

Organizational Change Initiative

by Jace Smrcka, Associate Director

“What do you do for a living?” is a question we have asked and been asked many times when meeting someone new. It often is the first topic of conversation.

How do you answer that question? Most people will answer by talking about their employer and the kind of work they do. It is common for people to refer to their job title, name of employer, the type of work they do. For many of us, our jobs define not only the way we earn a living, but they often also define who we are as people. The individuals Mosaic serves are no different.

Therefore, for Mosaic to fulfill our stated goal of Opening Doors to Extraordinary Lives, we must open doors to extraordinary employment opportunities for the individuals we support. Whether a Mosaic individual works in one of our day service facilities or is interested in working competitively in the community, it is essential that Mosaic is able to create and implement plans that incorporate choices for meaningful jobs, activities and earning potential.

Toward this goal, Mosaic in Omaha applied for and received an Organizational Change Consultation and Training initiative grant through the University of Missouri–Columbia. We obtained the award based on the capacity of the proposed project to improve effectiveness of *(continued on pg. 3)*

Rotary Club Opening Doors For Mosaic

Christmas 2007 was a special day for Bob Hembertt, a Mosaic client, and his sister, Connie Emery. In the past, Bob was unable to visit his sister’s home, even for holidays because the steps to her front door made the house inaccessible to his wheelchair. That changed this year, and Bob was able to spend Christmas Day with his sister at her home.

Thanks to a donation from the Downtown Rotary Club, Mosaic in Omaha was able to purchase two sets of portable wheelchair ramps. The gift from the Downtown Rotary Club truly opened a door for at least one Mosaic client this Christmas and promises to open many doors in the future for others. Bob’s staff was able to take him to his sister’s on Christmas Day, and using the portable ramps, get him into her home for their Christmas Day celebration. Now Bob and his sister have many visits to look forward to because of this generous gift from the Rotary Club.



“Now he’ll be able to visit me anytime he wants to,” Connie said.

It was a very Merry Christmas for Bob and Connie in 2007.

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Join Mosaic in observing National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in the following ways:

- Learn more about mental retardation and developmental disabilities. The Internet sites www.mosaicinfo.org and www.aamr.org are great resources.
- Get involved with an organization that supports individuals with disabilities, such as Mosaic, by sharing financial donations and/or volunteering your time.
- For the young children in you life, read to them “*A Very Special Critter*” by Gina and Mercer Mayer, “*What’s Wrong with Timmy?*” by Maria Shriver, or “*Let’s Talk About It: Extraordinary Friends*” by Fred Rogers. Donate copies of these books to a local children’s library.
- Perform your daily activities from a wheelchair for a portion of the day to gain a greater appreciation for people’s struggles with limited mobility.
- Become informed of political issues at the local, state, or national level and contact an elected official to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities. Visit the Web site www.mosaicinfo.org/advocacy to research issues.

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I'm apart.

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I'm a part.

inclusion

The Mosaic Voice

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Mission

In partnership with people who have disabilities, Mosaic provides supports and advocates that all may realize God's gift of wholeness of life.

Relationships

Mosaic is an affiliated social ministry organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a recognized service organization of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and a member of Lutheran Services in America.

Non-discrimination

Mosaic will not discriminate in matters of employment or service delivery on the basis of race, creed, age, color, sex, religion, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, marital status or veteran status.

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Legislative News

On Friday, Jan. 11, 2008, the Nebraska Association of Service Providers (NASP), held its annual legislative breakfast. This was an opportunity for:

1. Constituents to build relationships with their state senators; and
2. Constituents to build understanding with their state senators of the issues that impact developmental disability services in Nebraska.

During the NASP 2008 Legislative Breakfast, the following Issues Statement was disseminated:

"The Nebraska Association of Service Providers will in the 2008 session of the Nebraska Legislature seek a substantial supplemental appropriation sufficient to fully fund the state "Methodology" model which has for over a decade guided reimbursement rates to providers of community based services for persons with developmental disabilities.

The keystone input in calculating the model is the starting salary for front line employees at the Beatrice State Development Center (BSDC) whose job responsibilities mirror those of persons employed in similar positions in community based programs. With the wage settlement reached earlier in 2007 by the state and its employees' union, that starting salary at BSDC for a Tech II position now approaches \$11.00 per hour. Surveyed in December, the average starting salary for the employees of NASP member agencies performing essentially the same set of tasks is presently \$8.08 per hour.

If Nebraska is to continue to utilize its network of contracting local agencies to provide community based developmental disability services in Nebraska, wage rates to front line employees of those agencies ... the individuals who actually provide the services to clients ... must be made more competitive with those of other employees. Our member agencies face essentially the same problems which have been cited in the media as pertaining to BSDC: recruiting and retaining the caliber and numbers of staff necessary to provide services to clients of the kind that clients and their families have a right to expect."

If you would like additional information, please contact Mona McGee Ph.D., Senior Policy Analyst and Governmental Affairs Director for Mosaic at 877.366.7242 x1126.

KUDOS TO:

all of the direct support staff who picked up numerous overtime shifts during the holidays. Their hard work and dedication provided Mosaic clients with an extraordinary holiday season!

the **Fort Street Direct Support Managers: Elizabeth Bennett, Julie Jindra and Karen Pappé**. They have been covering two open management caseloads since early September. Awesome!

Kory Louderback, for being thoughtful of others and giving Gordon Weiler a new winter coat for Christmas! Kory, 14-year-old son of Omaha program employee Lisa Louderback, wanted to give a gift to someone from Mosaic who had little or no family and needed something for Christmas. Kory has been involved with the Omaha program since he was 6 years old.



Do You Want To Be Remembered As Extraordinary?

Make great things happen for individuals supported by Mosaic by leaving a legacy for Mosaic. Your estate gift will fund Mosaic's mission to support and advocate for people with disabilities for generations to come. Estate gifts help fill the gap between the cost of delivering costly quality services and the amount provided by governmental funding sources.

The following gifts will help Mosaic open doors for people with disabilities: a bequest in your will; life insurance gift; charitable remainder trust; charitable gift annuity; IRAs and retirement plan assets.

You are encouraged to contact us if you have already included Mosaic in your estate plan. For more information or if you would like to be part of the Mosaic Legacy Society, please contact Julie Corbett at 402.896.9988 x123 or e-mail julie.corbett@mosaicinfo.org.

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employment services and outcomes for people served. Our goal is to develop human and financial resources to support individuals with disabilities as they choose and pursue inclusion in our communities through their employment.

Darla Wilkerson, an assistant Professor of Professional Practice at the University of Missouri–Columbia, will provide the initial training to Mosaic administration, management, and direct support associates. The initial trainees will form a Guidance Team that will train other Mosaic employees and facilitate the implementation of changes. Additional supports to agency employees include peer mentoring, resource materials, and access to other related training provided by the University of Missouri–Columbia.

It is our goal that this Organizational Change initiative will enhance Mosaic employees' (already extraordinary) efforts in opening doors to employment and meaningful activity options for the people Mosaic serves. In conjunction with this initiative, Mosaic in Omaha will benefit from more than 80 hours of training and consultation in such areas as organizational change, continuous quality improvement, strategic planning, financial and resource development, team building, building a customer-responsive culture, management methods and tools, career and life planning, and community-based employment.

This year-long commitment will require the support, dedication, and leadership at all levels of Mosaic stakeholders who hold our goal of Opening Doors to Extraordinary Lives, close to their hearts.

Ongoing communication will come through this newsletter, mailings, phone calls, parent and guardian meetings, and Individual Program Plans. If you have questions, ideas, or contact information of people that could enhance this initiative, please contact Jace Smrcka at 402.896.9988 x112 or jace.smrcka@mosaicinfo.org.

This initiative will raise our employee's confidence levels and their ability to find positive employment services and outcomes for all people served by Mosaic. As a result of the Organizational Change Initiative, every Mosaic employee will be able to answer proudly and accurately, "I open doors to extraordinary lives," when asked the question: "What do you do for a living?"

Omaha Agency Wish List

Vacuum cleaners ■ Elastic waist pants/sweat pants (S, M, L, XL, and 2X) ■ Crumb Catchers (scarf or apron; <http://crumbcatcher.tripod.com/>) ■ Cotton bath towels (30" x 54"; any color) ■ Cotton washcloths (13" x 13"; any color) ■ Terry cloth kitchen towels (any color) ■ Cotton dish cloths (any color) ■ Silverware (full set; spoons and forks) ■ Non-stick pots and pans (full sets; large skillets; large pots) ■ Non-breakable dinnerware (full sets; dinner plates; soup/cereal bowls; small plates) ■ Gift cards (HyVee; Baker's; Target; Wal-Mart; Scheel's; Cabela's; Footlocker; JC Penney; Sears; Catherines (women's clothing); Best Buy; Kohl's; any grocery store)

A Big Thank You for the Spirit of Christmas in Omaha!

■ To the Downtown Rotary Club for donating the money for two portable ramps. (see story on page 1)

■ To the Mosaic Parent Organization and the leadership of Phil and Cheryl Gray.

The Parent Organization hosted the Mosaic clients' fall dance in October and the staff and client pizza parties at all three vocational workshops on December 21. The group wanted to express their appreciation to Mosaic staff for their hard work and dedication by giving a pizza party. We want to express our sincere appreciation to the Mosaic Parent Organization for all they do for Mosaic clients!

■ To the Mosaic Special Events Committee for organizing the 2007 Christmas/Holiday Party (that was held in January because of an ice storm)

■ To Wal-Mart in Papillion for donating two artificial, pre-lit, fully decorated, 12-foot Christmas trees for the Mosaic Grandview group homes.

■ To Don and Linda Spilkner and Spilker's Pineridge Tree farm of Lincoln for donating and delivering four fresh-cut Christmas trees for the Omaha agency office and workshops. The trees were gorgeous!



Don Spilkner and Omaha agency Executive Director, Mark Stromer

From the Executive Director's Desk

As I look back on the year since I came aboard in February, it occurs to me that much has been accomplished. Some major projects (seen and unseen) have been completed in the midst of agency consolidation and change. People have worked very hard and remain committed to our desire to be the best. New directions have been identified and planning is being done to move the agency forward.

It has been my pleasure to meet many new people and develop relationships. I look forward to the next year. Our goals will be to continue to improve on what we already do, and to continue to look for new ways to serve and be leaders in our field. I encourage everyone to be involved in a way that matters to you.

Mark Stromer
Executive Director

Mark Your Calendar

- **Very Special Arts Life Story Celebration**
Saturday, Feb. 23
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Omaha Community Playhouse
- **Omaha Agency Open House**
Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
J Street – 10011 J Street
Thursday, March 27 – 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.
- **Parent/Guardian Meetings**
J Street West – 10011 J Street
Thursday, April 17 – 6:30 p.m.
- **Mosaic Spring Dance**
Morningstar Lutheran Church – 10011 J Street
Friday, April 25 – 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Thanks to the Mosaic Parent Organization!
- **Heartland Hoedown**
.....a fundraiser for Mosaic
Saturday, May 3, 2008
Town Hall at Carol Joy Holling Center in Ashland, Neb.
The best barn dance you'll ever go to!