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## A Message from CHS Executive Director



Dear Friends,

When daily events seemingly challenge the deepest of our convictions, it is important to focus on the constructive, affirmative things that have gotten us to where we are today. At Cooperative for Human Services Inc. we trust in our Guiding Principles and believe in our proactive, innovating culture to keep us steadily moving forward.

We are proud of our reputation as innovators. We continually develop and introduce new methods and options, and we consistently make improvements to accepted practices. At CHS, innovation is neither a buzz word nor an empty concept; it is new and effective ideas having a positive impact on those we serve. We know there are better ways to care for, provide and assist those in our services and we are dedicated to finding alternatives and providing real options.

Established in 1981 as a private non-profit organization dedicated to the care of a small group of adults with special needs, CHS has evolved and taken a leadership role providing the highest quality of services to those we support. Today, CHS provides supports to more than three hundred people. We operate forty residential homes and our Individual Supports Program is expanding. We provide specialized supports for individuals with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and we offer services in our Shared Living and our Choices programs. Innovation is key to providing the variety of services the people who depend on us deserve. "We can never do enough for the individuals in our care" is the philosophy of CHS.

We serve individuals with a wide range of developmental and cognitive disabilities, brain injuries, mental health diagnoses and serious medical conditions. Our ability to provide meaningful, quality services to people with widely varying needs has grown as the number of individuals we care for has grown. We continually challenge ourselves to evolve and improve what we have developed so that we are meeting the changing needs of those we support. Our growth is important in allowing us greater flexibility and opportunity to positively affect the people in our services.

In these difficult, uncertain times it is more critical than ever to remain focused on our core values. Our fourteen guiding principles point the way, leading our innovative approaches and creative thinking. They continuously remind us of the commitment we have made to the individuals we serve, their families and all stakeholders. These guiding principles challenge me and the entire organization, daily, to strive always to make positive change in the world of the people we support.

The first three of our Guiding Principles were described in our Winter 2017 Newsletter:

- Treat Every Person with Dignity and Respect;
- Support Individuals as Valuable Members of Their Community by Promoting Physical Social Integration and Economic Opportunity.
- Design, Deliver and Modify Services to Meet the Unique Individual Needs and Preferences of Those Served.

The next three of our Guiding Principles are highlighted on the next page:

## BEGIN EACH DAY

with optimism and end  
each day with forgiveness.  
Happiness in life begins  
and ends within your heart.

*Doe Zantamata*

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

**\*Serve individuals of varying abilities, regardless of the intensity of supports needed.**

CHS is a welcoming organization where everyone belongs and everyone is important. We focus on the person not the limitation. We work on meeting the need rather than seeing the problem.

**\*Encourage stakeholder participation in the planning, support, provision and evaluation of services.**

Communication is a key factor in the success of CHS. We seek out suggestions, ideas, view points, and constructive solutions. We collect information from our Annual Family and Guardian Satisfaction Survey and individual conversations. Our commitment to clear, unobstructed communication builds trusting, respectful relationships.

**\*Promote individual and family empowerment by enhancing true, informed choice.**

Understanding the hopes and expectations of the individuals we serve and their family members gives us critical information used in the planning process. Inviting people to become engaged and actively participate in our process is essential to our success. Listening and learning has enabled us to create a large array of well developed and responsive services to meet the unique needs of each individual served.

We admit, we don't always get things right on our first attempt. What is important is that we always get back up, refocus and try again. This is the best, and the only way we know to help those in our services live a life of acceptance, independence, joy and security.

Sincerely,



Kevin J. Leahy  
Executive Director

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## Recognition of Quality Care

Cooperative for Human Services Inc.'s Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Program has quickly been established as an example of our leadership and commitment to responsive care. Each of our programs is specifically designed and developed to meet the unique needs of the individuals in the home.

Across our organization success can be credited to the strong relationships we have developed with our various stakeholders (individuals served, family members and guardians, our Board of Directors and business partners, our Management Team and those who fund us). We encourage input and participation from every stakeholder segment in our planning, support, delivery and evaluation of services. We know that input from each one is critical to our continuing mission.

The varying and complex health needs of those in our care sometimes require visits from the local Visiting Nurse Association (VNA). Having the opportunity to spend time with people in their homes, allows the nurses' unique perspective into what each person's life is like. We recently receive this letter from a nurse visiting a patient who lives at our ABI program:

"I just wanted to take the time to acknowledge your wonderful staff! I have been there at all different times, and am always greeted promptly and politely at the door, and given a thorough report. My patient is always wheeled to her room for me, and I am offered supplies and assistance. I can tell your staff really knows and cares about the residents. Every inch of the home is spotless, and so well organized. The staff have been so helpful to me, and always give me accurate information and are receptive to any suggestions. Friday when I called, one of the staff was so helpful by offering to hold lunch until I did my visit. Because it is such a distance, the consideration and accommodating of my schedule means a lot. This is the best home I have been to. I look forward to my visits. You have to be doing something right to have such fabulous people working so well to make a difference in the lives of the residents. There is so much respect, dignity, and compassion. Keep up the good work!"

This letter reminds us of just how lucky we are to have such dedicated, hardworking staff, giving tremendous amounts of effort everyday, to be supportive and to make the lives of the people we care for more comfortable and meaningful. We are grateful for the hard work of our staff and appreciate the input of our community business partners.



Want to join our e-news mailing list and receive updates, CHS newsletters and other resources?

E-mail us ~  
[info@cooperativeforhs.org](mailto:info@cooperativeforhs.org)

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## New Living & Employment Opportunities

Cooperative for Human Services Inc. strives to promote individual and family empowerment by enhancing true, informed choices. We are proud of our vast array of services including our newly developed living options and we believe we are better able to support our individuals as well as our employees because of our persistent innovation. The continual development of creative ways to care for the changing needs of those who are a part of the CHS community is one of our highest priorities. At CHS we know that the needs of your loved ones will not be the same in ten years as they are today. We are constantly evaluating the needs of the people we support so that they receive the highest level of care.

Among the newer of our living options and employment opportunities is Shared Living. Shared Living gives the opportunity for a provider and an individual in our services to really connect through a one-on-one relationship. As the two get to know each other, the bonds that are created turn into more of a relationship family members share. There is always a smiling face to come home to!

Another of our newer living options and employment opportunities was created for those served by our Individual Supports Services (ISS) program. These individuals live on their own receiving just a few hours of services a week and we began to see that their need for additional services was growing. We realized it would be beneficial to the individuals to have someone from CHS close by. This is how our Live-In Manager for Individual Supports position was created. The Live-In Manager has their own apartment in the same building as the individuals. That way if any issues

arise, everyone knows who to go to and where that person is. We find this has been a tremendous improvement for our individuals. They tell us they feel safer, more relaxed and calm now that there is a Live-In Manager nearby.

We offer a similar situation in several of our residential programs. An apartment in the lower level of the home offers a home to one of our employees. In addition to meeting the requirements of any other role they may hold at CHS, this employee has twenty-four hour on call responsibility and if needed will fill in for staff.

We also have a Live-In Manager at our farm. Although it closely aligns with our other Live In Manager positions, there are some additional responsibilities. We have a Farm Manager and Farm Coordinator, but sometimes things happen that need to be attended to when they are away from the Farm. This is where the Live In Manager at the Farm differs from other Live-In Managers. Assistance may be required with the animals, crops or any other potential problem and our Live-In Manager can discover it, report it and get help before the issue becomes catastrophic. The Live In Manager at our farm plays an important role in assuring that the farm operates smoothly.

Having unique employment opportunities and also offering a vast array of services and living options to individuals and their families helps the people we support to receive the highest level of care and presents our employees the possibility of becoming even more involved and connected in the CHS community.

# Expanding Opportunity for Participation and Belonging



Cooperative for Human Services Inc. operates under the deeply held belief that all people have dignity and value. We work to ensure each person we support, in any of our programs, is given the fullest opportunity for social inclusion and is encouraged to make independent choices.

Learning each individual's story, their likes and their dislikes, is crucial in designing services unique to the needs of that particular person. Understanding that person's story enables us to develop an individualized plan that allows for the continuation of activities while expanding interests.



The opening of our ABI program and acquisition of our Dartmouth Street Hall and the Farm, have each provided unique and unexpected benefits. Each location is providing greater opportunities for the people we serve than we first envisioned. We find that we are able to do much more for the individuals we support than we had hoped.

An incredible amount of effort has gone into making Dartmouth Street Hall a place where everyone feels welcome. The Hall is large enough to include each individual, regardless of the intensity of supports needed.

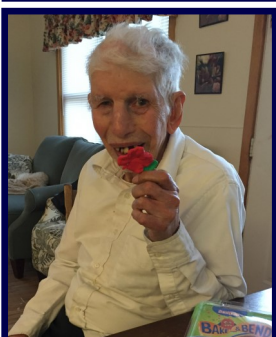


The fully accessible design of our ABI program makes socializing and group activities more open, enabling us to offer a greater variety of programming.

Our work to revitalize the Farm is endless but, helping to care for the animals, or in the gardens, taking a hike on the trails or just sitting in the open space of the Farm offers those we serve a sense of calm and of belonging.



The design and development of person specific services, our caring, supportive staff and the CHS belief in inclusion for all individuals, encourages them to become more inspired and explore new opportunities while remaining connected to the things they enjoy.



## Hydroponics at the Farm ~ Update

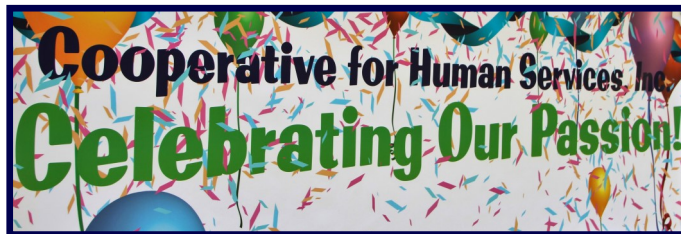


Our decision to grow several of our crops at the Farm hydroponically has proven to be efficient and cost effective. We began our growing season earlier and will be able to grow long after the traditional season ends. Most importantly, we can provide individuals in our care with healthy organically grown vegetables all year long.

Hydroponics uses water as the growing medium. There is no soil in this process. The idea behind hydroponics is to give plants a direct source of water and balanced nutrients, so they get exactly what they need. Costs are reduced because there is no need to buy soil or fertilizer.

We have been surprised to find hydroponics actually saves water. When plants are grown in soil and watered from above, a great deal of water runs off and never makes it to the plant's roots. The water that does get to the roots is not distributed to each plant equally. We found that the growth rate of hydroponic plants is faster than a soil grown plant and the yield of the hydroponic plant is greater. Also, plants grown hydroponically have fewer problems with bug infestations, funguses and disease.

We have already harvested and distributed ten heads of lettuce throughout the agency. We are excited about the ability to share fresh, organically grown produce with everyone connected to CHS.





## Your Input is Important to our Planning & Action



Each year we distribute our Annual Satisfaction Survey to family members, guardians and individuals asking that they help us by honestly evaluating the services we provide. Their evaluation of our organization helps us gather feedback regarding our current services and offers a springboard for the development of new, and exciting ways to deliver person centered supports. We at CHS know it would not have been possible to attain, nor would we be able to continue expanding our success, without the input and evaluation of our services by each of our stakeholders.

Family members and guardians receive surveys tailored to the specific service offering their relative receives: Residential Services, Individual Support Services and Placement/Shared Living Services. The survey questions require a response on a scale of Very Dissatisfied to Very Satisfied. The questions are designed to touch upon every aspect of our services. They are an evaluation of staff accessibility, professionalism and how parents and guardians feel that their loved one is being cared for. The questions help us zero in on our strengths as well as our weaknesses, helping us work toward significant improvement.

Once the information is gathered from the survey, we are able to understand what is working for people, and also realize where we need improvement. The results of the satisfaction surveys are integrated into our planning process, which helps us to improve our processes and services. We start the planning process with an understanding of how we can better provide for the needs of the people we serve. We thank each of you for providing your feedback and helping us improve the way we deliver our services!

### Carolyn's Work with Skill Corps in Kenya



In our last edition of Connecting Concepts Carolyn Mueller shared with us her hopes for her trip to Kenya. In this edition Carolyn tells us about her work at the Kaizora Institute:

The main focus of our visit to the school in Nairobi was to implement Direct Instruction (DI) throughout the school. DI is a skill the students need to transition into mainstream/inclusion schools. The idea was to teach peer awareness and group work. We began by observing classroom interactions between peer groups. I was amazed to see how knowledgeable the teachers were in Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and how dedicated they are to their students. It was truly inspiring. The school operated beautifully and just needed support utilizing group work. The Kaizora consultants had some knowledge of how DI works, but were unable to use it successfully in the classroom.

After a day of observing, our team developed a training on DI. We reviewed the main concepts, why it is important, focusing on choral responses and the use of scripted lessons. Our training involved questions to encourage staff to discuss how they currently run group work and compare it to the DI concepts.

The next day I gave a presentation on developing scripts. We based scripts on research but found the scripts very wordy. It became evident that the scripts would not work across the school. The scripts only seemed to be successful in the advanced classroom.

Upon further research we found that minimal research has been conducted on DI in special needs classrooms. We decided to share resources and develop a DI curriculum that would be successful for this school. We used role playing activities and socratic questioning to specify the scripts to the needs of the students and school.

Our script was sustainable across the entire school. Once the teachers became fluent in the scripts the students began choral responding, working together, and turn taking. The student's peer awareness increased tremendously!

Working together, Kaizora and Skill Corps staff found a way for students and teachers to maintain the skills taught long after we fly away. It was extremely exciting to see how quickly the teachers learned how to implement DI successfully.

Through this opportunity, I learned the importance of sustainability. It was amazing to be a part of work that hasn't been done before.

## Improving life for those we serve while protecting wildlife



In March of 2017 National Wildlife Federation (NWF) recognized and celebrated the efforts of Cooperative for Human Services Inc. at the Farm in creating a garden space that improves habitat for birds, butterflies, frogs and other wildlife by providing essential elements needed by all wildlife - natural food sources, clean water, cover and places to raise young. This certification also makes the Farm a Certified Wildlife Habitat<sup>®</sup> and part of the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge, a national effort to restore critical habitat for pollinators.

CHS's Wildlife Habitat at the Farm is an effort to increase the wildlife diversity in our backyard and create an environment where people can explore the outdoors and be in touch with nature. Through conscientious design we have created gardens and outdoor seating areas that are visually appealing and at the same time provide habitat for wildlife. These things have been accomplished by working with the existing landscape features.

The Farm pond provides food, water and shelter for local wildlife, which we take into consideration as we maintain the area. We have chosen to leave a grassy border untouched along the edge of the pond, allowing that piece to remain natural giving animals shelter as they make their way to the pond. We are also attracting pollinators and beneficial insects to our vegetable and flower gardens by adding a variety of native plants.

The NWF is America's largest conservation and education organization, inspiring Americans to protect wildlife. The Garden for Wildlife program encourages planting with native species, discourages the use of chemical pesticide and recognizes efforts to provide habitat for wildlife, including pollinators. David Mizejewski, NWF Naturalist says, "Whether you garden in a suburban yard, an apartment balcony, a ten-acre farm, a schoolyard, a business park, or anything in between, everyone can create a home for local wildlife. Turning your space into a Certified Wildlife Habitat is fun, easy and makes a big difference for neighborhood wildlife," he added.

For more information on gardening for wildlife and details on how you or your an entire community can become certified, visit [www.nwf.org/habitat](http://www.nwf.org/habitat) or call 1-800-822-9919

## CHS ~ Developing Innovative, Focused Day Supports

The Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDS) recently awarded Cooperative for Human Services Inc. a five year demonstration grant for the development of day programming for individuals over the age of fifty-five. The DDS grant committee report stated they found CHS's proposal remarkable in regards to the innovative and highly individualized approach. The committee cited CHS's past performance and achievements as influential in the award of this very competitive and exclusive grant.

CHS provides a variety of activities for individuals in our services, but sustaining these activities is financially difficult. We have many ideas and tremendous desire, but not always funds. Our dedication, passion and commitment was acknowledged with the award of this grant and the added level of trust will allow us to further our vision for those we support.

Over the years, we have discovered that as people age, many choose not to participate in traditional programming. They would rather stay home and find ways to enjoy themselves. However, they do still want to be involved, enjoy social activities and participate in community events.

Our Day Supports Program will base activities on individual interests, but because we recognize the importance of maintaining community connections we will plan activities that will also serve a purpose. We will encourage volunteer work through participation in our "Giving Back" program.

We encourage physical activity for people of all ages and ability. Currently, individuals are able to choose to participate in our indoor and outdoor walking groups, stretching classes, exercises classes and strength building classes. Each of our planned Day Support sites has unique attributes allowing for specific types of activities and learning opportunities for individuals.

A sample of activities by location follows:

At the Farm we will offer a wide variety of

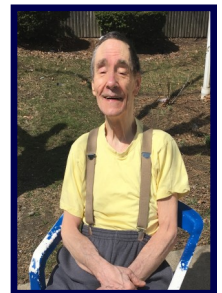
season-based, nature-focused opportunities to reconnect people with the land, organic sources of food, unique outdoor experiences and interactions with animals. Individuals and staff are encouraged to bring their families to the farm.

The full kitchen at our Dartmouth Street Hall will permit exploration of healthy cooking. Individuals can revisit their youth by recreating family recipes and sharing food with friends. The site's spacious size lends itself to large group and holiday events where friends and families can also participate in the activities.

We have several residential programs that offer bright spacious indoor and outdoor areas that are easy to navigate with assistive equipment. The level grassy backyards are ideal for outdoor social events and lawn games while the weather allows.

In addition to site-based activities, participants will be encouraged to engage in community activities like visiting museums, musical events, history exhibits, gallery viewings, artesian demonstrations and other cultural opportunities.

We look forward to providing you with updates as this program takes hold and becomes more fully developed.





**Cooperative for  
Human Services Inc.**  
A passion for what's possible

## Please Contribute

\_\_\_\_ YES, I/we want to help the Cooperative for Human Services Inc. 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](http://www.cooperativeforhs.org))

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

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