

SPRING **2021**

NEW COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS RECEIVE HONORS



On May 25th, 2021, MRCI was presented with the Life Enrichment Award from MOHR for their innovative new programming.

Taking the concept of community integration for people with disabilities to an entirely new level, MRCI began a community-based day service program in early 2021. The new program, which aims for true inclusion, received a Life Enrichment Award from the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR).

The new community program was a positive transformation from programming that occurred inside building walls to out in our communities with use of a minivan. With the vans, four clients and one staff member embrace community experiences each week as they volunteer, learn new skills, and meet new people.

MRCI is continuing to grow the programming across the southern metro and southern Minnesota – taking referrals for staffing and clients to produce smiling faces to join the team.

"True community inclusion is a feeling of belonging and fellowship with others," said Brian Benshoof, CEO. It should be a place to explore, learn and connect with others, just as it is for people without disabilities."

The program works through meaningful experiences to teach people the skills they need to be more independent and to learn about areas they have an interest in. Personal goals and growth are at the center. A daily schedule might include a stop to view and discuss unique cars, lunch at a local organization, volunteering with an animal shelter and some exercise at a community center.

The lack of social engagement resulting from the pandemic hit people with disabilities particularly hard. "Disability programs across our great state excel at making these kinds of connections with people," said MOHR President Julie Johnson. "We have learned that without us, many people suffer the negative effects of isolation."

Another aspect of the effort is the ability to meet new people and grow relationships. This helps each person to grow their own "natural supports," or helper networks made up of friends, neighbors, colleagues and family.

MOHR President Julie Johnson presented the Life Enrichment Award to MRCI on May 25 at the Chaska Community Center.

www.MyMRCI.org
800.829.7110



To provide innovative and genuine opportunities for individuals with disabilities or disadvantages at home, at work and in the community.



Meet Mark

Mark Anderson is a volunteer for MRCI and meets with individuals virtually to discuss events with them.

VIRTUAL SMILES ALL AROUND

As director of unified sports and competition for Special Olympics Minnesota, Mark Anderson is pretty busy. Not too busy, though, to take about 30 minutes each Monday in March to volunteer virtually with MRCI.

"I was able to meet with the individuals in MRCI's Sports R Us virtual group to present on all the things Special Olympics Minnesota has to offer. We covered not only the sports and competitions but discussed the other Special Olympics programs that many people don't know about such as our health and wellness activities, leadership opportunities, virtual classes, USA Games, World Games and fundraising activities like the Polar Plunge."

Mark emphasizes that while getting his message across was one goal, he gained so much more and found he had a very captive audience.

"It was so much fun. I would present for 10-15 minutes and show a few videos and then had an opportunity to take questions from everyone. The questions and the interaction with the individuals was the best part! The questions they asked were thoughtful, engaging and fun.

It was a great way to connect with such a fun and exciting group. I would highly recommend it," he says.

To learn more about volunteering with MRCI, visit mymrci.org.

TAKING CARE OF YOU!

Work demands, deadlines, and other stressors can, over time, have an impact on our mental well-being which, in turn, can have a negative effect on our overall well-being. Incorporating these simple tips into your daily routine can reduce mental fatigue and the many other issues it can lead to.

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY SLEEP SCHEDULE.

~Inconsistent or insufficient sleep can contribute to declining mental resilience. Your brain needs to be recharged-just like your phone! Speaking of your phone, minimize screen time before bed. A lighted screen has an alerting effect on your brain and can make sleep more difficult.

TAKE A BREAK.

~Don't work through your break times. Use that time to stretch, go for a short walk, read something you enjoy or listen to relaxing music.

GET MOVING!

~Research indicates that physical activity can actually improve mental well-being. Find something you enjoy and set aside time every day to do it. There are so many options to choose from. You can download physical activity apps for your phone, stream on your computer or streaming service or just go for a nice walk. If you're not accustomed to physical exercise, it's ok to start small-even 15 minutes a day can be beneficial.

NOTED!

~Take notes when you are learning new work tasks. This will help solidify and organize the information you are being given and will give you a valuable resource to reference later.

ESTABLISH ROUTINES.

~From the time you get up to the time you go to bed, you have opportunity to establish routines. A consistent morning routine can help you feel less rushed and less stressed by the time you leave for work. Routines at work can help you complete your work tasks in a more organized and efficient manner. A nighttime routine can help

you wind down from the day and makes a good night's sleep more likely.

MAINTAIN A BALANCED DIET.

~If you pack a lunch/snacks for work, do so when you are not hungry and craving unhealthy foods. Pack lots of healthy snacks so you are not tempted to get something less healthy from the vending machine or corner store.

ESTABLISH A WORK/LIFE BALANCE.

~You can be more effective at work if you balance it with enjoyable activities outside of work. Two effective ways to do this is to interact socially and interact with the environment around you. Call a friend, plant some flowers or take the family on a picnic.

TAKE TIME TO LAUGH.

~Laughter is a natural stress reducer. Laughter actually releases those "feel-good" endorphins. Listen to a comedian you enjoy, sing along to a silly song, or just do a Goggle search for "Things to make you laugh". If you really want to get the giggles going, watch a compilation of Family Feud moments.

LIMIT MEDIA EXPOSURE.

~Social and news media can often be very emotion-inciting. Too much exposure to these can actually be emotionally draining. Schedule media time for small increments each day to reduce over-stimulation.

MUSIC SOOTHES.

~If it is allowed at your work, listen to calming music you enjoy. The sound can not only be calming, it can actually help improve your focus by partially blocking out disruptive sounds.

FINALLY, GO EASY ON YOURSELF.

~Setbacks happen to everyone. If you make a mistake, take the time to think about what you've now learned and how you will avoid it in the future. Take responsibility for the mistake, but then forgive yourself and move on.

A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Longevity in the workplace is an accomplishment in itself, and the dedication of Lynell Vanasperen to her role with Sodexo, the company that provides food and service in the dining hall at Minnesota State University, Mankato, is a shining example of just how it is supposed to work. She has been with the company for 25 years.

"Lynell does so much for us," explains Jena Coveyow, her supervisor. "She does her usual jobs such as working in the dish room. But Lynell also ensures stations are being filled with utensils, plates and bowls. If someone calls out, Lynell will come and ask right away if she is needed in other stations to help out. Lynell does other tasks that are not asked of her before we even have ask her to do them."

It's a recipe for success, equal parts Sodexo and MRCI, the final result being a perfect fit for Lynell and the employer.

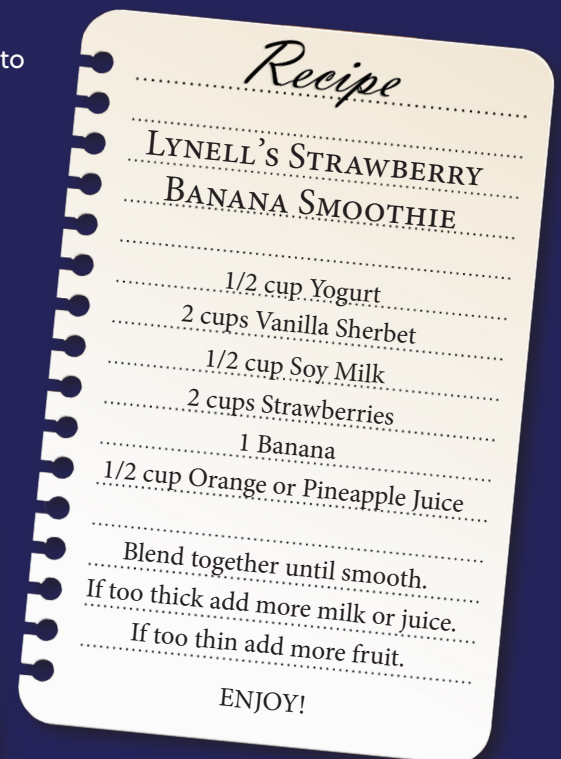
"We really enjoy partnering with MRCI as they are some of the hardest working employees that really show drive and dependability," says Jena. "It's an honor to be able to incorporate these valued, trusted community members as part of our team. They are examples of what we look for in quality employees: they demonstrate persistence and unwavering positive attitude. The just don't quit. Even on our toughest days they are always a consistent reminder on I why I love my job."

Lynell goes above and beyond in what she does daily. With a smile on her face, she is always looking for more tasks she can do.

"She is always helping others and very dependable when we need her to start early or stay late she doesn't think twice about it," says Jena. "We are very proud to have her on our team."

Meet Lynell

Lynell is always helping others and is very dependable at a job she loves working at Minnesota State University in the dining hall.



**APPLY TODAY to
begin your journey!
www.mymrci.org**

**A new career
starts here!**



WHOSE LINE IS IT MANKATO

AN IMPROV EVENT BENEFITING



SEPTEMBER 10, 2021

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excitement and spontaneous laughter?

Sponsorship packages are currently
available on our website mymrci.org.



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