

WHO LOVES SUMMER...?!

...WOO-HOO-
WEEEEE
DO!!!

This Issue:

SUMMER FUN!

Advocacy
Starts at Home

**TREE-
MAGEDDON**

Brain
Matters

**Spread the
Word**

Much More





Lisa Pakkebieer
Executive Director

Summertime - Sun, Safety, and Sincere Sentiments

Summer is often a time of year that fond memories come to mind. Often, one thinks of the beautiful weather that allows us to be outside and the various activities that coincide. It's a time for vacations, outings with family or friends, grilling, gardening, theme parks, fairs, splashing in a pool or at a beach, water parks, going to the zoo, baseball, leisurely strolls, or quite idle time. The list goes on and on...

Along with the changing seasons, it is important to think about safety and how to be proactive and prepared for the seasonal challenges that may lie ahead. This is even more critical when you are responsible for the safety and well-being of others. Though it was not officially summer yet, the evening of May 19, 2013, this date will not be forgotten anytime soon by those at the REM Iowa home, located at 36th Avenue in Cedar Rapids. Before you read on, ("Treemageddon 2013" p. 4), I would like to take this opportunity to give a heartfelt

thank you to each and every person (within the company and outside of the company) that was associated with supporting and restoring REM Iowa 36th Avenue and for supporting the individuals that live there, until they could return to their home on July 5, 2013. During this frightening time, you made a difference in the lives of eight individuals, and for that we cannot thank you enough.

'Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.'

~Mark Twain

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mentor Recruitment Community Picnic in Hiawatha

On Tuesday, August 13, REM Iowa's Host Home program will be holding a community picnic in Hiawatha aimed at recruiting caring Mentors to open their homes and lives. This will be a family-friendly event with free food, a raffle and other fun prizes. Attendees will also be able to meet some of our staff and current Mentors and learn about the rewards of opening your home to an adult with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

For more information, please contact Monica Ravn at 319-393-1944 ext 2509 or Monica.Ravn@TheMentorNetwork.com.

When: Tuesday, August 13 from 4 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Where: Guthridge Park is located at [704 Emmons Street](#), between 7th Ave and 10th Ave, across from the Hiawatha Elementary School. We'll be in the red shelter which is located close to the playground equipment and splash pad.

We Want to Hear From You!

* Required

Name

Email Address

You Are a ... *

- REM Iowa employee
 Individual served by REM Iowa

At REM Iowa, we value the feedback of everyone we serve, as well as families, friends, colleagues and community members. We are open to suggestions about our services and locations, and want to hear from you if you have any ideas for improvements. We are pleased to offer a convenient way for you to provide your feedback, right from the comfort of your own home. Just click [here](#), or visit us at www.remiowa.com and click on the link provided in the lower right quarter of our home page.

Summertime Fun!!!

A time of year that many of us look forward to. A season filled with warm days, late nights, and countless activities. As the summer season continues, we look forward to spending more days and nights doing the things we love. Some of these things may include, camping, swimming, trips to Adventureland, fireworks, picnics, playing softball, and watching baseball games. This year proves to be no exception, as there are many events keeping us busy at REM Iowa.

Submitted by: Anne Sopousek,
Program Director, Hiawatha ICF

Softball!

We spent our Tuesday nights, cheering on the REM Teams that participate in the Unified Softball League. Games were held every Tuesday at Ellis Park, in Cedar Rapids, IA.

Staff and individuals from RICS in Hiawatha and Mt. Vernon have taken day trips to Adventureland!!



And it ain't over yet...

Blank Park Zoo Trips - RICS Hiawatha is planning to take trip to the Blank Park Zoo on 08/13/13.

Park Day - scheduled for 08/13/13. The ICF individuals in the Cedar Rapids area will be gathering with the staff from the ICF's, and vocational staff from Hiawatha and Mt. Vernon to spend a fun-filled day fishing, hiking, paddle-boarding and enjoying the great outdoors!!

Block Party - RICS Hiawatha will be hosting a Block Party on 08/23/13. All are welcome to come and enjoy games, food and fun!

Track & Field Day - scheduled for 08/24/13 on the REM Iowa - Shelby Campus. The day's events include a 50 and 100 yard walk/run, softball throw, soccer kick, ring toss, water balloon toss, Norwegian golf, free throw competition, and football throw.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By: Pat Costigan, Regional Director

The Iowa Legislature ended its 2013 session on May 23rd marking this year as a year of compromise on several key issues. The 2014 Iowa Budget, Health Care Expansion, Education Reform, Property Tax Reform and continued work towards the **Mental Health and Disability Service Redesign** topped the list. Although the Governor exercised his veto power on some parts of these bills, Iowa continues to make progress to improve its system of care.

Highlights from the 2013 session include:

- Legislators approved a budget that increased spending by 4% while maintaining the states \$600 million surplus.
- HCBS service providers received a 3% rate increase and other Medicaid providers received a 1% increase.
- Increased dollars were appropriated for brain injury and autism services to expand services across the state.
- Training costs will be allowed as a direct cost for HCBS providers

The Iowa Legislature decided to not fully expand Medicaid services as allowed with the Affordable Care Act (also known as Obama Care), but passed the Iowa Health and Wellness Plan that will provide health care to 150,000 Iowans. Iowan's at 100% or less of the federal poverty level (approximately \$15,856 for a single person) will continue to be eligible for Medicaid while those between 101% - 138% of the poverty level will have their health insurance premiums subsidized by the state. Over the next several months there will be many changes to our country's health care system which impacts not only the people we serve but all of us.

Overall, many of the issues and concerns of Iowans with disabilities were positively addressed during this year's session. The ongoing advocacy by all of us is paying dividends and making a difference. Disability services have continued to receive more and more attention from our legislators. If you have the opportunity, be sure to thank them for their efforts.



Patrick Costigan is a Regional Director, overseeing the Eastern Iowa RICS (REM Iowa Community Services) programs. He has been with the company for over 10 years. On July 1st of this year, Pat was appointed by the Governor to the **Iowa Advisory Council on Brain Injuries**. The council's mission is to represent individuals with brain injury, their families, and all Iowans through advocacy, education, training, rehabilitation, research and prevention. By means of these efforts, the council brings about awareness to others and services as a source of hope and healing to survivors of brain injury.



ADVOCACY GROUP ELECTIONS

By Stephanie Bawek, PD

In response to our 2012 Satisfaction Surveys, REM Iowa Developmental Services added an Advocacy Group to the programming that occurs at all our vocational sites in Iowa. This addition brought some creativity in who would participate in these groups!

The individuals at REM Iowa Developmental Services—Hiawatha ICF held their first elections in April for the Advocacy group leaders. The individuals who ran, made posters and held campaigns. Shawn Stender, candidate for President stated, "As President, I will give everyone a day off from the workshop". He decided that Memorial



Day sounded like a great day to take off.

The campaigning came to a close on Tuesday, April 30th, when the individuals and staff voted for the Advocacy Group Members. Shawn Stender was elected President, with his Vice President Larry Davidson, at his side. A Secretary was also elected on this date. The individuals announced their leadership roles to their peers on Thursday May 2nd.

This group of Advocacy leaders will meet quarterly and discuss topics that affect their everyday lives at REM Iowa Developmental Services, as well as brainstorm ways to bring more meaningful activities to our vocational setting.

All Iowans would probably agree that we had unusual weather in May 2013, across the state. We received it all – from thunderstorms, hail, torrential rains, flooding, snow, straight-line winds, to tornados. May 19, 2013 will be forever etched in the memories of the individuals residing at the REM Iowa – 36th Avenue facility,

in Cedar Rapids and the employees who support the program. The facility was hit particularly hard by the straight-line winds that came through the area. As there is with tornados, there was no siren to sound a warning of the potential danger that was upon us. Three massive cottonwood trees were blown down onto the property. The first tree crashed through the roof and into one of the individuals' bedrooms, where they happened to be sleeping in their bed, approximately only 3 feet under the tree. The second tree came down across the main section of the roof, punching three holes in the roof, smashing the fence, and crushing the facility van. The third tree came down on the property, demolishing the shed and its contents. One supervisor aptly coined this "Treemageddon" – much like Armageddon.

The estimates on the cost of the repairs, tree removal, and replacement items are expected to be well over six figures. But the miracle in all of this, is that all eight residents, including the person who woke up to a tree hovering precariously above them, were unharmed.

For those who saw the extent of the damage, and how close the tree was to the sleeping individual, it is hard to believe that no one was injured. Regardless of your religious beliefs, it is hard to question that there was a higher power working to ensure the safety of those in the facility at the time. But it is also believed that the calm demeanor and rational thinking of Trisha Bucknell,

Direct Support Professional (DSP), who was the only staff working on the overnight shift when the storm hit, helped immensely to ensure that those present remained calm and were reassured that they were safe.



Trisha did an amazing job and far exceeded the typical job responsibilities of caring for the individuals in our services!

Early the next morning following the storm, we obviously knew that we were going to need to evacuate the facility and determine alternative living arrangements for the eight individuals that resided at REM Iowa – 36th Avenue. We split individuals up to stay at the other five area facilities, trying to keep in mind what would be the best for all individuals involved, based on their needs – the 36th Avenue individuals, the individuals that reside in the other five programs, and all staff. We knew that this was not going to be an ideal situation for anyone, but we needed to make the best of the horrific conditions.

When we arrived at the facility the morning following Treemageddon, we were able to see the extent of the damage and begin the arduous task of removing the enormous trees from the property; it was incredible to see the amount of employees that showed up to help.

It truly was astounding to see so many people working this hard, all for the common goal of getting the facility restored so that we could move the 36th Avenue individuals back into their home.

There were employees from all levels that came to help support the cleanup efforts – from DSPs and nurses to supervisors, maintenance personnel, directors, and support personnel – as well as those from other programs and business units within REM. It truly was astounding to see so many people working this hard, all for the common goal of getting the facility restored so that we could move the 36th Avenue individuals back into their home.

GEDDON 13

Submitted by: Dawn Steffen,
ICF/ID Regional Director

Because the storm damage was felt in so many areas in Cedar Rapids, the area tree removal services were already booked for work before 7:00 AM the next morning. Roger Wilson, Maintenance Specialist for the Cedar Rapids ICFs, made the quick decision to



contact our local landscaper, [JJG Lawn Services and Landscaping](#). James Moffat, the owner, and his crew were there before 8:00 AM, working diligently all day and until dark, to begin sawing up the trees, so that they could be removed. They continued this effort for the next couple of weeks. While this type

of job didn't fall into their typical "landscaping" jobs, they recognized the significant need to get the individuals back into their home as quickly as possible. Without their willingness to take this project on and put in as much time and effort to see it through, we would have been delayed with our restoration efforts for

several weeks, until we could secure another vendor to do the job. Recognition also needs to be given to ROBO Construction, who is a vendor that assists us with a lot of work in our Cedar Rapids programs. They came out immediately to assess the damage and determine what was going to be involved in making the essential repairs and then blocked out the necessary time to complete the work as promptly as possible.



Because REM Iowa - 36th Avenue is an ICF/ID, we had a variety of other hoops that we needed to jump through, outside of just securing the typical vendors to make repairs. We needed to work with the local and state fire marshal, state building code inspector, an electrical engineer, and sprinkler system and fire alarm system personnel -- as well as maintain frequent and on-going communication with the Department of Inspection and Appeals, regarding our progress.

While this had been a long and demanding process, and the lives of the individuals that receive supports in all Cedar Rapids area ICFs had been negatively impacted in such a colossal way, it all ended on 07/05/13, when everyone from 36th Avenue returned to their home. We want to say a very heartfelt thank you to all of our wonderful staff, vendors, and everyone that assisted in this long process.



"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"
- Fred Rogers

IMPORTANT NOTES



REM recently sponsored a bowling outing. It was a great turn out with several individuals from within the company in attendance, as well as several individuals from other companies joining in on the bowling and pizza fun. Everyone started out with having some nachos and onion rings as an appetizer, and then some fresh-made pizza was enjoyed. Several individuals commented on how good all the food was and how nice it was to eat out with others. Pitchers of pop were on tap, and no one's cup stayed empty for long! After enjoying their dinners, the individuals made their way down to the lanes and played a couple of games. Everyone was a winner with several getting strikes! All Individuals agreed that they would like to have another outing very soon! Thanks to all who came and helped out!

Jon readies his bright green ball for a trip down the lane.

After months of practice, Tim Jensen, consumer with the Mt. Pleasant Office, won a blue ribbon February 2nd in Basketball Skills at Burlington, Iowa's local [Special Olympics](#) competition. This made him eligible for competition in the Statewide Winter Games held in Iowa City, IA on March 16th. Tim was very excited about competing and practiced hard. He got to see all that hard work pay off when he received the Silver medal for Basketball Skills in the Winter Games.

But Tim didn't stop there. He got his housemates more involved in the program and all three recently won blue ribbons at the

preliminary summer competition. Zachary Davis placed 1st in both the Softball Throw and the 50 Yard Dash. Brandon Downing won blue ribbons in the 100 Yard Dash and the Softball Throw. Tim won a blue ribbon for the Javelin Throw and a red ribbon for the 100 Yard Dash. We definitely dominated our events for these age groups. Fun was had by all, and all three of the guys then looked forward to BRINGING HOME THE GOLD on May 23rd and 24th in Des Moines, IA, where they competed in the State Summer Olympics along with 2,700 other athletes from across Iowa.



Tim Jensen (with friends) sporting his silver medal.



Several times a year, the Partner's Program out of Des Moines county sponsors a dance for those with special needs. Many of the Mt. Pleasant consumers have been attending for a while, but the St. Patrick's Day Chili Supper and Dance was by far the most successful for us. Four of the six waiver homes in Mt. Pleasant participated in the dance. PCs, DSPs, and consumers all joined together to boogie down. A fun time was had by all.

Donna Johnson takes Whitney Shoemaker for a spin on the dance floor.

Drop by the Blairs Ferry Wendy's on the 2nd Wednesday of each month between 4 and 6pm, and you will be greeted with an overwhelming presence of REM Iowa consumers and staff.

For the past 3+ years, Wendy's and REM have participated in a get-together in which Wendy's donates 10% of their sales during those two hours to our PAC (Political Action Committee) fund. This committee supports legislators that fight for issues that directly affect our consumers and employees.

Seating is always at a premium, as the

turnout is consistently high - routinely between 50-75 consumers attend each month. Individuals, family, and staff from Cedar Rapids, Vinton, and Mt. Vernon all make sure to join in the fun and good food. The Wendy's staff have stated that they really enjoy having us, and we sure appreciate their willingness to let us take over their restaurant for a couple of hours. The consumers always seem to enjoy visiting, eating, and spending time with one another. Mark your calendar for the 2nd Wed of each month and join us!



The gang's all here. Wendy's night is rarely a quiet night out.



A Brand New Way of Life

By: Lori Sharpe, Mentor

Hi, my name is Lori Sharpe and

it feels like I have been a care giver my whole life, in one capacity or another. I had a sister with Cerebral Palsy who lived in a group home in Iowa City for over 20 years. If I had been able, I would have had her come live with me. So when I was told about the [Mentor Host Home program](#), it was very natural for me to apply. I have been a Mentor for over a year now and I have to say, it is one of the best decisions I ever made.

From my first extensive interview until now, I have

learned so much. My first lessons were in self acceptance, and I have found out a lot about my strengths and weaknesses. I realized that you really need to open yourself up to the whole experience and learn from it. This came in handy with my first experience with Host Home. I had an individual live with me for 8 weeks. This individual decided that Host Home was not the right environment for her and moved back into a 3 person program. Happily, she is doing well. Even though this first placement didn't succeed, we all learned a lot and didn't give up.

"...No, he is my family."

In March, my wait paid off. Aaron moved into my house March 12th. The opportunity for Aaron to move came very quickly, and after a short getting to know each period, we have both adjusted very well. I have found that you adjust as your relationship progresses. Aaron has recently stopped smoking and continues to focus on his diet to lose even more weight.

Having worked in group homes and having lived with someone with special needs, this program is a wonderful alternative. People will ask me "So he is your full time job"? and I respond "No, he is my family."

REM Iowa Community Services lost two beloved individuals this spring. **Fred Izer** passed away on 3/1/13, and his roommate, **Connie Fahey** passed away on 3/30/13. Fred and Connie lived together for 4 years and both loved to spend time in their apartment, visiting with each other and staff. Anyone who spent time in their house can still hear the chimes of Fred's bird clock and can still see the piles of magazines that Connie loved to look through.

Fred loved to joke around with staff, and it didn't take long to realize he had a heart of gold and cared deeply for anyone in his life. Fred enjoyed going to the park to bird watch, and he always ensured his bird feeder that was outside the living room window was filled. Staff will always remember Fred with a cigarette in his mouth and bird seed in hand.

Connie will always be remembered for her big smiles and loving kisses. Anyone who visited Connie will never forget her jamming out to her rock and roll music. She looked forward to weekly visits from her sister, who was the most important person in her life.

Both Connie and Fred touched a lot of hearts throughout their lifetime, and any REM staff who worked with them would agree that they were a friend.





Hello, my name is Annie Streng, and I am the Brain Injury Specialist for REM Iowa. I started working for REM almost four years ago in our Coralville office, then transferred to our Hiawatha location, where I became a Program Director. As a Program Director, I was given the opportunity to train our Comprehensive Brain Injury modules, and this sparked my interest in the human brain and my passion for supporting the survivors in our services. In November of last year, I began my position as Brain Injury Specialist. During this time, I have had the great opportunity to learn about the lives and struggles of each of our survivors. This continues to fuel my passion to educate those around me about the human brain and how it works. The more we understand our brains, the better we can serve those we support and assist them in returning to their lives prior to the injury. Education about brain injury is not only important to the survivors but also for their families and the communities they reside in. For this reason, I will have a reoccurring section in the REM Voice dedicated to brain injury education and updates on our brain injury services.

The last few months

Annie Streng, Brain Injury Specialist

were very exciting for REM

Iowa Community Services. In March, REM was honored by the Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa for providing quality services to brain injury survivors. March was also Brain Injury Awareness month, and many of our offices held fundraisers for their local Brain Injury Alliance chapters. The money raised was donated to the local support groups in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, and Davenport. In April, a few brave souls endured the abnormally chilly weather to participate in the 4th Annual Run, Walk, Roll 5k for the Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa. They had a great time and enjoyed the cheers from the crowd, as they rounded the corner and climbed the final hill of the course. Finally, in May, the Program Directors were charged with determining the brain injury level of service for the individuals we support. There are 3 levels of brain injury service we provide, and by determining which level an individual fits into we can better tailor our goals and supports to meet their specific needs. I am truly excited about the growth of our brain injury programs, and I look forward to reporting our continued progress in the future.



Front row, left to right: Lindsay Travagiakis, Melinda Wetherell
Back row, from left to right: Melissa Garthwaite, Kelly Neuroth, Erica Koranda, Jennifer McIntosh, Lacy Busenbark

Spread the Word to End the Word

is a campaign to raise awareness of the hurtful effects of the

“R-word” and to encourage people to

pledge to **STOP** using it. **National**

Awareness Day for

Spread the Word to End the Word Day was March 6. REM Mt Vernon sported t-shirts to show their support.

MEET OUR *Leadership Team*



Chrys Bitting
Urbandale



Kim Brown
Atlantic



Paulette Lingle
Avoca



Dione Glenn
Council Bluffs



Tracy Herwig
Council Bluffs



Abby Patterson
Urbandale



Amos Rop
Urbandale

WESTERN AND CENTRAL
IOWA PROGRAM DIRECTORS
- REM IOWA COMMUNITY
SERVICES

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 **30 years** of service – Corrine Sindt

For **20 years** of service – David Vanfleet

For **15 years** of service – Mary Biede, Joe Eichelberger

For **10 years** of service – Thomas Cox, Russell Steffens, James Wahome, Tracy Walder

For **5 years** of service – Rebeckah Andrews, Mary Boudreau, Samia Elhussain, Julie Furnish, Hilda Hytrek, Charles Kazlow, Grant Lack, Michelle Maher, Brian Stowell, Sheila Zornes

MARSHALLTOWN

REM Iowa Developmental Services has expanded services into Marshall County!

REM Iowa Developmental Services is excited to announce that they are now providing Prevocational and Day Habilitation services in Marshalltown, Iowa.

On January 14th, the Career Development Center (CDC) in Marshalltown announced the closure of their Vocational program for June 30th. This would affect 25 individuals receiving day programming supports in this community. That same week, the parents and guardians of this community reached out to REM Iowa as an option.

Sara Drish, Area Director, and Lisa Pakkebieer, Executive Director, provided an informational session about REM Iowa Developmental Services on January 24th. What an inspirational and moving experience! Marshalltown is a great community, full of advocates and parents who want the very best for their loved ones.

It had been uphill ever since – securing a contract for services and obtaining the current CDC space for vocational operations. REM Iowa Developmental Services opened their doors July 22, 2013. We are thrilled to be joining the Marshalltown community and working to smoothly transition those in need of, and interested in, our services.

Look for updates and more details in our next newsletter!



The REM Iowa Voice – July 2013 – Volume 2, Number 1

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 or by phone, at (319) 294-0264.

Design: The Human Element/LifeForward, LLC

REM
IOWA

Place
Stamp
Here

1661 Boyson Square Drive, Suite 202
Hiawatha, Iowa ♦ 52233
(319) 393-1944 ♦ www.remiowa.com

Life to the fullest. Every day.