

Executive Notes

Dear Friends of Arc Northland,

I hope you are doing well! I am sure you are welcoming the warmer weather, longer daylight and awaiting the colors of spring to emerge. We can definitely embrace the promise of this kind of change!

Change has been a common theme over this past year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. You may have heard this before; "Change is inevitable, growth is optional". The pandemic has certainly brought changes to all of us. At Arc Northland we have chosen the attitude of growth. For example, most team members have been working from home, meeting individual needs creatively by connecting with people virtually, increasing phone calls, sending texts and emails. It has not been easy by any means, but we made it work and everyone remained healthy.

I am happy to report that we are on our way to being fully vaccinated and are slowly migrating back to the office. It feels good to hear additional voices around the office. We are starting to meet people in person, safely, socially distanced and masked. Individuals are excited when this happens, as it has been a lonely year for many.

We have had some personnel change. In Housing Services, we had to say good-bye to Stacey Nordby who moved on to a new organization. Karel Hedstrom was promoted to Program Manager and we welcomed Seth Borovsky to the team. They continue to move Housing Services to the next generation of services. In the ARQC, we said good-bye to Susannah Gressman and are awaiting Rebecca Lambert, who will join the team on April 13th. Lastly, Sherie Lillie left her position in Adult and Family Services (AFS). Due to high needs, especially with school advocacy, we are hoping to add a full-time position in AFS soon.

In addition to a new website (please check it out), our service territory has grown. Arc Northland now serves, St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Carlton, Koochiching, Aitkin, Itasca, and Pine Counties. Arc Minnesota made the decision to end services on the Range, and since we have been supporting these counties and we are in closer proximity, it made sense to make it official. We look forward to making new connections soon.

The positive outcomes are we pulled together, kept strong, supported each other and followed the health guidelines to help keep us safe. It has not been easy, but the commitment of the team and the support of our Board made it possible. I want to thank everyone who played a role in getting us through the past year. It truly has made a difference in so many people's lives.

Here is to a happy and healthy spring and summer where soon we can be together in person.

Take care,

Laurie B. Berner, Executive Director



~ ~ ~

1951–2021

Arc Northland,

Here for you!

~ ~ ~

Board of Directors

Ann Roscoe, Chair

Sandy Moore, Chair-Elect

Heidi Zegan, Secretary

Becky Jakubek, Treasurer

Blaze Zenner, Member

Tracy Averill

Gina Gensing

Election for Officers and
new members 4.21.21

~ Latest Program Updates ~

Adult and Family Services

People First members held their annual elections in January and nominated their new officers. The positions that were voted on include President, Vice President, Secretary, Sergeant at Arms and Ambassador. People First Members worked on and presented their personal statements with the group, and the election took place. Meetings continue to be held virtually each month and some of the topics and activities include online Jeopardy, mindfulness & relaxation, and putting our brains to work with fun exercises.

The Disability Equality Training Series (DETS) first group of individuals began in March and is meeting over Zoom every Monday. Some of the topics include values, building assertiveness, learning more about the three styles of communication and practicing becoming more assertive by role-playing scenarios. Members who complete the DETS series will gain important life-long skills and will also be given certificates upon completion. There are two more DETS group courses scheduled that will take place throughout this Spring.

Healthy Sexuality and Relationships training has continued to flourish, despite the pandemic. We continue to have a waiting list. With our service territory expansion, the continued needs in Healthy Sexuality training growing, school advocacy needs, and possible program expansion to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for youth in high school, we will need to add a new team member. More about that in our next newsletter.

For more information contact Meredith at: 218-344-0810, or mkujala@arcnorthland.org.

PCA Choice

In Minnesota the Personal Care Assistance (PCA) program serves 44,000 Minnesotans. It has been one of the longest running, most cost-effective and diverse Medicaid programs in our state, helping older adults and people with disabilities live and work as independently as possible in their communities and avoid more costly services or congregate care settings.

However, the lack of support to fully fund the PCA Choice program continues to be a critical concern. Laurie Berner, Arc Northland's Executive Director testified on April 6th to the House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee, where our local Congresswoman, Jennifer Schultz, is the Chair. Laurie shared with the Committee, "As a PCA Choice agency, Arc Northland is still struggling from the inadequate rate for the Collective Bargaining Agreement from two years ago, when the wage went up by \$1.25 but our reimbursement rate only increased by 40 cents. A similar situation occurred in 2017. We fully support higher wages and benefits for the hard-working PCA's, we just need to ensure that the reimbursement rate adequately funds the increased wages, PTO, and holidays. If once again the proposed rate does not support the provisions, we will be forced to have a difficult conversation with our Board of Directors about the feasibility of continuing the PCA Choice Service. This would be devastating to the 200+ people and their families who depend on Arc Northland to provide this service."

If you would like to make sure that PCA services in our state remain intact, please reach out to your local Representatives and Senators to share your story and show your support for an adequate rate reimbursement for Arc Northland and all the other PCA providers in our state. For more information, please feel free to call Jenny Kempfert, PCA Choice Program Director at 218-726-4724 or email jkempfert@arcnorthland.org.

Arc Northland Intern News

"My name is Brianna Williams and I am from Deer River Minnesota. I am a senior in the Bachelor of Social Work program at the University of Minnesota Duluth and will be pursuing my Masters in Clinical Social Work this fall. As an Intern at Arc Northland, I work in Adult and Family Services and focus on the People's First group and DETS. My time here at Arc Northland has been extraordinary, and I am eager to connect with more individuals throughout the next few months!"

Arc Northland Team:

PCA Choice:

Jenny Kempfert

Jenny Feehan

Naomi Gordon

Adult and Family

Services

Meredith Kujala

Brenda Caya

Tracy Jenny

Housing:

Karel Hedstrom

Seth Borovsky

Regional Quality Council

Lori Moench

Rebecca (Becky) Lambert

Finance

Rick Sailstad

Executive Director

Laurie Berner

Arrowhead Regional Quality Council

In January, Governor Walz shared his proposed budget for the next biennium. As a cost-savings measure, the Governor proposed the appropriation for the State Quality Council be eliminated, which included funding for the Regional Quality Councils (RQCs). While this proposed cut is concerning to the RQCs, it is not final. In response to this proposal, RQC staff statewide have engaged in legislative outreach and grassroots advocacy efforts by connecting with Legislators, the Governor's office, and the Department of Human Services (DHS). You can find the RQC 1-Pager resource used in our outreach efforts on our website: <https://qualitycouncilmn.org/wp-content/uploads/RQC-Resource-Final-2.2021.pdf>

On behalf of the RQC's, we'd like to thank those of who have advocated for this work by writing letters and meeting with Legislators. We sincerely appreciate your help with these efforts!

The Arrowhead RQC has continued with quality improvement initiatives related to promoting person-centered strategies, sharing information and resources on guardianship alternatives, and building community inclusion. Over the last several months, our workgroups have met to review data, strategize action steps, and begin drafting recommendations to be made to the Department of Human Services.

This month, we look forward to welcoming our new Program Coordinator, Becky Lambert!

If you would like to learn more about the work of the Arrowhead RQC, please contact Lori Moench @ lmoench@arcnorthland.org or (218) 491-4128.

Housing Services

Our housing department experienced a few changes during the past month with Karel Hedstrom moving into the position of Housing Services Manager and hiring Seth Borovsky as our new Housing Coordinator. While new to Arc Northland, Seth has a wealth of experience in case management and housing in the Duluth area, and we are very excited to welcome him to our team. We are continuing to grow and develop our housing programs in order to best serve a wide range of needs. We were able to provide the following services in 2020:

- 1167 people served through housing outreach
- 53 people moved through Housing Access Coordination
- 8 people moved through Relocation Service Coordination
- 47 people moved through Housing Access Services
- 2 people moved through Housing Stabilization Services
- \$17,695 in funds disbursed through Housing Access Services Grant

A Message From Our Out-Going Board Chair, Ann Roscoe

Over the last six years on Arc Northland's Board of Directors, I have seen the Board and staff respond to many challenges. Both have contributed to a stronger organization, serving more people with needed services. In the last couple of years, Arc Northland participated in strategic planning, providing a plan for future development. The staff have been implementing the plan, even with the serious impediment of the pandemic. They have been working from home, continuing to provide services. It has not been easy. I salute them for that! As I leave the Board, I am pleased to have been both Secretary and Chair. It has been an honor to work with the Board members and the Arc Northland staff.

Thank you Ann Roscoe for your years of Board service and Bob Kanuit for your service as well. For information on board membership, contact Laurie at lberner@arcnorthland.org.

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Support the Work of Arc Northland

We hope you enjoy the news and updates about Arc Northland's programs and services and the many important services offered.

Support us through a financial donation or by becoming a supporting member.

All proceeds support Arc Northland's local services.

We Thank You for your support!

Newsletters are available on our new website. If you no longer want to receive this newsletter via the mail, contact us at info@arcnorthland.org or call: 218-726-4725.

Contact Us:

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