

WINTER 2021

A NEW YEAR... A NEW PLAN!



"We look forward to resuming services in 2021 with an exciting plan for the future!"

Brian Benshoof, CEO
MRCI



MRCI moves into a new year, by moving away from facility-based disability services. The concept has been discussed for several years, but COVID-19 nudged us from concept to reality. The change impacts about 1,400 program participants.

In March, when the pandemic forced MRCI to suspend programming, MRCI leadership got to work innovating.

MRCI made the decision to move its employment and life enrichment supports entirely to the communities where it operates. It was originally a five-year plan but the COVID shutdown pushed up the timeline. MRCI has closed buildings in Chaska, Shakopee, Rosemount, Fairmont and New Ulm, and consolidated two buildings into one for its Mankato headquarters.

MRCI CEO Brian Benshoof used to tell people that changes like these are like rebuilding an airplane while it's flying. **"With COVID, we kind of got the plane on the ground, in the hangar and rebuilt it. It's a lot easier to do it that way."**

The move to community-based programming takes a lot of partnerships and community support. Employers that utilized MRCI in the past were asked to hire the individuals directly. Responses were positive.

We are proud to be an employment-first organization; however, for individuals who are unable to work a full day our new



day service program is very exciting.

To assist with the new day service program, staff took the time to reach out to families and case managers to communicate the wide menu of services for each participant.

MRCI will transition its bus fleet to minivan transport. The smaller vehicles are cheaper to operate and will be safe for clients. Volunteers will also be key to our new day service programming. If you have a talent you want to share for an hour or more, call us!

MRCI was one of the first providers in the industry to implement the exclusive community-based day service model. So innovative, Benshoof was invited to speak to two national industry organizations about the model.

For more information on this new model of programming, to get involved, please call 507-386-5600.



www.MyMRCI.org
800.829.7110



Embracing Aging Through Social Engagement (EASE)

EASE is a program for people with disabilities who are typically 55 years of age or older, seeking meaningful experiences to fill their day as an alternative to work. With a focus on community involvement through outings and volunteering, we have something for everyone! Our experienced staff provide guidance and support while creating an enjoyable, individualized plan for participants to enhance community access and improve their social skills.

David Anderson and LaRae Grundmeyer enjoy playing games with their friends at MRCI in New Ulm.

Margret Kelly, who goes by Penny, says having a place to go each day helps give her life meaning.



David and LaRae



Margret

MRCI Celebrates Self-Direction Successes

Like a lot of people in 2020, Gina Rietveld was worried when her hours at work got cut back because of COVID. The worries were a little different for Gina though. She had something special she was saving up for: a bike for her son. Not just an ordinary bike, a bike that kept her son Kris steady, on a path toward living his life to the fullest.

"I'm saving up for another bike because that's his love he loves riding his bike," explained Gina. "We've always had a trike for him, but they keep breaking down. All summer we were thinking about how we were going to get him a new bike knowing it would be hard with my hours getting cut due to COVID-19."

Kris, 31, has some developmental disabilities. Riding his bike, or trike as this case may be, gave him joy in his day. A joy that almost slipped away.

"I was telling his case manager that we have two broken down bikes and the parts don't fit each other," continued Gina. "That's when she told me she could help. She helped me get it set up with MRCI to put it in Kris's budget from the state. I found a sturdy bike for him at the store, MRCI paid for it, and he is so happy!"

Parents and guardians like Gina, often aren't aware of programs and funding available to them. In Kris' case, that meant getting a new bike.

"At first, he was so tickled he couldn't even talk. He rode the bike to his grandmother's house about 100 yards away, and he walked in the house and said, '**grandma these are happy tears, not sad tears. I love my bike!**' He's easy to please, but this was pure joy." Gina says the bike has been good for the whole family, as he has been giving rides in the basket to his 6-year-old nephew. His brother helps him maintain it and shows Kris how the lights and other features work. "It's a blessing to have something that can make him so happy."

These are the stories that drive the mission of MRCI Client Directed Services, a division of MRCI that serves as the Financial Management Service (FMS) for families across the state, including the Rietveld family. FMS provides help with financial tasks, billing, and employer-related responsibilities for people who, like Kris and his family, self-direct their services through Consumer Directed Community Supports.

"We definitely appreciate the help that MRCI has given to us, and if Kris could give you a medal, he probably would," said Gina.

While not a medal, MRCI recently announced they have successfully completed a 2020 Readiness Review conducted by Applied Self-Direction. Applied Self Direction (ASD) is a national organization and the process included a rigorous review of MRCI's Policy and Procedure Manual, in-depth walk throughs of their operations and meetings with staff.

Kris

Kris enjoys taking his bike for a spin around the neighborhood. Thanks to MRCI, he is able to have a bit of independence!

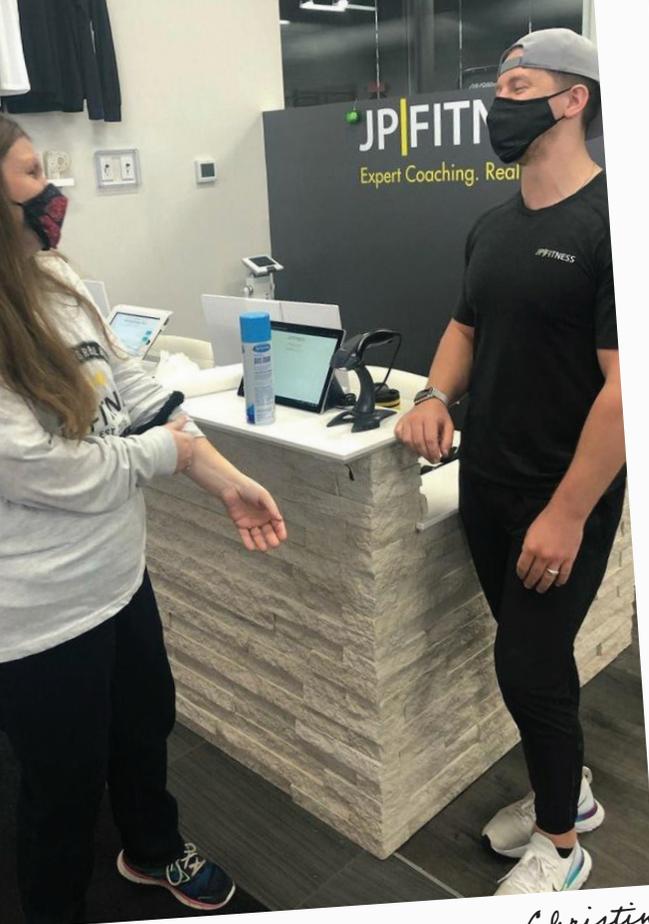


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Christina

A Workforce Solution

More than 51 million people in the U.S., or nearly 1 in 5, self-identify as a person with a disability. Integrating individuals into the workforce not only increases diversity in the workplace, but also fills needed jobs.

Christina Davis enjoys her job at JP Fitness in Mankato. She says she loves interacting with the people there while she works. Jon Jamieson, owner of JP Fitness, says he appreciates Christina's work at keeping his facility clean and safe for all who go there.



MRCI provides innovative and genuine opportunities for people with disabilities or disadvantages at home, at work and in the community.

The Connector is a publication of MRCI. To learn more about MRCI, please visit:

MyMRCI.org

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