

# HOST HOMES...

Our First Issue!

**ZOMBIES  
and  
PIRATES!**  
(Take the PLUNGE)

A CAPITOL Event

Spread the word  
TO END THE WORD

Meet our  
LEADERSHIP TEAM



...Have  
Arrived!



**Lisa Pakkebie**  
Executive Director

# Welcome!

I am truly honored to be a part of our first newsletter and cannot express my enthusiasm that this newsletter has become a reality.

As the executive director for REM Iowa I support all of our operations within Iowa. 2012 marks my 20th year with the agency. It's been a pleasure as well as an adventure to be a part of our organization - the time has gone by so fast. 2011 was a remarkable year in that we began to focus on our future in a way that would result in new opportunities, approaches, and ideas, including the publication of our first REM Iowa Newsletter!

Early last year we identified the need to create a formal Strategic Plan and proceeded with securing a consultant to help us move forward with our efforts. After considering several candidates, Dan Ebener was selected as the right consultant to assist us with this project. Dan has been instrumental to this undertaking and is truly one of the most genuine and knowledgeable people that I know. He educated all of us; explaining what Strategic Planning is and why it is important. Strategic Planning is "a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it" (Bryson, 2004). A strategically managed organization defines where it wants to be and manages change through an action agenda to achieve that future. (Basically the Strategic Planning Process helps us identify our overall purpose, desired results, any challenges to achieving those results, and helps us plan how those results will be achieved.)

Dan proceeded by facilitating values process meetings and focus group meetings with employees, the family members of people receiving REM Iowa services, and community partners associated with REM Iowa. He compiled the input of our focus and

values groups, assisted us in refining the information and reviewed the results with the REM Iowa Leadership Team. The Leadership Team (comprised of 43 members including Program Directors, Area Directors, Regional Directors, human resource team members, quality assurance members, our Financial Analyst, office managers, and me) collaborated to create our mission statement, our values statement and our strategic plan, which includes our primary strategic issues and action items (i.e., what our challenges are and how we are going to meet those challenges).

Of the primary strategic issues, communication was identified as an area that we wanted to improve and strengthen with all involved stakeholders. The team determined that a newsletter would assist us in increasing and maintaining communication with stakeholders on an on-going basis...and that is how we got to where we are today; with the first issue of **The REM Iowa Voice**. I hope you find the newsletter to be a valuable and informative communication tool. We welcome and value your ideas and feedback so please feel free to share your thoughts with any member of the leadership team. If you would like to give me your input you can contact me at my email address [lisa.pakkebie@thementor.com](mailto:lisa.pakkebie@thementor.com).

Whatever role you play in our agency, I would like to thank you for your support and the positive impact that you have on the individuals receiving our services. What I will leave you with is our REM Iowa mission statement:

We enhance quality of life today and inspire hope for tomorrow by teaching independent living skills to people through a continuum of quality services.

MISSION STATEMENT



# Finally Here!

Chris Irish has dreamed of living with Ashley and Tim

Woodward for over a year and a half and his dream was finally realized on March 31, 2012. Chris moved into REM Iowa's first host home program with the Woodwards as his Mentors and is not looking back...

For weeks leading up to his 'big move', Chris was excited and all he talked about was his new home, the Woodwards and Neko, the family dog. When the move in day finally came, Chris was prepared and ready to get going. Chris has easily adjusted to his new home and Mentors.

We would like to thank Chris' case manager, Mike Snitker, for all his support as well as Chris' previous REM support team (Janet Sabin, program director; Devin Hinke, Program Coordinator; and all his direct support professionals) and his substitute Mentor, Jackie Snyder.



Chris is excited about the future with his Mentors including a new house, spending time with family and friends and buying new things.

*L to R: Chris Irish, with new Mentors, Tim and Ashley Woodward Inset: Tim and substitute Mentor, Jackie Snyder*

What exactly is the Host Home program all about? REM Iowa's newest service was recently featured in the April issue of Adel Living:

Earlier this year, REM Iowa started a Host Home program. Individuals with intellectual disabilities are placed in private homes with families who are matched with them and then become their mentor, says Monica Ravn, the recruiter-coordinator for the Host Home program.

The person with disabilities lives with the host family on a full-time basis. "It becomes a very unique, shared living environment," Ravn says. "The mentor is (...) a mentor to that individual and a role model, but they're also that person's primary caretaker."

Ravn says this set-up will be a positive one for the individual with disabilities because they will have a consistent caregiver with whom they can develop a stronger relationship and develop more trust rather than having multiple caregivers if they were to live in a group home.

"We see our individual making a lot of strides," she says.

[P]eople who are interested [in the service] can contact her at [monica.ravn@thementornetwork.com](mailto:monica.ravn@thementornetwork.com).

## The Mt. Vernon Renovation

The Mt. Vernon employees have faced many challenges in the five and half years of providing service but none more glaring than a summer 2011 rain storm which left puddles of water on the floor, damaged office equipment and lost work time. After months of planning, painting the office, installing new carpet and replacing desks and cubicles, REM Mt Vernon now has a new look.

The Mt. Vernon individuals and



# Capitol Day-2012



Staff and individuals served by REM joined others on February 28th at the State Capitol to advocate for greater access and better funding for services for people living with a brain injury. Expanded research, adequate resources, programs

designed specifically for the needs of people with brain injuries and increased legislative and congressional awareness were topics of discussion.

In addition the individuals and employees petitioned their representatives to:

- Increase funding to support best practices in BI services and education in Iowa.
- Include acute care, post-acute rehabilitation, and home and community-based services for Iowans with brain injury in all state healthcare reform legislation and policy.
- Eliminate the need for waiting list by fully funding the home and community waiver programs.
- Expand the scope of the Medicaid HCBS Elder Waiver and remove the upper age limit of 64 on the Brain Injury Waiver.
- Implement a Graduated Drivers License system in Iowa that will require:
  - the use of “hands-free” devices while using cell phones;
  - all persons under 18 years of age who are being transported in a motor vehicle, other than a school bus or motorcycle, to be secured by an approved child restraint system or a seat belt regardless of seating position;
  - helmet use for children when riding bicycles.
  - helmet use for all persons riding motorcycles and ATV's.

Even though the individuals were not able to meet all their representatives due to a busy day in session, they were able to leave mail and other materials in their boxes. Several legislators have acknowledged that they received the materials and thanked them for their advocacy.



Visitors to the Capitol included: John Stone, Moses Ryan, Robert Smith, David Scothorn, Don Carsensen, and employees, Patti, Lea, Ryan and Nelson.



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The last two years have been very busy for people with disabilities and their stakeholders who have been working to redesign the Iowa Mental Health and Developmental Disability system. Legislators, the Department of Human Services (DHS), providers, advocates, individuals receiving services and others have been working to improve Iowa's system of care. Their work culminated last week with the passage of a MHDD Redesign Bill by the Iowa Legislature.

The redesign of the mental health and disability system is complex, requiring a lot of new and revised laws and rules, but hopefully, will help make services more accessible across the state and offer more choices.

Highlights of the new system include establishing regions versus having counties manage services individually. This will increase consistency across the state and ensure every Iowan has access to the same set of core services no matter where they live. The new legislation requires the same property tax assessment for MHDD services across the state to create a more balanced and equitable funding source. Iowa will also add some new crisis services to ensure a better continuum of care.

The redesign of the system was a huge undertaking and required a lot of advocacy and compromise. Although not perfect, it is a great step forward in Iowa to have a more stable and effective system of care.





# HELPING. ONE ANIMAL AT A TIME.

By: Vicki Lewis, Program Coordinator, HCBS  
- Council Bluffs

Choosing to give back to your community is a commitment many people find hard to keep. Celeste Ring, who has lived in Council Bluffs for over twenty years, is one who has kept this commitment. While watching TV one day, she saw a commercial about donating money for sick dogs. Celeste stated, "I want to do that." After speaking with her program coordinator, Celeste realized there was an animal shelter in her town, so she began visiting the animals there. One visit became two, and so on. Now every month Celeste goes to Wal-Mart and purchases food, toys and cat litter for the animal shelter; Celeste says she loves looking at the dogs and playing with the kittens. Celeste not only has made friends with the animals, but also with the shelter staff. They know her name and greet her when she comes through the door which always puts a smile on Celeste's face. Celeste is very grateful she can help the animals and the community any way she can.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



The Council Bluffs REM office contributed to the Community this past Saturday, April 21st by helping the local Boy Scout Troop 510 by accepting donations for the Scouting For Food drive. Troop 510 was able to collect over 870 food items for the local food pantry.



# P-P-Polar P-P-PLUNGE!!

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

**Zombies, Pirates, Jail birds, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles...** These were just a few examples of the many costumes you may have seen if you were present at the Polar Plunge on March 24, 2012. This year marked the 5th Annual Polar Plunge at Palo Lake. Participants can register as a Plunger or a Chicken and raise a minimum of \$75. All proceeds go to supporting Special Olympics.

This year the water at Palo was a balmy 55 degrees, a vast improvement from last year's temperature of 37 degrees. REM Iowa had two teams participate in the Polar Plunge. RICS Hiawatha aka the Pirates of Palo dressed as pirates and had the largest team registered with 28 members. Their team raised the second highest amount of money bringing in \$2873. The REM PERC-u-laters participated for the 5th straight year. This year the PERC-u-laters had members from REM Iowa ICF's, RICS Mt. Vernon and REM Iowa Developmental Services in Hiawatha and Mt. Vernon on the team. The PERC-u-laters dressed as zombies and put a spin on Thriller - aka Chiller this year to go with the theme for a Polar Plunge. The PERC-u-laters won Best Costume this year, bringing home this title for the 3rd time!

Congratulations to both teams for their willingness to participate in this fun event and for helping support Special Olympics and the athletes that participate in Special Olympics!



## **RICS Hiawatha as The Pirates of Palo**

**Front Row L to R:** Elizabeth Wilson, Kim Jons, Danielle Smith, Sara Fedorowicz, Annie Streng, Darla McGaffic, Sara Miner, Heather Smith **Middle Row L to R:** Christy Norton, Sara Shelton, JoAnn Lynch, Jean Gisel, Michelle Maher **Back Row L to R:** Jon Shelton, Melinda Wetherell, Scott McDowell, Devin Hinke, Dave Wetherell, Sacha Dyson-Holland, Angie Thomsen, Tom Johnson, Nick First, Zach Weiss, Eric Green

## **Best Costume Winners - REM Iowa PERC-u-laters as "Chiller"**

**Front Row L to R:** Rachel Hartman, Stephanie Bawek, Katey Barnhurst, Michael Hepker **Middle Row L to R:** Brittney Kayser, Shawna Kahler, Lindsey Travagiakis, Bailey Carver, Anne Sopousek, Rachel Schlotfelt, Kerri Neil, Sarah Gonzalez, Kara Foster, Angela Behrend **Back Row L to R:** Katie Little, Angie Bizek



# SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD.

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

Remember when you were a kid and people would say, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me?” While this popular phrase may sound good in theory, it often is untrue. Words can be hurtful. Being called names can be hurtful. In our society, people freely use the word retard or retarded. To people with disabilities being called this hurts. To those of us who work with people who have disabilities this word hurts us too. We are taught to look past the disability and see the person and knowing that people use this word in everyday language to make fun of people with disabilities or to put them down seems wrong. It’s time for a change!

REM Iowa ICF’s in Cedar Rapids teamed up with the organization r-word.org to “Spread the Word to End the Word.” This organization does amazing work toward stopping the use of the r word (retarded) from everyday language and spreads awareness for individuals with disabilities. It gives individuals and their family members a voice and place to

share their story.

March 7, 2012 was the nationally recognized day to take the pledge to stop using the r-word. REM Iowa ICF’s set up a booth at Lindale Mall and set out to educate the community and encourage people to take an online pledge that they would no longer use the r-word in their everyday language. We handed out bracelets, buttons and stickers to those

*Remember when you were a kid and people would say, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me?”*

that were willing to take the pledge. It was a successful day, as we were able to obtain approximately 80 pledges and the r-word organization was able to obtain over 30,000 pledges nationwide.

Taking the pledge is just one small step. If you didn’t take the pledge, there is still time. Anyone can take the pledge by visiting the website at [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org). It’s not too late. You can help make a difference and put an end to the r-word. It’s time for acceptance, respect and inclusion.

**ACCEPTANCE**  
**Be a fan of**  
**RESPECT**  
**HUMANITY**  
[www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org)



## What’s in a Name?

THE **REM**  
IOWA VOICE

When we put out the call to help us name our new newsletter, our team of compassionate

and creative associates answered – loud and clear. Each respondent had some very distinct ideas about what we should call the publication and why, but all of them exhibited one trait in common: passion for what they do. In the end, one entry, in particular, struck a chord.

Winner, Tina Webb, describes her process:

“I chose “The REM Iowa Voice,” because ‘voice’ is defined as ‘a sound produced by the vocal organs,’ but has another, more important meaning: “to express or utter; the right to express a choice or opinion”. I believe REM Iowa is dedicated to making sure all individuals in its care as well as its staff are given the opportunity to have their voices heard, and the name ‘The REM Iowa Voice’ reflects this.”

*Tina Webb is a Utilization Review Specialist in Adel, IA. She has been in her position since May 2011 and has been with REM Iowa Developmental Services since February 2010.*



# MEET OUR

# Senior Leadership Team



**Lisa Pakkebieer**  
Executive Director



**Amber Glasscock**  
Area Director - HCBS  
Coralville, Davenport,  
and Southern Areas



**Sara Drish**  
HR Manager

**Dawn Steffen**  
Regional Director - ICF



**Sara Drish**  
Area Director - RDS



**Debbie Beall**  
Office Manager



**Pat Costigan**  
Regional Director - HCBS  
Eastern Iowa



**Kelly Flanagan**  
Area Director - HCBS  
Western and Central Iowa



**Clara Conklin**  
QA Manager

**Matt Hidlebaugh**  
Area Director - HCBS  
Cedar Rapids and  
Mt. Vernon Area



**Brenda Isenberger**  
Business Development  
Director



**Tom Drish**  
Financial Analyst



## 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 15 years of service – **Christine Bengel**

For 10 years of service – **Erin Evans, Kim Milligan**

For 5 years of service – **Tana Bieber, Rebecca Branstetter, Amy Renaud, Amy Nelson, Linda Crill, Rose Hesford, Jessica Haynes, Josh Brenneman**

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