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Supporting over 40 Years of Excellence in Community Services

July 2009

State Advocacy

The goal was to speak for the nearly 4,000 invisible Kansans that either are not getting any services or have only the most basic support. Our local Sunflower group reached that goal by making themselves very visible when they attended Interhab Push Day in Topeka.

This self-advocacy group of 16, led by facilitator Amanda Urban, should be commended for personally illustrating the high level of concern for people with developmental disabilities. Our gratitude also goes to everyone who made calls, wrote letters or sent emails to the Legislature on behalf of the people Sunflower serves.

We understand lawmakers have a difficult job, and will continue to provide them information about the importance of services that allow people to lead more independent and rewarding lives.



Early Assessment Services

Early-childhood professionals in Rice and Barton counties pooled their resources and the result is a state RECESS grant that enables families to

seek help for a variety of concerns. RECESS stands for Rice Early Connections Equal School/Life Success.

Cathy Estes, Early Education Center coordinator, noted that the goal is to ensure families have everything they need, including day care, immunizations and healthcare in general.

In addition, our EEC offers early-intervention services and social/emotional assessments, which are so important for displaced children who have social/emotional needs due to low income, substance abuse or a single parent with limited education.

Cathy and her staff teamed up with Rice County Communities in Schools (CIS) Inc., Parents as Teachers, day care centers, the Rice County Health Department and the Rice County Coalition for Children and Families. The grant was \$165,602, with local cash and in-kind matches bringing the total to \$192,432.

The Rice County agencies should be commended for collaborating with one another for our mutual success. We all wanted to find a way to reach the people who need us most.

Marian Poe, CIS executive director, is the grant administrator; Joy Millison is the connection coordinator and Valerie Orth is the part-time family support worker.

The grant is through the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, with the full support of the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. The EEC's Interagency Coordinating Council in Rice County, Bright Beginnings, also plays a pivotal role in this effort.

Adult Medical Supports

Nancy Winkelman is Sunflower's new medical services coordinator and we couldn't be more pleased. A veteran registered nurse, Nancy oversees medical administration and provides our staff with training on when and how to dispense medications. In addition, she oversees all Sunflower clients' medical appointments.



Families can be assured Nancy is dedicated to supporting all Sunflower individuals and ensuring they have immediate access to medical care. She wants everyone we serve to enjoy their independence and the best quality of life possible. Since Sunflower has a long tradition of making a difference in people's lives, Nancy is a perfect fit.

She graduated from the Barton Community College School of Nursing in 1991 and earned her bachelor's in nursing in 2008 at Fort Hays State University. Her background includes Central Kansas Medical Center infection control director, CKMC patient scheduler, CKMC staff nurse and clinical coordinator at Golden Belt Home Health & Hospice, which CKMC owns and operates. She also was a recovery room and surgical room nurse at Ellinwood District Hospital, health and nutrition coordinator at Central Kansas Head Start, and utilization review and employee health nurse at Clara Barton Hospital.

Ladeska "Decky" Makings, Sunflower's chief operating officer, noted that Nancy's background speaks for itself. She has a wide range of experience and families can have peace of mind that she is dedicated to supporting their loved ones.

You may also be interested to note that other agencies are using consultants, while we continue to employ a full-time nurse. This is one more example of Sunflower exceeding expectations.

Employment Success

Ronnie Lewis has so impressed his employers that they have increased his responsibilities and his hours, and he couldn't be happier. Ronnie recently celebrated his two-year anniversary at Central Kansas Custom Upholstery, 2200 Main, where he has truly found his niche.

When he began his new career, Ronnie worked only a few hours during a few days a week. Then Keith and Nita Reimer, CKCU owners, realized what a treasure they had on staff and now Ronnie works Monday through Friday and every other Saturday.

His new responsibilities include opening and closing the store, answering phones, product pricing, customer service, inventory tracking, operating the computerized embroidery machine and computer data entry.

Keith and Nita have told us Ronnie is a great employee and a tremendous asset to their company. In turn, we appreciate them because they were willing to discover the many talents and abilities of the people served by Sunflower.

Congratulations, Ronnie; and thank you, Keith and Nita.



iGive/iSearch

Sunflower has found a new way for individuals and businesses to support people with developmental disabilities and all it takes is a few clicks and keystrokes.

Choose Sunflower Diversified Services for your charitable dollars, and the iGive.com website allows donations in two ways. When you use its search engine, Sunflower receives a penny per search; and we all know those pennies can add up. Second, if you get to a business site from the iGive webpage and buy something, Sunflower receives 1 to 26 percent of the purchase price, depending on the business.

The iGive page toolbar can be downloaded so it is right at your fingertips.

We encourage local businesses and individuals to support this special effort. You have our assurances that every cent donated to Sunflower goes directly to your neighbors who need a helping hand.

For more information on this project's extensive list of possibilities, contact Connie Pounds, 620-792-1325.

Early Intervention Outcomes

While watching Grady, Keirstin and Leah crawling around the house and climbing on furniture, it is difficult to believe that the triplets were born 15 weeks early, weighing less than 2 pounds each. They are also babbling and playing with each other and their sister, Jaidyn, 3.

The boy and identical twin girls were born to Beth and Jason Pinkston of Larned at Wesley Medical Center in April 2008; the hospital's Neonatal ICU referred them to our Early Education Center. Such a referral is automatic for extremely premature babies with medical conditions and/or low birth weight.



The NICU was the triplets' home for almost four months; they were on oxygen, apnea monitors and feeding tubes, and had heart abnormalities. Leah also had eye problems that required surgery. Now all three are thriving and meeting milestones for their adjusted age, thanks to their loving, vigilant parents and EEC Intervention.

Sunflower's EEC team included a family service coordinator, an infant-toddler teacher, teacher's assistant, and occupational and physical therapists. Their participation included evaluations and home visits to work with the babies and their parents in activities that would ensure a good start in their early development.

Beth wishes our team could stay with the family until the triplets turn 16 – when they learn to drive.

Comfort Zone Update

We cannot pinpoint the date yet but we will schedule an open house for our new therapeutic center, The Comfort Zone, sometime this fall. While progress is never as quick as you hope, Eric Bortz, our maintenance person, is doing a great job.

The Comfort Zone will provide an aviary, and water, aroma, light, sound and other relaxation therapies for folks who can't tolerate crowds and noise. It will be a peaceful environment that will help people deal with daily stressors.

The spa is complete and being used for those who need hydro-therapy. In some cases, we need a doctor's instructions before this therapy can begin.

Eric has installed energy-efficient windows, and is finishing the ceiling and painting. On the to-do list are installation of an outside exit and construction of a ramp at that exit. The electrical and lighting work is complete.

The areas around plants, the aviary and pond will have recycled-tire mulch to give them a real garden look and feel, and we will put down some type of timbers to mark the walking path and secure the mulch.

This is a labor of love by all of us on staff, as well as volunteers who are helping in a variety of ways. We know it will be worth it as we see the rewarding results for people needing these special therapies.

Beautification Award

The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce Beautification Committee has recognized our new curb appeal at 1521 K-96. The new overhang/façade, wood panels, paint, flowers and our logo caught the committee's eye and we appreciate the recognition.

The work on the building's front and north side was done with volunteer labor; the back yard upgrades and roofing were done with contract labor.

"We appreciate the efforts that Sunflower Diversified Services have made to enhance the curb appeal of its K-96 location," said Dortha Keenan, Beautification Committee chairwoman. "The new façade and fresh floral arrangements really add a touch of professionalism to the building's exterior."

Our K-96 location is home to case management, which coordinates children and adult services. It is the only state-funded service for which there is no waiting list. Staff members provide pre-vocational services, therapy, community alternatives and retirement supports for people with more severe disabilities, as well as those no longer able to work full-time.



Sunflower offers the services of an estate planning consultant, at no cost or obligation. Please contact us for details.

Contributions

April 2009 through June 2009

The following individuals and businesses have contributed to the support of Sunflower's programs and special projects. Dollars received by the Foundation are gifted on a quarterly basis to supplement local, state and federal funding.

Our supporters and partners are very important to us, and we appreciate the involvement of each and every one. If you know of anyone we have missed, or if we need to update our information, please let us know.

Quarterly Newsletter

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