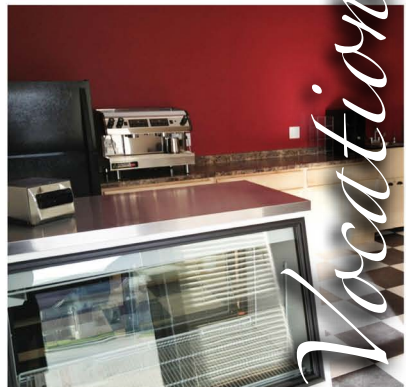
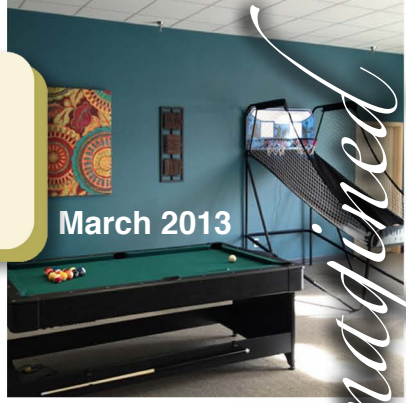


# THE REM IOWA VOICE

March 2013



*Vocational Services, Reimagined*



**Lisa Pakkebier**  
Executive Director

# “REM”iniscence...

It’s hard to believe another year has come and gone.

REM Iowa is now in its 34th year of service. I thought it would be fun to go back in time, reminisce and reflect on accomplishments, including where we are today. Let’s take an abbreviated walk down memory lane. REM Iowa began services in 1979 with REM-Leadway. It all started with a vocational site and four cottages in Shelby, with 18 part-time and full-time employees. Each home could house up to 13 individuals with a diagnoses of intellectual disabilities. The age range of those receiving services was 5–20 years old. Families had to agree to communicate with the youth at least once a week and to take them home at least one weekend a month. Parents were asked to pay up to \$45 a month, but the cost could be waived by the home county, in hardship cases. The remaining costs were paid by counties, as well as federal and state funds.

Now, let’s fast forward to 2013.

REM Iowa has 1085 employees. The age range of those receiving services is 10–74 years old. Services are located in 14 different counties throughout Iowa. We provide services to children, adults and seniors with varied and often compounded diagnoses of

developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health issues and acquired brain injuries. We currently support over 400 individuals in our residential services (Home & Community Based Services/Supported Community Living, Host Home Services, and Intermediate Care Facilities for individuals with an Intellectual Disability) and over 240 individuals in our day/vocational services (prevocational, day habilitation, community integration, and transition services).

We have come a long way over the past 34 years. This could not, and would not, be achieved without the employees, families, and stakeholders that dedicate their lives to supporting, advocating, and serving others. As we continue to move forward, we will strive every day to meet 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.

REM-Leadway, The Early Years



## HOST HOMES GIVING BACK

Thank you to all the individuals and Mentors with [REM’s Host Home program](#) for your volunteerism this year! Children in foster care and their foster parents were able to enjoy many fun activities and visit Santa at the Families Helping Families event in December 2012. Individuals and Mentors helped children make poinsettia decorations as part of the theme – Christmas Around the World.

**Front Row:** Aaron Stych, Ashley Woodward, Dawson Revers, Chris Irish, and Suzanne Revers  
**Back Row:** Jerry Eggert & Mason Hamann





...is excited to announce the opening of its anticipated, newest vocational facility.



[Coralville](#)  
[RDS](#) opened its doors this past November and is continuing to grow and serve as a preferred day program option in the Iowa City-Coralville area. Inspired by the California MENTOR vocational programs, Area Director, Sara Drish and Program Director, Kara Foster worked hard to bring a fresh modern look and feel to Iowa

(see cover photos) with this visible new location right off of Highway 965.

A new look isn't the only exceptional quality of Coralville RDS. New, improved programming is being offered to ensure that RDS is the provider of choice in the area. An on-site, community accessible café, aptly named Java 965, offers a unique opportunity for individuals to learn customer service skills. On-site music therapy, fitness coaching, art and cooking classes



**This trendy location is already drawing the local celebrities!**

and pet therapy are just some of the ways individuals spend their day at RDS. Modern leisure activities like Xbox Kinect and foosball are offered as well as some old favorites such as shuffleboard to encourage individuals to get up and moving. The

addition of a relaxing sensory room complete with Somatron brand chairs and a soothing soundtrack provide therapeutic options for our individuals served. Getting out into the community to experience all the area has to offer is a vital part of the Coralville RDS experience for our individuals and an important reason the area was selected for this start-up according to Area Director, Sara Drish, "I was very impressed with the Coralville/Iowa City area. It is a very up and coming community with a lot of things to offer. Identifying this

location would also allow us to bring individuals back to their community that were currently commuting to our vocational location in Mt Vernon. After taking a careful look at the needs in Johnson County, I felt that this was a great community to start our services in. Johnson County has been very supportive throughout this whole process and we are very excited for what the future holds."

A bright and homey new look, innovative programming options, and inspired leadership are all part of the Coralville equation. Coralville RDS Program Director, Kara Foster has been an integral part of this initiative.

"Being a part of opening the new Coralville vocational program has been so rewarding. As soon as I accepted the PD position for this site, my wheels started turning as I started to try to think about ways to incorporate the new feel we wanted to achieve and ways that we could best meet the needs of the individuals we provide services to. I have loved being able to see the satisfaction in everyone's faces as soon as they walk



**Kara and Jessica, with Coralville Mayor, Jim Fausett**

into the building. We have put a lot of thought and time into making this program a comfortable, relaxing environment for

all to enjoy! The most exciting part of the new site for me is opening the café, Java 965. This on-site training center for our Pre-Vocational individuals will provide them the opportunity to greet customers, run a cash register, check inventory, shop, bake and sell coffee and goods. So far the site has exceeded all expectations!"

Rickey, a client at RDS Coralville says, "I love coming here every day!" Come and find out why. Java 965 is located at [2761 Oakdale Blvd, Suite 4 in Coralville, Iowa](#) and is open for business Mondays through Fridays, from 9am - 1pm. Look for the welcoming REM Iowa Developmental Services sign. See you there!

Questions about REM Iowa Developmental Services or Java 965? Don't hesitate to call [Kara](#) at 319-665-2440.



**Johnson County Case Managers and Program Team**

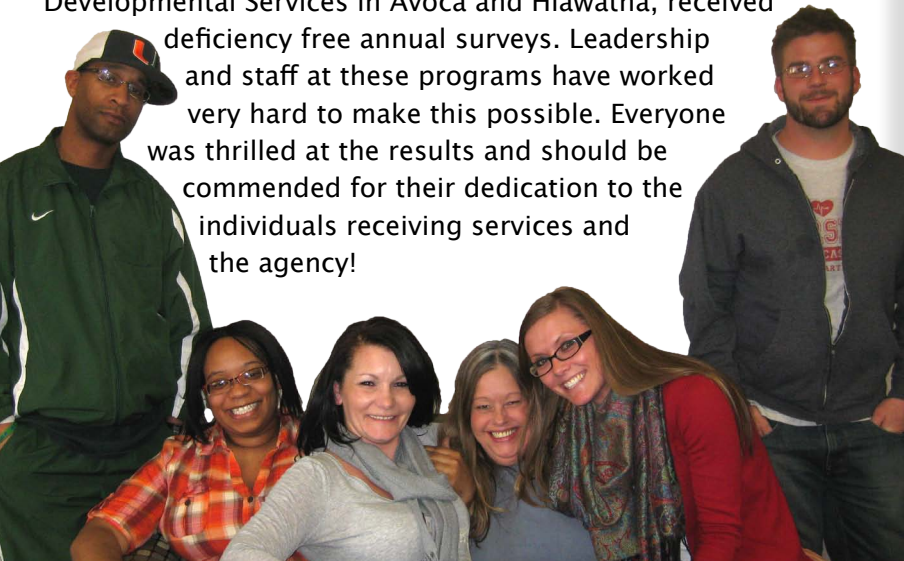
# Hard Work Pays Off!

By: Jill Anstey and Staci Siddell, Program Directors

Over the course of a year, all [REM Iowa Intermediate Care Facilities for the Intellectually Disabled \(ICF/ID\)](#) programs and the ICF/ID vocational programs at [REM Iowa Developmental Services \(RDS\)](#) work hard to prepare for the [Department of Inspection and Appeals \(DIA\)](#)'s annual surveys. Home Managers, Lead Direct Support

Professionals (LDSPs) and RDS Program Coordinators are preparing program staff through additional observation periods, trainings, and ensuring all documentation is in place. To receive a deficiency-free survey is no easy feat; however, through teamwork, dedication and a commitment to the individuals receiving services, it can be accomplished.

Three times, this past year, all this hard work paid off when three REM Iowa programs in Shelby (Aspen and Birch) and Marion (8th Street), along with their supporting REM Iowa Developmental Services in Avoca and Hiawatha, received deficiency free annual surveys. Leadership and staff at these programs have worked very hard to make this possible. Everyone was thrilled at the results and should be commended for their dedication to the individuals receiving services and the agency!



**REM Iowa 8th Street Staff: Left to Right:** (Standing) Frederick "Sonni" Thomas, Lead DSP; Dawn McClay, DSP; Stacy Bennet, DSP; Shiela Malloy, DSP/CMA, Katie Little, Home Manager; (Standing) Lucas Lawrence, Licensed Practical Nurse. **Not Pictured:** Shunta Bryant, DSP; Keeshun Jackson, DSP; Rex Jones, DSP Brent Kennedy, DSP



**REM Iowa Developmental Services Hiawatha ICF staff: Back row Left to Right:** Romero Justin, DSP; Marty Andersen, DSP; Steve Michener, DSP; Jeff Drury, Licensed Practical Nurse. **Middle row Left to Right:** Jessica Furnish, DSP; Jody Byrns, DSP; LaRae Lynch, Program Coordinator; Brittany Possehl, DSP; Leesa Jaeger, DSP; Julie Wagner, DSP; Kayla Cranston DSP. **Front Row, seated, Left to Right:** Wendy Brown, DSP; Rose Gladwin, DSP and Stephanie Bawek, Program Director



**REM Iowa-Aspen staff: Back row Left to Right:** Amanda Adkins, Home Manager; Chelsea Lee, DSP; Kathie Pitt, Lead DSP; Alissa Dermody, DSP. **Front row, kneeling, left to right:** Jodi Myers, DSP & Mary Gramkow, Registered Nurse.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Iowa Legislators are back to work. The 2013 Iowa Legislative Session gavelled in on 1/14/13 and leaders shared their vision for Iowa. This year's legislative priorities were identified and include passing a new two-year budget, lowering property taxes, reforming the state's education system, implementing the Affordable Care Act and addressing Iowa's skilled workforce shortage.

Governor Branstad delivered his State of the State speech, focusing on education reform and lowering taxes. His speech did not touch on any mental health or disability issues. The Governor has since presented his new two-year budget, which keeps Medicaid spending at the low end of DHS's estimates for next year, not leaving much room for growth. He is not looking to expand Medicaid services, an option states have as part of implementing the Affordable Care Act, nor did he recommend any money for non-Medicaid county-funded services next year. Governor Branstad recommended only 19% of the money counties have requested to be able to maintain services through the rest of the year.

Important issues for everyone involved in Iowa's service system include:

- Fully funding transition dollars so counties can continue to provide the same levels of service and avoid cuts.
- Fully funding Medicaid to ensure growth in rates and avoiding waiting lists.
- Medicaid Expansion – expansion would bring approximately 150,000 more Iowans into the Medicaid program which would help to cover those currently receiving county services or no services at all.
- Mandates on direct care staff training requirements prior to working which could have a detrimental impact on providers' ability to higher direct care staff.

Please keep in contact with [your legislators](#) and remind them how vital services are to people with disabilities, brain injuries and mental health needs, both for the individuals receiving them and our communities.

# Seasonal Celebrations



On December 19th, 2012, [Coralville REM Iowa Community Services](#) held their annual holiday party at the Saddlebrook Clubhouse in Iowa City. Many individuals and their families attended, this year, and it was a great opportunity for celebration. There were activities throughout the evening, including Christmas songs, pool in the recreation room, and laughing and visiting with family and friends. Everyone enjoyed a meal of pasta, bread, salad, cookies, and punch, but it was a visit from Santa that added a particular level of excitement to the party. He brought many smiles and had his picture taken with anyone who wished to pose with him. It was great start to the holiday season!



Each year, REM Iowa reaches out

## SEASON OF GIVING

to a family in need to “adopt” for the holiday season. This year, staff and supervisors from our Linn County programs and the state office adopted a single mother and her four children. Staff purchased or donated money toward the purchase of gifts for the family. Gifts like clothing, toys, games, movies, food, and gift cards were given to help make their holiday a little better and brighter.

## The REMedy

On February 9, 2013, REM Iowa staff and individuals from [Shelby](#) participated in the town’s annual soup cook-off, benefitting the town of Shelby’s walking trails. Each competing team came up with a creative name and recipe and provided their own flair, not only in the making, but in the presentation of the soups – including their table decorations. REM Shelby’s team, The REMedy’s team soup was Italian Lasagna. Of the 12 teams that participated, whoever received the most donations from event patrons won the contest. Although The REMedy did not win the top ‘People’s Choice’ or ‘Judge’s Choice’ awards, they did take home the ‘Best Team Spirit’ award. Fun was had by all, and plans to participate next year are already in the works.



**Christopher Neri, individual receiving services and Chelsea Lee, Direct Support Professional.**

## Attitude of Gratitude

On 11/19/12, several REM Iowa – Birch individuals made nonperishable food donations to the Western Iowa Community Action Agency located in Harlan, IA. These donations go to less fortunate community members and families. Participating in this donation was a great opportunity for them to give back to the community.

Individuals include (l to r) Sharon Winther, John Sheldon, Western Iowa agency staff member, Mary Elam, Chris Neri and Paul Schnirring.



# Ah, The Theater...

By: Leah Zapf, QA Specialist

Six of our own, from [RDS Hiawatha](#), spent six exciting weeks preparing for a very special night. On Friday, February 8th, at 6:00 pm, these individuals presented a series of short skits to their peers, family, and community. This event was the cooperative effort of [REM Iowa Developmental Services](#), [Theatre Cedar Rapids \(TCR\)](#), and [Legion Arts](#).

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*"I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being."*

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—Oscar Wilde

Mike Wilhelm, TCR's Education Coordinator, coached our actors weekly with exercises to encourage self-expression and interactions between players. Mike's experience and excitement for bringing the enriching experience of theater to special populations is apparent. He skillfully guided the class to develop their innate talents and embrace their personal style. The actors responded with teamwork, cooperation, and pride in their accomplishments. Legion Arts

generously allowed us the use of the historic theater at CSPA Hall in Cedar Rapids, so the participants could have the full experience of presenting on a stage where scores of artists have presented before them. Local artists, Sonya Darrow and Brook Hoover worked with the actors to create inspiring and creative costuming and innovative sound and music techniques, respectively. And Todd Kimm, of Legion Arts, was instrumental in capturing the vision and bringing the team together to make the project a great experience.

The RDS actors had a wonderful time learning about movement, projecting their voices, and following stage direction. "I like it. I think it's fun," says Douglas Franta, one of the actors. Shawn Stender also had an enjoyable time. "It's great and very beautiful," he says of the experience. Stephanie Bawek, Program Director, and Kevin Connor, Program Coordinator, lent their acting chops to the performance as well. Kevin believes the experience was a memorable one for all, "The individuals involved relish the idea of being in the theatre," he commented. Felicia Sales, actor from RDS, agrees, "I like to be a mouse, and I really enjoy it!"

This experience exemplifies the RDS mission of quality programming and community integration. It is one of many opportunities individuals in our services enjoy along with art classes, music therapy, and fun fitness coaching. We hope the relationships created within the community, through this project, will continue to inspire opportunities and enhance lives.



*"We look for opportunities to expand our knowledge and our service to meet the needs of the community." - REM Iowa Values Statement*

In late 2012, after months of planning, REM, in its continuing efforts to identify and meet the needs of individuals and their communities, opened its first programs in [Marshalltown](#). First to be served – Nathan Peterson, Conner Smith, and Samantha and Christine Lawless – and plans are already underway for a third program opening sometime this spring.

The relationship between REM and the community has been very positive. Program Director, Dorie Tammen, and Program Coordinators, Dawn Mathes and Tena Hausafus have been especially involved, meeting with local human service agencies, the [Chamber of Commerce](#), [The Marshalltown Main Street Program](#), and other city officials who have collectively helped to grow local awareness of REM. We would like to express our gratitude for their efforts. We are pleased to be a part of such a great community.

MARSHALLTOWN

## March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

Did you know that your brain controls everything about you? The

human brain contains approximately 100 billion neurons that communicate with each other to control the way you move, the way you speak, and even your emotions. When a brain injury occurs these neurons are damaged and are not able to communicate with each other as well as they used to, or, in some cases, no longer work at all. Imagine you could no longer speak or use your dominant hand, how would this make you feel? What if you couldn't remember where you lived or even where you were five minutes ago? This is just a small glimpse of the many challenges survivors of brain injury are faced with each day and it can take years for them to regain skills. Unfortunately, in some cases certain skills never return and some individuals are no longer able to lead independent lives.

According to the Center for Disease Control, an estimated 1.7 million people in the United States sustain a brain injury each year. Of that 1.7 million approximately 52,000 result in death, 275,000 are hospitalized, and 1.365 million are treated in an emergency department. And this is happening every year!

In 2011 [REM Iowa](#) served 23 individuals diagnosed

with a brain injury. As of February 2013 our census has increased to include 70 individuals and continues to grow each month. As our brain injured population increases we are compelled to increase our knowledge and awareness of this complex diagnosis. REM Iowa currently has 21 Certified Brain Injury Specialists and 10 more employees will be taking the challenging class starting this month. With better understanding we will be able to provide the best supports possible to these individuals. Remember a brain injury can happen to anyone, even you.

I encourage you to get involved and, most importantly, get informed about brain injury and how it impacts those around us. One of the best places to start is your local chapter of the [Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa](#). There are many activities and support groups sponsored by this organization that promote awareness throughout our community. Become a member of the Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa or get more information at <http://www.biaia.org>. Contact your local legislator about increased funding for brain injured individuals at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/Legislators/find.aspx>.

By: Annie Streng, Brain Injury Specialist

RUN, WALK, & ROLL



JOGGIN' FOR YOUR HOGGIN'

Remember: April 13 is the 4th annual Brain Injury Alliance Run, Walk, Roll 5k and Fun Run.

**Christopher Trautman** was a long time resident of REM. He had lived with REM since he was 18 years old. Chris had lived in Shelby, Council Bluffs

and then back to Shelby.

Chris was an amazing man that lit up the whole room when he walked in.

Chris was known for giving hugs. If you were genuine when giving him a hug back, you would get a pat on the back. Chris loved to visit with the staff, when he entered the room, and would love to sit and sing "Tomorrow" from the movie "Annie" when anyone put the movie in to watch it. Chris was known for giving his vocational staff a "bad time" when they went out for a break. He would check their pockets for cigarettes and then proceed to let them know, "No cigarettes!" if they had any.

Chris fought a long time battle with pneumonia. He would go in and out of the hospital every couple of months to every two weeks before he passed away. Chris did lose his battle to pneumonia the beginning of December. He is and will be dearly missed by all who knew him and worked with him. We have comfort knowing that Chris is smiling down on us each and every day along with the other REM angels that keep watch over us.

By: Paulette Lingle, Program Director  
RICS - Avoca

**Cory Allen Russell**, 34, of Iowa City, passed away in his sleep on Friday, January 18th, 2013.

Cory loved being independent and making his own way in life. He loved bowling and lived for league night. Cory also bowled on his dad's team in Texas when he visited. Cory's zest for life made you smile just watching him.

There was not much about WWE that Cory couldn't tell you about, either. He loved to do ceramics, and he gave many of his pieces to others. He got a lot of joy out of making people happy. Cory's optimism kept us all focused on what was really important. Cory was kind and loving, and as his final gift, he gave of himself through The Donor Network.

A thousand words wouldn't do justice to such a special man. We miss you Cory and you will live in our hearts forever and always.

By: Patty Lefler, Program Director  
RICS - Coralville

Christopher Trautman

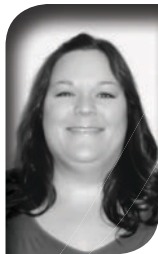
REM Angels

Cory Russell



# MEET OUR *Leadership Team*

PROGRAM DIRECTORS  
- ICF AND RDS



Jill Anstey  
Western Iowa - ICF

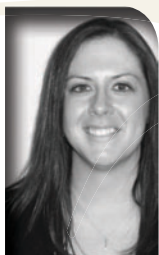


Stephanie Bawek  
Hiawatha - RDS  
ICF



Amy Cady  
Hiawatha - RDS  
HCBS

Jessica Cross  
Adel & Avoca - RDS  
HCBS



Kara Foster  
Coralville - RDS  
HCBS



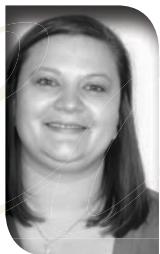
Darla Iburg  
Coralville - ICF



Amy Keltner  
Mt. Vernon - RDS  
HCBS



Staci Siddell  
Hiawatha - ICF



Anne Sopousek  
Hiawatha - ICF



## INTRODUCING - BRANDIE GEARY, M.S., BCBA

Hi! I am Brandie Geary, the new Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) for REM Iowa. I will be working with individuals and their teams to help develop behavior support plans, proactive approaches, rewards plans, and training strategies for teaching replacement behaviors. My goal is help increase social and communication skills needed for individuals to positively participate in their lives. I will also facilitate relevant trainings to staff to give them a basic understanding of [applied behavior analysis \(ABA\)](#) and how to use to positively support others.

I graduated from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale with a Master's of Science in Behavior Analysis and Therapy in May 2009 and become a certified behavior analyst August 2009. Some of my experience is as a direct care staff for a state facility and helping some of the individuals I worked with transition into community placement as their [QMRP](#) and home manager. I have also assisted with [Special Olympics](#) of Illinois. Since becoming a BCBA, I have worked in pediatric clinics with children in their homes, the clinic, schools and community settings, and I have presented and assisted with workshops for families, other professionals, and support staff.

Since starting my position in October, I have had the chance meet many wonderful individuals, and I have found that there is never a dull moment!

## IN RECOGNITION...

REM Iowa has an employee recognition program to express our gratitude to the dedication of our long-term employees. This is an opportunity for us to recognize our employees for his or her years of service and loyalty. REM Iowa has been providing services since 1979 and this is made possible by the on-going dedication and commitment of our employees. Continuity of services and care is critical to our quality and the stability of the individuals we serve. We would like to congratulate and express a heartfelt "thank you" to each employee being recognized.

For 10 years of service – Sheila Carroll, Marjorie Melody, Patricia Robinson, Sarah Knutson, Cheryl Karas

For 5 years of service – Ndage Kahinda, Andy Shipman. Robin Garcia, Martin Andersen, Marilyn Holterhaus, Mary Meinhardt, Tess Brawe, Ryann Feddersen, Ashley Levelle, Mabelle Kemp, Amelia Storesund, Ashley Frazier, Julie Furnish, Tammala Masters, Darla McGaffic, Kathie Bush

### The REM Iowa Voice – February 2013

Volume 1, Number 3

The REM Iowa Voice is a publication of REM Iowa, Inc. © 2013. If you would like to receive our publication, either by mail or electronically, please contact us at [Matt.Hidebaugh@thementornetwork.com](mailto:Matt.Hidebaugh@thementornetwork.com) or by phone, at (319) 393-1944.

Design: The Human Element/LifeForward, LLC

## UPCOMING EVENTS

On 04/13/13, REM Iowa will be plunging for the 6th consecutive year in the [Polar Plunge](#) to raise money for [Special Olympics](#).

Please contact Anne Sopousek, via e-mail ([Anne.Sopousek@thementornetwork.com](mailto:Anne.Sopousek@thementornetwork.com)) or by phone ((319) 393-1944) if interested in participating!



REM  
IOWA

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Stamp  
Here

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*Life to the fullest. Every day.*