

Boston Health Care Systems, Inc.

A company dedicated to volunteerism and caring.

The Boston Connection

Spring 2011 Edition



From the Top



2

Dogs are odd creatures – yet we love them unconditionally and often exceptionally. With upturned or floppy ears, pointed or squished noses, bodies of irregular shapes and sizes – we heartily love them in spite of their uniqueness; we adore them for their differentness. We do this so much so that we alter nature to create remarkably odd combinations of dogs. The Labradoodle, a combination of Poodle and Lab is only one example of which there are many.

Looking yesterday at my seven pound (sopping wet) Yorkshire Terrier standing (maybe) six inches off the ground, I had to wonder what exactly it is about humans that we so value uniqueness in our animals but hardly accept, let alone, tolerate differentness among ourselves.

Beauty is well-defined in societies like ours and the further you are from the ideal, the greater the likelihood that your life will be less. Behavior is also prescribed ... and here again, chances are the more one marches to the beat of a different drummer, the greater the likelihood he or she will be kept a further distance from the "inner group." We know this to be true for the populations we serve at BHCS. There is a high price to pay in our society for being different.

So, what exactly is it that allows us to impose an absolute rigidity of rightness and value for very specified human characteristics, but extols limitless appreciation and preference for oddity and diversity in our pets? What is it that causes us to adore, snuggle and sleep with creatures that look like Boxers, Pugs, and St. Bernards yet causes many to turn away, stare, taunt and even abuse human beings simply for being some deviation from the norm?

Too often I hear it said or see it written that "fear" is that which makes us humans intolerant of differentness. That reasoning, however, I believe lets us too easily off the hook. It excuses such an enormous defect of character by posing our prejudices and intolerance as a psychological matter over which we have no control. Excuses aside – it is plainly wrong to see others as less – or more, or judge our own worth based on appearance. It's just time for us to be better people!

~Michele



2



3

An Accidental Awareness

It all started as "a ministry-type thing". We were going to make a documentary on what homeless folks might ask of God, what questions they would ask," Ryan Possert said as he explained how the drives to help the homeless started outside the Dorothy Day Center off of West 7th Street in St Paul. "The first time we went to do it, the police came and questioned us—thinking we were there to sell drugs. There was a fistfight; people were yelling and screaming at each other and we came in to do our thing. Suddenly, the energy became calm and peaceful and that made us want to keep doing it." Our thing? Pizzas; a bribe brought to get people to talk to us, but it turned into a life-changing drive to help our fellow community members.

Besu Ketete, Chris Meyer, Ryan Possert, and Mike Rhodes came together as a group, showing us it doesn't take a whole lot of resources and manpower to make a difference in the world around us. They organize monthly drives to help the homeless. They bring pizzas, clothes, gloves, socks, backpacks, and anything else someone would need to survive our painful Minnesota winters, to those who desperately need it.

According to *Long-term homelessness in Minnesota in 2009 Wilder Research, February 2011 Rev.*, there are a total of 5,256 homeless individuals in Minnesota. It is estimated that in the United States, there are between 2.1 and 3.5 million people experiencing homelessness each year. On any given night, 850,000 families, individuals and youth are homeless. (http://service.govdelivery.com/docs/STPAUL/STPAUL_539/STPAUL_539_20051129_en.pdf)

This group discovered many families living in their cars, who needed gas to keep the car running and themselves warm. Along with the items listed above, they

give out bus fare, gas cards and gift cards that might allow for a hot cup of coffee on a cold morning. Mike Rhodes gave the gloves off his hands to a woman who had none. "It was so meaningful to her."

When asked how we can help, Mike commented, "How many people spend \$5 a day on coffee? You could skip one a week and donate that." Every little bit counts. The donations have come from the overwhelming support of Boston Health Care Systems employees, their family members and friends.

If you would like more information on how to help, please contact Besu Kete, Chris Meyer, Ryan Possert, or Mike Rhodes at Boston Health Care Systems.



3



4



Kelsey Kelly, Kelsey Rhodes, & Besu Ketete, Mike Rhodes, Chris Meyer, Ryan Possert, joined by two of the men they served.

Take it to the Hoop!

What an exciting season for our consumer basketball team at Boston Health Care Systems! Due to the overwhelming number of folks who wanted to play this year, the consumers formed two teams, respectively called the Boston Celtics and the Boston Rockets.

Ryan Possert and Chris Meyer coached the Celtics, who were moved to the "A" league, due to the extraordinary talent and skill of the players. Chad Hofer and Bryan Meyer continued to coach the Boston Rockets in the "B" league, where everyone enjoyed the game and the camaraderie with their teammates.

While each team played well together, a few players stood out for their achievements. *Let's hoop it up* for Nic U., who averaged 20 points a game; David N., who, due to his rebounding efforts was labeled the "Dennis Rodman"; and Sally W., who scored a basket in every game. Coach Ryan stated that "the players played good defense and put forth an amazing team effort".

To celebrate the end of a great season, the Boston Celtics and Rockets held a pizza party at BHCS office. Immediately following, they attended a much anticipated Minnesota Timberwolves game. Earlier in the day, The Boston players played basketball on the Timberwolves court. The teams scrimmaged against each other and were extremely excited to be able to use the automatic scoreboard. The energy in the room was amazing. *It's not the hype, it's the hoop!*

Coach Ryan summed up the season in a few words; "It was a great learning year! They learned new skills, played as a team, and stayed competitive in a much more competitive league"! In another words... *We've got Hoopla!*



Back row: Chris Meyer, Pat M, Sally W, Nick H, Jason Z, David N & Ryan Possert.

Front row: Ben M, Nick U, Andrew S & Harold F.

Housing Access Services: Are You Ready to Move?

Person-centered, cost-effective Housing Access Services, funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and delivered by The Arc Minnesota, have helped more than 180 Minnesota adults of differing ages and disabilities move to their own homes. The Arc Minnesota, on average, assists 15 people in moving into their own homes every month. Housing Access Services have proven to be an integral support for those with disabilities who choose to assume the responsibility of living in their own homes rather than residing in more costly group settings.

Decades of mainstream education and the protection of civil rights along with avoiding funding cuts, have changed the expectations of people with disabilities and their families; many seek independent lives through work, friends, family and their own homes. The partnership of The Arc Minnesota and the MN Department of Human Services Disability Services Division has demonstrated what it takes to help people with disabilities move into homes of their own where they can get the right service at the right time.

Housing Access Services assists people eligible for Minnesota Medicaid Home Care or waiver services. This includes people who are eligible for Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS). The service assists with helping people find housing, completing rental agreements, negotiating with landlords or property staff, budgeting development, finding furnishings, packing and the process of moving and application fees and deposits.

Just one of our 180 success stories is BHCS participant, Tracy J. Tracy is a participant in the Independent Options program at BHCS. She is eligible to receive Housing Access Services because she receives waived services through Ramsey County. Although it was discussed as a possibility, Tracy was not interested in moving to a group home as she has always maintained the expectation of living on her own, cooking her own food and making her own decisions. Housing Access Services and BHCS staff helped Tracy find a modest apartment to rent, helped her with budgeting, moving and unpacking her belongings and a rental deposit. Housing Access Services also provided information and support about Minnesota Supplemental Aid/Shelter Needy which is a state paid housing subsidy that helps Tracy afford where she lives. Tracy continues to live on her own and enjoys her life with her family and friends.

If you are someone or know someone who is eligible and is ready to move, please contact The Arc Minnesota at 651-523-0823 x101 or visit www.thearcminnesota.org

Mandela Residence Celebrates Its First Year Anniversary

With the generation of "baby boomers" reaching their sixties, accommodating the unique needs of an aging population is becoming increasingly important. Boston Health Care Systems, Inc. was on the hunt for a house to serve the needs of its more mature consumers when a home in Burnsville became available. Named after Nelson Mandela, Mandela Residence opened in April 2010 and is now home to four women in their sixties with increasing medical needs.



Beautifully decorated, Mandela is situated in a charming neighborhood. At Mandela's open house last year, consumers found out just how friendly their new neighborhood could be. When neighbors arrived, they came bringing flowers, cards, and even chocolate! One neighbor continues to bring raspberries and flowers to the house on a regular basis.

The women of Mandela hope to continue to explore their neighborhood this summer and find its hidden "treasures". Barb, who joined the original three residents late last year, says she enjoys and appreciates her home, housemates, and staff. She described Mandela as "a beautiful house with beautiful people...who could ask for more?"

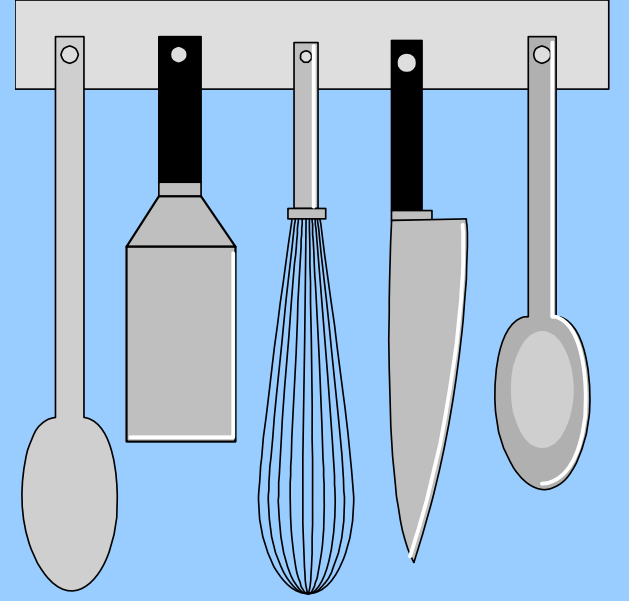


"Outs and Abouts" Program Makes Some Changes

The Independent Options Recreation Program "Outs and Abouts" recently received a make-over after considering suggestions from consumers, family members and staff. One change includes scheduling activities later, in order to accommodate more consumers' work schedules. Special activities and sporting events will continue to be held as previously scheduled.

We are especially excited with the changes made to Dinner Club. This activity used to include having dinner at a local restaurant. BHCS now has the resources to make dinner at the Central Office. Dinner Club members are learning to properly handle foods and cook using electric frying pans, hot plates, a toaster oven and microwaves. Participants are involved in food preparation, cooking and clean up. Once dinner is cooked, everyone is invited to sit down, socialize with peers and enjoy their creations!

Boston would like to thank everyone for their suggestions and support which will continue to make "Outs and Abouts" such a huge success!



A Role Model for Us All



Many of us struggle with wanting to lose that extra 10, 15 or even 50 pounds. It's hard work and many of us give up before reaching our goal. Not so with consumer, Sherri M. Sherri has lost an amazing 146 pounds. When asked about how she accomplished such an amazing feat, Sherri simply said, "I never dieted. I watch what I eat." Cheriee Jones, Primary Counselor, said that as Sherri's weight began to fall, she was able to exercise and this made losing weight even easier. Sherri credits her success with walking, smaller portions, healthy food and support from staff and her sister. Sherri loves the comments that she gets when she runs into old friends who haven't seen her recently. Sherri said that while it took her almost five years to lose her weight, she is comfortable in the time it took as it gave her time to adjust to the "new me."

On Left — Sherri before weight loss.
On Right—Sherri after weight loss!



Valentine's Dance A Great Success!

The stage was set for romance at this year's Boston Health Care System's Valentines Day Dance. From the hand-cut hearts to the white lights, everything was in place for a night of dancing and socializing with friends and loved ones. Consumers were greeted at the door by Program Director Lisa Amey who was handing out special tickets. In a new twist on this year's dance, each consumer was given a ticket for a series of raffle drawings. Throughout the night, numbers were called and the holders were asked to come forward and claim a special Valentine prize. The lucky winners walked away with prizes such as heart-shaped picture frames, arts and craft supplies, and heart-shaped pillows.

A custom mix of love songs spanning the decades resonated through the night. When the consumers needed a break from dancing, they feasted on jumbo strawberries and baby carrots as well as cheese and crackers. One of the big surprises this night was the delivery of specially decorated cupcakes to each table! Patti O., a resident at Jackie's summed up the evening by saying, "I thought it was neat. I liked the balloons, the people and the snacks. I am so looking forward to next year's dance!"

And the Survey Says...

Consumer satisfaction surveys for the second half of 2010 are now available for your review. If you are interested in the results or you would like more specific information regarding the latest survey, please contact:

Molly Hoffman at 651.501.2378.



Thomas L, Kevin L & Bob G dance the night away.

Crème de la Crème Award

Introducing Ginger Perzichilli, our most recent Crème de la Crème winner. Ginger is an outstanding staff who goes above and beyond her job duties. She personifies Boston's policy of "It's not about me."

Ginger has grown tremendously since going from the asleep overnight position at Ruth to the 7-3 position. She has learned an incredible amount and is always wanting to learn more. She helps PD Lindsay Anderson get the consumer books ready for audit and asks for help whenever she needs it (which is rare!). Ginger is constantly asking for more responsibilities and willing to help out whenever it is needed.

Ginger has an outstanding capacity to empower the consumers to be independent while teaching them new skills along the way. An example of Ginger's "It's not about me" attitude involves a consumer who is diagnosed with schizophrenia and rarely left the house when Ginger started her 7-3 position. Lindsay emphasized at staff meetings that she would like to see this consumer get involved with things she enjoyed. We tried for a long time, offering up a variety of activities and each time she declined. Ginger continued to work on this and in the past months, through trial and error, was able to help this consumer identify things she enjoys. It started with the consumer going for coffee at Caribou — even though it was just to pick up and bring home. Eventually she drank her coffee at Caribou. This was HUGE! Ginger decided to take it a step further and see if we could engage her in cards within the house. It started out as a once a month activity of Gin Rummy. Ginger continued to try to get her to participate more frequently and through many trial and errors discovered this consumer enjoyed playing Go Fish, Slap Jack, and Old Maid! These games she would play at least twice a week. Then we got the Wii at Ruth House. This consumer barely watches TV, let alone plays video games. Ginger was able to get her to play bowling and tennis! She also engaged her in dancing when she noticed this consumer was enjoying a particular song. The most recent and awesome activity this consumer is going to participate in is a sewing class at SEED. Ginger took the initiative to take her to SEED to take a tour and meet the teachers, as well as get the approval for Ginger to go with the first few times until this consumer was comfortable. At the end of the tour, she decided she did not want to go. The next day when Ginger came in, she told Ginger that she had her sewing stuff ready and they were going to start on February 4th. She also informed Ginger she had already called SEED to let them know. In short, this consumer used to not participate in any activities throughout the week and now she has, at the least, three. AMAZING!

Ginger is an asset to Boston Health Care Systems and we are lucky to have her. Even more, Lindsay feels lucky to have Ginger as an employee and wishes she could be the one to proudly say "I was the one to hire her."

Thanks for all you do Ginger!



Published by
**Boston Health Care
Systems, Inc.**

1865 Old Hudson Rd.
St. Paul, MN 55119
651.501.2378
FAX 651.738.1737
www.bhcsystems.org

CEO

Michele Boston

CFO

Lori Lindgren

Editor

Patrick Hagerty
Karen Klein
Scott Boston

Layout and Design

Ann Arrigoni

**Contributors to this
Edition...**

Lindsay Anderson
Ann Arrigoni
Michele Boston
Scott Boston
Katie Campana
Kristina Gizinski
Char Hanson
Karen Klein
Jill Kraemer
Sara Lange
Chris Meyer
Dagny Norenberg

*To Establish a
Rhythm of Life!*