

More than Mission: Hosanna's Doors Wide Open

Since 1972 Hosanna has been serving the great community of Mankato with dedication and care. Over the years, they have become more than just a place of worship; they have evolved into an incredible recreational space for MRCI Day Service Participants.

Hosanna has graciously opened their doors, allowing us to use their kitchen space for cooking activities, their gymnasium for physical exercise and sports, and their table space for crafts, games, and social gatherings.

These facilities have provided a wonderful environment for participants to learn & grow. The warmth and hospitality of Hosanna staff have made a significant impact on our participants, creating a sense of belonging and community. MRCI is honored to present Hosanna with our Community Impact Award as a token of our gratitude. This award recognizes their unwavering commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive community, where everyone is valued and encouraged to thrive. We are deeply thankful for their partnership!



www.mymrci.org
It's what you
can do that
matters

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Rising to the Challenge: MRCI's Visionary Shift Refines Services and Success

For over 70 years, MRCI has been a pillar of support and empowerment for individuals with disabilities. This long-standing legacy is rooted in a commitment to being person-centered, ensuring that each service provided is tailored to meet the unique needs and goals of our clients. Five years ago, MRCI transitioned to competitive community-based employment. This strategic initiative, initially part of a broader plan, was accelerated due to the unforeseen challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Change is never easy, but MRCI has risen to the challenge with remarkable resilience and dedication. Our key leaders have worked tirelessly, demonstrating vision and persistence to ensure that MRCI stands strong today. Without their countless hours of hard work and unwavering commitment, I am not confident that the MRCI we love would exist. Their efforts have truly shaped the organization into the beacon of support and empowerment it is today" said Mark Dehen, Board President.

MRCI's transition from subminimum wage (center based) work and (community-based) work crews to competitive employment opportunities reflects our commitment to empowering individuals with disabilities to achieve their full potential in the workforce. We have embraced a model that prioritizes competitive, integrated employment, where participants earn competitive wages and work alongside their peers in diverse, inclusive settings.

The success of this transition is largely due to the strong partnerships we have built with over 500 employment partners. These partners have been instrumental in providing meaningful job opportunities and supporting our mission to create a more inclusive workforce. Their collaboration and commitment have enabled our participants to thrive in various industries, from retail and hospitality to healthcare and technology.

"Our partnership with MRCI began over 30 years ago and remains strong to this day—especially in the wake of COVID-19. Before the pandemic, our team was primarily composed of an MRCI-supported crew. When COVID hit, that work was temporarily paused. In response, we made the decision to hire those individuals directly—one of the best decisions we've ever made," said Brian Hodapp, GC Distributing Company.

As MRCI continues to build on its successes, the organization remains committed to all parts of its mission: at home, at work and in the community. The lessons learned and the innovations developed during the past five years will undoubtedly shape the future, ensuring that MRCI continues to make a positive impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities.

In conclusion, MRCI's transition to competitive community-based employment and day services has been a resounding success, by serving annually more than 1200 individuals thanks to its initial strategic vision, innovative programs, and dedicated staff. The organization's ability to adapt and thrive in the face of challenges has set a new standard for excellence in service delivery. **"The dedication and personalized support provided by their staff have made a profound impact on the lives of participants. My son has grown immensely in confidence and independence, thanks to the engaging experiences and unwavering support from MRCI. We are incredibly grateful for MRCI's creativity, communication, and their commitment to fostering personal growth and community integration,"** said Mary Jo Menden, Parent & Board Member.



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

www.MYMRCI.org
800.829.7110

From Rural Roots to Remarkable Resilience: Emily Finds her Place and Purpose

Emily wears many hats working at The Gardens at Winsted, a nursing home in Winsted, Minnesota.

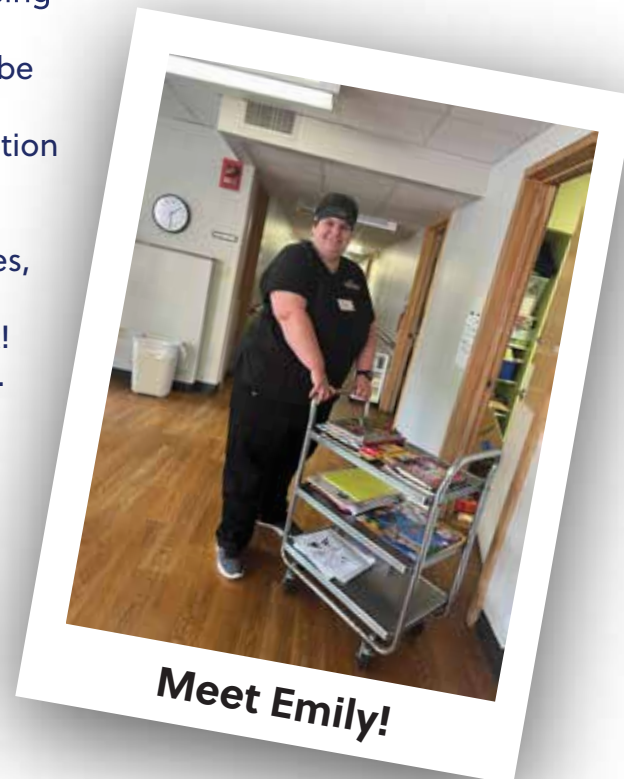
In her three and a half years as a Therapeutic Aide & Dietary Aide, her job duties have included running bingo games, engaging with residents, one-on-one activities, group activities, and serving meals and drinks. She wears those hats so well that she's been employee of the month not once, but twice!

"Emily is always a hard worker and goes above and beyond. She puts the residents' needs above all else and we are lucky to have her here at the Gardens!" - Amber Wiederholt, Therapeutic Recreation Director, Gardens at Winsted

Emily has been working with MRCI since 2016, utilizing both Job Coaching services and Long Term Supports. After losing her job due to the covid pandemic, she was able to find another relatively quickly. Although, it didn't turn out to be a long-term match. She went back to the drawing board with her MRCI Employment Specialist to find another option that better suited her interests.

Emily lives in a rural area with rather limited opportunities, which was a hurdle in her search. But she advocated for herself, put in the work, and was able to find a perfect fit! That perfect fit turned out to be The Gardens at Winsted. The role has challenged her in ways that have helped her grow both at work and outside of work.

"Emily has developed great relationships with residents and staff. She has greatly improved on her work skills increasing her flexibility, accepting constructive feedback, and improved social skills." - Neenah Heimer, Employment Coordinator, MRCI



Meet Emily!



Growing Together: Ney Nature Center & MRCI Volunteers Nurture Nature and Community

The Ney Nature Center, located in Henderson, MN, is dedicated to the preservation of a massive 446 acres of parkland in Le Sueur County. This beautiful expanse of land is not only a haven for wildlife but also a place where the community can connect with nature.

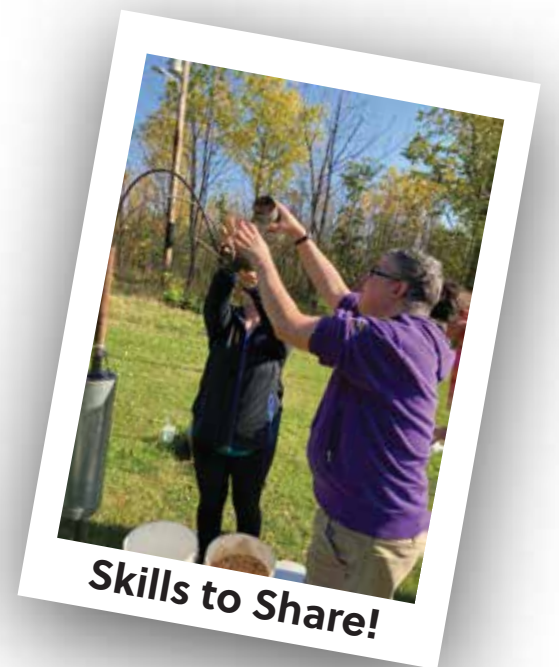
The center works tirelessly to restore and preserve buildings with historical significance, ensuring that the rich history of the area is not lost. They offer a variety of interactive programming, walking and biking trails, and more, making it a perfect destination for nature enthusiasts of all ages. Their mission is to 'manage and protect the Ney Wildlife Preserve through education and interaction with the natural world'.

MRCI Community Based Day Service groups are proud to volunteer their time to help fulfill that mission. For the last four years, day service groups have spent time at the Ney Nature Center filling bird feeders, watering indoor plants and outdoor gardens, feeding the animals, and helping however they can. Their dedication and hard work have made a significant impact on the center.

MRCI participant David Ducharme, who is very handy, was able to fix three bird feeders that had fallen and broken during a windstorm, showcasing his skills and commitment. Another MRCI participant, Cory Sutton, has really enjoyed learning about how maple syrup is formed and collected for consumption. The group unanimously agreed that fresh maple syrup is better than store-bought, making this a unique and memorable experience for everyone involved.

"Volunteering at Ney is so important to my group because they look forward to seeing our friends there (the staff and critters). They love being helpful and are always ready for whatever the Nature Center has us doing that day! The amount of gratitude they feel for being able to have this opportunity is the most important thing about us volunteering at Ney Nature Center," said Jessica Swanson, MRCI Day Service Specialist.

Back in 2023, an MRCI Day Service group received the distinct honor of being named "Volunteers of the Year" at the Nature Center's Fall Fling Fundraiser. This recognition was a testament to their hard work and dedication. MRCI is grateful to build relationships with community partners like the Ney Nature Center, who add so much value to the area. These partnerships not only enhance the center's ability to fulfill its mission but also enrich the lives of those who volunteer, creating a strong sense of community and shared purpose.



Skills to Share!