

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 1
Winter 2021

The Constellation

Thank You to Everyone For Continuing to Go Above and Beyond to Care For People We Serve!

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: Laquita Perry, Gabrielle Salais,
Augustine Saye, T oriano Scroggins

Bassett Creek: Kumba Jagne, Sudi Mohamed, Linda Okwara

Bayport: Neiosha Flewellen, Gladston Nkwainguh,
Leslie Nkule, Yvonne Porte

Eidelweiss: Richard Dayee, David Krah, George Putu, Joan Thomas

Girard: Tupee Cheneyon, Becki Christenson, Natalie Clarke

Greenfields: Natalie Clarke

Inca: Jeanna Burns, Ameatrice Crawford, Rebeka Dietz,
Kennita Wright-Jones, Carrie Remiarz,

Inca: Sumaya Abdullahi, Jeanna Burns, Rebekah Dietz,
Tina Karwo, Sabrina Shine, Teresa Stiefel

Logan: Angel Malone, Rebecca Thera

Maple Lake: Devyn Anderson, Sarsee Gbor

Olympia Place: Danielle Franke, Amy Perkins

Silver Lake: Annie Haukos, Kendra Wooten

Springbrook: Mulugeta Berhane, Shiressa Nelson

Woodridge: Amanda Schultz, Patrick Soine, Tiwane York



The Constellation Contributors

Leota Bemis
Jennifer Buethe
Ashley Jenkins
Sharon Kedrowski
Joy McLaughlin

Colonel Egahn Ehpets, Retired,
Editor in Chief



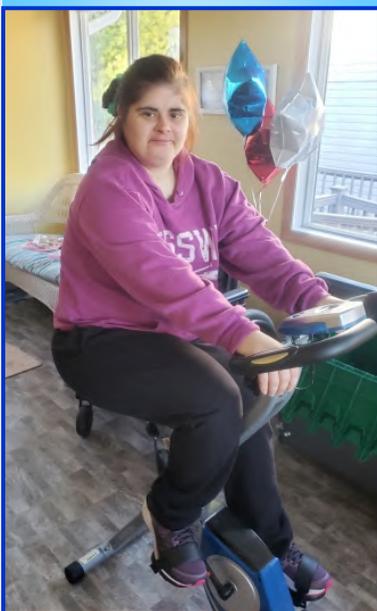
"... book
'em, Danno!"

Mission Movement!

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have introduced initiatives and opportunities for people to focus on their mental and physical health maintenance. In November, the goal of the “Mission Movement” was for people to move / exercise / engage in physical activity for twenty minutes each day for twenty days.

Patricia Dahlheimer and **Chuck Stringer** were the winners of this mission.

Awesome job and congratulations to you both!



A Focus on Benefits: Why Do We Have Paid Time Off Instead of Vacation and Sick Time?

We encourage and welcome questions, suggestions and input from our colleagues in our ongoing effort to do the best that we can as an organization, both for those we serve and for our employees. Our colleagues' input has played a significant role in shaping the organization as it is today and will continue to do so into the future.

One of the issues that comes up occasionally has been employees saying that they'd rather have Vacation and Sick Time instead of our current benefit of Paid Time Off (PTO). This has always been something of a surprise for us, given that it was our employees who had vigorously requested that we convert our Vacation and Sick Time into Paid Time Off (PTO).

We thought, therefore, that it might be helpful to discuss the reasons why those employees felt so strongly that we should convert to Paid Time Off (PTO) and why we believe it would be a serious mistake to return to Vacation and Sick Time.

For many years, our full-time employee received two separate benefits of both Vacation and Sick Time. Employees in their first and second years received 7 days of Vacation and 7 days of Sick Time annually. Employees in their third and fourth years received 9 days of Vacation and 9 days of Sick Time annually. Finally, employees who had worked for the company for 5 or more years received 12 days of Vacation and 12 days of Sick Time annually.

While we considered these to be two very generous benefits, our employees suggested that we could do better.

First, our employees pointed out that having Vacation and Sick Time as separate benefits actually penalized employees who came to work every day and didn't call in sick. While employees who missed work, due to illness, could be paid for up to 12 days, employees who dutifully came to work every day didn't receive this benefit in any form. Our employees asked us why should those who come to work every day receive fewer benefits than those who don't?

Second, our employees pointed out that when they resigned, with proper notice, they would leave with payment for up to 12 days of any unpaid Vacation, but would be losing, without any compensation, up to 12 additional days of Sick Time. Again, they asked us if this was fair to the employees who hadn't used their Sick Time?

Our employees pointed out that if we were to convert the two separate benefits of Vacation and Sick Time into the one benefit of Paid Time Off (PTO), it would solve both of these issues as all employees would have the potential to receive the same benefits.

If employees were sick, they could use their Paid Time Off (PTO) to cover those days away from work, exactly as they would use Sick Time. In fact, it made it easier for them to do so as they didn't need to take Sick Time and then, if they ran out of Sick Time, separately apply to take Vacation time to cover the time off they needed. With Paid Time Off (PTO), the benefit came from the same source.

If employees weren't sick, they would have up to 12 additional days of Paid Time Off (PTO) available to them for vacations, or other personal days off, that had not been available to them in the past.

Finally, when employees resigned, with proper notice, they would be eligible to receive payment for all of their Paid Time Off (PTO) ... up to 24 days paid ... as opposed to no more than 12 days under the old Vacation and Sick Time arrangement.

Our employees were right! Paid Time Off (PTO) is a better benefit.

As a result of these employee input, therefore, we changed our policies from a Vacation and Sick Time benefit system to a Paid Time Off (PTO) system approximately 15 years ago. We combined all Vacation and Sick Time into one Paid Time Off (PTO) benefit. Instead of two separate funds of 7, 9 or 12 days each, accessible for different purposes, the funds were combined in one fund of 14, 18 or 24 days, accessible for whatever purpose they were needed.

Once again, given the substantially better benefit of Paid Time Off (PTO) over Vacation and Sick Time, we continue to be surprised that when employees suggest that we return to that system.

Clearly, we have to assume that their thinking is that we would do so by adding another set of Sick Days to our current PTO policy. If this is the case, it's important to make it clear that this is not a possibility. First, our current policies are very generous and offer up to 24 Paid Time Off (PTO) days off annually, plus 7 holidays, plus 2 Volunteer days off for a total of 33 days ... almost 7 weeks ... of paid days off a year. Adding a single Sick Day would cost the organization approximately \$70,000.00. To extend this to a full 5 Sick Days would cost \$350,000.00. This is a cost that we simply can't bear.

We hope that this clarifies the issue for everyone. If you have any questions or further thoughts, please let us know.

A Focus on Benefits: Highlights Regarding Our Holiday Policies

Our organization observes seven standard holidays annually, including ...

- New Year's Day**
- Easter or Floating Holiday**
- Memorial Day**
- Independence Day**
- Labor Day**
- Thanksgiving Day**
- Christmas or Floating Holiday**

Our holiday policies include some unique features that we would like to share with you.

The next holiday that the organization will observe will be the Easter holiday. While all Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) receive payment for the Easter holiday if they work on the holiday, full-time DSPs receive payment for the holiday whether they work it or not. Management and administrative staff, who wouldn't otherwise work on the Sunday of the holiday, receive a Floating Holiday instead of the Easter holiday. They may use this Floating Holiday during the pay period before or in which the Easter holiday takes place, or anytime during the calendar year, after the holiday, with supervisory approval.

The organization has another unique policy regarding administrative and management staff when New Year's Day, Independence Day or Christmas Day falls on a weekend. When one of these holidays falls on Saturday, the organization's offices will be closed on the preceding Friday and administrative and management employees will take that Friday off as their holiday. When one of these holidays falls on a Sunday, the organization's offices will be closed on the following Monday, and administrative and management employees will take that Monday off as their holiday.

The organization considers most of the holidays to be a twenty-four-hour period, from 12:00 am to 11:59 pm on the day of the nationally recognized holiday. Christmas and New Year's Day, however, are different for our DSPs. These two holidays are designated by the organization as twenty-four-hour periods of time from 6:00 pm on the eve to 6:00 pm on the day of the nationally recognized holiday.

In addition, the Christmas holiday may be taken as a Floating Holiday. A administrative or management who does not celebrate Christmas, may choose to work on Christmas Day, with supervisory approval. If they do so, they may take another day off as a Floating Holiday. This Floating Holiday may be taken in the pay periods before, during or after the pay period in which the Christmas holiday occurs, with supervisory approval.

Finally, our organization has a policy to provide for the observance of other faith related holidays. An employee may take religious holidays to allow for the observance of such special occasions other than those observed here provided the employee requests it in writing from their supervisor not less than two weeks in advance. Such time off may be taken as a substitute for an observed holiday, or as an additional one taken using Paid Time Off or without pay. In other words, an employee who wishes to take a day off to celebrate a holiday of their faith, may be do so, with supervisory approval, using PTO, doing so unpaid, or they may substitute one of the organization's standard holidays for the religious holiday. In the latter case, the employee would work on the standard holiday and would then take off the religious holiday of their choice. Examples might include substituting Memorial Day for Eid al-Fir, Labor Day for Yom Kipper or New Years' Day for the Eastern Church's celebration of Christmas.

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 \(meridiansvs.com\)](#)

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.



Zenith Services and Upstream Arts

"Being Active and Being Happy!"



December Employment Anniversaries

30 Years

Marilyn Beck

22 Years

Mark Henry

18 Years

Amber Robles Martinez

13 Years

Andrew Stomberg

10 Years

David Whitebird

9 Years

Amanda Hacker

Rebecca Lardy

8 Years

Shane Eggerstedt

7 Years

Kelsey Lee

5 Years

Shelby Ablan

Kristin Kerfeld

Sean O'Reilly

Jordan Stewart

Jodi Walstrom

Kendra Wooten

4 Years

Ayub Ahmed

Cairbeh Baysah

Erinne Cremeen-Harris

William Davies

3 Years

Matthew Ashpole

Susan Atkinson

Randi Vidmar

2 Years

Toni Bahl

Alexandra Bellile

Bobbi Berg

Jennifer Dukowitz

Jamecar Gbanjah

Sarsee Gbor

Aloysius Gwaikolo

Karl Honeck

Randall Kar

Jacey Spraguer

Anthony Smith

Kovy Vang

Brianna Wilson

Kessely Zumoh

1 Year

Angela Brooks

Thelma Johnson

Faima Kelleh

Christabella Kelly

Stephanie Menege

Ruth Okai

Muhktar Roble

Gabrielle Warnsby

Shout Outs!

I would like to give a Shout Out to **Samson Oluwole** from Kentucky Specialized Services. As a Direct Support Professional, he has continuous demonstrated consistency, work ethic and a great working relationship with both his co-workers and the people that we serve. Samson is always there to help management and his co-workers with anything they need assistance with and has a fun, outgoing personality that has tremendously improved the quality of life for the people that we serve. Thank you Samson for all of your hard work over the last year! - Stephanie Hughes, Program Director, Meridian Services



I would like to give a Shout Out to **Ruth Okai**, a Direct Support Professional at Kentucky Specialized Services. Ruth is always willing to help out with whatever other Direct Support Professionals, management, or the people we serve need. She goes above and beyond, has a consistent work ethic, and has a great relationship with both her co-workers and the people she serves. Ruth helps create a fun work environment, and is always engaging with others. Her positive attitude when she enters the house, immensely improves the environment not only for the other Direct Support Professionals, but the people we serve. Ruth has done a phenomenal job improving the lives of those who currently live at Kentucky, and we are so lucky to have her! Thank you for all your hard work Ruth, it does not go unrecognized!

- Michelle Macgillivray, Program Manager, Kentucky Specialized Services, Meridian Services

Shout out to **Jenny Schraut** for all the managing she has done with the Covid-19 testing and now the vaccination rollout for our folks. I can only imagine it is an endless job and not many thanks come in from behind the scenes. - Sharon Kedrowski, Program Director, Zenith Services

I'd like to submit a Shout Out for my supervisor, **Frankie Bennett**, on behalf of my co-lead, Justine Lindholm, and myself. Frankie has been a steadfast and enduring support for our team throughout COVID-19 and the ensuing challenges. She is always willing to listen and makes us feel heard. This is truly so appreciated and we are thankful for Frankie on our team!

- Michelle Sommers, Lead Case Manager, Meridian Services

I would like to Shout Out my co-worker, **Samantha (Sammy) Kelly**. She took on extra work for me when I was behind which she did not have to do. Sammy supported and encouraged me throughout the process of getting caught up and made me feel like I wasn't alone. I also want to thank **Abigail Rios** and **Autumn Carlson** for normalizing my situation and believing in me. I felt like giving up and probably would have, if it weren't for them.—Heather Wilson, Case Manager, Meridian Services

I want to give a shout out to **Kelsey Plank**. Kelsey is a wonderful, caring, and kind Case Manager who works diligently to meet her client's needs! She deserves all the recognition.— Gabrielle Molash, Case Manager, Meridian Services

I would like to give a Shout Out to **Carrie Remiarz** from Inca. When I first started training at Inca, Carrie was there to help me whenever needed. She was welcoming and willing to help when I had questions. Carrie does an amazing job working with the girls, you can truly tell she cares about their wellbeing. She has also been a great help "behind the scenes" helping with office work, coordinating appointments and completing tasks to ensure the program runs as smooth as possible. Thank you for all you do Carrie! - Courtney Ruttger, Program Lead, Meridian Services

Shout Out to **Emily Milius**, ISO Coordinator, who did an amazing job covering two caseloads while we trained in another coordinator! Emily was always willing to jump in and help even after the coverage period was over. She showed great leadership and dedication to her work and the families that we serve. Thank you! - Zach Garcia, Orion ISO Program Director, Orion Associates

Shout Out to **Christine Kim** who recently took over her full caseload as an Orion ISO Coordinator! We are so excited to have Christine as part of our team! - Zach Garcia, Orion ISO Program Director, Orion Associates

Shout out to the **ISO Coordinator Team** for navigating all the changes regarding the 8.4% increase, the PPOM 40 hour lift, and the Covid-19 Vaccine. You have all been amazingly patient and professional as we swim uncharted waters. Thank you! - Erin Huldeen, Executive Administrator, Orion ISO and Morning Sun Financial Services, Orion Associates

Shout Out to **everyone who worked through the Morning Sun Utah Waitlist Care Respite Program and Caregiver Compensation**. You are all rock stars! - Erin Huldeen, Executive Administrator, Orion ISO and Morning Sun Financial Services, Orion Associates

Shout out to **Ceil Van Campen** for continually adapting with the Utah background screenings. You are always organized and forward thinking. Thank you! - Erin Huldeen, Executive Administrator, Orion ISO and Morning Sun Financial Services, Orion Associates

And More Shout Outs!

I would like to send a Shout Out to **Emily Miller**. Emily is celebrating ten years at Little Stars. She puts her heart into her job at Little Stars. We are so thankful to have her as part of our Little Stars family! - Meghan Shields, Director of Recruiting, Orion Associates

I would like send a Shout Out to my co-worker **Cory Mitts** for being a great partner and team member for his knowledge, dedication and devotion to his job! Thank you! - Tom DeWell, Orion ISO FS Payroll Specialist, Orion Associates

Sharing the News!

Births and Adoptions!

Carissa Dugan, Program Manager, Bassett Creek, with Meridian Services and her boyfriend Matt are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter ... Gianna Frances, born on December 8th.

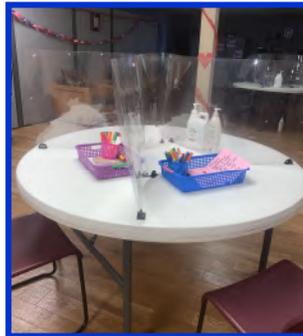
Andrea Hagen, Director of Risk Management, with Orion Associates, and her husband Justin are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter ... Cecelia Mae, born on January 5th.



Zenith Services ... Through the Pandemic

Zenith Services closed its doors on March 18, 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our employees either stayed home or began working in our Meridian Services programs that were still in operation.

On July 6th, almost four months after the closing, the Zenith Services DSC reopened its doors. We were only able to have one individual on site with one staff person for up to three hours per day. This was a change when we were used to fifty individuals with fifteen to twenty staff. We identified the individuals who were eligible for services. At that time, it was only open to those who did not live in group home settings, made a schedule and began to provide services.



We began by offering services in different ways. Some of the individuals used conference rooms at our Golden Valley West and Hopkins offices. Another individual was another community based. This arrangement continued until September when we were able to bring individuals back into the Zenith Services site together.

Currently, there are fourteen individuals receiving services. They are still being served for only half days and not all at the Zenith Services site at the same time. Some of the individuals work, some socialize ... which has been one of the most important things that we've all missed through the pandemic, some are simply happy to get out of the house and some are grateful for a paycheck again. Two of the individuals served at Zenith Services have been able to return to some or all of their shifts with their jobs in the community, while others continue to wait.

As has been the case for all, Zenith Services has its cleaning routines as well as initiated the full and proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in order to make the site as safe as possible. We all look forward to the future and hope that we will soon be able to bring everyone back so that we all can return to doing all that we love, including enjoying our lives together.

The Benefits of Random Acts of Kindness!



Research shows that acts of kindness can be beneficial to our own mental health, as they can reduce stress, improve our emotional wellbeing and even benefit our physical health. Accordingly, all people receiving services and employees were encouraged to do acts of kindness during the month of January. An amazing group of women from Green Fields purchased Valentine cards and plan to spread some cheer and kindness by sending them to residents at a local nursing home.

January Employment Anniversaries

41 Years

Marya Hage

28 Years

Stephen Hage

19 Years

Erin Huldeen
Reuben Johnson

18 Years

Meghan Shields

17 Years

Daniel Phillips

14 Years

Gerty Mikel

10 Years

Emily Miller

9 Years

Karen Howay

8 Years

Katherine Polz

7 Years

Marion Benedict
Amber Fagerlee

6 Years

Rachel Murphy

5 Years

Amanda Cardona
Amy Miller
Amber Toenyan
Ger Yang

4 Years

Judy Coleman
Stephen Myers
Haley Peterson
Allison Pieri

3 Years

Sokari Afonya	Jena Klemish
Brooke McIntyre	Angelica Oppegard
Gillian Renstrom	Christopher Seek
Abu Siryon	Amy Ward

2 Years

Raphael Anodere	J. Flomo Dakemu
Emma Deignan	Thomas DeWell
Jenny Erickson	Ariel Fredrickson
Katrina Grunewald	Olivia Hansen
Kathryn Jorgenson	Hillary Krahling
Megan Mayer	Antonio Miles
Umulkheye Mohamed	Natalya Popova
Jessica Romo	LaKesha Snead
Quincy Williams	Ntxuam Yang

1 Year

Gaidah Azem	Rosalind Bakion
Megan Beuthien	Anna Conley O'Connell
Antonia Contreras	Michael Gilbert
Ashlynn Jeseritz	Spencer Leeco
Aderayo Olajide	Samson Oluwole
Julia Rodriguez	Lisa Schafer
Chaunelle Smith	Kayla Smith
Nikole Strand	Zarr Yarpah

February Employment Anniversaries

15 Years

Daniel Schmidt

12 Years

Alfred Longley

11 Years

Elijah Yormie
Douglas Zimpfer

10 Years

Arceli Diaz

9 Years

Chris Gillet

8 Years

Olayiwola Sobande
Mark Suggs

7 Years

Patrick Soine

6 Years

Kirsten Olds
Paul Turnbloom
Jurbe Wakkias

5 Years

Tiarra Randall
Robert Romani

4 Years

Tohmia Caspah
Kwamaine Fitzpatrick
Jeremiah Jones
Magan Koscher
Prince Mohammed
Matthew Mua
Nathaniel Peters
Jean Steen
Edwina Vah

3 Years

Siera Walton

2 Years

Alyattu Capehart
Massah Garwai
Lauretta Goll
Dana Bettis Huseth
Nyapal Malou
Emily Milius
LaQuita Perry
Marcus Sayonkon
Danielle Tiehi
Alvin Zelee

1 Year

Salina Alameda	Gladys Borsay
Jennifer Buethe	Richard Dayee
Marcie Flynn	Erin Gregoria
Stephanie Hawkins	Stephanie Hoffman
Ashley Jenkins	Bethany Jewison
Johnnie Livingston	Gabrielle Molash
Olando Momo	Gladston Nkwainguh
Adebimpe Ogunleye	Oluwatosin Ojo-Arndt
Hannah Rogge	

Employees of the Month ... August, September and October

August

Joy Bredeck – Direct Support Professional – Green Fields SLS – Meridian Services

Joy has done a great job keeping spirits high. She is always trying to get the ladies out at Green Fields, even if it is just out to the yard. Joy is hard working and has helped a lot during these months of COVID-19. The ladies always enjoy seeing her. Joy was nominated for the Employee of the Year in 2020. Although someone else received that recognition, Joy is our program's Employee of the Year! Thanks, Joy, for all you do.



Marie Hurtis — Case Manager — Case Management - Meridian Services

Marie goes above and beyond for her clients. She has proven to be a very trustworthy and reliable Case Manager. Marie is a 100% involved, dedicated and responsive Case Manager. She consistently comes at every obstacle with compassion for the client and a true desire to find the best solution possible.

Alex Spraguer — Billing Specialist — Orion Associates

Alex has been instrumental in the training of a new Billing Specialist in person and via Microsoft Teams during the COVID crisis. Pinnacle Services has recently moved their case management billing into Great Plains, and he worked closely with them, training them on the system. Alex approaches his work with high ethical standards, great customer service, professionalism, and kindness. He voluntarily comes in monthly to ensure Meridian Services' statements are processed and mailed on time during the COVID-19 crisis.

Pam Tessmer – Program Director – Meridian Services

Pam has done an outstanding job of staying in close communication with the ladies that live at the Green Fields home and their families. She has not had a Program Manager at the Green Fields home since December, so she has been the primary contact during this time. Pam always puts the needs of the people we support first and has often been complimented for her compassion and integrity.

September

Erin Gregoria — Case Manager - Case Management - Meridian Services

Erin has been an instrumental part of the Legislative Committee over the past year. She has been an active member of the committee and has helped to coordinate the Get Out the Vote events recently held at the Golden Valley West Office. Erin is an inspiring and tireless advocate for the people she serves and those within the community. Thank you for all your dedicated work Erin!

Angel Malone – Direct Support Professional – Logan SLS – Meridian Services

Angel joined Meridian Services this year as a Direct Support Professional and has been a great addition to the Logan team. She works almost every evening and the individuals she serves have come to enjoy her dependability and company so much. Angel has a great understanding of the individuals interests and needs. She strives to share the load of cooking and cleaning equally with her coworkers and will take the initiative to get tasks done that are not being addressed. One of the individuals she serves typically will choose not to eat what is served for dinner but when Angel is cooking, she will rarely turn it down. Angel is typically very quiet but will go out of her way to acknowledge her coworkers and let them know that she enjoys working with them.

Brooke McIntyre — Payroll Tax Coordinator — Orion Associates

Brooke is the Payroll Tax Coordinator for Morning Sun Ohio and Morning Sun Alabama. She has been tasked with stepping into our Morning Sun FS Utah program to assist in on boarding a new Wait List Care Respite program which includes at least 416 new participants. Brooke has been tasked with our Employer paperwork issues and has been reaching out daily to Employers who's paperwork needs additional items or revisions. In addition, she is monitoring the employee paperwork assigned to the Tax Coordinator. This is a huge task considering the volume of paperwork coming in. Brooke has been a rock star with handling this head on. She has asked questions on processes to ensure we are doing our part correctly where needed and has had amazing communication between our group so that everyone is in the know. Brooke makes sure the items assigned to her are completed in a timely manner and is always able to answer questions for others. Her work ethic is commendable and so we would like to recognize her through this nomination.

September Continued

Joseph Wreh – Program Specialist – Meridian Services

Joseph is a Program Specialist who learns the ins and outs of individual programs very quickly. In his short, incremental times working at Palmer Lake, he has found new ways to keep everyone active and engaged throughout his shifts. In addition, Joseph works very well with his teammates and full-time staff over at Palmer Lake to ensure success of daily tasks. He has also been very adaptable, immediately jumping on new tasks that are delegated to him by the Program Director. Palmer Lake currently does not have a Program Manager, but when Joseph is there, one can be sure that everything that was requested is completed. Joseph has a mind for the management aspects of working in a program and does a great job coming up with creative new ways of refocusing outcomes to be in the best interest of the people with whom he works.

October

Toni Bahl — Human Resources Generalist - Orion Associates

Toni has been a key part to keeping the Human Resources Department running during the pandemic. We have been down a couple team members and she has helped to pick up the slack and to work on huge projects while still maintaining her own job duties and positive attitude. Toni has effectively and efficiently trained in our new Human Resources Generalist, who has raved about her experience working with her. We would not have gotten through these last few months without Toni!

Anita Baron — Case Manager - Case Management - Meridian Services

Nita is one of our best team members. She is knowledgeable and was open to helping train in a new employee during COVID-19. Nita goes for case coverage when she is able, which seems to be often. She is always willing to help and comes up with new ideas or points of view. Nita shares different resources and information pertinent to our job. She is very appreciated, and we are grateful she is on our team.

Rebekah Deitz – Direct Support Professional – Inca SLS – Meridian Services

Rebekah is always willing to help staff and the individuals at Inca. She shows concern for her responsibilities and does her job very well. Rebekah holds healthy boundaries with the staff and individuals at Inca. She has been an Inca employee for over ten years. Rebekah helps with bringing the girls to appointments. The girls are most themselves around Rebekah, they do not feel judged. She can be fully honest without offending anyone or being mean. Rebekah truly cares about everyone who comes through the doors at Inca, including staff, individuals, and management. She has a great sense of humor and is empathetic towards each kid's situations. Rebekah has a level of patience that cannot be taught.

Jennifer Dukowitz – Program Specialist – Meridian Services

Jen is a Program Specialist for our north programs as a support to staffing shortages and hard to staff areas. She has done an exceptional job with picking up last minute shifts, moving whole month schedule around last minute and going with the flow. During this difficult year of uncertainty, Jen has been able to keep a positive attitude. Her schedule has been evolving daily and has changed her schedule to meet the needs of the people served along with changes due to people's illnesses due to COVID-19. Jen adjusts to these changes like a champ and does her best to continue to support the whole team. She continues to remain calm and assist our people served with resources and outlets during this pandemic.

Employee of the Month Nominees ... August, September, October

Alena Alameda, Elizabeth Bel,
Allison Brewer, Leah Dean, Rebecca Dietz,
Madison Dramen, Shandra Dunsner,
Madeline Faffler, Amber Fagerlee, Evan Gadtke,
Karl Honeck, Dana Bettie Huseth, Ashlynn Jeseritz,
Jeremiah Jones, Jena Klemish, Rachel Korfe, Cort-
ney Kruger, Kaelyn Kubler, Annie Logan,
Karen Marcatoma, Joy McLaughlin, John Moody,
Kirsten Olds, Uchenna Otiaba, Tanner Papa,
LaQuita Perry, Nina Petrovski, Hannah Rogge,
Jasmine Rose, Missy Schraut, Tony Smith,
Sarah Stark, Paul Turnbloom

Thank
You!

Hangin' Out with the Matt and Harrison at Maple Lake



Orion Associates

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Golden Valley, Minnesota 55427

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In Celebration of Black History Month!

The origins of Black History Month can be traced back to a man named Carter G. Woodson (1875 – 1950), the son of formerly enslaved parents.

Since his family was too poor to send him to school as a child, he taught himself the basics of a school education. At the age 20, Woodson was finally able to attend high school, which he completed in just two years. Woodson then went on to earn a bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Chicago. In 1912, Woodson became only the second African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard University (W.E.B. Du Bois was the first). Woodson used his hard-earned education to teach. He taught both in public schools and at Howard University.

Three years after earning his doctorate, Woodson made a trip that had a great impact on him. In 1915, he traveled to Chicago to participate in a three-week celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the end of slavery. The excitement and enthusiasm generated by the events inspired Woodson to continue the study of Black history year-round. Before leaving Chicago, Woodson and four others created the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) on September 9, 1915. The following year, the ASNLH began publication of the Journal of Negro History. Woodson realized that most textbooks at the time ignored the history and achievements of Black Americans.

Thus, in addition to the journal, he wanted to find a way to encourage interest and study of Black history. In 1926, Woodson promoted the idea of a "Negro History Week," which was to be held during the second week of February. The idea caught on quickly and Negro History Week was soon celebrated around the United States. With a high demand for study materials, the ASNLH began to produce pictures, posters, and lesson plans to help teachers bring Negro History Week into schools. In 1937, the ASNLH also began producing the Negro History Bulletin, which focused on an annual theme for Negro History Week.

In 1976, the 50th Anniversary of the beginning of Negro History Week and the bicentennial of the United States' independence, the week was expanded to Black History Month.

Since then, Black History Month has been celebrated in February around the country. Woodson chose the second week of February to celebrate Black History Week because that week included the birthdays of two important men: President Abraham Lincoln (February 12) and Frederick Douglass (February 14). When Black History Week turned into Black History Month in 1976, the celebrations during the second week of February expanded to the entire month of February.

