



More Defining Moments

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mainstay messenger

Providing life-long, high-quality support services to ensure that people with developmental disabilities lead fulfilling lives and realize their vision of a desirable future.

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Israel gives back

Article by: Christine Clement, Program Manager

Israel has lived at Idlewood Road for four years now. When he moved in, he immediately informed the staff that it was very important for him to practice his faith and participate in synagogue services on Saturday mornings. His staff happily complied and continues to assist Israel in attending the weekly services. Not long after, Israel began to take a more active role in his synagogue and now regularly attends social functions.

Israel has always had an interest in Jewish food and spends time researching cook books for new recipes to try. He enjoys cooking and, with staff's assistance, regularly prepares Jewish meals. Israel says, "The food is not only delicious, but it brings back wonderful memories for me."

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Ellen joins the staff of Mainstay

Article by: Marilyn Brinkman, Program Manager

Ellen was born in 1964 with Mosaic of Trisomy 18, a rare condition in which some of the body's cells have an extra copy of chromosome 18. This causes mental retardation, as well as varying degrees of physical problems. When she was born, doctors believed that Ellen did not have much of a chance of reaching adulthood. Ellen is now 44 years old.

Ellen came from a large family. She has one sister and seven brothers and they, along with her parents, were very supportive of Ellen as she was growing up. Her parents encouraged Ellen to become as independent as possible and to be involved in her community. Ellen attended church with her family and was sometimes a reader during the services.

Ellen and her parents often attended

the national medical conferences on Trisomy 18 for families and professionals. They frequently spoke about how the condition not always limited one's potential or lifespan.

While still living at home with her family, Ellen completed a training program at CCAC for food service. She then held jobs at La Roche College and later at Kane Hospital in the food service departments. Ellen also attended a six-week child care training program at Mercy Hospital and then worked at Castle Shannon Learning Center for four years.

When Ellen's siblings moved out of their parent's home, she decided that it was time for her to leave too. Shortly thereafter, she moved into an apartment

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Message from the CEO, James R. Kirk

By the time you read this letter, my hope is that Congress will have passed the Stimulus Bill, and federal dollars are flowing into states. Our services are largely dependent on state and federal funding through the Medicaid program. Medicaid currently provides health insurance and other benefits to an average of 58 million low-income Americans. Its enrollees are mostly children, the elderly and the disabled.

At least 46 states are facing budget shortfalls, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Because most states must by law balance their budgets each year, a number of them, including Pennsylvania, have no choice except to cut their Medicaid programs. For many states this represents the largest or second-largest budget item. With states facing reduced tax revenues, both the House and Senate stimulus bills propose giving them \$87 billion for Medicaid, most to be spent over the next two years. Pennsylvania's share would total \$3.8 billion.

In addition to helping states manage their budget situations and avoid deeper Medicaid cuts, we know from a whole series of research that Medicaid is an important economic engine in state economies. Medicaid funding filters through state economies to help support not only health care services, but jobs in both the health care sector and other sectors of the economy. With this massive infusion of federal dollars into the Medicaid program, funding decreases will be avoided and services to our most vulnerable citizens preserved.



Jim Kirk, Chief Executive Officer

Safety first

Article by: Dave Cochran, Associate Director of Program Operations

Mainstay Life Services' Workplace Safety Committee was developed in 1994 by a six member work group. The goal of this committee was to protect the safety of our employees and prevent accidents. Our method was to review agency safety practices with regard to: property safety and maintenance, vehicle and driver safety, assurance of worker safety, and training possibilities in all areas of safety.

Over the years, the members have changed, but the goals of the committee have remained the same. The Safety Committee continues to meet monthly to conduct safety inspections and make recommendations for improvements, review accident reports and determine ways to prevent accidents, and to develop training opportunities for staff. Mainstay Life Services is committed to providing a safe, healthy environment for all employees and residents.



Safety Committee members pictured above, standing left to right: Chuck Ptacek, Jeanne Griffith, Donna Francis, Ned Ochester, Bruce Bertrand. Monica Nickles. Seated left to right: Gina Koty and Sherry Brown. Other members not pictured: Dave Cochran (Chair), Heather Lewis, Teresa Brunner, Grace Urda

Giving back

Continued from page 1...

Recently, Israel received a monthly magazine from his synagogue and was struck by an article that was asking for people to do a Mitzvah. After reading the article, Israel came to me and said he would like to help with the Mitzvah. He explained that Mitzvah is a “good deed” and that the article was asking for a donation of groceries. Israel liked the idea of assisting people who could not afford groceries or who were unable to leave their homes to grocery shop. He was so happy to be able to help those less fortunate that he spent the remainder of the evening making a list of items that he planned to purchase for the Mitzvah.

Israel’s wish to participate in the Mitzvah did not surprise me. He is a very generous and kind-hearted man who frequently thinks of others. I thought Israel’s story about the Mitzvah was a good example of how self-determination and self-esteem go hand in hand. Israel has such a great sense of pride in being able to contribute something back to a community that has embraced him and nurtured him through the years.

Through reciprocity, Israel is not only helping someone



Israel

else who is in need, but is increasing his own self-worth. It is such an honor and privilege to be part of the spiritual and emotional growth that occurs in our individuals when they are given the support and encouragement to develop social roles within the community and to determine their own destiny.

Lindsay and Melanie have gone to the dogs!

Article by: Jennifer Dayton, Program Manager

Lindsay and Melanie have been volunteering their time at Animal Friends since the shelter opened its new site in the North Hills a few years ago. It is a happy coincidence that the women not only share a house in Mt. Lebanon, but a love for animals as well. They initially began their volunteering experience at the Western Pennsylvania Humane Society and were excited to try their hand at Animal Friends.

Prior to becoming official volunteers, the women participated in a three-day intensive orientation training program held at the shelter. The first part of their orientation included general information about volunteering. Following that, the women were asked to decide which type of animal they wanted to work with first. Both Lindsay and Melanie share a particular affinity for dogs and decided to spend their time walking dogs. During the remainder of orientation, Lindsay and Melanie learned to collar and leash the dogs, walk them, and give them treats. The women enjoy going to Animal friends each Saturday afternoon, and they both look forward to expanding their volunteer activities at Animal Friends to include working with both cats and rabbits.



Lindsay and Melanie

Living Mainstay's values

Article by: Alexandra Calabrese, Director of Human Resources

"It was supposed to be for three years. I took this job at Mainstay to bridge my career, not for it to be my career," says Debbie Fulmore. Now, 15 years later, Debbie is working at the same site. She remembers her son, Maceo, as a toddler when she was hired in 1994. Now a senior in high school, her son is looking at a career in human services. "The guys I work with at Mainstay are a part of our family," says Debbie. "Maceo, now a young man, has developed a compassionate side because of growing



Debbie Fulmore

Ellen

Continued from page 1...

run by Northern Southwest. In 1997, she moved to one of Mainstay Life Services' semi-independent apartments located in Castle Shannon.

Ellen lives a very active life. She participates in many activities such as basketball, soccer, softball, track and field, swimming and ice skating through Special Olympics. In addition, she enjoys singing with the PACC Chorus and going on a variety of day and overnight trips. Ellen loves watching sports on television, "but it's even better in person," she says.

Ellen likes to cook and, since her diagnosis of diabetes several years ago, has learned to prepare new and healthful meals. Ellen is developing an understanding of her disease through attending a diabetes support group hosted by Mainstay Life Services. Through staff support and Ellen's hard work to stay on her diet, she is losing weight and feeling healthier.

Ellen has always enjoyed working and is currently employed at Mainstay Life Services where she performs a variety of clerical tasks including shredding paper, putting together gift baskets for special occasions, helping with mass mailings, and

up around these individuals. It was great to have the men there when my husband and I renewed our wedding vows. The day wouldn't have been so special without them." Debbie has been an integral part of so many happy memories, including vacations to Myrtle Beach and Fort Lauderdale. And sadly, Debbie has mourned the loss of four individuals. "Together we got through it and we frequently reminisce about the good times we had with them," says Debbie.

Throughout her employment, Debbie has given so much to Mainstay. With her supervisor, Cindy Weigl, Debbie developed a recreational program that ran for approximately five years. She continues to manage a summer bowling program that over 40 individuals enjoy. "An achieving moment," Debbie recalls, "was when Jerry's Parkinson's became stable in 1997. He was so fragile and so weak for so long." As Debbie and the other staff worked with Jerry, he was able to get up on his own and regain some of his independence.

During our two hour conversation, Debbie recalled so many fond memories. She referred to each and every achievement as "we," not "I". The staff at the Bower Hill at Ruth home where Debbie works prides themselves on always making team decisions; they include all staff and, most importantly, they involve the men who live there. Now that Debbie is an assistant supervisor, she oversees two additional homes located on Elm and Oxford. Because of this, her family has started to grow even more.

coworkers," says Ellen.

Ellen is very happy living with her roommate and their cat, Max. When asked why she likes living in her apartment she says, "This is my home. I have a lot of friends here. Staff helps me when I need it and everybody helps each other."



Ellen

Making sure it all adds up

Article by: Robert Rak, Director of Finance

2008 was a year of change in the fiscal department at Mainstay Life Services. During the past year, the department has been focused on meeting the challenges of the transition of the State of Pennsylvania's Mental Retardation program from a program-funded basis to a fee-for-service basis beginning in July 2009.

And these challenges have been many.

At the core of Mainstay's challenges was being able to capture and account for all of the costs and revenues associated with our program. In order to establish fee-for-service rates for the 250 individuals we serve at 51 locations, we needed to be able to account for every penny and make sure we billed for each minute of service provided.

To meet that need, we began the year by implementing the Great Plains Dynamics accounting system. The Great Plains implementation has allowed us to create a flexible reporting environment to meet the ever-changing current and future reporting requirements brought on by the fee-for-service environment. During the past year, the accounting staff processed 12,269 check requests and invoices covering 803 different vendors that produced 6,637 checks without missing a beat.

Also during 2008, the accounting staff transitioned the billing of our services from the County's ECAPS system to the State's PROMISE Medicare billing system. During this transition, Mainstay consistently had a billing accuracy in excess of 99% - far better than the State's 70% average. Recently, based on our exemplarily track record, Mainstay was asked to participate in a State-wide peer training session where we could share our experience and success with other providers who were struggling with the transition.

Legendary coach Vince Lombardi said, "Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the individual commitment put forth by my team that made 2008 not just a challenging year, but a successful year. So thank you Ruth Opferman (Resident Account and Billing Specialist), Shirley McIntosh (Accounting Supervisor) and Dee Hamilton (Accounts Payable and Payroll Specialist) and congratulations on a great year. I know that in the end I can count on you to make sure things always add up.



Above from left to right: Ruth Opferman, Shirley McIntosh and Dee Hamilton

Promoting healthy lifestyles

Article by: Kim Vlcek, Program Coordinator

Mainstay Life Services is proud to support a Wellness Committee whose goal it is to promote a healthy lifestyle for all individuals and staff through the provision of education and resources.

Mainstay's Wellness Committee had a very busy year. We started 2008 with a Spring Wellness Fair which helped us to kick off Highmark's Lifestyles Return Program. Many employees benefited from this program through the development of a Wellness Profile and online resources.

Continuing this year was the committee's very well-attended monthly Diabetes Support Group. The meetings are open to both individuals and staff and are led by Joann Megan, a Health Care Quality Unit Nurse. The monthly sessions are both interactive and educational.

In October, we had a successful Fall Wellness Fair. We teamed up with nurses from St. Clair Hospital who administered flu shots to our employees. Scott Medical Health Center, P.C and Health America representatives provided chair massages. Health America employees also set up a trail mix station and were on hand to answer staff health care questions and to provide information on a variety of health care topics including stress management and smoking cessation. Joann Megan and Dee Kinkopf from the Health Care Quality Unit held exercise classes and provided information on proper nutrition and dental care. Dr. Ian Wagner and his associate conducted postural analysis for interested employees. Best of all, Wellness Committee members Mel and Lindsay provided Wii fitness demonstrations.

Thank You Mainstay Life Services Contributors!

Mainstay Life Services thanks all of its contributors for their generous support. Listed below are those who contributed between June 16 and December 31, 2008. If your name has been misprinted or omitted, please contact Alyssa O'Toole at 412-344-3640 ext. 313.

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Board news

Mainstay Life Services is pleased to welcome **Sean Smiles** to its board of directors. Sean received a Bachelor's Degree from Thiel College and is currently the Director of Information Technology at Dollar Energy Fund, Inc.

Sean joined the Board this past fall and is looking forward to volunteering his professional experience. Mainstay topped Sean's list "because of the people who manage the organization, as well as the people who benefit from the services provided," Sean recently explained. "While I feel that I can give Mainstay the benefit of my experience, I believe that I will gain a great deal more in return."

Seeking board volunteers

Mainstay Life Services actively recruits board members on an ongoing basis. Individuals who are interested in being considered for board membership should contact Jim Kirk, CEO, by phone: 412.344.3640, or send a resume to:

Mainstay Life Services
 200 Roessler Road
 Pittsburgh, PA 15220
 email: jkirk@mainstaylifeservices.org

Mainstay Life Services is currently looking for interested family members of persons with developmental disabilities to participate on the board. The organization is also seeking board members with expertise in the areas of finance, social services, marketing, information technology, or property management.

Contributors, continued from page 6...

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2008 Charity Golf Outing... a hole-in-one for Mainstay

Mainstay Life Services held its 2nd Annual Charlie Ross Memorial Charity Invitational Golf Outing on August 22, 2008 at Quicksilver Golf Club. The weather cooperated once again with sunshine, temperatures in the 80's, and an occasional cool breeze.

After the putting contest, practice on the driving range and a cookout lunch, 100 golfers headed out for a shotgun start. After golf, everyone made their way back to the clubhouse for cocktails, silent auction bidding and dinner.

This year's outing raised over \$50,000 for those receiving support from Mainstay Life Services - our most successful golf outing to date! We sincerely thank the Ross family for being part of this year's event. We are also grateful to the event sponsors, golfers, volunteers and prize donors for contributing to the success of the outing.

Mark your calendars for the 2009 golf outing scheduled for August 14 at Quicksilver Golf Club!

Thank You Golf Outing Sponsors and Volunteers

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