

THE REM
IOWA VOICE

June 2014

REM
IOWA

35 YEARS



35 Years of Service

...and counting

This year, REM Iowa celebrates a big milestone: 35 years of service to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. While it's a great opportunity to look to the bright future ahead, it's also a chance to reflect on how far we've come in the past three decades.

REM Iowa launched in 1979, with the purchase of [group homes](#) in Shelby, and soon expanded east. In 1994, the organization expanded into southern Iowa with our [Home and Community Based Services](#)—and kept going. In 2003, REM partnered with [The MENTOR Network](#), combining nearly 60 years of service and innovation to offer a greater range of services for the people we serve. In 2012, we launched our [Host Home](#) program for adults.

Today, we and the people we serve continue to find new reasons to celebrate, such as Java 965, a café run by individuals in our Coralville [Day Program](#), scheduled to open in late summer.

"When REM Iowa started, it consisted of a vocational site and four cottages with 18 employees. Now we have 1,250 employees and more than 750 individuals receiving services," said Lisa Pakkebie, Executive Director of REM Iowa. "Today we offer a comprehensive range of supports that empowers people to live life to the fullest."

For many people, the complex nature of their challenges means that it can be difficult to access the services they

need locally. In fact, prior to REM Iowa's presence in their communities, many people with specialized needs, such as children and individuals with a brain injury, moved out of state for care.

"Because we are an organization focused on innovation, we have been able to close some of those gaps and help families access the services they need. As we enhance our training and knowledge base for specialized services for individuals with challenges such as autism, brain injury and dual diagnosis, we further our mission to provide innovative, high-quality services that help the people we serve thrive in the community of their choosing," Pakkebie said.

"When REM Iowa started, it consisted of a vocational site and four cottages with 18 employees. Now we have 1,250 employees and more than 750 individuals receiving services"

-Lisa Pakkebie, Executive Director

REM Iowa's 35th anniversary celebration is planned around the theme of "Serve, Serve Well, Serve More," which is also one of the organization's guiding ideals.

"Each of our employees is committed to this ideal on a daily basis, in all their interactions with the people we serve and our community partners. We could not have accomplished such a milestone without their extraordinary passion and dedication," Pakkebie said.

SERVICE:
Our GOLD Standard
GUIDED BY PURPOSE, DEFINED BY EXCELLENCE

Our service promise is to work together in a positive way to be the best at what we do while exceeding expectations in valuing, supporting, empowering and promoting health and safety for everyone we serve.

Starting in May 2014, REM Iowa employees embarked on an 8 month journey to reach the next level of excellence. The Customer Service Initiative was created out of a collective vision to empower teams to achieve Redwood President Dave Petersen's call to Serve - Serve Well - Serve More.

Armed with a fresh tool kit of materials and training videos, employees all across Iowa are meeting monthly to explore our 8 service standards that together make up our Service Promise. Customer Service Expert and author Petra Marquart leads staff in discussions via video about the 8 service standards and also the anchor behaviors that teams are encouraged to make part of their every day. The initiative is especially exciting for Iowa teams, as several of our own appear in the video vignettes playing characters who demonstrate the service standard of that module.

While REM Iowa has long held a high standard in the area of Customer Service, teams are implored through this unique training to remember that every interaction is an opportunity to shine and cultivate a culture of service. This is our vision as we move into the future of services Guided by Purpose and Defined by Excellence.

Serve, Serve Well, Serve More



May 3-4, 2014, Mount Vernon, Iowa hosted the 9th annual **Chalk the Walk**. More than 300 artists utilized the downtown city streets as a canvas. This was the 1st year REM Iowa Community Services participated in the event, bringing 20 artists of our own out to help create 4 main pieces of artwork and some rather original pieces separately. Daniel Kelchen, volunteer artist, assisted us to ensure accommodations were met for our individuals, to allow everyone a chance to participate, if they wanted.



Submitted by: Lindsay Travagiakis

Philanthropy You Can 'Bank' On



Nate Shannon coordinated the trip to King Harvest Ministries' food bank.

Kyle Wood and Natasha Thomas stop for a quick picture while serving meals to the homeless.



Submitted by: Brenda Isenberger

On February 22nd, 2014, REM staff Natasha Thomas, Kyle Wood, and Nate Shannon volunteered at **King Harvest Ministries**, a local food bank, serving food to the homeless. This event was organized by Program Coordinator Nate Shannon who said, "It was a rewarding experience, I met some good people and look forward to future volunteer opportunities".

King Harvest Ministries provides meals to many individuals with Mental Health challenges. They were very impressed with REM staff and asked if REM would be able to support their efforts further by educating their volunteers on mental health disorders. Kyle Wood, Program Director, has agreed to assist the volunteers. The Davenport team is committed to continuing their support of King Harvest Ministries' food bank. They will be volunteering at the food bank once a month.



Bowling Day!!

On January 25, 2014, REM Mt Vernon partnered with Leanna Doyle, a student at Cornell College and Joe Jennison, the Mt Vernon Lisbon Community Development Director to host a bowling day. During the 2 hours of fun and entertainment, 11 community members and 14 REM individuals bowled together and got to know one another. Everyone helped create team names and work together to support one another and cheer each other on.

Prizes were awarded to each team, some of the awards went to; Most Unique Team Name, Most Supportive Team, Most Enthusiastic Team, Fastest Bowlers, Loudest team, and Best Technique.



AUTISM DAY ON THE HILL - 2014

On 02/18/14, the [Autism Society of Iowa](#) hosted the 4th Annual Day on the Hill to raise awareness for [Autism](#). Six employees from REM Iowa attended the Day on the Hill in Des Moines, Iowa.

During the events of the day, many legislators spoke regarding needing to fund autism programs and continued funding for children on the spectrum and parents of children on the spectrum addressed the participants and discussed their personal struggles with getting appropriate services related to autism for their loved ones. In addition, one parent that spoke was Darcy Mettler, mother to Jack Mettler (an individual living in REM RBSCCL services in the Des Moines area). She shared the struggles and successes they have faced over the years to get Jack the right services in and out of the state of Iowa. Jack also spoke about how the supports he has received have helped him to make progress in achieving his goals.

Participants were then given the opportunity to split into two groups. One group discussed recent insurance changes and approving funds for behavior analyst support for children up to age 9. The other group talked about the need for adult services and supports and how there really is nothing out there for people on the spectrum after they graduate school and enter into adulthood.

Toward the end of the day, Governor Terry Branstad signed a proclamation declaring April as Autism Awareness month in Iowa and time was given for participants to reach out to their state representatives to advocate for Autism and raise awareness.

ADVOCACY DAY

Submitted by Troy Ward

On February 27th, 2014, 45 REM consumers and staff attended Brain Injury Advocacy Day at the state capitol in Des Moines.

The purpose of this day was to show legislators the amount of support that exists for issues involving [brain injury](#). As well, interested persons had the opportunity to talk to legislators directly about these issues.

The current waiting list for individuals to get onto the Brain Injury Waiver is over 900 in the state of Iowa. That equates to about a 2 year waiting period for individuals desperately in need of these services. By having such strong participation in Brain Injury Advocacy Day, REM definitely made our legislatures aware of the need for continued focus on these concerns.

Front Row: Abby Patterson, Joellen Jensen, Rachel Schlotfeldt & Denita Peterson Back Row: Darcy Mettler, Jack Mettler, Anne Sopousek & Spencer Partridge



April is Autism Awareness Month. Each year, April 2nd, is the day to Light it Up Blue for World Autism Awareness Day! To honor this day, REM Iowa hosted a cookie sale. Various cookies were available for purchase and all people attending the event were encouraged to wear blue to support Autism Awareness. Through the cookie sales, REM Iowa was able to raise \$138 that was donated to [Autism Speaks](#).





Special Olympics

Mid-Winter Games 2014



Submitted by Casserly Mowrer,
RICS Program Coordinator

On Saturday, March 15th, Iowa City Fieldhouse Sports Complex was packed with spectators and athletes all across the state to compete in the [Special Olympics Iowa Mid-Winter Tournament](#). Qualifying teams met head-to-head in four different sporting events: basketball, powerlifting, gymnastics, and cheerleading.

REM Iowa Community Services, Hiawatha had a few proud athletes participate in basketball. Kyle Swallom's 3-on-3 basketball team took home bronze, Casey Bordwell's 5-on-5 co-ed basketball team took home silver, and Devon Ruchotzke took home silver in the skills portion of the basketball competition. Way to go guys!

Pictured above: Casey Bordwell

Pictured below, left to right: Kyle Swallom and Devon Ruchotzke



Sheena Taylor

Neither rain, nor sleet, nor snow, nor dead of night shall keep the folks of Southeast Iowa from celebrating the holidays together. On January 6th, consumers, staff, families, and administrators of Keokuk/Ft. Madison gathered together for a celebration that included food, entertainment, door prizes, and gifts for all consumers. The weather outside was frightful, but the company was so delightful! Program Director, Judy Chatfield cooked up some delicious pulled pork. Administrative Assistant, Winnie Alberts made desserts, casseroles, and her world famous homemade caramels. Winnie also made sure that each consumer would have a gift under the tree - something they each would enjoy. Each program was responsible for bringing side dishes, which included macaroni and cheese, salads, mashed potatoes and gravy, and baked beans. Elvis made an appearance, too! A good time was had by all. So much so, that plans are already in the works for a 4th of July bash! Stay tuned.

Congratulations, REM Iowa Developmental Services in Marshalltown...

*...as they celebrate their 1 Year Anniversary, on July 22, 2014
Thank you for the hard work and dedication this past year!*



Our REM Iowa [Host Home Program](#) has partnered with [WMT Radio](#) to educate the community about our host homes as well as recruit community members that want to [become Mentors](#).

Our relationship began in the Fall of 2013, when we wrote a proposal and was awarded with The Mentor Network's Innovative Grant. This grant enabled us to air several commercials during September.

We have also participated in WMT's "The Expert Hour" to share our program. "The Expert Hour" is hosted by [Jim Doyne](#) and is live! Mentors Suzanne Revers and Lori Sharpe as well as Recruiter Monica Ravn were all a little nervous, this first time, but their passion for the work they do quickly took over. A big thank you to Suzanne and Lori for sharing their stories!!

TAKIN' IT TO THE STREETS

Additionally, we have been privileged to join hosts Terry Cunningham and Keith Ruff on the Public Access Television (PATV) talkshow, "Hello, It's Us", a forum for individuals with disabilities and their advocates. Click to the right or in the links below to catch our appearances.



Mentor Suzanne Revers, Recruiter Monica Ravn, The Expert Hour Host Jim Doyne, Mentor Lori Sharpe & Sales Representative Marty Mason at our first appearance!

Mason Hamann, individual in host home, with his Mentor Suzanne Revers participated in one of our three commercials. We all had a great time learning about this process and taping the commercials! We were surprised with our talents!



LOOK & LISTEN!! Click the links below to catch our appearances on "The Expert Hour" and "Hello, It's Us"

- [The Expert Hour - November, 2013](#)
- [Hello, It's Us - August, 2013 Part 1](#)
- [Hello, It's Us - August, 2013 Part 2](#)

Season of Giving Back!

Giving back and supporting other caregivers is very important to our Host Home family. For the second year, individuals in host home, Mentors and REM Iowa personnel gave back by participating in the Families Helping Families Annual Christmas Party. [Families Helping Families](#) is a Cedar Rapids non-profit foster family support group, and this year, they had a record turnout of over 460 people!

We assisted kids in making Christmas Spiders, playing games and decorating



holiday shaped sugar cookies (yum)!

Left: COOKIES!!! PD Melinda Wetberell, Mentor Ashley Woodward, Emma Ravn, HR Business Partner, Sara Drish, and daughter, Macy



Clockwise from Upper Left: The always serious Tim Woodward, Cbris Irish, and Aaron Stych

Left: "Makin' Spiders... you?" Sydney, Lori and Monica assembling arachnids.



APPRECIATION DINNER - 2014



In celebration of Mentor Appreciation Month, on May 22 we honored all our Mentors with a dinner, a short program and hand-decorated flower pots made by individuals in the host home program! Our Mentors are everyday heroes that make a HUGE difference every day! Thank you and you are appreciated!

This past December, current individuals, Mentors and their families participated in our annual REM Iowa Host Home Program Holiday Party! We all enjoyed socializing, networking, playing games, and a gift exchange (AWESOME GIFTS!). Most of us commented on how much our program has grown in the past two years – from 4 individuals/host homes in 2012 to 11 individuals/host homes in 2013, with a number of additional approved Mentors eager to host and individuals awaiting their perfect match.

"We love our Mentor(s) and our host home!" - Some of our current host home individuals and Mentors – Looking good!

Holiday Party



2nd Anniversary

We are so pleased to congratulate Chris Irish and Mentors Ashley and Tim Woodward on their 2nd Anniversary! Ashley and Tim began hosting Chris on 03/31/12 and were our first host home program!

Mentors Ashley and Tim are most proud of how much Chris has opened up and started talking more. As a couple, they have learned they have great communication and can work together. "It's a lot of hard work, but it's all worth it," both shared.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
UPCOMING HOST HOME EVENTS

- Hiawatha Movies on the Square - July 25th
- Cedar Rapids Kernals Games -
 - July 19th, 5:05 pm (vs Fort Wayne)
 - August 16th, 6:35 pm (Special Olympics)
 - August 29, 6:35 pm (vs Kane County)

Brain Matters

Hello...

My name is Troy Ward and I am the new Brain Injury Specialist for REM Iowa Community Services. I have been with REM for 2 years. During that time I have worked as a Program Coordinator and Program Director. I have worked in the human services field for 7 plus years with children and adults and am currently pursuing a master's degree in mental health counseling. While working with REM, I have developed a passion for **Brain Injury (BI)**. My biggest goal with my position is to increase the quality of our BI services and help to improve the lives of those we serve. I am looking forward to meeting and working with many more individuals and staff around the state!



Troy Ward,
Brain Injury
Specialist

In other news...

On March 25th, the **Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa** held its 19th annual Awards and Recognition Celebration. REM Iowa Community Services Program Coordinator Scott McDowell



was recognized as Volunteer of the Year. In addition to supervising a program with three individuals with a brain injury, Scott serves his local chapter of the BI Alliance as a co-facilitator of the **Beginning Again** support group. Scott's passion for brain injury shows in the service he provides.

Congratulations Scott!

LOOKING AHEAD:

Submitted by Sara Drish,
REM Iowa Developmental Services

REM Iowa Developmental Services is excited to announce that we are working on a two year plan in conjunction with the **State's Employment First Initiative** and embracing a community integrated service redesign.

What does that mean for individuals accessing our services? This means that facility-based work and day programming is a service of the past and integrated community based job development and day programming is the service of the future.

Individuals accessing REM Iowa Developmental Services will be provided more options for community integration and job development. (See at right)

REM Iowa Developmental Services is committed to providing high quality job readiness training and day programming to individuals with disabilities. We are also committed to individual choices and needs. These commitments will not falter as we transform our services away from a facility and into the community.

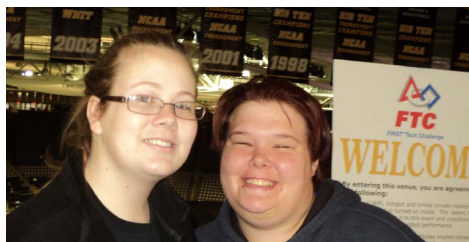
This transformation is already successfully underway in our Linn County programs and we look forward to our other programs evolving over this two year period of time. Our vocational team is committed to this initiative and redesign, as it will provide increased integration and fulfillment of community based services.

The future of REM Iowa Developmental Services is looking bright!

THE
FUTURE
OF VOC SERVICES



- Day Habilitation will be community integrated based on individual needs and desires
- 100% community based
- Partial participation
- Prevocational will focus on job development per Home and Community Based Services guidelines- preparing an individual for paid or unpaid employment, but which are not job-task oriented. These services include teaching the individual concepts necessary as job readiness skills, such as following directions, attending to tasks, task completion, problem solving, and safety and mobility training.
- Building a resume through: volunteer opportunities; job shadowing; mock interviews; community access opportunities
- Continued work with Supported Employment providers to assist in identifying and transitioning individuals to appropriate community employment opportunities





VOLUNTEER DAY

Employees of REM Iowa, a partner of The MENTOR Network, a national network of local health and human services providers, came together with their families

and friends on Saturday, April 12th to participate in The Network's 2nd Annual National Volunteer Day. Nearly 200 employees cleaned up Tucker Park and Guthridge Park in Hiawatha, IA after a hard winter. Volunteers raked leaves, added mulch, cleared the park of sticks and debris, and prepared the park for spring.

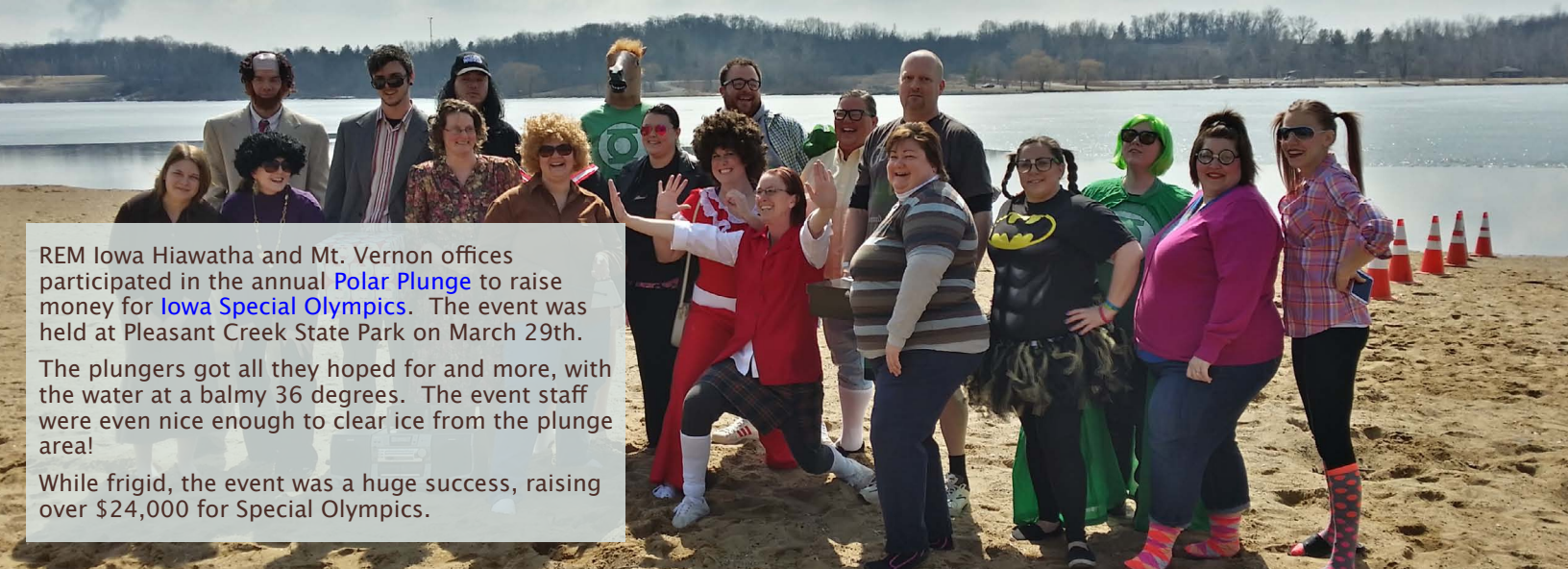
"What an amazing and fun-filled experience it was to participate in The MENTOR Network's 2nd Annual Volunteer Day!" said Lisa Pakkebier, Executive Director of REM Iowa. "To be able to have so many people within REM Iowa, as well as families and friends, participate in volunteering their time to give back to the community, was inspiring and invigorating. As a human service provider we make a difference in the lives of others every day, but it felt remarkable to have so many people associated with our organization be a part of making a difference in cleaning the parks in Hiawatha knowing that children, families, and adults would benefit from these acts of kindness. I can only hope more people have the opportunity to be a part of engaging events of this nature by giving back to their community in some way, shape or form."



Nearly 800 employees across The MENTOR Network volunteered in nine states on April 12th. Participants organized spring cleanups and painting projects at a Boys & Girls Club, therapeutic horse farm, community boathouse, battered women's shelter and various parks across the country, while others boxed products at food banks and sorted donated items at The Salvation Army.

"I want to thank everyone who made our second national Volunteer Day a big success!" said Bruce Nardella, President and CEO of The MENTOR Network. "To have so many employees volunteer their time toward making a difference in the communities we serve, in addition to the work they do every day with our consumers is inspiring and is the embodiment of The Network's mission in action."

FREEZIN FOR A REASON



REM Iowa Hiawatha and Mt. Vernon offices participated in the annual Polar Plunge to raise money for Iowa Special Olympics. The event was held at Pleasant Creek State Park on March 29th.

The plungers got all they hoped for and more, with the water at a balmy 36 degrees. The event staff were even nice enough to clear ice from the plunge area!

While frigid, the event was a huge success, raising over \$24,000 for Special Olympics.

REM *Angels*

REMEMBERING THERESA MACOMBER

Theresa will be remembered for her big smile, her singing, scaring others with “BOO”, whispers in your ear, her many bracelets and yelling at the choo choo train to go home. Theresa was surrounded by many staff and her family as she traveled from this world to the next. She will be greatly missed by many and has left a piece of herself in the hearts of all who knew her.

RICS Mt. Vernon lost a special person on May 4, 2014. Theresa Macomber passed away peacefully in her home at the age 58. Theresa first came to REM in 1996 and resided in Kalona. In 2005 she moved to Mt. Vernon. Theresa had several different roommates during

her 9 years in Mt Vernon but she was extremely close to Mike, Janet and Joyce. Theresa and Joyce are probably eating oatmeal cream pies and McDonald’s while chatting up a storm.



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 ongoing 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 **25 years** of service – Julia Techau, Roger Wilson

For **20 years** of service – Cynthia Claussen, Sherrie Wilson

For **15 years** of service – Megan Fuhs, Pamela Knoot, Mary Parker, Michele Van Thournout

For **10 years** of service – Shay Andersen, Christina Bradley, Mary Gramkow, Brenda Isenberger, Patrick Knepper, Patricia Robinson, Jennifer Schuler

For **5 years** of service – Nawai Abdelrahman, Trenton Andersen, Patricia Biwot, Kara Bomer, Christina Boshart, Lacy Busenbark, Kathie Bush, Patrick Cornick, Jennifer Echavarria, Sara Etringer, Bruce Greenwood, Elizabeth Haddad, Angel Hammermeister, Isyaga Jabbie, Musa Koech, Kathryn Kopecky, Jordan Koster, Ashely Levelle, Thomas Makori, Tammala Masters, Darla McGaffic, Patricia Moffit, Jean-Paul Mugesuzi, Kristin Parlier, Rocio Ramirez, Ciarra Setran, Abdul Shindo, Danielle Smith, Amelia Storesund, Kristin Swartz, Obsa Taddese, Vernon Thompson, Jessica Zahorik

Time to Celebrate

In the coming months, REM Iowa will be hosting events in the following areas across the state to celebrate 35 years of service:

- Cedar Rapids & surrounding areas
- Council Bluffs & surrounding areas
- Davenport & surrounding areas
- Des Moines & surrounding areas
- Keokuk, Mt. Pleasant & Fort Madison



The REM Iowa Voice – June 2014 – Volume 3, Number 2

The REM Iowa Voice is a publication of REM Iowa, Inc. © 2014. 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 for 35 years.