

Orion Associates, Meridian Services, Zenith Services,
Orion Intermediary Services Organization, Morning Sun of Ohio,
Morning Sun of Alabama, Morning Sun of Louisiana,
Morning Sun of Utah, Headwaters Relief Organization

Quarterly Newsletter
Volume 12, Issue 2
Spring 2021

The Constellation

Our Foundational Principle of Volunteerism

The concept of volunteerism is a foundational principal of the organization. It is a job expectation for all management and administrative staff to volunteer in the community, at least once during every year of employment. In order to facilitate and encourage volunteerism, the organization provides management and administrative staff with up to 16 hours annually out of their regular weekday schedules to be involved in volunteer activities. Management and administrative staff who work part-time schedules will receive up to 8 hours annually be involved in volunteer activities.

The organization will financially support volunteer activities providing for there to be no effect on an employee's salaries or hourly wages during the pay periods in which the employee volunteers. Salaried employees will receive their full salaries for pay periods that include volunteer hours. Hourly employees will receive their full hourly wage for volunteer hours in which they engage in volunteer activities, exactly equal to the number of hours they would have worked on any given day in which they engage in volunteer activities. Volunteer work done on weekends, holidays, "after hours" in the case of hourly employees, or other days off, do not result in any additional compensation, including, but is not limited to, comp days.

Volunteer Options ...

Company Selected Volunteer Events: The company will select three to four volunteer activities in which a group of employees can participate together, with the approval of the Officers. They will be scheduled for specific times and places. Hours volunteered through for Company Selected Volunteer Events do not count towards the 16 hours allotted in this policy. These hours volunteered are 'granted in addition to those available for other volunteer activities.

Individually Selected Volunteer Events: Eligible employees may volunteer individually for organizations of their own selection. These volunteer opportunities would also be approved by the Officers, but could then be scheduled at the individual's convenience. Many employees are already involved in volunteer activities, including volunteering to support their own hobbies. While the organization considers these to be legitimate volunteer activities and will count them towards our organizations' goal of volunteer participation, these are not activities for which one can be compensated or otherwise receive financial support. The program's goal is to encourage volunteerism in new and different areas.

Headwaters Volunteer Events: Headwater Relief Organization is the volunteer organization sponsored by the Orion Associates, Meridian Services', Zenith Services family of companies. Headwaters will regularly sponsor volunteer events. Hours volunteered through the Headwaters Relief Organization do not count towards the 16 hours allotted in this policy. These hours volunteered are granted in addition to those available for other volunteer activities.

... and Volunteer Expectations

Volunteering is a job requirement. It is an expectation that every management and administrative employee will be involved in one or more volunteer activities, annually, whether they are group or individual activities.

All volunteer activities are allowed subject to and allowed only with supervisory approval. A supervisor has full discretion to deny or delay an employee's participation in any volunteer activities, if they determine that it is in the best interests of the organization and/or their program to do so. Supervisors may elect to deny or delay an employee's participation in a particular volunteer activity or activities due to their current job performance. An employee must be in "good standing" in order to participate in volunteer activities. Supervisors may elect to deny or delay an employee's participation in a particular volunteer activity or activities, but require them to remain on duty, due to their essential nature of their position's role in meeting the current needs of the organization.



The Constellation Contributors

Leota Bemis
Ashley Jenkins
Joy McLaughlin

Colonel Egahn Ehpets, Retired,
Editor in Chief



"... my
dog's bigger than
your dog, my dog's
bigger than yours!"



Thank You For a Very Successful COVID-19 Vaccination Event!

We were very pleased to be able to host two COVID-19 vaccination events at the Golden Valley West office in March, at which about 300 people received both doses of the Moderna vaccine!

We would like to thank all those who made these events possible, including those who supported the people we serve so that others could be vaccinated. These included Direct Support Staff who came in to cover for their colleagues, as well as the Program Administrator team, our residential Nurses and colleagues from other departments.

We would also like to offer a special thank you to Sherry Smith, our Quality Assurance Administrator, for working with the vendor, Specialists, to ensure that the events went smoothly. The Specialist nurses were particularly complimentary of our staff and how well the vaccination process went.

It was wonderful to be able to have these vaccination events that helped so many people. It's our hope that this will go a long way towards making it possible to return to a more normal home and work life for us all.



We Continue to Be Grateful to Those Who Care For the People We Serve In These Challenging Times

We continue to be deeply grateful for the courage, commitment and sacrifice that everyone demonstrates every day as we continue to face the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate our administrative staff, our management staff, and particularly, the Direct Support Professionals who make such a positive difference in the lives of the people we serve every day.

While everyone who continues to do their best during these extraordinarily difficult times deserves recognition for their sacrifices and good work, we must give special recognition to a dedicated group of Direct Support Professionals who have committed themselves to living in the homes that have been quarantined due to COVID-19 exposure.

When the homes listed below were quarantined, these people provided continuous support to the people served for two full weeks until the homes were taken out of quarantine. Thank you all!

Arrowood Heroes!



Laquita Perry



Gabby Salais



Toriano Scroggins



Danielle Tiehi



Alvin Zelee

Golden Hills Heroes!



David Adedeji



Aloysius Gwaikolo



CJ Johnson



Watta Korleh



Spencer Leeco



Prince Saeed Mohammed

Hampshire Heroes!



Jane Anderson



Clarence Suttle

Kentucky Heroes!



Cecilia Lamin



Samson Oluwole



Joseph Thomas

Woodridge Heroes!



Charles Obeize, Amanda Schultz, Wola Sobande, Mark Suggs, Joseph Wreh

Company Policy Questions

We invite you to review Meridian Services, Zenith Services and Orion Associates company policies which are posted on each company's websites.

Meridian Services: [Employee Manuals - Meridian Services \(meridiansvs.com\)](https://meridiansvs.com)

Zenith Services: [Employee Manuals - Zenith Services](#)

Orion Associates: [Employee Manual - Orion Associates](#)

If you have questions regarding company policies, including new or revised policies, please contact your supervisor.

You may also contact Stephen Hage, Chief Administrative Officer, at the Golden Valley East office, at 763-450-5004.



Welcoming Spring!



Kathy enjoys the spring sunshine at Timber Crest ...



... Melissa flies a kite at Kentucky ...



... and Timber Crest's Patty declares that it's National Collage Day!

March Employment Anniversaries

24 Years

Patrick Dickey
Kelly Reichel

14 Years

Sylvester Adenodi
Andy Driesewerd
Ceil Van Campen

11 Years

Myron Hovda
Sonita King
Ryan Ummel
Jeff Vilorio

10 Years

Thomas Ekelund

9 Years

Dieudonne Asambang
Eugene Lazer
Kabasio Ngue

8 Years

Alyssa Wineberg

7 Years

Leon McCormick
Dennis Page

5 Years

Emmanuel Adebayo
Steven Montgomery
Michelle Toenyan

4 Years

Ayub Ahmed
Stephanie DeForrest
Amina Dale Doyle
Elizabeth Nelson
Kelsey Pillatzke
Nathaniel Poden
Michelle Sommers
Lamin Youla

3 Years

Natalie Clarke
Eric Njeru
Williette Ouoiyan

2 Years

Boimah Cooke
Vivian Cooper
Madeleine Faffler
Bobbi Garcia
Kalilu Kamara
Diana Macedo
Angie Quoiyan
Kari Reinhart
Lori Wik
Stephen Wreh
Winifred York

1 Year

Christine Anderson
Aileen Arabiana
Zoe Bush
Johnetta Freeman
Madison Langrehr
Savannah McCollow
Mai Pha
Kay Zishka

Silas Ansera
Mariah Briggity
Tanya Deonat
Lea Jancikla
Angel Malone
Mearel Momo
Geroge Seju

A Focus on Benefits: Leaves of Absence Jury Duty Leave, Voting Leave, Funeral Leave and Personal or Sabbatical Leave

Jury Duty Leave ...

As a civic duty, Jury Duty Leave with pay and benefits will be granted employees. In order to receive full pay, employees must submit their jury stipend to the organization, for each day served on jury duty. If an employee is discharged early, the employee is expected to return to work. Jury Duty Leave must be requested immediately upon notice from the court.

Voting Leave ...

When it is necessary due to an employee's work schedule, the employee may take a leave for the purpose of exercising their voting rights. Every employee who is eligible to vote in an election has the right to be absent from work for the purpose of voting on the day of that election, but only if the employee is unable to do so outside of their scheduled hours. In other words, if their schedule has the employee on duty for the full time period in which the polls are open. In Minnesota, this would usually be from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm. Employees may do so without penalty or deduction from salary or wages because of the absence.

Funeral Leave ...

We offer Funeral Leave for the purpose of making arrangements for or attending funerals.

In the event that the funeral is for an employee's spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, parent-in-law, sibling, grandparent or grandchild, great-grandparent, the company will pay up to two days Funeral Leave. Any such payment will only be made with supervisory approval and demonstration to the supervisor's satisfaction that the funeral is for a qualifying person and the event is for at least two days duration.

Salaried employees will be paid for 8 hours on the day or days they are absent for an approved Funeral Leave. Salaried employees will receive Funeral Leave only for regular business weekdays, Monday through Friday and not for weekend days. The days paid must be continuous and contiguous with days worked, excluding weekends. Hourly employees will be paid for the number of scheduled work hours they were absent for an approved Funeral Leave.

Personal or Sabbatical Leave ...

The organization may grant employees a Personal or Sabbatical Leave, without pay or benefits, for the purpose of taking up their own personal goals and interests, especially further education, for a period of time without working.

The requested leave must be made 1 full calendar month ahead of the expected leave dates. While approved leaves will usually not exceed 12 weeks, leaves of a greater length of time, up to 1 year, will be considered, especially for the purpose of further education.

The employee must use all their accrued Paid Time Off during the leave period.

Employees returning from a Personal or Sabbatical Leave are eligible to return immediately to work in their same position, if it is open, or to another open position.

Sharing the News!

Births and Adoptions!

Ariel Fredrickson, Program Manager, In-Home Services - Central, with Meridian Services and her husband Jake are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter ... Adalynn, born on March 19th.

Thoughts and Quotes

"Don't compare yourself to others. Be like the sun and the moon and shine when it's your time."

"You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending." - C.S. Lewis

"You're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."
- A.A. Mine

"You are never too old to set another goal or dream a new dream." - Les Brown

"Today is your opportunity to build the tomorrow you want." - Ken Poirot

Submitted by **Courtney Ruttger**, Program Lead, Kentucky SS, with Meridian Services



Loving Hearts, Helping Hands

Loving Hearts, Helping Hands is a volunteer organization founded in 2016. Since that time, the organization and its participants have provided support to the community through numerous events, including but not limited to, food packing events, making toys for shelter animals, caroling at nursing homes, decorating bags for Meals on Wheels, and walking/rolling in the annual Golden Valley parade.

The organizations efforts were hindered due to the pandemic, but the group is planning events to begin this spring. There will be an outdoor gathering on April 29, 2021, so that participants can connect again, and then a volunteer event with 'Free Food for Kids' on May 19, 2021. If you'd like more information about LHHH or the upcoming events, please contact Leota Bemis at Lbemis@meridiansvs.com.



Loving Hearts, Helping Hands Looks Forward to Returning to Group Activities in the Near Future!

Shout Outs!

A thousand thank you's to **Becki Proctor** and the **Inca DSP's**. We have FINALLY (and hopefully permanently) made it to the end of distance learning! I am so grateful for the support you provide to the girls daily and the stability you have worked to establish.
— Annie Lieto, Program Administrator, Meridian Services

Shout out to **Toni Bahl** and **Andrea Seurer** for all their incredible work these past months ensuring open enrollment and benefit administration went seamlessly! Another Shout out to **Emily Froidcoeur**, **Ashley Jenkins** and **Amanda Yang** for kicking off the 21-day equity and inclusion challenge, food drive AND leadership connection series! Great job team! - Angela Cavalier, Executive Administrator, Orion Associates

Welcome back **Andrea Hagen**! We have missed you and are so excited to have you back!
- Angela Cavalier, Executive Administrator, Orion Associates

Thank you to **everyone who has participated in the 21-day Equity and Inclusion Challenge!** So far, we have received 66 submissions to Jotform from people who have taken part in the challenge and we are only on day 7! We are thrilled to see people taking advantage of the opportunity to learn, read and do more to create a more equitable world! A special Shout Out to **Justine Seek** who has participated in 7/7 of the challenges so far! Way to go!
- Angela Cavalier, Executive Administrator, Orion Associates

Shout out to the Meridian **Program Administrators** for all their help with the COVID vaccine clinic at the office! The event would not have run as smoothly as it did without all your help!
- Sherry Smith, Quality Assurance Administrator, Orion Associates



April Employment Anniversaries

16 Years

Leota Bemis
Dina Marie Heltzer

14 Years

Elizabeth Bel

13 Years

David Barmon
Valerie Glenn

12 Years

JoAnn Ramler

11 Years

Emmanuel Nyemah

8 Years

Erin Lanigan
Michelle Railey

7 Years

John Moody

6 Years

Alexander Gandah
Denise Wurm
Monica Ziemke

5 Years

Rebecca Stauffer

4 Years

Theodore Buzzeli
Sue Featherly
Melissa Gaslin
Abiola Kuku
Erin Moore
Markayla Zeiher

3 Years

Karen Marcatoma Guachichul
Jerry Hansen
Arelí Linares Vargas

2 Years

Abimbola Adediji
Isaac Anderson
Bridget Barrett
Shandra Dunser
Emily Hess
Mammie Koliego
Paige McKenzie
Jennifer Robinette
Amanda Schmolke
Erika Tello

1 Year

Thomas Boons
Marie Hurtis
Shannon Jones
Victori Kieh
Alex Lee
Clinton Okirigiti
Faid Omar
Quantella Prescott
Maddie Reeves
James Sirlleaf
Bridget Targbe
Amber Thompkins

May Employment Anniversaries

23 Years

Martha Dolo Sieh

20 Years

Kirsie Garvin
Annie Logan

19 Years

Keosha Adams

17 Years

Renee Pelkey

16 Years

Todd Cunningham
Melisa Kay

14 Years

Melissa Bartkowitz

13 Years

Rebekah Dietz
Jane Wier

8 Years

Sharon Kedrowski
Karen O'Bar
Shayl Spotts

7 Years

Michelle Dionne
Justin Dukowitz
Andrea Jones
Natasha Jones
Michelle Sedo

6 Years

Charles Obize

5 Years

Theophilus Adegbile
Allison Brewer
April Fore
Justine Lindholm
Oladimeji Olatunji
Zachary Spanier

4 Years

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Adam Grise | Kelly Jones |
| Deborah O'Fallon | Abigail Rios |
| Teresa Schlaman | Mary Steinmetz |
| Sophie Toe | Sherronda Wiley |
| Kari Wines | Kayla Wojciak |

3 Years

| | |
|---------------|-------------|
| Julia Demgen | Edeth James |
| Cassidy Link | Brian Oteri |
| Jessica Reich | |

2 Years

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Jacques Abonbeza | Antonette Arabiana |
| Kierra Chavez-Ramirez | Jeffrey Erickson |
| Phillip Gehrke | Jade Gomez |
| Mariah Hobby | Watta Korleh |
| Margaret Krueger | Moimah Massaquoi |
| Cory Mitts | Toriano Scroggins |
| Alex Spraguer | Veronica Street |

1 Year

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Allison Brandts | Lauren Cappelen |
| Ameatrice Crawford | Etima Kollie |
| Julia Kranz | Alvin Kumeh |
| McKenna Miller | Gannon Raguse |

Employees of the Month ... November, December and January

November

Frankie Bennett — Case Manager Director — Case Management - Meridian Services

Frankie goes above and beyond for her Case Managers every day. We often refer to Frankie as "mama bear" to her Case Managers as she is always looking out for their best interest, willing to step in and help with any challenging situation and has this overall sense of care for her employees. Frankie does an amazing job at showing this flexibility and understanding side while at the same time holding firm expectations and boundaries.



Evan Gadtke — Human Resources Specialist — Orion Associates

Evan is the Human Resources Specialist for Morning Sun Ohio and Louisiana. Since he started in July 2020, he has consistently shown up with a positive attitude and a great amount of care for his co-workers and the people that we serve. Evan has built strong, working relationships with his Human Resources Specialist teammates and our Morning Sun Administrators, Laci and Rebecca. He learned his position almost entirely while working remotely and training over Microsoft Teams.

Magan Koscher – Program Manager — In-Home Services – Meridian Services

Magan always goes above and beyond in her job duties. She not only was a huge part in my personal training process but continues to help and assist whenever we need extra assistance. Magan also takes initiative to do things that may not necessarily be her responsibility but needs to get done. She is thorough for the people she serves, a very hard worker and a great professional role model.

Courtney Ruttger – Direct Support Professional – Kentucky SS – Meridian Services

Courtney's passion for organization is a key factor for Kentucky Specialized Services to run as smoothly as it ever has. She can work quickly and thoroughly through projects and has been helping out other houses with office work, including Inca, Bassett Creek and Golden Hills. Courtney also picks up shifts as needed on nights, weekends, and Holidays. She is very flexible when it comes to working at other homes if they have a shift open during the week as well. Overall, Courtney is a major asset to not only Kentucky, but Meridian as a whole. She has a bright future with her own life as well as with Meridian Services.

December

Ashlynn Jeseritz — Case Manager - Case Management - Meridian Services

Ashlynn has been such a big help to team Anoka. She is a mentor on our team to help Case Managers learn a new service agreement process. Ashlynn's peers have nothing but good things to say about the time she is dedicating to helping them. Recently our team lead has become very busy with a crisis, so more Case Managers on our team have been asking Ashlynn for help. Ashlynn is helping them without hesitation, while maintaining her own workload. She is a hard worker and has a positive attitude. Ashlynn faces difficult challenges head on. It is a pleasure to have her on our team.

Gerrit Hunt – Program Manager – Edgewood SS – Meridian Services

Gerrit recently took over the Program Manager position at Edgewood. He instantly excelled and became a great leader to the Direct Support Professionals and provided stability to the individuals living in the home. Over the past few months, Gerrit has done a great job handling the adversity that comes with managing a crisis facility. He has overseen the intake of multiple individuals with diverse needs that are not often supported at Edgewood. Gerrit worked diligently to get medical services started and to meet with potential long-term placements for the residents at Edgewood. He is often complimented by Case Managers and guardians for his work ethic and responsiveness. Gerrit has done so well that he was recently promoted to a Program Director. He will be greatly missed by the Edgewood team.

December Continued

Zach Garcia — Program Director, Orion ISO — Orion Associates

Zach is a fabulous Program Director for Orion ISO. He represents the company with professionalism and a solid work ethic. Zach continues to train new ISO Coordinators while still managing his team and covering a partial caseload. He stays informed of changes at the State/DHS level and is able to effectively bring information to his team for training and further knowledge. Zach is respectful to his supervisors, his teammates, and most importantly the families and consumers he supports. He is an integral part of the ISO team and we appreciate all of his contributions. Thank you, Zach!

Katie Anderson – Direct Support Professional – In-Home Services – Meridian Services

Katie has gone above and beyond in December. She started doing on call for Team 8. Katie has picked up shifts on short notice, moved her schedule around to meet the needs of Long Prairie SLS and to assist the managers with on call duties. Katie also helped get work done in the office during the month of December. She is willing to expand her knowledge and learn new things. Katie puts the needs of the people she supports first.

January

Aissauou Bah – Direct Support Professional – Hampshire SLS – Meridian Services

Aissatou is a great employee and dedicated to the people served at our Hampshire program. She has worked hard over the years to try new ideas and bring suggestions to improving the quality of life of the people that we serve. Aissatou is a preferred staff and people served and is always trying to help them excel in life. She has been our consistent support at the house over the years and is truly appreciated for all she does on a day-to-day basis.

Montesha Coleman – Program Manager – Spring Brook SLS – Meridian Services

In Montesha's short time as the Program Manager at Springbrook she has been amazing. She has reimplemented programming for the people served. Montesha has rearranged the menu to find food items the clients like that also allows them to lose weight. She has exercised with the residents assisting them in better life choices. She brings a very positive attitude to work treating everyone with respect. Montesha asks for staff and client input. She is great at what she does, and we are so happy to have her as part of the Meridian Services team.

Faimah Kellah — Case Manager - Case Management - Meridian Services

Faima has a client with high needs for whom it has been a hard time finding housing. This client has a team of workers who are attempting to move him into housing, because they believe they know what is best for him. Faima has remained person-centered throughout the entire process while keeping in mind the client's cares and needs. This month, the client had a very close family member pass away. Because of this, it is urgent that this client finds housing. Not only has Faima kept on top of her caseload overall, but she has kicked it into high gear to find this client housing. Faimah has a positive attitude and knows that she will find housing which is something to be in awe of after knowing how long this process has been..

Meghan Ross — Payroll - Orion Associates

Meghan has helped hold the Meridian Services payroll together during January. She completed nearly all edits, all change notices, all COVID live ins, half of the insurance deductions for the end of January payroll. If it were not for Meghan, we would have not been able to process the main payroll on time and or accurately. She is always willing to answer questions the newer Payroll Specialists have and is an amazing leader. Her positive attitude and humor help hold the team together. We would not have gotten through January if not for Meghan.

Employee of the Month Nominees ... November, December, January

Dana Bettis Huseeth, Yassin Ibrahim,
Samantha Kelly, Watta Korleh, Sarah LaBaw,
Laina Lender, Justine Lindholm, Emily Milius,
Tony Smith, Jean Steen, Winnie York

*Thank
You!*



Along with
Logan's
Del and Eddie,
we all say ...



Orion Associates

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Making Informed Choices: Everyone's Privilege and Right

Prior to the pandemic and throughout the pandemic, we have all had to make informed choices. These are choices that people make that are based on likes, dislikes, community-based experiences, the potential impact on people's quality of life, and information about other available options people receive from their support systems. From what we eat for breakfast, to what we wear, to whether we dine in at

the restaurant or get take-out, these are informed choices we make everyday.

The same is true for the people receiving services from Meridian Services and Zenith Services. Throughout the pandemic, it has been especially difficult for supporters to look beyond protecting each person from potential health risks. The people we support have the same right to make informed choices, take risks or simply make choices that may be different than the choices you would make for yourself. As we enter into the spring and summer, millions of people, including people served and employees at our organizations, are receiving vaccinations, the weather is getting warmer and social activities and opportunities are becoming more abundant again. We want to remind everyone of our obligation as caregivers to support people in making informed choices and thereby respecting their rights.

