AJ) to name a few. You allowed me to reminisce about wanting babies and to feel what it’s like to hold one. I got to be a girlie girl and color my hair, paint my nails, wear pretty clothes, and have slumber parties. I got to go on picnics, run through the splash pad, and yell at people when, “I wanted” them! I got to dance, listen to my favorite shows and musicals (like House, Family Guy, Glee, Grease, Footloose, Dirty Dancing to name a few) and to listen to my favorite music that made me the happiest. People would put aside their bashfulness and read me racy and very grown up books and I really enjoyed those moments when I could escape and listen. I lived with seven other people who are truly amazing and unique and even though it may have seemed like we didn’t always get along I know they love me and I love them. Why else would Julie sit outside my bedroom door quietly when I was about to leave this world waiting with me or why would Greg use sign language to show tears rolling down his cheeks and kiss his “I love you” hand sign and then bend over and gently kiss my chin. I even felt what it was like to have someone hold me when I was the most scared and make me feel better because they crawled up beside me in my bed and told me I would be okay and it was okay to let go. I laughed, I cried, I stood on mountain tops, and at times I felt like I could soar like an eagle. For all of this, I am thankful for each of you. Thank you, Lori, for standing by me and being there for me. The bracelet you gave me that said “No One Fights Alone” was my inspiration because I knew I could count on you and my REM family to see me through no matter what. Please remember me and keep me nestled away in your hearts for when you need to laugh, or when you need a moment of reflection on what is important in life, or when you need a good cry, but know that I loved my life, I am no longer in pain, and I am in the arms of the REM individuals and coworkers who you may have seen pass on before me. We have been reunited in love and spirit and will watch over you all every day. My friend Michael sent you the rain following my passing to let you all know he still loves a rainy night and that I am safe and with him now. I know you miss me and that it hurts, but know my life was good and even now it is good.*

(Continued from page 1)

*My crown of jewels here is bigger than I am and I have named each jewel after each of you so you will never be forgotten. Thank you again for the laughter, the good times and the not so good times, and most of all your forever love. Godspeed to you all!*

*Love, Debra"*

To our workforce: Thank you for the tremendous difference that you make in the lives of others and the important work you do each day in support of our mission. To the families and guardians of the individuals that we support, thank you for putting your trust in us and allowing us the privilege to support your loved one.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of REM – a milestone made possible by the dedication and commitment of our workforce. I urge you to provide us on-going feedback as we look forward to working together to be the best we can be as individuals and as an organization – for each other and for the individuals and families we serve.

I dedicate this article to our workforce and to the consumers that were once with us and have since passed away. We are so very thankful for you, for the time we had with you, and for the difference you made. You have enriched our lives and our hearts and we are better today because of you and all that you have taught us.



SEPTEMBER 9TH-15TH WAS DESIGNATED DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL WEEK AND REM IOWA JOINED IN THIS CELEBRATION WITH GIFT CARDS, T-SHIRTS, FOOD DAYS AND NUMEROUS OTHER ACTIVITIES TO HELP SHOW THANKS TO THE MOST IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE REM TEAM: THE DSP. WITHOUT THE DEDICATED DIRECT SUPPORT FROM ALL DSPS, REM WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE THE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES THAT THEY ARE KNOWN FOR. REM BELIEVES THAT THEIR DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK IN DIRECT CARE SHOULD BE VALUED, SUPPORTED AND RECOGNIZED FOR A JOB WELL DONE. WITHOUT A DEDICATED DIRECT SUPPORT WORKFORCE, ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS OURS WOULD BE UNABLE TO PROVIDE COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES TO THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

TO CELEBRATE DSP WEEK 2012 AND THANK OUR DIRECT SUPPORT WORKFORCE, EACH OFFICE WAS GIVEN THE CHOICE OF HOW TO SHOW THEIR APPRECIATION FOR THEIR DSPS. THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF SOME OF THE RECOGNITION THAT OFFICES SHOWED TO THEIR DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS.

- CORALVILLE RICS PROVIDED A CATERED LUNCH DURING TRAINING
- HIAWATHA RICS, CORALVILLE ICF AND CORALVILLE RICS PROVIDED HAND WRITTEN NOTES AND GIFT CARDS
- REM SHELBY PROVIDED 24OZ INSULATED TUMBLERS AT THEIR SEPTEMBER HOUSE MEETINGS
- REM COUNCIL BLUFFS PROVIDED A T-SHIRT
- REM IOWA DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES, IN AVOCA AND ADEL RECOGNIZED THEIR DSPS WITH SOMETHING DIFFERENT FOR EACH DAY OF THE WEEK, RANGING FROM BREAKFAST AND LUNCH, THANK-YOU NOTES, T-SHIRTS AND A CANDY GRAM...



ON BEHALF OF REM IOWA, THE INDIVIDUALS WE SERVE, AND FAMILY MEMBERS, A BIG THANK YOU TO EACH DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL. YOUR DEDICATION TO IMPROVING THE LIVES OF THE INDIVIDUALS WE SERVE IS INSPIRING AND MUCH APPRECIATED. YOU ARE ALL TRULY

**"SUPER HEROES"!!**

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DSP WEEK, VISIT

**[NADSP.ORG!!](http://NADSP.ORG!!)**

By: Matt Hidlebaugh, Area Director, RICS – Hiawatha

# HOST HOMES ARE HAPPENING!!!

By: Monica Ravn, Program Manager

We are excited to let you know that we are currently supporting four individuals in four Mentor host homes in the Cedar Rapids area!

We would like to briefly introduce you to the individuals and Mentors:

Chris Irish & Mentors Ashley & Tim Woodward were featured in our first REM Iowa newsletter as they were our first match! All continue to do well! Chris and the Woodwards have had a busy summer by swimming, walking, attending Camp Badger for a week in Wisconsin, horse-back riding at Miracles in Motion and taking two vacations to Wichita, Kansas.

Aaron Stych & Mentors Jerry & Kathy Eggert moved in together on May 21. Aaron actually met his Mentor Jerry on his birthday and knew this was 'meant to be'. Aaron has enjoyed spending quality 1:1 with his Mentors, their two adult children and their boys. Aaron is very proud of his accomplishments of being healthy by losing over 35 lbs in about three months as well as decreasing his smoking.

Debbie Vopalka & Mentors Kelly & Brad Pedersen moved in together on May 29. Debbie and Mentor Kelly knew each other for several years as they both work at Options of Linn County. Debbie has always wanted to live with dogs and now lives with two dogs - Wyatt & Chloe! Debbie has enjoyed 'mothering' Leah and Aubrey, twin 17-year olds of Mentors Kelly and Brad. Debbie enjoys time with her Mentors but also enjoys her four hours of alone time per day. She is already looking forward to having more alone time as well as being able to walk Wyatt by herself someday soon!

Mason Hamann & Mentors Suzanne & Brian Revers moved in together on August 20 just in time for school! Mason enjoys spending time with Suzanne and Brian as well as their children, Andy and Dawson and the family dog Baxter. Mason has

wanted a Mentor host home for quite a while and has waited very

patiently for a perfect match. Mason is having lots of new experiences already including being a student at Prairie Transition Center located on Kirkwood Community College campus. Mason is most excited about having more freedom!

We have five additional Mentor host homes approved and awaiting a match! Please check out more information about our host home program and Mentors at [www.remiowa.com](http://www.remiowa.com) or call Monica at (319) 393-1944 ext. 58.



Chris and the Woodwards



Aaron Stych



Front row: Dawson & Mentor Suzanne Back row: Andy, Mason, Mentor Brian & Baxter










**CLASS OF SERVICE**  
This is a fast message unless its deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.

**WESTERN IOWAN CANDYGRAM**  
W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT SF-1201 (4-60)

**SYMBOLS**  
DL = Day Letter  
NL = Night Letter  
LT = International Letter Telegram

The filing time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is LOCAL TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is LOCAL TIME at point of destination. 5 AM 11 57

THANK YOU FOR BEING A SWEET DSP!

YOU DESERVE  EVERY  FOR ALL THAT YOU DO AND THE  YOU PLAY IN OUR CLIENTS' LIVES. STRESSFUL TIMES ARE  IN THIS LINE OF WORK. SO THE NEXT TIME YOU WANT TO MAKE LIKE  AND RUN HOME,  AND REFLECT ON THE  YOU ARE HERE AND THE  YOU GET FROM WORKING WITH THE CLIENTS' . EVEN WHEN YOUR SUPERVISORS ARE  OR YOU THINK YOU ARE WORKING WITH A BUNCH OF .

Above: REM Iowa Developmental Service's CandyGram DSP Heroes, from pg. 2 and on cover (L to R): Ayube "AJ" Jiru, Carol Frazier, Josh Ludley, Rachel Hartman, Shunta Bryant and Bobbie Bickford

# Rock your BLOCK Off... in "The Vern"

By: Marcia McLaud, Program Director, RICS – Hiawatha, and Kara Foster, Program Director, RDS – Coralville

Mount Vernon battled the summer heat by throwing a block party for individuals, families, and staff.



Everyone enjoyed the food, games, and karaoke. The scorching temperatures definitely made the dunk tank the hit of the party.

The shaded karaoke tent was a popular gathering spot for many as Britney Spears, Boyz II Men, Michael Jackson, and many more blared from the speakers.

The summer party could not have been possible without the help of many donations from That's



Edertainment, Lacy Busenbark, The Gazette, Shelly Albers, A1 Rental, Rainbow Supper Club, Taco Bell, McDonald's, Steve & Sheryl Shaw, and Dean & Kendra Neuroth. Thank you to the many staff who volunteered their time to make the party a success, and especially Kelly Neuroth, who was bribed into the dunk tank by her parent's gracious \$100 donation.



# We -- Love a Parade!

By: Jill Anstey, Program Director, ICF/ID – Shelby/Council Bluffs

On July 12, 2012, several staff and individuals from REM Iowa's location in Shelby participated in the Shelby County Fair parade. The theme of the event was "It's a Family Affair". REM staff created a float within this theme to promote REM's mission and recruit interested applicants. The "REM Iowa, It's a Family Affair: Come join our Family" float was brightly decorated by all involved and everyone had a great time. Amanda Adkins, Home Manager, was quoted as saying, "It was fun and everyone had fun, it was a very good parade and experience!"

**Opposite Page - Track and Field Header: Back row:** Ashley Franks, DSP; Katy Todd, DSP; Hanna Dickerson, DSP and Sheresa Hampton, LDSP. **Front row:** Mary Elam, Becky Hare and Ricky Grimes LIFT-ALL

**Pictured from left to right:**

Kathie Pitt, John Sheldon, Becky Hare, Amanda Adkins, Mary Elam, Chris Neri, Sheresa Hampton and Charlys Folk.



# THE SPORTS PAGE



By: Jill Anstey, Program Director, ICF/ID  
- Shelby/Council Bluffs

The 26th annual REM Iowa Track and Field Day was held on September 8, 2012, at REM Iowa's location in Shelby, IA. Track and Field Day has been a long time favorite for individuals receiving services and staff, alike. Track and Field Day started in 1986, due to the combined effort of staff and supervisors that were working at the time. The games were held at the Shelby Elementary School for many years. Historically, surrounding communities have joined in the fun, other facilities such as Glenwood Resource Center and Concerned, Inc. in Harlan sent participants.



The day's events included a 50 and 100 yard walk/run, softball throw, soccer kick, ring toss, water balloon toss, Norwegian golf, free throw competition, and football throw. Event participants came from surrounding communities such as; Council Bluffs, Avoca, Atlantic, Adel, and Urbandale. The events started at 9:30 a.m. and concluded with lunch and an awards ceremony. All the track stars received a gold medallion for their participation. Colored ribbons were provided to 1st through 6th place event winners. The audience roared with applause as each participant was called to receive their awards.



**REM Iowa Developmental Services** will soon be opening the doors to a new Vocational site at 2761 Oakdale Blvd in Coralville. Please contact **Kara Foster**, Program Director for more information at: (319) 665-2440 or [kara.foster@thementornetwork.com](mailto:kara.foster@thementornetwork.com)

## COMING SOON - FALL 2012!!



It's Tuesday in early summer. In the ICF part of the world you see staff and individuals dressed in blue and yellow. You hear people asking "What time is the game tonight?" or "Which diamond do we play on?", and you can feel a sense of excitement in the air. That can only mean one thing... Rockstar

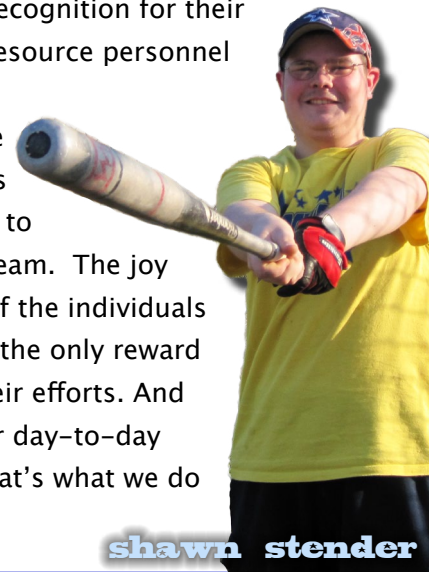
Softball! In 2007, REM Iowa joined the Unified Softball League through the Cedar Rapids Park and Recreation Department. This league gives our individuals an opportunity to play ball alongside their staff. We have experienced great turn out of people wanting to play, or to just come watch some live sports action.

REM Iowa has improved greatly over the years as every at bat, every sprint toward first base, and every attempt to catch or throw the ball was met with enthusiastic cheering. We adopted the phrase "we won because we played!" And this year that phrase took a new meaning as the Rockstars went undefeated!

### rockstar EFFORT

By: Kerri Neil, QA Specialist,  
ICF/ID - Hiawatha

At the end of each season a party is held, where pizza is devoured and every single participant receives recognition for their contribution. From resource personnel to direct care and vocational staff, there are plenty of folks willing to pitch in to help out for the team. The joy on the faces of the individuals we support is the only reward offered for their efforts. And just like in our day-to-day operations, that's what we do it for.



REM Iowa has always looked to recognize and thank its employees, especially those that have reached significant years of service milestones (10, 15, 20 years, etc. in 5 year increments). Since 2000, REM Iowa has held biennial service recognition banquets in Cedar Rapids and Council Bluffs to honor these employees.

This year's service recognition banquet for REM Iowa employees based out of eastern Iowa programs took place on October 3, 2012 at A Touch of Class in Cedar Rapids. The western Iowa programs banquet took place on October 11, 2012 at Pizza King in Council Bluffs. Everyone gathered at their banquet sites and enjoyed a lovely dinner and award ceremony. It is traditional that following each banquet's meal, the employees are recognized individually. A tribute to each employee is provided by their direct supervisor or a peer that has worked with them. Those in attendance get to hear heart-warming and possibly humorous stories involving each of the employees being recognized along with recognition for their many years of service and accomplishments at REM Iowa.

# Employee Recognition

Some of the more memorable moments included; Julie Fox, Program Coordinator, providing an entertaining story about Patricia Duncan's 10 years of service that had the whole room laughing or Kim Larimer's heart-tugging recognition for 15 years of service provided by Kerri Neil, REM Iowa QA Specialist, which left few dry eyes at the banquet. Each employee being recognized is provided a certificate for their particular milestone and commensurate gift.

A total of 35 employees were recognized across the state for their contributions and meeting the various years of service milestones, not all of which attended a banquet. This banquet is our way of saying thank you to those that have made a career of providing service to others. In today's fast-paced world with ever-changing employment opportunities, it is a rare gift to have so many employees that are dedicating themselves to the success of our organization and the people we serve.

By: Jill Anstey, Program Director, ICF/ID – Shelby/Council Bluffs



For **30 years** of service – Mark Jensen – Maintenance Specialist

For **25 years** of service – Janet Watson-Weiderman – Direct Support Professional (DSP)

For **20 years** of service – Diosdada “Dada” Graham – DSP, June Love – DSP/CMA, Lisa Pakkebieer – Executive Director, Michelle Wilson – Maintenance Worker

For **15 years** of service – Christine Bengel – DSP, Cynthia Dalen – DSP, Amber Glasscock – Area Director, Kim Larimer – Nursing Director, Shiela Malloy – DSP/CMA, Deborah Seikora – Utilization Review Coordinator

For **10 years** of service – Patrick Costigan – Regional Director, April De Gala, Program Director (PD), Sara Drish – Area Director, Patricia Duncan – DSP, Krista Ehm – DSP/CMA, Erin Evans – Program Coordinator (PC), Julie Ely – DSP, Alice “Jean” Gisel – Client Financial Specialist, Barbra Harvey – PC, Karen Hiemstra – DSP, Sandra Higdon – DSP, Kathy Hoegh – Administrative Assistant, Teresa Kensett – DSP, Linda Klein – DSP, Patricia Lefler – PD, Vicki Lewis – PC, Connie Lunning – PC, Tonya Mahon – DSP, Stephen Michener – DSP, Kim Milligan – DSP, Renee Petersen – DSP, Barbara Stouder – DSP, Alexis Velazquez – DSP, Tracy Walder – Administrative Assistant, June Walker – DSP



By: Anne Sopousek, Program Director  
ICF/ID – Hiawatha

Losing people in your life is never easy. Losing people that you work with and that you provide services too, can be even more difficult. Recently, REM Iowa lost two very special people.

Jeanene Cummings was a long-term veteran employee that provided almost 23 years of service to the REM Iowa Daleview facility. For most of her time, she held the 6am – 2pm position. Jeanene was extremely dedicated to the individuals residing at Daleview and her years of knowledge and expertise were vital to all who lived and worked with her. Jeanene was known for always having a smile on her face and could often be overheard discussing the many successes of her individuals at Daleview. Jeanene looked for opportunities for community involvement and was a participant with doing bell ringing through the Salvation Army and for working with the Salvation Army delivering food after the flood of 2008, while ensuring to involve our individuals. Jeanene lost a courageous battle with cancer in July this year. Her presence is deeply missed and even as time passes, her memory lives on, especially with the individuals at Daleview.

Debra Maach was a long time resident of REM Iowa, living with REM for over 20 years and spending most of her time at REM Iowa Terry Avenue. Deb was a remarkable woman who was popular with many staff. Deb was quick to chat with you, loved musicals and

thrived from being the center of attention! Deb’s laughter was contagious and infectious. She had a zest for life and lived hers to the fullest, making every moment count. The memories of Deb are countless, and those valuable memories help many of her staff cope with her loss. Deb fought hard through her months of illness, and eventually her body could not sustain any longer and she passed away in July. Deb’s loss was felt by many people as she was truly loved and cared for by so many staff at REM Iowa.

Time heals all wounds, or at least we can hope for that. The loss of our REM Iowa family members have impacted many staff and individuals. We can take comfort in knowing that two more REM Angels are watching over us.

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS

*As we approach the holiday season, we are thankful for the individuals that we support, their families and involved others as well as the direct support professionals, health care professionals, support staff, and supervisory staff. We are blessed to be in supportive communities throughout Iowa and to be associated with so many kind, caring, and committed people.*

*All of us at REM Iowa send you warm wishes for a joyful holiday season and a year filled with happiness and good health.*

## THE FINAL WORD

According to the [American Network of Community Options and Resources](#)



(ANCOR), there are approximately 1.4 million individuals who require professional support in order to live and work in their own communities and only 875,000 direct support workers. There is a documented critical and growing shortage of DSPs in every

community throughout the United States and many DSPs are forced to leave their jobs due to inadequate wages and benefits, creating high turnover and vacancy rates that adversely affect the quality of supports to the individuals receiving services. The role of the DSP is vital in enhancing the lives of individuals of all ages and that reach beyond the capacities of families and natural supports. ANCOR has a National Advocacy Campaign called “[You Need to Know Me](#)” and it seeks the resources to recruit, train, and retain a sustainable direct support workforce. For more information and how to get involved in the National Advocacy Campaign, please visit [www.youneedtoknowme.org](http://www.youneedtoknowme.org).

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