

# Community Links

October 2019



“To provide quality services in a cost-effective manner through innovation, leadership, and the cooperation of dedicated people.”

## Kids - Connect

Join us for an informal gathering to connect and network together for families of those with younger children. Focused on children 12 and under but anyone is welcome! Parents can connect while kids are supervised in guided activities.

Please bring a couple of toys your kiddo is willing to share & any (peanut-free) snacks your kids may need.

**Saturday, October 12**  
**11:00 a.m.-Noon**

*Valley Friendship Club-Hub*  
*Stillwater, MN*

Cost: \$3.00

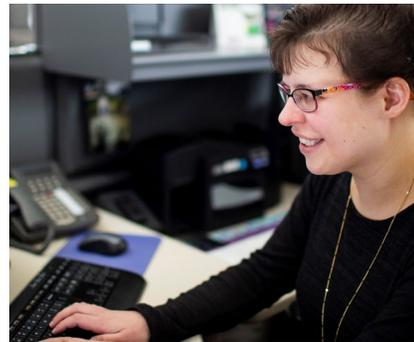
[www.valleyfriendshipclub.org](http://www.valleyfriendshipclub.org)

RSVP so we have enough child care & craft/game supplies.

**Washington**  
  
**County**  
**COMMUNITY**  
**SERVICES**

## Celebrating the Next Step: Alyssa Becomes an Employee at Renewal by Andersen

Alyssa Peterson joined the Renewal by Andersen team as a Lifeworks Associate



more than seven years ago. Over time, she has developed skills, refined processes, and built strong friendships with her co-workers. As an Administrative Assistant in the Human Resources Department, Alyssa ensures that the office runs smoothly. She has been instrumental in onboarding new employees, managing communication boards, and ordering office supplies, just to name a few – all while being mindful of sensitive, confidential personal and company data.

Chuck Elliott, Alyssa’s job coach, notes: “Alyssa is a great team member; she gets along



with everyone. If people have questions they come to her and if Alyssa has questions she goes to them. She directs her own job duties and makes sure that her team gets what they need to get done.” Alyssa’s diligence, flexibility, and growth led Renewal to recently hire her as an employee, making her eligible for benefits, paid time off, pay increases, and profit sharing. Renewal held a celebration to commemorate the occasion. Alyssa explained what this accomplishment has meant to her: “I was really proud to be hired. Everybody that I know came in and congratulated me. It’s just been a really nice experience.” Laurie Maul, Executive Administrative Assistant, provides insight into the partnership between Lifeworks and Renewal: “We are a growing manufacturing company because we put people first. Our partnership with Lifeworks is just so seamless. It’s always worked really well. There is no reason why a company would not want to do this.”

Julie, Alyssa’s mother, shared how this experience has impacted her daughter: “Alyssa has grown and matured so much. She is independent, is very responsible, and has a superb work ethic. She handles everything that she has to do with her job on her own.”

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## AuSM Pumpkin Trolley

AuSM invites you to experience the thrill of riding a trolley, spend some time with Minnesota Autism community friends, and pick a perfect pumpkin during this fun October event for individuals and families affected by Autism. View the [event flyer online](#).

Join us for a fun ride along the rails, including a stop where you will be able to select a pumpkin to take home. The first trolley charter will leave the station at 10:30 a.m. and the final charter will roll back to the station at 11:30 a.m.

**Saturday, October 12**  
**10:30-11:30 a.m.**

*Minnesota Streetcar Museum*  
*Minneapolis, MN*

Cost: \$15.00/family - AuSM members  
\$20.00/family - Non-members  
\$5.00/person with ASD

Space is limited, so please [register](#) early.

## Valley Friendship Club Annual Halloween Party!

Halloween time is near,  
A VFC Party can't be beat!  
Halloween time is near,  
mark your calendar, 6:30 we will meet!  
Location, Oak-Land Middle School,  
October 25th the date!  
With DJ, pizza, & treats for all of you,  
the party will be great!  
Costume prizes can be won,  
Come say BOO and join the fun!

**Friday, October 25**  
**6:30-8:30 p.m.**

*Oak-Land Middle School*  
*Lake Elmo*

Cost: \$5.00/person or \$10.00/family

*Please RSVP.*

[www.valleyfriendshipclub.org/  
events/vfc-annual-halloween-party-2/](http://www.valleyfriendshipclub.org/events/vfc-annual-halloween-party-2/)

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Lifeworks strives to connect the people we serve with meaningful careers and after being hired on by a company, should they benefit from additional support, we are still available to help. To learn more about Lifeworks, contact at: [www.lifeworks.org](http://www.lifeworks.org) or 651-454-2732.

\*Written and originally published by Lifeworks Services, Inc.

## Samantha's Story

Samantha Berns is a Washington County resident who recently had the opportunity to give a speech before the FDA (food and drug administration). Samantha did an outstanding job describing her diagnosis and how the drug she is receiving is impacting her life in a positive way.

Samantha Berns is diagnosed with Niemann Pick Disease Type C (or referred to as NPC). This diagnosis is a rare progressive genetic disorder characterized by the bodies inability to transport cholesterol and other fatty substances inside of cells. This leads to abnormal accumulation of these substances within various tissues of the body, including brain tissue. The accumulation of these substances damages the affected areas.

Samantha currently receives a spinal injection of cyclodextrin that essentially prevents her brain cells from deteriorating. Samantha has received 129 injections thus far; she has to travel to Chicago to receive each injection. Samantha's care is being overseen by Dr. Elizabeth Kravis and she is able to receive the injections through a "compassionate use" policy (the cyclodextrin injections are not currently FDA approved). Samantha and her family discovered Dr. Kravis at a rare disease conference at Notre Dame University and has since had five years of stability (she has had no brain cell deterioration since).

Samantha works three days per week at an adoption clinic. Outside of getting her treatments and working, Samantha enjoys Starbucks coffee, Marvel movies, and going for bike rides. We hope for continued success for Samantha and appreciate her efforts to educate other professionals about her diagnosis and treatments.

## October is Disability Awareness Month

A little history: It was declared in 1988 by the U.S. Congress for this month to raise awareness of the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. One way this month is celebrated is paying tribute to men and women with disabilities and their accomplishments that have been inspirational. Just to name a few if you want to learn more:

- Alexander Bell: a scientist and engineer
- Thomas Edison: an inventor
- Albert Einstein: a physicist
- Haben Girma: a disability rights lawyer
- Claudia Gordon: a U.S. attorney
- Stephen Hawking: a professor of mathematics
- Jess Thom: a comedian and public speaker
- Stephen Wiltshire: an architectural artist

The current employment rate gap for those with disabilities and those without disabilities is large. They represent a high number of qualified workers but remain the highest group of individuals unemployed. This month brings awareness to the importance of being inclusive to all abilities and continuing to open the door to all. It's essential to understand

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## Valley Friendship Club Book Club!

The VFC Book Club offers a community-based book club for members. Book Club members have a wide variety of reading levels (including some who cannot read). Join us, we will be starting a new book, so perfect time! We will meet weekly for one hour to read aloud and discuss a book which will be provided by the Lake Elmo Library.

**Tuesdays • 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

Lake Elmo Library  
Lake Elmo, MN

This event is FREE but you must RSVP as space is limited.

## Ninja Warrior Class!

Join the Ninja Warrior Class on Tuesdays and Thursdays! This is a level one class. You will learn a few ninja moves to challenge yourself and develop agility, strength, coordination, technique, listening skills, and teamwork!

**Tuesdays & Thursdays  
4:30-5:00 p.m.**

Valley Friendship Club-Hub  
Stillwater, MN

Cost: \$3.00

## The Weekend Pack Program

The Weekend Pack Program and SoWashCo CARES are working with schools in district 833 and Good in the 'Hood to provide FREE meals and snacks for children over the weekends and school breaks.

If you would like to donate to the program or volunteer to help pack meals, or if your child could benefit from this program, visit <https://goodinthehood.org/our-programs/feeding-the-future/weekend-pack>.

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the significance of a diverse workforce that includes those of individuals with disabilities because that allows us to achieve higher success and gain different perspectives.

*"There is no greater disability in society than the inability to see a person as more."*

– R. Hensel

## New Wearable Assistive Technology Devices from PACER's Simon Technology Center

PACER's Simon Technology Center has Assistive Technology (AT) devices available through the Lending Library. AT devices help individuals with disabilities to have more independence in their day-to-day life. Two of the newest devices available through the lending library are the KEEN Habit Aware and the Revibe.

The KEEN Habit Aware is for people who exhibit negative repetitive or compulsive behaviors. The device senses these behavioral patterns and gives a vibration to alert the individual so that they may recognize the behavior and work on breaking the habit. It also helps to track the patterns of when the individual is engaging in these behaviors, which may be used to try to identify possible triggers.

The ReVibe helps people to stay focused throughout the day. Geared toward students, this device gives vibrations and on-screen text reminders to get back on task. It also can sense when the student has been focused and provide positive reinforcement by telling them, "Good job!" Additionally, the ReVibe can remind students of their daily schedule and what they should be doing.

## Study on Guided Imagery and Music in Treatment of Depression

A team of music therapy researchers are seeking adults with depression to participate in a study on Guided Imagery and Music in the treatment of depression. This is a specialized music therapy approach in which specially selected classical music is used to support internal imagery, which the client and therapist work together to use in the client's healing process.

If you decide to participate, you will be provided with a series of Guided Imagery and Music sessions at no cost. You will also be asked to complete a series of questionnaires five times over the course of the study.

To be eligible for this study, you need to be at least 18 years old and have depression, rather than another illness such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or schizoaffective disorder. There is no cost to participate. All participants will be provided with Guided Imagery and Music sessions at no cost. However, additional compensation is not provided. For more information, call 302-285-9989 or email [honigtj@appstate.edu](mailto:honigtj@appstate.edu). For more information see [NAMI website](#).

## FutureLife Options

FutureLife is a program to help families plan for when they will no longer be there to support their loved one with a disability. They create a comprehensive plan, uniquely designed for the individual. The plan will act as a guide for anyone who will support the person in the future. The program offers the initial creation of the plan, as well as yearly updates. It can be paid for using waiver funds for those individuals on a waiver.

For consultation, call the Arc Minnesota at 952-920-0855.

## Through Jimmy's Eyes - #CaughtCaring

Through Jimmy's Eyes and TJE Fashion know all about the love, tears, laughter, and sacrifice that goes into being a caregiver. Nominate someone who has been #caughtcaring to be featured on our social media.

We are partnering with the University of Minnesota Masonic Children's Hospital to give away one headband to a caregiver for every headband sold. We'll be featuring winners on our Through Jimmy's Eyes and TJE Fashion social media pages.

[www.throughjimmyseyes.com/caughtcaring](http://www.throughjimmyseyes.com/caughtcaring)

## Ruby's Pop-Up Pantries

Ruby's Pop-Up Pantries are located in multiple places around the cities and have no restrictions on who can participate.

\$20 for a food share.

*You must register.* Registration requires no documentation.

If you would like to participate, or want more information, see <https://rubyspantry.org> to find the pantry nearest to you.

## How to receive additional issues of Community Links:

To subscribe or unsubscribe to the Community Links newsletter, go to [www.co.washington.mn.us](http://www.co.washington.mn.us), click on the "Notify Me" tab, enter your email address, and click on the envelope next to Community Links Newsletter.

## Contact for Article Submissions:

Denise Steans  
[denise.steans@co.washington.mn.us](mailto:denise.steans@co.washington.mn.us)  
651-430-4168

## Merrill Arts Center

Merrill Arts Center does six shows per year that you can attend at a discounted rate! For more information check out [www.merrillartscenter.org](http://www.merrillartscenter.org). **Each show offers a Thursday preview performance for special needs audience members.** The shows are performed in two spaces, one is a 100 seat auditorium, which does include some accessible seats however accessible seating in this theatre is limited. The other theatre has 900 seats and has a large number of accessible seats. *Accessible seats can be reserved.*

Upcoming shows:

- *Madeline's Christmas preview: Thursday, December 5 • 7:00 p.m.*
- *Young Frankenstein (PG-13): Thursday, February 6 • 7:00 p.m.*
- *Cyrano de Bergerac: Thursday, April 16 • 7:00 p.m.*
- *Matilda: Thursday, July 9 • 7:00 p.m.*

*East Ridge High School, Woodbury*

Cost: \$5.00 per person / FREE for PCAs and caregivers

Merrill Arts Center has a small grant to help them subsidize rates for preview nights so they can offer lower pricing. Regular non-preview shows are also reasonably priced with discounts for children, seniors, and the under 30 crowd. If you buy 12 tickets for the same night, the box office takes 20% off the price. *The previews are cash or check only.* To reserve seats, send an email to Barbe Marshall Hansen ([barbe@merrillartscenter.org](mailto:barbe@merrillartscenter.org)) at the Merrill Arts Center, the email should include how many people will need wheelchair seating, which preview you would like, and the number of staff attending.

## Mad Hatter Wellness

Provides resources and classes to enhance the lives of children and adults with and without disabilities through yoga and wellness by supporting their social, emotional, and physical awareness. They offer classes for parents, support staff, and individuals with or without disabilities.

For more information call 651-216-2195 or visit the website:

<https://madhatterwellness.com>.

## Resource Networks

- **Community Bridge:** A consortium of five community education programs and school districts organized to provide activities for teenagers and adults with disabilities. Call 651-748-7445.
- **Connect WC:** A network for adults and children with developmental disabilities. Go to [www.connectwc.org](http://www.connectwc.org).
- **Disability Linkage Line:** Free resource informing how income affects benefits and answers questions about government benefits. Call 1-866-333-2466 or go to [www.db101.org](http://www.db101.org).
- **First Call for Help:** Free and confidential information and resources in the metro area. Call 211 or go to [www.211.org](http://www.211.org).

## Special Olympics Teams

Organized year-round sporting events and activities for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD):

- **Blazing Stars (Woodbury area):** [www.sites.google.com/site/woodburyblazingstars](http://www.sites.google.com/site/woodburyblazingstars)
- **Lumberjacks (Stillwater area):** [st.croixvalleylumberjacks@yahoo.com](mailto:st.croixvalleylumberjacks@yahoo.com)