

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 3  
Summer 2021

# The Constellation

## Thank You to All Those Who Cared For the People We Serve During These Challenging Times

As the summer arrives, it's beginning to feel like a new world ... or maybe it just feels like we're returning to a world that we knew and have missed for a very long time! As millions have been

vaccinated for COVID-19, we've been able to begin to remove our masks, to stand close to one another again, to shake hands, to hug, and to share the simple joy of being together again with friends and family. For this, we're all deeply grateful.

As we begin to move forward into the future and away from the very difficult months of the COVID-19 pandemic, we'd like to express our gratitude to you, our colleagues, for the courage, commitment and sacrifice you demonstrated during these difficult times. Together, we saw that the good work that we do as an organization was done and will continue into the future. While many did their best during these extraordinarily difficult times, those who deserve particular recognition are the Program Management staff and Direct Support Professionals who continued to work in our programs, seeing that the needs of those we served were met day after day, throughout the pandemic.

Thank you all!



### The Constellation Contributors

Leota Bemis  
Dr. Roshan Khatri  
Joy McLaughlin

Colonel Egahn Ehpets, Retired,  
Editor in Chief



"... without chemicals, life itself would be impossible!"

## Calling for Nominations!

### The Direct Support Professional of the Year

Every year there is a national week devoted to recognizing the devotion and hard work of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). This year that celebratory week is September 12 to 18, 2021.

As part of the week's celebration, the leadership of the Meridian Services and Zenith Services Organization will recognize one Direct Support Professional who has shown their commitment and compassion to the people we support.

Nomination details:

- Direct Support Professionals who have worked for the organization for at least six months can be nominated by supervisors, other DSPs or by guardians. Nomination forms will be sent out to all DSPs and supervisors on July 12, 2021. If you are a guardian, and would like to nominate someone, please email [information@meridiansvs.com](mailto:information@meridiansvs.com) to request a nomination form.
- All nominees will be recognized in the company newsletter and on the company Facebook page. The winner of the Direct Support Professional of the Year Award will have their photo and name placed on a plaque at the main corporate office, they will receive a \$250 gift card, and will be nominated for a National award.

# Loving Hearts, Helping Hands Reunited!

Loving Hearts, Helping Hands reunited in April for the first time in 15 months! Everyone had a great time catching up!

The group gathered again in May to volunteer at Free Food for Kids. Free Food For Kids works to ensure that children have access to food, activities, and enrichment lessons. Kids and teens can receive all of this at multiple locations throughout the state, no registration or ID required! For children who rely on school meals to provide over 50 percent of their daily calories, COVID shutdowns and summer vacation can mean not knowing where their next meal is coming from. Free Food for Kids help to fill the void by providing 7 meals and snacks each week! Loving Hearts, Helping Hands assisted with packaging corn dogs, chicken nuggets and pizza for the meal bags!

## Save the Date! Stakeholder Webinar

August 3, 2021, 6:00pm – 7:00pm

Update from the organization and an opportunity to ask questions or share ideas!

The link for the webinar will be sent via email to all stakeholders.



## Congratulations Donovan!

Donovan recently graduated from North East Metro Intermediate, District 916 South Campus.



On July 29<sup>th</sup>, Loving Hearts, Helping Hands will be gathering to tie dye socks for Hope 4 Youth, an organization that provides assistance to homeless youth. If you'd like to attend this event or want to know more about Loving Hearts Helping Hands, please email Leota Bemis at [Lbemis@meridiansvs.com](mailto:Lbemis@meridiansvs.com).

## 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: <https://www.meridiansvs.com>  
Resource Center > Company Manuals >  
Meridian Services Personnel and Training Policies and Procedures Manual

Zenith Services: <https://www.zenithservices.com>  
Resources > Employee Manuals >  
Zenith Services Personnel and Training Policies and Procedures

Orion Associates: <https://www.orionassoc.net>  
Resources > Employee Manuals >  
Orion Associates Personnel and Training Policies and Procedures

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,



## Person Served Spotlight: Justin Catanyag

Justin moved into the Swan Park home in 2008, when he was 8 years old. He is now 21.

In fulfilling one of his dreams, Justin has just come back from his first vacation. He had the opportunity to spend time at the Grand Casino Hinckley. While there, Justin did some gambling, ate different kinds of foods, and had a road trip to Duluth. While in Duluth, he rented a bike and rode around, visited the Park Point beach and Canal Park where he watched boats come in. Justin also visited the sandstone quarry, the Hinckley fire museum, the firehouse and enjoyed playing pull tabs. He was very excited winning some but also lost some. The trip was filled with excitement and adventure. Justin could not stop talking about his excitement and was always smiling, giggling, pointing things out to staff all through the period of his vacation. Justin is currently planning another vacation to the Wisconsin Dells.

Everyone who supports Justin is grateful for the opportunity to help him explore new things, and discover what brings him joy!



### Congratulations Dez!

Dez recently graduated from the Anoka-Hennepin Bridges Program!



## At Home and Out and About!



### Mission Movement 15!

Patty was the winner of Mission Movement 15! She exercised at least 15 minutes each day for 15 consecutive days and has continued her efforts well beyond the challenge! Nice work Patty!



# Thank You Pat For Your Years of Service!

Patricia Schultz was hired by Meridian Services in July of 2005 and worked as a Direct Support Staff at the Long Prairie SLS program, as well as provided supports to people in living in the community through In Home-Services.

Throughout Pat's years as a Direct Support Professional, she was able to build strong relationships of trust and reliance with the people she supported and her fellow Direct Support Professionals. Pat's peers shared that she is always in a good mood and it is really hard to be in a bad mood when she is around. Pat is a natural caregiver, she dedicated her time to providing supports to people in a way that empowered them, made them laugh, and she always had a smile while doing so. One person Pat supported said, "I love Pat because she drives me to Fergus Falls and sings funny songs with me."

Pat will enjoy her retirement by spending time with grandchildren, vacationing and fishing.

We want to thank Pat for all her years of service and dedication to the people we support. We appreciate all she has done and we hope she enjoys her much deserved retirement.

## June Employment Anniversaries

### 28 Years

Cassandra Yeats

### 24 Years

Jennifer Schraut

### 19 Years

Sheri R Smith

### 17 Years

Melissa Hofstede

### 12 Years

Joy McLaughlin

Elizabeth Swanson

### 11 Years

Gloria Freese

### 9 Years

Jill Elliott

### 8 Years

Theresa Andrus

Bryan Close

### 7 Years

Danielle Jungk

Anne Lieto

Kent Rebehn

### 6 Years

Maya Gitch

Kelly Lambert

Nicole Schaffer

Kennita Wright-Jones

Jennifer Yang

### 5 Years

Subor Freeman

Keneisha Gilmer

Holly Godding

Megan Hanson

Sherae Hayes-Chumley

Jennifer Roache

### 4 Years

M Tupee Cheneyon

Mary Demgen

Kristen Jackson

Uchenna Otiaba

Jennifer McAllister

Aishah Musawwir

Amy Perkins

Larry Wilkins

### 3 Years

Katie Anderson

Anita Baron

Frances Bennett Shumira Cunningham

Venessa Sanders Victoria Sendolo

Julia Stanch

### 2 Years

Johanna Baden

Neiosha Flewellen

Patricia Peterson

Jenna Rief

Patrick Rosemark

Chelsea Weitzel

### 1 Year

Franklyn Asambang

Noah Cline

Elise Durre

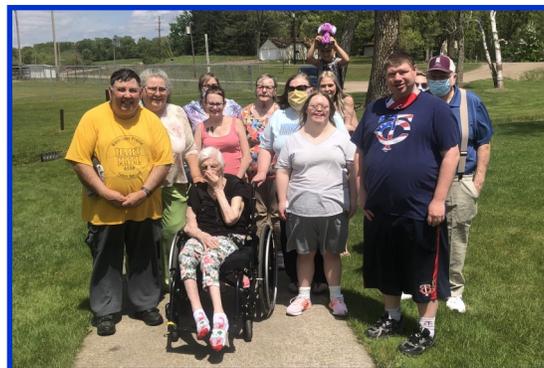
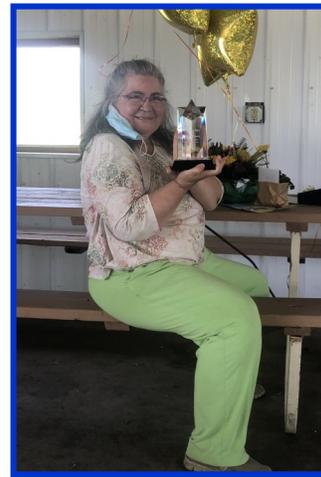
Reya Gathings

Emily Joiner

Rockie Kazouh

Melody Thompson Jomarie Williams

Matthew Wilson Joseph Wreh



# Shout Outs!

Shout Outs to **Missy Schraut, Paige McKenzie, Alexander Gerchak** and **Jeff Erickson** for graciously covering our open caseloads in Orion ISO. Thank you for going the extra mile every day to make sure those we serve get top quality service! — Lara Trujillo, Program Administrator, Orion ISO, Orion Associates



I would like to give a Shout Out to **Amber Nielsen, Missy Bartkowitz** and Kirsten Waterman for covering my caseload when I was on FMLA leave. Thank you! - Amber Robles Martinez, Program Manager, Fee For Service North, Meridian Services

I would like to give a Shout Out to **CJ** from Golden Hills. Since implementing changes to the staff assignments, he has been more than willing to assist with tasks to make the house run smooth, "We need to work as a team." He has been open with me expressing his thoughts and concerns and has even presented ideas to help contribute to the house. I truly appreciate his efforts and charisma! - Courtney Ruttger — Program Lead, Golden Hills — Meridian Services

Shout Out my team ... **Michelle Macgillivray**, Program Manager for Kentucky Specialized Services, **Jurbe Wakkias**, Program Lead for Kentucky Specialized Services and, **Courtney Ruttger**, Program Lead for Golden Hills Specialized Services. Thank you for all of your hard work to make a difference in the lives of numerous children and adults we serve in our Crisis Programs. You are not only appreciated by me, but by the individual's and their teams that we have served in the past and are currently serving. — Stephanie Hughes, Program Director, Meridian Services

Shout Out to **Justine Seek**, who is so hard working and has made the office a better place since she started her position. A special thanks for all of her patience with the many screenings and tasks she was doing on her own. Team Medica appreciates her very much! – Mariah Briggity, Medica Lead Care Coordinator, Case Management, Meridian Services

A Shout Out to **Samuel Smart** who has been an amazing part of the Kentucky team these last few months. He is always willing to pick up shifts when needed, and while on shift, he works extremely hard. Samuel always is willing to do activities with the individuals, and makes it a goal to make a difference in each individuals day. He always does his documentation extremely thoroughly, and makes sure everything is completed by the end of his shift. When Samuel is asked to perform a task at the house, he is always willing to do it. He has been very helpful to me, the manager, and all of his coworkers. He comes into work everyday with a positive attitude, no matter what is going on in his personal life. Samuel has been such a beneficial factor to the team here at Kentucky, and the house would not be the same atmosphere if he were not a part of it. We appreciate him so much!  
- Michelle Macgillivray, Program Manager, Kentucky SLS, Meridian Services

# Sharing the News!

## Engagements and Marriages!

**Michael Gilbert**, Program Director, Case Management, and **Brooke McIntyre**, Payroll Supervisor, were married on June 12<sup>th</sup>.



## Graduations

**Allison Brewer**, Program Director, Case Management, graduated from Augsburg University on June 8th with a Master's Degree in Social Work.

**Katrina Grunewald**, Case Manager, is pleased to announce that her daughter, Isabella Grunewald, graduated from Saint Cloud Technical High School on May 28th. She also completed two years of college at Saint Cloud State University, at the same time. She is majoring in Social Work.

**Stephen Hage**, Chief Administrative Officer, and **Lara Trujillo**, Program Administrator, Orion ISO, are pleased to announce that their daughter, and former employee, Maya Trujillo Gitch, graduated from Saint Olaf College on May 29th, with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology. She will continue her education with graduate work in Elementary Education at the University of Minnesota.

**Stephen Hage**, Chief Administrative Officer, and **Lara Trujillo**, Program Administrator, Orion ISO, are pleased to announce that their daughter, and former employee, Madeleine Hage, graduated from Tulane University Medical School on May 22nd, as a Medical Doctor, specializing in Obstetrics and Gynecology. She will begin her Residency at North Shore University Hospital, on Long Island, New York.

# July Employment Anniversaries

## 30 Years

Leann Thompson

## 23 Years

Jennifer Swanson

## 21 Years

Heather Dubuque

Angela Lewis

Sheryl Vosika

## 16 Years

Patricia J Schultz

## 15 Years

Jason Hoffrogge

## 14 Years

Sandra Bushey

Michael Hardy

## 12 Years

Shantell Washington

## 10 Years

Maurice Jones

Heather Ramos

## 8 Years

Kathleen Bauwens

Desiree Buckner

Zachary Garcia

Anthony Geebli

Richard Hanson

Jeanine Heidelberg

## 7 Years

Kelsey Bretto

Stephen Hill

Rochelle Kochendorfer

Molly Naylor Olson

## 6 Years

Autumn Carlson

Patricia Oliver

Shaquilla Paino

Hle Vang

## 4 Years

Bryce Austin

Khan Ndeh

Jessica Little

Thomas Pecoraro

Joseph Thomas

Samantha Fletcher

Krista Lange

Meghan Morin

Tiane Robinson

Marcus Vavrik

## 3 Years

Amenan Kouadio

Abigail Schneider

George Putu

Rebecca Thera

## 2 Years

Catherine Bonaventura

Madelyn Gilbertson

Jasmine Minett

Oluwabunmi Ozekhome

Rora Lee

Hannah Monson

Anne Williams

## 1 Year

Cassandra Andersen

Ashia Fofana

Taylor Grindland

Kendall Olson

Amanda Schultz

Alexander Burns

Evan Gadtke

Deborah Hill

Kelsey Plank

Fernando Zavala Valero

## August Employment Anniversaries

### 20 Years

Allyson Johnson

### 15 Years

Becky Christenson

### 14 Years

Latrice Dunmars

### 10 Years

Jody Ann Mason

Tasha Moody

Shannon Swarthout

### 9 Years

Scott Casey

### 8 Years

Fedell Paasewe

### 7 Years

Alexander Gerchak

Julie Kaus

Amber Nielsen

Melvin Peters

Brian Sakowicz

### 6 Years

William Gounleh

Comfort Karmue

Rebecca Proctor

Amanda Ruberg

Charles Obieze

### 5 Years

Terrica Duke

Michelle Gesinger

Dylan Kassela

Travis Larson

### 4 Years

Jessica Cortes

Dylan Thaler

Ashley Vanderveur

### 3 Years

Garrett Bankston

Gerrit Hunt

Elly Lee

Leslie Nkule

Meghan Ross

Kirsten Waterman

Allison Wolff

John Demgen

Francis Kesseh

Kelsey Miller

Chandler Rodriguez

Kortoe Varpailah

Nicole Wilson

### 2 Years

Shaina Briscoe

Alisha Graunke

Roshan Khatri

Elsaris Pacheco

Donald Richardson

Alexis Carlson

Yassin Ibrahim

Kaelyn Kubler

Lauren Phalen

### 1 Year

Nuradin Ahmed

DeBrea Chambers

Lee Myers

Courtney Ruttger

Michael Zelee

Audrey Bartley

Taylor Johnson

Nicxi Rodriguez Robles

Michelle Vang-Her

# Employees of the Month ... February, March and April



## February

### Emily Hess — Case Manager — Case Management - Meridian Services

Emily was nominated for her hard work, dedication, and the positivity she brings to the Hennepin DD team. She willingly takes challenging situations head-on and maintains a positive attitude even when it is difficult.

Emily recently took on a difficult client situation and volunteered to take on tasks to help prepare for a new hire. She also takes responsibility for her own work and learning and isn't afraid to ask for help. Emily consistently sets specific goals for herself to improve, and diligently works towards them. She is also a steadfast support for many of her team members. Emily is extremely welcoming towards new hires and her authenticity and positivity helps her team members feel at ease. Hennepin DD would not be the same without her humor and positivity that radiates through everything she does!

### Sherry Smith — Quality Assurance Administrator — Orion Associates

Sherry has done an amazing job coordinating the effort to provide opportunities for the Covid-19 vaccine. She has kept the organization connected to all of the public health departments and has been available on a moment's notice so the organization can take advantage of any and all opportunities. Sherry has registered Meridian Services and Orion ISO in multiple counties so we can provide updated vaccination information to participants and employees. She also organized the Covid-19 vaccination clinic at the Golden Valley West office in which we were successful at providing 296 people with vaccines! Thank you, Sherry, for going the extra mile to keep the rest of us healthy and safe!

### Wola Sobande — Direct Support Professional — Woodridge SLS — Meridian Services

Wola has gone above and beyond over the past couple months. He jumps in to help everyone around him not matter what is going on. Wola has independently taken on helping management with whatever he can help with. He has been putting in a lot of effort to help direct staff when they have questions, and helps his supervisor as necessary. Wola comes to his supervisor with concerns, ideas, and is more than a pleasure to be around. He changes his approach as is appropriate for each individual in the house according to what works best for them. Wola goes above and beyond his job because he has a genuine care for every individual and ever staff. He has been a tremendous help when it comes to keeping everyone informed, held accountable and is a joy for everyone to be around. Wola is setting one of the best standards for the Woodridge house.

### Hoda Sulub — Direct Support Professional — Northwood SLS — Meridian Services

Hoda has been on top of things and isn't afraid to let her supervisors know about concerns or suggested improvements! She sets a wonderful example for other staff and is always looking for ways to improve the quality of the persons served daily life. Hoda is prompt on requests and very helpful with offering suggestions. She is always making sure the persons served is well cared for such as scheduling haircuts, hygiene cares, and encourages everyone to be persons centered and plans her typically workday to provide persons served with activities they enjoy.

## March

### Shelby Alban — Direct Support Professional — Inca SLS — Meridian Services

Shelby works great under pressure and works through tough and difficult situations with the teenagers at Inca. She does an amazing job deescalating emergencies and crisis situations.

### Mariah Briggity — Case Manager — Case Management - Meridian Services

Mariah has gone above and beyond for Team Medica over the last many months. She has not only continued to manage her own case load, but continues to volunteer to help her coworkers. The team is currently understaffed and rather than complain, Mariah maintains her positive attitude and passes that onto the team. She was also promoted to the Medica Lead position and continues to take on more and more responsibility, all with a smile on her face!



## Gardening in the Spring!



## March Continued

### Charles Obeize – Direct Support Professional – Woodridge SLS – Meridian Services

Charles has been at the Woodridge and Bayport programs for eight years and taken his position to the next level being a role model for his coworkers and the young men living in the houses. Specifically, over the Easter weekend, Charles took time out of his holiday to be at the house and ensure they had a fun and engaging weekend. Taking the guys for walks, getting them outside to play in the spring weather, playing ball or with the watering hose. He helped cook family dinner and encouraged the guys to play with puzzles and search for Easter goodies around the house.

### Kovy Vang — Accounts Receivable Specialist — Orion Associates

Kovy has done an exceptional job over the last few months working through her programs. She has brought the receivables down in Zenith to the point that only items over 60 Days are private pay cost shares. Kovy has taken the billings for Hennepin Health and maintains the receivables for her other programs as well. She took a LOA and before she left she created 5 videos showing how to bill Zenith so her supervisor or someone else could bill in her absence. These videos were a huge help and it was very resourceful to have them.

## April

### Ken Brown – Direct Support Professional – Woodridge SLS – Meridian Services

Ken is a phenomenal person. He takes his job seriously and sets the standard in the house. Ken is one of the most dependable people who is always more than happy to jump in and help out whether it is his duties or not. He makes sure that everyone is taken care of, including staff. Everyday Ken is in, we all know it is going to be a good one. The individuals really listen and follow his instructions and redirections. He is very knowledgeable and confident, which radiates to others around him.

Ken always comes in with a smile on his face and ready to support our guys in every way possible. From going on adventures, to cooking special meals, using his creativity to make sure everyone gets the best out of life. Ken is a stand up staff in so many ways and is always ready for whatever is coming his way. He brings a light, fun energy with him which is calming to those around him. Ken is an amazing person inside and out that carries a genuine love for everyone around him and does all he can to ensure everyone receives the best life can offer them. There isn't a situation he couldn't or wouldn't handle. Woodridge would not be the same without him! We appreciate him and are more than blessed to have him on our team.

### Brianna Cordle — Human Resources Specialist – Orion Associates

Bri is an incredible person to work with. Formerly a Human Resources Specialist temp for Morning Sun Utah, she came back to Orion Associates with ease when we acquired our new Morning Sun South Carolina contract. Bri displays exceptional leadership day in and day out. Once her tasks are completed, she's always reaching out to her team to check in and see if anyone else needs a hand. Bri is willing to help anyone, in any program, at anytime, and we could not be more thankful to have her back on our team! Thank you Bri, we all appreciate you!

### Melissa Hofstede — Administrator - Case Management - Meridian Services

Melissa always goes above and beyond what is expected of her with a smile on her face. She is always reliable and prompt. Melissa steps into anything ready to help out. She always follows through. Melissa is consistent and friendly. She is an awesome leader and enjoyable to work with!

### Teresa Stiefel – Direct Support Professional – Edgewood SLS – Meridian Services

Teresa has been going above and beyond to help the individuals at Edgewood succeed. She has been spending hours each week prepping food for someone with a complex diet. Teresa has also been thinking of creative ways to get the residents at Edgewood out of the home. They all recently went to Como Zoo and had a picnic in the park. Beyond being vital at Edgewood, Teresa has also been helping out at other programs. She is a true team player and will pick up open shifts and gaps at Inca and Golden Hills. Teresa brings a lot of energy and a great attitude to each shift. When she walks in the house people gravitate towards her.

## Employee of the Month Nominees ...

### February, March and April

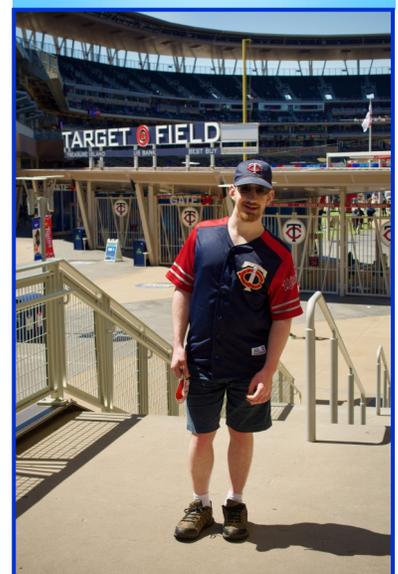
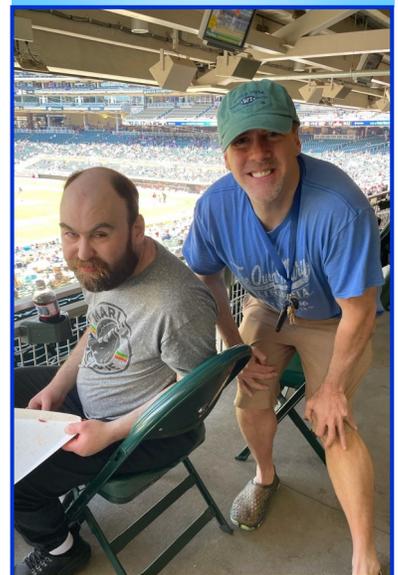
Katie Anderson, Dana Bettis Huseh, Kourtney Bowlin, Ken Brown, Akattu Capehart, Rocia Cervates, Molly Clarke, Tom DeWells, Emilie Friodcouer, Hannah Jones, Maria Juariez, Christine Kim, Krista Lange, Elly Lee, McKenna Miller, abrielle Molash, Luke Morken, Elizabeth Nelson, Amber Robels Martinez, Tiane Robinson, Nicxi Rodriguez, Cory Mitts, Jasmine Rose, Mikayla Schultz, Jean Steen,

*Thank  
You!*



## At the Ballgame!

Isaac and Justin recently attended a Minnesota Twins game! The weather was perfect and the Twins won!



## Orion Associates

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## CARF International Survey Scheduled for August!

We are pleased to announce that CARF International conduct its survey of our organization from Monday, August 23, 2021 through Wednesday, August 25, 2021. Unlike previous surveys that were conducted in person, this survey will be conducted virtually.

This will be our seventh CARF International accreditation survey. Our organization was first accredited in 2003, for three years, and has been reaccredited for every three years since then, including in 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018.

The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) is a international, non-profit organization founded in 1966. CARF provides a framework, then consults and advises health and human service organizations to help improve their service quality. CARF accreditation is evidence that an organization strives to improve efficiency, fiscal health, and service delivery, with the goal of helping an organization to create the foundation for stakeholder satisfaction.

During this survey, the CARF representatives will complete interviews with stakeholders. If you are interested in sharing your experiences with our organization, and are open to being interviewed, please contact [Lbemis@meridiansvs.com](mailto:Lbemis@meridiansvs.com).



## Headwaters Relief Organization Addresses the Issue of Human Trafficking

Headwaters Relief Organization's project of human trafficking issues in Nepal was recently received the 2021 Student Award for Excellence in International Public Health Practice, by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Dr. Roshan Khatri, Headwaters' Medical Director and the Headwaters' team have been working in communities throughout Nepal using their book, "Together Again". The book is a story for children that addresses the issue of human trafficking and the harmful social and cultural practices that can support it.

We are incredibly proud of the hard work and dedication our team has displayed while working in Nepal.

