

THE REM IOWA VOICE

January 2016





Ripple of Hope Awardee

Brandon Mason

REM Iowa joined The MENTOR Network on October 28 in Boston at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate to honor the 2015 Ripple of Hope Reward recipients. REM Iowa's Brandon Mason was among the ten honorees, who were selected from nearly 300 nominations.

The MENTOR Network's Ripple of Hope Awards were created in 2005 to recognize employees, Mentors and other independent contractors whose compassion, energy and skill create ripples of hope in the lives of others.

"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

-Senator Robert F. Kennedy

As a direct support professional (DSP) out of REM Iowa's Hiawatha office for the past five years, Brandon Mason has supported individuals in 17 of the 22 homes and, as a result, gotten to know most of the individuals supported and staff. He has built strong bonds with the intention of being in it for the long haul.

Brandon's career choices have always focused on helping others. He started his EMT training in high school, then went to school for firefighting. He was still in college when he became a DSP.

"Making a difference is what I want to do more than anything else," said Brandon.

Brandon doesn't stop at the role of caregiver. He sees the bigger picture. Brandon will fix things - from wheelchairs to drains, to securing TVs for safety. He will stop in to visit with individuals he

supports on the days he's not working with them, even on his time off, because he knows it makes them happy. "I just like being there," said Brandon. "I'm one of the consistencies."

"Making a difference is what I want to do more than anything else."

-Brandon Mason

Brandon's genuine interest in people as individuals is evident, as is his passion for helping to make their day better. It is one of the reasons staff, managers and the individuals he supports often turn to him when they need help, whether to fill a shift or address a behavioral issue.

The name, Ripple of Hope, echoes words spoken by the late United States Senator Robert F. Kennedy in his 1966 address at the University of Cape Town in South Africa during the height of Apartheid. Award winners are nominated by their peers and selected by The MENTOR

Network in recognition of their unwavering commitment to make a positive difference in the lives of others, whether in an office, program or community setting. Recipients of the 11th annual Ripple of Hope Awards are heroes among us. Their legacies of caring, like Brandon's, extend beyond themselves to touch the lives of many.



Brandon (left) and father, Jeff



At Left: Dave Wetherell, Program Director; Brandon Mason, Direct Support Professional; Brandon's dad, Jeff Mason; Mike Rivera, Program Coordinator; and Lisa Pakkebier, Executive Director
Cover: Brandon, with MENTOR Network CFO, Denis Holler.



DSP APPRECIATION 2015!

Each Fall, we make a special effort to remind our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) just how inspired we are by their dedication and just how much we appreciate their warmth, creativity, and the exceptional skills they share with us, and most importantly, the individuals we serve. Here are a few of the ways some of our coordinators expressed their gratitude for the talented DSPs on their team. DSPs were also treated to lunch at some of the locations, special t-shirts were distributed, and much more.



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 **5 years** of service - Tennille Backstrom, Katey Barnhurst, Dustin Bell, Tamara Bjorklund, Harriet Ferris, Matthew Gaul, Evens Guerrier, Jacy Halverson, Rhonda Hockney, LaRae Lynch, Dennis Patrick, Carol Peckensneider, Kathie Pitt, Christina Seitz, Abdelmonem Shareef, Emily Stanford, Shwan Stender, Robin Troxel, Tracie Urmie, Donna Walker, Forkpa Wilson

(Unique to this issue: Due to the number of individuals recognized for **10 years or more of service**, an insert has been added to ensure all acknowledged employees are included for all to see. Additionally, you will find many pictured in the Awards Banquet article on page 6.)

Meanwhile, in Coralville...



ON 9/17/15, THE CORALVILLE OFFICE HELD A CHILI COOK OFF (WON BY PROGRAM DIRECTOR SARA MINER) TO HELP CELEBRATE DSP APPRECIATION WEEK. BESIDES YUMMY CHILI, THERE WERE MANY OTHER GOODIES PROVIDED FOR THEIR EMPLOYEES TO RECOGNIZE ALL THE HARD WORK DSPs DO.

UPDATE ON MODERNIZING IOWA'S HEALTHCARE

The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) will be transitioning most Medicaid members to a new managed care program, officially named **IA Health Link**. The goals of IA Health Link are to improve the coordination and quality of care that **Medicaid** members receive and to become a healthier state, while Iowa works towards a balanced, predictable state budget. The original plan was for implementation to take effect January 1, 2016. The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)** conducted a site visit, between December 8th and December 11th, to review Iowa's readiness to implement managed care for 560,000 Medicaid beneficiaries in the state. It was determined that Iowa is not yet ready to implement the transition to managed care within that original timeframe, and CMS determined that they cannot, at this time, approve the 1915(b) and 1915(c) waivers necessary for the state to do so. CMS is going to continue to work closely with the state on an approach to readiness that provides a smooth transition for beneficiaries, MCOs and providers. CMS believes that Iowa can be prepared to implement the program March 1, 2016.

This change will impact nearly every individual served by **REM** by assigning each person to a health care plan administered by one of three insurance companies, also known as **Managed Care Organizations (MCOs)** (**Amerigroup Iowa, Inc.; AmeriHealth Caritas Iowa, Inc.; UnitedHealthcare Plan of the River Valley, Inc.**). The Department of Human Services (DHS) initially selected four MCOs to administer the IA Health Link Program. On December 18, 2015, the **Notice of Intent to Award was reversed for WellCare of Iowa, Inc.** following an appeals process. While further litigation may continue, Iowa Medicaid will tentatively reassign members who were initially assigned to, or who chose WellCare during the enrollment process. The new tentative assignments will be sent in January, 2016. REM is in the process of contracting with all of the remaining awarded MCOs.

What does this mean for the people we serve? Each

member will be automatically assigned to an insurer but will have a window of opportunity to choose another plan. Members will be able to choose their health plan until February 17, 2016, for coverage beginning March 1, 2016. Members will have until May 18, 2016 to make a change for any reason, and then for "good cause" reasons after that.

The members' healthcare costs, including **REM** services, will be paid through their insurance plans. It will be important for members (and their representatives) to educate themselves on IA Health Link and familiarize themselves with their plan. The services each person is currently receiving will continue.

Individuals may experience a change in their targeted case manager and/or other healthcare providers depending on their insurance carrier's approved provider network. If members have questions about the mailing or transition, they are encouraged to contact **Iowa Medicaid Member Services** at 1-800-338-8366, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday – Friday, or by email at IMEMemberServices@dhs.state.ia.us.

What does this mean for REM? REM will have new managed care partners to assist in coordinating care for the people we serve. REM will work with each insurance company to develop care plans that are matched to the person's needs. The new healthcare system will increase provider focus on quality outcomes for health and community living. The partnerships will offer additional opportunities for innovation and creativity to serve populations that need the most help. Throughout this systems change, REM will continue to focus on serving, serving well, and serving more people that need our help.

More information on Medicaid Modernization or the IA Health Link program can be found at: <http://dhs.iowa.gov/ime/about/initiatives/MedicaidModernization>

Due to the frequently changing status of the Medicaid Modernization rollout, this article contains additional updated material contributed by Lisa Pakkebieer, Executive Director.



Playing it Safe!



Program Coordinators attending New Supervisors Training on November 5th participated in a project to create REM Iowa Safety Culture logos as a part of the Safety and Worker Compensation session. What amazing creativity!

The Marshall Council Knights of Columbus, Marshalltown Fire Department and Blank Children's Hospital held a training in the fall to educate persons with intellectual disabilities on fire safety, how to properly use a fire extinguisher and how to evacuate from a simulated fire. All their time was volunteered to help individuals be more prepared while living in the community in case of emergencies.



FIRE PREVENTION TRAINING



GO HAWKS



Lifelong Hawkeye fan Mike Nowachek wanted to attend a **Hawkeye football** game this year. He and DSP, Brian Norton attended the October 10th game against Illinois. Beautiful weather and a Hawkeye victory made for a great day.



ok•TĒM•ber-fest: Annual event that happens every year in Marshalltown the last weekend in September. There were 140 entry floats with REM Iowa being amongst them. REM Iowa staff and individuals passed out 500 crayons and coloring sheets, wristbands, drink cozies, and bouncy balls. The crowd of over 5,000 people brought great pleasure to our staff and individuals by applauding them as they drove by. The annually anticipated Oktoberfest is a 4-day event that often includes such crowd-pleasers as a carnival, car shows, and music performers. REM Staff and consumers put the float together the day before and enjoyed seeing the community interactions with each individual.





RELOCATION

REM Iowa Developmental Services is rarely a company at rest. If you were part of the **REM Iowa Developmental Services** team, you were likely part of a relocation or expansion of services this season. Individuals and staff from Mt Vernon, for example, relocated to 1195 East Post Road in Marion, Iowa on September 16th. Soon following, on October 1st, our Hiawatha services added an additional 25 individuals from **New Horizons**, a local ICF residential provider. With this expansion came another new facility located at 1395 Stamy Road. This new site will also continue to serve ICF individuals previously receiving our services at the North Center Point Road facility in Hiawatha, as well as our facilities in Mt Vernon and Coralville. And finally, on November 5th, services in Adel moved to 7755 Office Plaza Drive North - Suite 170 in West Des Moines.

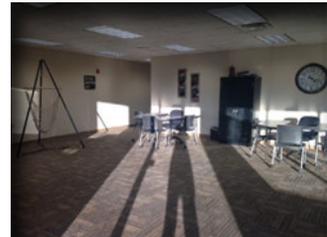
Each of these new sites will allow individuals accessing our services more options for programming, community integration, and the opportunity to develop new friendships as we move into the next phase of community based services in Linn and Polk Counties.



Our new facility in West Des Moines



Pictured above: A few of the guys from the new Hiawatha location
Below: Our new location in Marion



Above and below: A couple interior detail shots of our West Des Moines site



RDS CARNIVAL

Submitted by: Amy Keltner
Program Director

** Making a Splash in Mount Vernon! **

Mount Vernon RDS held a carnival day on Tuesday, August 25 to say "farewell" before their scheduled relocation to the Marion area. There were many activities that took place such as karaoke, games, a photo booth, and of course a Dunk Tank!



Brain Matters

[Troy Ward, our former Brain Injury Specialist, transitioned into the role of Mental Health Specialist for REM Iowa in May. In his new role, he works with our individuals dealing with difficulties due to mental illness. His role includes consultation throughout the state, staff training, and developing new resources and trainings.]

Hey There!!!



TRACY KENNIS
Brain Injury Specialist

My name is Tracy Kennis and, as of July 1st, I am the new Brain Injury Specialist for **REM Iowa Community Services!** I began my exciting journey with REM Iowa in November 2011 as a Program Coordinator in Davenport and then as a Program Director shortly after in April 2012, also in Davenport.

Over the years, my passion for working with individuals with Brain Injuries has become undeniable. I have had the opportunity to travel to Carbondale, IL and Tulsa, OK to meet individuals from Iowa who are receiving Brain Injury Services and Rehabilitation, and I have had the pleasure of assisting many folks in their return back home to Iowa.

My goal as the Brain Injury Specialist for REM Iowa is to share my passion with everyone I come in contact with. I will continue to advocate for the individuals that we serve and work to increase Brain Injury Awareness throughout the State of Iowa.

In Other News...

The 2015 football season arrived, and the Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa took the opportunity to have a little fun with Iowa's well-established Cyclone/Hawkeye rivalry, while simultaneously increasing awareness of Brain Injuries and raising funds for advocacy, education, prevention, support, and research with their "Egg 'Em On' Challenge".

Throughout Iowa, fans on each side (Go Cyclones!) challenged fans of the opposite team, colleagues, and family members to participate in smashing stigmas of Brain Injury.

Let me explain...An egg, representing the many stigmas and obstacles associated with Brain Injuries, including the lack of a helmet law in Iowa, waiting lists for Brain Injury Services, lack of funding, and many more, were smashed on the participants' heads, metaphorically smashing the stigma.

Troy Ward, Mental Health Specialist; Annie Streng, Business Development Director; and I could not resist the opportunity to participate in "Smashing Stigmas" and raising awareness throughout the state. REM Iowa's RDS in Marshalltown also joined in the fun and participated in the challenge. Check out our videos and more on the [REM Iowa Facebook](#) page. While it was messy (and the Cyclones lost), the opportunity to spread awareness made it well worth it.



Jeffry Hessing - 20 yrs



The Eastern Iowa 10 yr Group



Crys Bast (Left) - 20 yrs



The Western/Central IA 10 yr Group



Barb Van Alst - 20 yrs



The Western/Central IA 15 yr Group

2015 Recognition Banquets

REM Iowa Recognizes a Commitment to Service by Honoring Dedicated Employees

REM Iowa leadership, colleagues, family, and friends were honored to recognize 81 employees to celebrate milestone service anniversaries at the 2015 Employee Recognition Banquets this fall. Employee recognition celebrations took place in Eastern Iowa on August 25th at the Cedar Rapids Marriott and in Western and Central Iowa on September 17th at the Ameristar Casino in Council Bluffs. Both events offered a formal dinner, an "Over the Years" presentation, and individual recognition of each employee for their years of service (refer to years and employee names on the accompanying insert or click here). Both evenings were full of laughter and inspirational stories of service. Much has changed over the past 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35 years, but one thing that hasn't is staff's commitment and dedication to REM Iowa's mission and the individuals we serve.

We congratulate each of you for your success and achievement in our organization! With all your hard work and dedication toward the services we provide and the individuals we support, you have made a difference. Thank you for your ability to enhance quality of life today and inspire hope for tomorrow, by teaching independent living skills to people through a continuum of quality services. The success of our mission belongs to each of you.



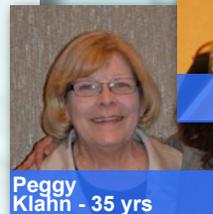
The Eastern Iowa 15 yr Group



Jeff & Julie Drury (Left & Right) - 20 yrs



Tracy Herweg - 20 yrs



Peggy Klahn - 35 yrs



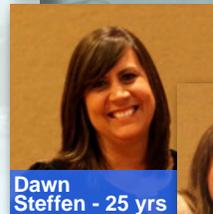
Leslie Little - 20 yrs



Matt Hidlebaugh - 20 yrs



Doreen Dae (Right) - 30 yrs



Dawn Steffen - 25 yrs



Peaceful Gantenbein (Left) - 20 yrs

#supportblue

Submitted by: Tracy Herwig, Program Director

The Council Bluffs community and the REM Iowa Community Services office, located in Council Bluffs, mourned the loss of Officer Kerrie Orozco, who was killed in the line of duty. Building trust with all community members helps us better support the individuals in our services and increases the social/professional circles of support for each individual. Our local police department supports us in our mission; they want to know more, help more. On May 26, as Kerrie's funeral procession passed by our office, it was our turn to give them support. I was proud while standing next to my co-workers. I could feel our REM camaraderie. Our REM togetherness. Our REM support for them and for each other. We need to live life to the fullest every day and continue to encourage and engage those we support with services to do the same.



On Saturday November 7th, 2015 REM Hiawatha lost a beloved member of their family as John Boyle passed away after a brief illness. John joined REM in the winter of 2007 as a part of the first brain injury program. John was a fun loving guy who liked to sit outside and have a smoke with his roommates, listen to 50's and 60's music, go to the HY VEE gas station for a Diet Coke and a bag of chips or popcorn and watch Jeopardy. John cared very much for his staff at REM, and his roommates. They were his family. You never knew what to expect from John. He was quick with advice and he always left others smiling. John touched a lot of lives and he will be greatly missed.

REM Angels



Rachel Diane Stanley of Adel, Iowa passed away peacefully with her family by her side on January 26, 2015 at the age of 29. Rachel had been a participant at the REM Iowa Developmental Services day program in Adel since December 2008. Rachel

loved listening to music, watching Disney movies, using sensory equipment and being around others. She was known and loved by many in her community and will be greatly missed by her friends at REM and everyone touched by her life.

To celebrate Rachel's life and honor her memory, Rachel's family generously purchased some items for her REM friends to enjoy at the day program. Rachel's peers can now think of her while they unwind in the comfy hammock swing, listen to their favorite tunes on the portable Bluetooth speakers and utilize their favorite apps on the iPad mini that came complete with iTunes credits and a case in Rachel's signature colors of pink and purple.



Wishing You A WONDERFUL New Year

As we begin a new year,
we gratefully pause
to wish you a warm, healthy, and happy
year ahead.

We have much to be thankful for...
Whatever role & association you play
with our agency & the people we are
blessed to serve, we would like to take
this opportunity to express our heartfelt
gratitude to you. Thank you for your
support & partnership.

Warmest Wishes from REM Iowa

The REM Iowa Voice – January 2016 – Volume 5, Number 1

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Design: The Human Element/LifeForward, LLC

REM Iowa Recognizes a Commitment to Service by Honoring Dedicated Employees

REM Iowa leadership, colleagues, family and friends were honored to recognize 81 employees – celebrating milestone service anniversaries at the 2015 Employee Recognition Banquets this fall. See accompanying story on pages 2 and 6.

Western/Central Iowa 10 Years of Service

Amanda Adkins
Lynda Knecht
Christina Bradley
Patricia Robinson
Mary Gramkow
Todd Koch
Barbara Morgan
Nancy Turner
Russell Steffens
Karen Fry
Dawn Beauchamp
Amber Jensen
Thomas Cox
Jill Anstey
Dione Glenn
Jody Nelson
Angela Hammons
Lisa Mills
Sheila Carroll

Eastern Iowa 10 Years of Service

Carol Bantz
Devon Buckert
Rachel Tank
Kelly Neuroth
Juliana Ejiasi
Kimberly Jons
Jessica Walker
Debbie Beall
Amy Cady
Jessica Cross
Jean Kemper
Vicki Gardemann

Christine Norton
Winifred Alberts
Michael Burns
Staci Siddell
Sabra Hopkins
David Penn
Michele Stainbrook
Joanne Byrns
Julie Parker
Brenda Isenberger
Shay Andersen
Patrick Knepper
Amy Renaud

Western/Central Iowa 15 Years of Service

Kelly Flanagan
Kim Brown
Troy Mahan
Christina Cox
Megan Fuhs
Becky Riley
Mary Biede

Eastern Iowa 15 Years of Service

Lindsay Travagiakis
Darla Iburg
Anne Sopousek
Lori Raleigh
Pamela Knoot
Mary Parker
Clara Conklin
Michele Van Thournout
Monica Ravn
Joe Eichelberger

Western/Central Iowa 20 Years of Service

Cynthia Claussen
Tracy Herweg

Eastern Iowa 20 Years of Service

Jeffrey Hessing
Matthew Hidlebaugh
Jeffrey Drury
Peaceful-Spirit Gantenbein
Barbara Van Alst
Leslie Little
Crystal Bast
Julie Drury
Sherrie Wilson
David Vanfleet
Michelle Wilson
June Love

Eastern Iowa 25 Years of Service

Dawn Steffen
Julia Techau
Roger Wilson

Western/Central Iowa 30 Years of Service

Doreen Dea
Corrine Sindt

Western/Central Iowa 35 Years of Service

Peggy Klahn

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