



CHS Community News

Spring, 2015

Volume 2, Issue 2

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Message from CHS Executive Director

Dear Friends,

July of 2015 marks the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA ushered in a new era of respect, dignity and opportunity for people with developmental disabilities. So very much has changed for the better in the past two and a half decades - yet there is so much more for us to do. Cultural norms have changed; values that promote accessibility, inclusion, civil rights, community living and contributions are now commonly accepted in American Society.



It has been a hard road for people with disabilities, their families and their friends, to get where we are now. We should celebrate, but we can't sit back.

Massachusetts has recently enacted two laws which will provide all of us greater opportunity to realize the hopes and aspirations we have through the ADA. People with developmental disabilities will have a much greater opportunity to determine where they live, work and how they receive services with the passage of the Real Lives bill. The second bill, the Omnibus Autism bill requires the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Disabilities to use the broader federal definition in determining funding and service for people who have been diagnosed with disabilities on the Autism Spectrum.

These legislative initiatives will provide new and exciting opportunities to build on our organizational achievements here at Cooperative for Human Services, Inc. Our mission, goals and objectives remain focused, balanced and actionable in meeting the individual need of those we serve and others we will serve in the future.

We will continue to reach out to create productive partnerships; learning while encouraging. We are thinking about what people are feeling and experiencing. We are continuing to find ways to keep us ready and responsive to the needs of those we serve and their families, (including siblings). CHS programs embrace the continuation and evolution of community services in a person centered, inclusive and caring way.

There is renewed enthusiasm within our organization. As always we are very busy improving and expanding services, practices and infrastructure. Staff's hard work and dedication is evident throughout all areas of our services.

Thank you to all who contribute to our success. Work with us more closely as we continue to progress. It is those we care for who propel us forward.

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CHS Women's Group
Conversation, Poetry & Tea
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VISIT US ON-LINE !

CHS: An Evolution of Excellence

Since 1981, Cooperative for Human Services, Inc.'s person-centered approach to service design and delivery has been the foundation of our work. Each year we review our service delivery practices and the outcomes achieved to enhance the lives of the people we serve.

In discussions this year we at **CHS** focused on **how the people we serve experience the services they receive**. Repeatedly we asked "what is it like to be a person we serve and what is it like to receive services from CHS."

The outcome of these discussions is that ~ **we have been compelled to do more for both the people we serve and our employees!** ~ resulting in the creation of our *Evolution of Excellence* campaign.

Launched in March 2015, CHS's Evolution of Excellence is the next chapter in our continued pursuit of a *Passion for What's Possible* on behalf of each person we serve. CHS has developed a training series to renew and re-energize our commitment to the people we serve and the staff who support them.

Our Positive Supports Training focuses on creating happiness, learning the "story" of the person served and then teaching our employees to adapt their approach based on each person's life story to create personal happiness. The training series will be introduced in phases, beginning with our managers and will cascade throughout the organization until each employee is trained!

Although it is an enormous undertaking, the results of our efforts so far are outstandingly positive. This campaign promises to have a transformative effect on CHS services and in the lives of the people we serve - creating happiness, one person at a time.

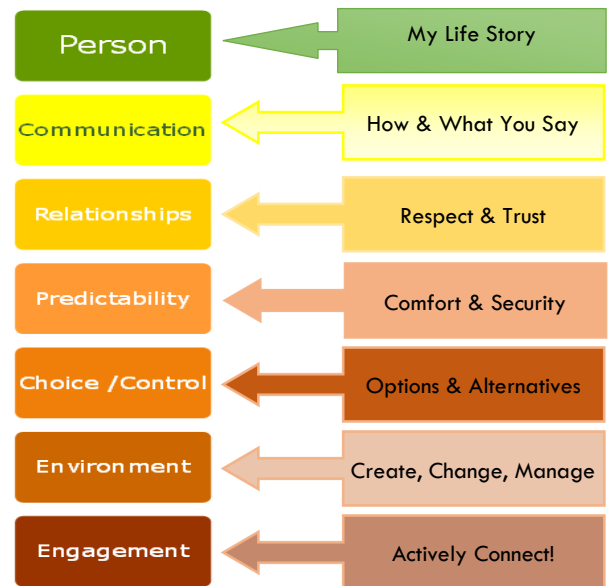
Begin today with a smile & Bring happiness into your life!

Our Approach is:

- ⇒ **Person First!**
- ⇒ **Proactive & Progressive**
- ⇒ **Holistic**
- ⇒ **Universal**

Our Success is in:

- ⇒ **The Life Story**
- ⇒ **Committed Employees**
- ⇒ **Caring About not just for the people we serve!**
- ⇒ **Creating Happiness**



Be part of our story & share yours!

CHS invites the people we serve, family members, guardians and our staff to share their story! Stories will be selected & featured in upcoming newsletters.

Join our Evolution of Excellence!

E-mail: info@cooperativeforhs.org

Message from the Executive Director ~ (Continued from page 1)

Continued from page 1

Some highlights of recent activities:

Residential Services ~ CHS has been implementing capital projects designed to maintain and improve our twenty-four hour residential homes. Some of our current projects include remodeling kitchens, re-siding the exterior of homes, updating bathrooms, painting (exterior and interior) and re-decorating and re-furnishing. As usual for this time of year, yard cleanups and planting of gardens (vegetable and flower) are a primary focus for individuals and staff, as well as activities related to routine repairs, seasonal cleaning tasks and on-going maintenance for each of our homes. The Maintenance Department is always hard at work!

Individual and Family Supports Program ~ Individuals living independently with part time support services from CHS, have been receiving assistance from CHS staff with spring cleanup, basic repairs, maintenance and other improvements, both interior and exterior, for their homes. Our Community Center in Malden continues to be a place for individuals served to have celebrations, catch up with friends and receive additional support from CHS staff.

CHS has continued to enhance our family and sibling support networks, as well. We are planning to host MA Families Organizing for Change's (MFOFC) educational series "Advocacy Boot Camp" in the fall of 2015.

We are also seeking funding for a project entitled "Strengthening Family and Adult Sibling Relations." If funded, CHS would partner with MFOFC, The Arc of Massachusetts and MA Sibling Network to provide outreach, education and supports to families and adult siblings of adolescents and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders. We will keep you posted on the status of this very exciting project.

Administrative Projects at Cooperative for Human Services, Inc. ~ Technology: CHS recently added twelve new computers, three laptops and twelve tablets to our system promoting the use of wireless tools to enhance our services. We have added this inventory as part of our goal to continuously update and improve telecommunications among staff, individuals served, managers and families.

Further development of our comprehensive IT system is also underway to improve CHS data collection, tracking and analysis for individuals served. Data for individuals will track goal outcomes, medical & health care information, family & sibling involvement and participation in community activities. This system will have the ability to aggregate data and deliver reports that will enhance CHS's ability to forecast, plan and evaluate services, present and future.

Our Human Resources and Business Departments have new payroll and personnel software that when fully operational will give each employee on-line capabilities to manage their benefits and check their attendance and payroll records. All HR functions will be managed using this new user friendly, efficient electronic system designed to improve Human Resource service.

Staff Training ~ The organization has continually been recognized for the extensive and relevant training provided for our staff, offered on-site, in our offices or through the web, all under the development and direction of Rebecca Sarvela, Director of Human Resources and Quality Assurance. Our extensive training has been critical for staff development and person centered service. Training is a core factor in our success and will be in our future accomplishments.

In order to keep pace with the needs of those we serve and remain a leader in best practices we have continually adapted new training techniques and added important training topics. New training initiatives are underway in every sector of our organization. These include:

The Evolution of Excellence at CHS, ~ Emerging Health Care Issues for Those We Serve, ~ Positive Support Training and Coaching Techniques for Managers. In addition, we have enhanced our training and support for all staff working with our new and expanded information and communication systems.

We are and will continue to progress forward. As always, I welcome your thoughts and concerns.

Sincerely,
Kevin J. Leahy,
Executive Director
kleahy@cooperativeforhs.org



Americans with Disabilities Act ~ 25th Anniversary

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Where Do We Go Next? The ADA Moving Forward

“While there is much to celebrate in the 25th anniversary year of the ADA, there is still far too much left undone. As a nation, we must move forward with vigilance to fully realize the promise of the ADA for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Ensuring opportunities for true community living, integrated employment, and access to information technology are perhaps the most significant next steps we can take to realize the promise of the ADA in the United States.

While the government has a responsibility to enforce mandates and guidelines, people with Intellectual Disability Disorders, allies, providers, and policymakers have responsibilities too. Everyone must demand change. The status quo cannot be tolerated. It will take a unified voice to change communities and the opinions of citizens within our communities.”

**Amy Hewitt, Director, Research and Training Center on Community Living
Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota.**

“Where Do We Go Next? The ADA Moving Forward,” Amy Hewitt, Impact: Feature Issue on the ADA and People with Intellectual, Developmental, and Other Disabilities, V.28(1).Gaylord, V., Witeck, C., Nalker, M., Hewitt, A., & Poetz, C.



Joanne Young, Anita Corin, Jennie Oliveri ~ out on a walk in the park



Edwin Rodriques ~
A visit to the Library



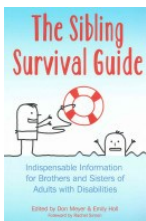
Alfred DeDominici and Michael Sansone ~
Enjoying an afternoon together

Celebrating National Sibling Day

MA Sibling Support Network & CHS Host Family Event

On Thursday, April 9, 2015, from 7 to 9 P.M., MA Sibling Support Network and Cooperative for Human Services, Inc. hosted a wine and cheese event to celebrate National Sibling Day. The event featured local authors who discussed their publications about the joys and challenges faced by adult siblings, parents of young siblings and professionals working with siblings. Following the readings and discussion, the attendees had the opportunity to network with each other.

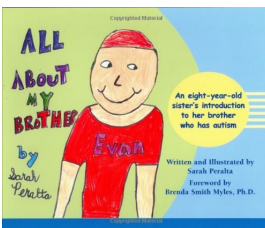
The following sibling books were discussed:



The Sibling Survival Guide: Indispensable Information for Brothers and Sisters of Adults with Disabilities, Edited by **Don Meyer and Emily Holl**. Contributing author John Kramer discussed this guide that focuses on concerns faced by adult siblings. The guide offers practical information and anecdotes about issues related to future planning and adult sibling relationships.



Sibling Group Lends a Helping Hand: A Guide to Facilitating Support Groups for Siblings of Children with Special Needs, Olivia von Ferstel and Bridget Glenshaw. Co-authors Olivia von Ferstel and Bridget Glenshaw discussed their compassionate, comprehensive guide to forming a sibling group using expressive arts therapies.



All About My Brother by Sarah Peralta. Author Sarah Peralta talked about her heartwarming and introspective children's book that she wrote at age eight, sharing her experience of growing up with a brother with autism.

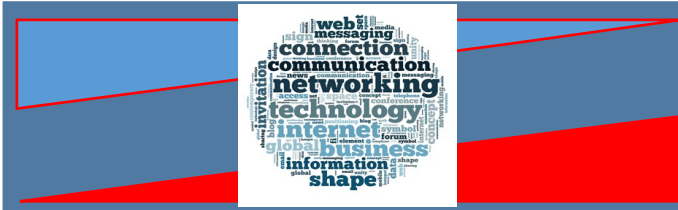
The Massachusetts Sibling Support Network is committed to supporting siblings of people with disabilities in the following ways:

- ★ Creating welcoming communities for siblings across the lifespan;
- ★ Improving the range and availability of sibling support services; and
- ★ Providing education about sibling related issues.



Much like the parent and self-advocacy movements, siblings are taking on an increasingly active role in advocating for themselves and allying with their brothers and sisters with disabilities.

For more information about MSSN, please contact info@masiblingsupport.org or call 617-807-0558.



UMass Lowell Provides Life Changing Technology Solutions for CHS Individuals

CHS Technology Update

As part of our Strategic Plan, CHS continually explores ways technology can enhance the lives of the people we serve, improve our service delivery practices and more closely connect our staff to our mission. We view technology as a tool that can minimize and possibly eliminate manual processes that take valuable time away from supporting the people we serve! The technology practices we have introduced over the past two years have greatly improved agency wide communications, provided self-service access for staff training registration and employee scheduling. We have been able to develop CHS Intranet sites, deliver trainings in a multimedia format and provide self service access in a central location for all business and service related documents and forms.

Our Evolution of Excellence continues as we search for technology that is relevant and helps us to achieve positive outcomes on behalf of the people we serve. At CHS, we realize that technology is not the only answer; it's only one of many tools available to help us plan for the future and achieve more of our goals!

This year CHS will introduce a new software that will allow for paperless employment applications and management of our hiring process. This new software will also give employees and managers access to a number of new self-service features like:

- ◆ Benefit selection & enrollment (with a direct feed to the carriers);
- ◆ Electronic documentation with automated reminders & tracking of completion dates;
- ◆ A robust reporting system.

This new system will help us more efficiently comply with new government regulations, as well as continually manage our key workforce development indicators.

In the near future CHS will introduce our Learning Management System. This software will be integrated into our new payroll and human resources management system; it will provide stronger links between CHS Professional Development to organizational outcomes. Implementation is scheduled to begin in March of 2016.



Please share your technology experiences with us; CHS would like to know what successful apps, devices or software you can recommend to help us enhance the lives of the people we serve.

UMass Lowell's School of Engineering, Department of Technology along with Kevin J. Leahy, Executive Director and Michelle MacEachern, Director of Support Services recently announced a promising collaboration that will substantially enhance the daily life for two CHS individuals. Engineering students have been assigned assistive technology projects tailored specifically for the selected individuals.



A gentleman, from one of our residential programs in Burlington, who is unable to communicate, will be working with an engineering student who will develop the software and hardware that will enable him to communicate through his electronic tablet via a specially designed, foot operated assistive device. This assistive device will also allow him to independently turn lights and his television on and off in his home (tasks he currently cannot do on his own), along with other self-determined tasks that will be pre-programmed for him.



A woman from our Maynard residence who has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and is non-verbal will work with a UMass engineering student to develop a device that will help her to communicate her needs on a daily basis. The device as conceptualized will be a pink tablet with colored buttons representing six distinctive verbal phrases that reflect her self-determined wants and needs. A durable and mobile tablet will be used to enable her to use the device as she travels into the community, thereby increasing her overall inclusion and independence.

The assigned engineering students will work with a large spectrum of their engineering colleagues at UMass Lowell including plastic engineers, software engineers and process technology engineers in order to meet the specific, articulated needs of the selected individuals. These engineering services are provided at no cost to our organization and CHS plans to continue this project with UMass Lowell next year, as well.

The UMass Lowell Assistive Technology Program started in 1991 as an engineering program tasked with helping people with physical and other disabilities. Today, the project is part of the engineering curriculum and participation in the project is required for graduation. UMass Lowell students work for two semesters on solving key projects to assist individuals in the community who have unmet engineering technology needs.

"We work on Real World Solutions to Real World Problems for the disabled."
Dann A. Clark, Professor, UMass Lowell Assistive Technology Program.

Moving Ahead



On Thursday, March 5, 2015, Cooperative for Human Services, Inc. was honored to receive a \$1500.00 grant from Enterprise Foundation. CHS Executive Director, Kevin J. Leahy and CHS Chief Financial Officer, Glen Charney welcomed Enterprise Account Executive, Becci Miller and Enterprise Business Development Manager, John Coombs to CHS Administrative Office where the grant check was presented.

THANK YOU ENTERPRISE HOLDING FOUNDATION!

Want to join our e-news list
to receive family support updates, CHS newsletters and other resources?
E-mail us ~ info@cooperativeforhs.org



~ CHS Walking Club ~
Exploring
the great outdoors
for leisure and fitness.



Coming Soon!!!



~ You're Invited ~
**Planning is currently underway for our
Annual Summer B-B-Q's series.**
Details to Follow!

Partnerships and Collaborations



Cooperative for Human Services, Inc. has just entered into an innovative partnership with the YMCA of Malden, Massachusetts to pilot the YMCA's nationally acclaimed Diabetes Prevention Program for the men and women in our Individual Support Services program.



Michelle MacEachern, Director of Support Services will be working closely with Martin Dubovic, YMCA Director of Healthy Living and Jo Sanchez, Director of the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program, in developing this pilot program, using visual aids and adaptive communication supports to augment the curriculum for the individuals in our support services.

This Diabetes Prevention Program includes weekly and monthly educational classes designed to set health and fitness goals, attain skills and establish practical, healthy living habits.

Along with these classes, CHS individuals will have access to all the YMCA's fitness classes, gym facilities, staff supports, swimming pool, as well as other services. Importantly, the Malden YMCA is only a short distance from our Individual Support Services Community Center in Malden.

Because adults with disabilities are at a greater risk of developing diabetes than the general population, CHS has always promoted a healthy diet, exercise, fitness and active lifestyle. This partnership with the Malden YMCA is another great opportunity for CHS to extend health and wellness to the individuals we serve.



ATTENTION STATE & FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

CHS is an approved non-profit organization for both Federal and State employees who contribute to their respective Combined Charities Programs. If you, your friends or family members are employed by a State or Federal agency, your contribution can be directed to Cooperative for Human Services, Inc. by indicating our provider number on your pledge card.

Our MA Combined Employee Campaign Number is 700417.

Our Combined Federal Campaign of Eastern MA number is 42522.

Thank You!

Partnerships and Collaborations



Individual Support Services Mammogram Study



Recently student researchers from Boston University School of Medicine / Boston Medical Center contacted staff at Cooperative for Human Services, Inc., Individual Supports Service Program to ask if any of the women receiving services in the program would be interested in participating in a research study.

This study was designed to determine how best to help women with Intellectual Disabilities learn about breast cancer screening (mammograms). Boston Medical Center staff would present information to interested women using various formats and then ask them which format helped them the most: a DVD, computer technology like Skype or an in-person meeting.

After spreading the word among the women in the ISS program, six women volunteered. On April 3, 2015 the women and their CHS support staff met with the student researcher from Boston Medical Center in our Malden office. The group of women listened intently to the researcher and then each one met with her individually. The women signed consent forms and together discussed what they already knew about mammography.

Next, the women watched a DVD of a physician who provided an explanation of the mammography process and why it was important to have a mammogram. After watching the DVD, the women again met individually with the researcher to review what they had seen.

At the conclusion of this session, the women came together to discuss the next session. A coin tossed to determine what methodology would come next in the study. The "In-Person Meeting" method won and the group will meet again in six weeks at our Individual Supports Service office.

All of the women who participated in the study were excited to be a part of this process. In discussing the study with the women, they talked about how mammograms made them feel and they agreed that if the process could be explained better, they would be less likely to be frightened and less likely to refuse to have a mammogram. The women understood that the study was designed to determine how best to present the information and each one of them is proud to be a part of such an important study.

Without proper education and support, mammograms for women with Intellectual Disabilities can be at the least frightening and at the worst traumatizing. Women with Intellectual Disabilities are just as likely as other women to get breast cancer. Unfortunately, many women with Intellectual Disabilities do not receive screening tests (mammograms) for breast cancer in time. Getting screened for breast cancer can save lives and it's very important for all women to get screenings. We will keep you informed as this important study progresses.

"Women with intellectual disabilities are living longer, receiving primary care in the community, and have equal rates of breast cancer compared with women in the general population, but they have lower rates of mammography. Although several public campaigns have successfully raised the mammography rate for racial and ethnic minority women, they have not penetrated the community of women with intellectual disabilities. No research to date has explored potential barriers to mammography for these women by involving the women themselves as participants."

'It's Easier Said Than Done': Perspectives on Mammography From Women With Intellectual Disabilities,
Joanne E. Wilkinson, MD, *Annals of Family Medicine*, March, 2011

Activities for All Seasons

EARTH DAY AT CHS

Cooperative for Human Services, Inc. values healthy living choices and prides itself on being a green organization. In recognition of Earth Day, and as a part of a summer long initiative to engage the people we serve in gardening, CHS recently held several Earth Day Seeding Projects. Participants were encouraged to chose a variety of vegetables and spices they wanted to grow.

The individuals will take care of their seedlings in indoor greenhouses until the end of May when they plant them outside and care for them through the summer. Many individuals have experienced living on a farm and love to garden, for others it is a new exciting, experience that they are really enjoying. Our goal is to engage everyone in the growing process and teach people the importance of caring for our planet.

Conversation, Poetry & Tea!

CHS celebrated Women's History Month in March by holding several afternoon teas. These social events celebrated the strengths of womanhood. The women talked in depth about important figures in women's history. Rosa Parks stirred up a lot of conversation, as many of the women lived during the Civil Rights Era and remember how much change took place. Participants were also very interested in Eunice Shriver, founder of the Special Olympics.

There were also poetry readings and everyone was given the opportunity to read.

The women had tea and light refreshments served from fine china decorated in bright, festive colors and patterns.

These afternoons together celebrating the strengths of womanhood have made lovely memories.



HEALTHY LIVING THROUGH FUN COOKING!

As a part of our healthy living philosophy, CHS continually encourages people to think creatively about new and healthy food options and making better healthier choices.

Our Cooking Groups offer the opportunity for those we serve to come together and create delicious meals and special treats. All involved have lots fun enjoying each others company and sharing what they have created. Their repertoire now includes homemade banana bread and pizza!



Activities for All Seasons

Holiday Hostesses ~ Spread Holiday Cheer

Many of us dread the holidays. The planning, shopping, the cleaning, the cooking and preparations can all be very overwhelming. The holidays can also be very lonely the people we support who do not have families to go home to.

Through the years staff in our Individual Support Service program provided companionship and holiday meals to the people we serve. The meals would generally be held at our community center in Malden with our staff helping to planning and preparing the meals. These holiday events were anticipated, the dinners were nice and very much appreciated, there was warmth and companionship, but still, something was missing.

At Christmas time in 2012, Angela and Ann Marie, sisters receiving services in our Individual Support Services Program, asked Kim Cohen, ISS Manager, if they would be able to host a Christmas dinner at their home. They planned to invite a few of the friends they had made since joining CHS.

The rest of the story is history.

Since that holiday, Angela and Ann Marie have opened their home every Christmas, Easter and New Year, hosting upwards of fifteen people for their holiday dinner parties.

The sisters also enjoy hosting summer holiday barbeques. They have had up to thirty friends from our Individual Support program as guest for their fabulous Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day parties.

At Easter time this year staff offered to provide the paper goods for the dinner party. The sisters adamantly responded, "Absolutely not! It's Easter. We will use our Mother's china." The ladies have also politely declined staff assistance with preparing the meals, saying "We're all set."

The sisters don't hesitate getting their guests involved in the preparations. The spirit of friendship and caring is palpable. Soon everyone is laughing and enjoying each other's company, not to mention the great food.

Easter dinner this year the sisters baked a ham made with pineapples and cherries!

We'll have to wait to see what's on the menu for the next holiday celebration.

Angela and Ann Marie host these celebrations out of the goodness of their hearts and ask only friendship and acceptance in return. To say "Thank You" Angela and Ann Marie were presented a gift card to Texas RoadHouse. They will now have the opportunity to have someone cook for them!



*Thank you Angela and Ann Marie,
You have added a whole new dimension to the awesome ISS program.*

Please Contribute



____ YES, I/we want to help the Cooperative for Human Services continue its mission to provide quality residential, independent living, guardianship and other support services to individuals with developmental disabilities. Please accept my/our tax deductible contribution of \$_____. (You can also contribute on-line at www.cooperativeforhs.org)

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State/Zip _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Gifts can also be made in memory, in honor, or in celebration of a special person or occasion.

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

In Celebration of: _____

Please make check payable to Cooperative for Human Services, Inc. and mail to:

Cooperative for Human Services, Inc., 420 Bedford Street, Suite 100, Lexington, MA 02420

Telephone: (781) 538-4626 On-line donations: www.cooperativeforhs.org THANK YOU!

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