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## Welcome

*Best Life* was created by Washington County Community Services staff to promote the use of equitable, person-centered best practices as we support people to live their best lives. We will spotlight success stories, share artwork and talents, provide education about language and goals, and offer resources. It is meant to be uplifting and supportive, and available for all people, families, providers, and staff.

The theme of this issue: **School, work, and meaningful activities.**

## Spotlight:

### *Maylon at Bethel University's BUILD Program*



Maylon with her Bethel student identification card.

Maylon is 19 years old and graduated from high school in June 2022. Maylon was unsure what she wanted to do once she graduated high school but knew she wanted to “move out and go to college.” She explored options such as transition school, taking a college course, or getting a job. After talking with a friend, Maylon decided to apply to the Bethel BUILD program. Maylon said “this was the best decision I have ever made!”

**What do you enjoy about campus life?** I enjoy the activities and making new friends. It has been so fun to meet new people and go to events. I am achieving my independence. I like setting my own schedule and doing my laundry when I want. Like today, I just decided to clean my room, on my own time. I am happy that I do not have to rely so much on my parents to help me.

**What activities are you involved in on campus?** Everything! I attend all sporting events such as basketball, hockey, and football. I participate in choir and have an internship with Special Olympics. I recently started assisting with “Welcome Week” to encourage other people to attend Bethel BUILD. I talk about my experience and share my story. I am going to do an internship as an Ambassador for Respect, which means I am going to teach 4th graders about respect.

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**Who are supports in your life?**



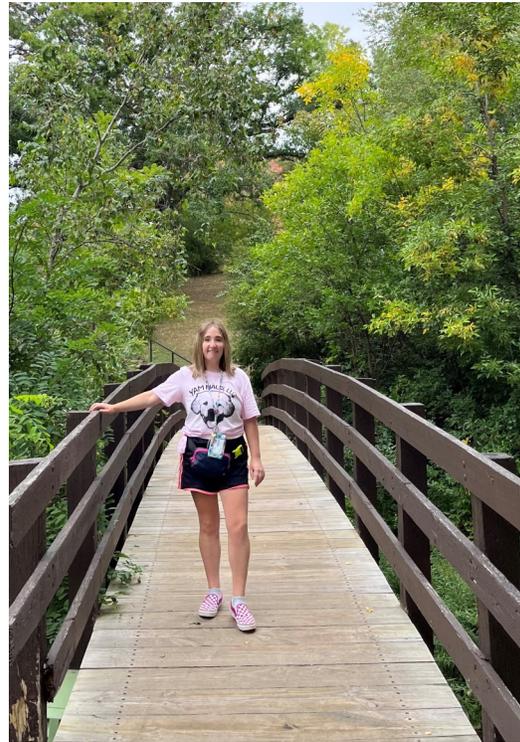
My mom, dad, and grandpa. My campus mentors also support me. They are always available to answer questions I have but also encourage me to try things on my own, first.

**What are your hopes and dreams for your future?**

I want to live independently in an

apartment with my current roommate. I want to get a job so I can pay rent and support myself. I love taking photos and want to be a photographer. I would also like to get a job working at a nursing home.

**Any words of advice for others who are exploring options for their future?**



Whatever you want to do, just go for it. It is hard at the beginning but it is worth it. It might be hard at first, but it is your journey and you can do it! If you decide to go to college, you should jump into activities and get yourself out there. It is fun to have those experiences and meet new friends and people.

Maylon on a walk.

Submitted by: Caitlin McNamara, Supervisor

**Employment Success Story:**

*Jenny*

Jennifer Borgstadt is a customer service expert and the first face customers see when entering Cabela's in Woodbury, MN. She greets each guest with a smile and a friendly "hello" four days each week. Her skills and work ethic were recently recognized when she received a special star party earlier this year; given to associates who receive



outstanding online customer reviews.

Jenny began working with Rise, an employment support provider, in 2020. She joined the Cabela's team in 2021. She has also successfully signed up customers for the Cabela's Club, a store credit card, enrolling 46 people in 2021.

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Cabela's staff say she is a team player who is always willing to volunteer her time helping in other areas of the store when needed.

Congratulations to Jenny!

Jenny's Case Manager: Katie Figuero, Social Worker

Written by: Winna Bernard, Senior Social Worker

## My Supports (Resources)

### *Work Matters! How Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) benefits youth and young adults ages 14-21*

When a student indicates they want a job, it's a magical thing for many reasons: independence, purpose, economic self-sufficiency, and participation in the community. However, it can often be overwhelming knowing where to start especially for families supporting the student to prepare. With Minnesota being an employment first state and sub-minimum wage coming to an end in 2024, it is imperative to connect young students who may be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) with resources as soon as possible. More experiences and opportunities to explore and prepare for competitive, integrated employment at a younger age could provide valuable tools for them now and in the future.

Students and families often don't realize, services are available as young as 14 years old or ninth grade. Work and supports may look different for everyone, but connecting with VRS could help pave a pathway. The goal of Pre-ETS is to help students with disabilities explore, increase awareness, and prepare for post-secondary employment and education options through five core services:

#### *Vocational Rehabilitation Services:*

People looking for support with finding a rewarding career need to look no further than their nearest Vocational Rehab Services office. With over 30 locations state wide, job counselors are available to help you explore your interests and decide on the job that is the best fit for you.

Your job counselor will meet with you throughout your journey to provide guidance on all the important steps necessary to be successful with employment. What you can expect is to begin by creating a road map on how to look for a job, plan for what needs to be done to get the job, and determine your goals for the job.

- Job Exploration Counseling;
- Workplace Readiness Training;
- Work-based Learning Experiences;
- Counseling on Post-Secondary Education or Training; and
- Self-Advocacy.

The VRS program partners with high schools to arrange for or provide any of the above five services at no charge to students. Pre-ETS Services are available to students who are in grade nine through the age of 21 and who have one of the following:

- An Individualized Education Program (IEP);
- A 504 plan;
- A record or note from a mental health or medical provider that verifies an impairment; and/or
- A Social Security Administration (SSA) beneficiary award letter.

VRS has Pre-ETS Services available across the state. Find the Pre-ETS representative in your area by visiting the [Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's \(DEED\) Pre-ETS website](#).

Submitted by: Chantelle Heifort-Adams, Social Worker

Next, job counselors are there to help you get what you need such as training, workplace accommodations, or assistance with some costs that may arise during your journey. Once you get a job, there are opportunities for continued support through the extended employment program and community partners.

Please see the [Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development \(DEED\) website](#) for more information on eligibility and service center locations.

Submitted by: Rachel Carpenter, Supervisor



## Our Words Matter

To people supporting someone in living their best life: By following best practices with person-centered language, we show we are taking care with the words we use when talking *with* others, when talking *about* others, and/or when

*writing* about others. When supporting someone with employment or meaningful activity goals, it is important to use words that are respectful and that are personalized to them, their preferences, and what is important to them. Below are some examples:

Best Practices	vs. Historical Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the person’s name</li> <li>• “Person I support” or “Person I work with”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client</li> <li>• Consumer</li> <li>• Person Served</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Benefits from support with...”</li> <li>• “Needs support/help with...”</li> <li>• Start with identifying a strength before describing what it needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependent</li> <li>• Dependency</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not use this term</li> <li>• Be specific with needs</li> <li>• “Needs support with...”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low Functioning</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider individual situations for not working or not being able to work</li> <li>• Provide specific examples of the situation or reasons for not wanting to work</li> <li>• Some people have experienced receiving comments during the pandemic when using unemployment benefits due to the inability to work because of being immunocompromised and to stay safe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freeloader (in the context of using unemployment benefits)</li> <li>• Lazy</li> <li>• Unmotivated</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Does really well in _____ areas or with _____”</li> <li>• Use a specific diagnosis, if known</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Functioning</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Does not see how [mental health symptom] affects work/keeping a job”</li> <li>• “Needs support with achieving work/meaningful activity goal”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of insight</li> <li>• Lacks insight</li> <li>• Denial</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Declines support”</li> <li>• “Chooses not to...”</li> <li>• “Prefers to...”</li> <li>• Put the situation into context/be specific</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-compliant</li> <li>• Resistant</li> <li>• Refused</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our job is not to identify what is realistic or unrealistic, rather capture what is important to a person and what they want to do.</li> <li>• Be as specific as possible about the situation: “Wants _____ job, but the team is concerned about _____ and is partnering to best support them with their goal.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unrealistic</li> </ul>

For more guidance on person-centered best practices and the words we use, please see Washington County’s [Our Words Matter](#).

Coordinated by: Molly Henningsgard, Supervisor

## Showing with the Saints

Are you a local artist?

“The Show” announces another season of “Showing with the Saints” in Andy’s Gallery. “Showing with the Saints” is a free opportunity for local artists to show and sell their art during St. Paul Saints baseball games in front of 7,000 fans.

Inside the ballpark you will be provided a space in Andy’s Gallery which is located on the concourse behind home plate. This space includes a table with a table cloth, two chairs, and a grid wall. This space is accessible.

Your name will be displayed on the Mega Video and will be announced during the game. You and one other person (to assist) will be given free entrance to the game. Stay as long as you like.



Last year was the seventh season. “Showing with the Saints” supported 160 artists; 35% were artists with disabilities.

“The mission is to promote diversity and create environments where artists are welcome regardless of training and background.”

Sign up is easy: go to The Show’s website, pick a date, and sign up.

For more information, [email Winna Bernard](#) or visit [The Show’s Showing with the Saint Paul Saints website](#).

## ★ Goals, Outcomes, Dreams



Your goals are just that – YOURS. They are a very important part of supporting you to live your best life. For those supporting someone, it is important to understand the shift to using best practices with person-centered goals. The Minnesota Department of Human Services *Informed Choice and Transition Protocol* defines person-centered outcomes as: Achievement of what is most important to the person in ways that work for [them] and build on [their] strengths... supports help the person connect to opportunities in the community, as well as build relationships [they] care

about. It is not the job of a support person to decide if a goal is “realistic” or “appropriate.” Rather, the job of a support person is to capture the person’s goal – that *they* identified – because it is important to them, then help them get there.

For those providing support to someone, please see Washington County’s [Best Practices – Outcomes](#) for more guidance and below for examples of goals and action steps (note, people and goals are fictional):

Person-Centered Goal	
Best Practices	vs. Historical Language
Jannat wants to work at the Science Museum giving tours.	Jannat will go to the Science Museum, depending on staff availability, one time per month.

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Action Steps	
Jannat	Jannat will partner with natural and formal supports to work towards her goal of giving tours at the Science Museum.
Employment Supports	Staff will meet with Jannat three times per week to create a resume, complete applications, and practice interviewing. Staff will help foster a connection with the Science Museum to assist Jannat with her goal of providing tours.

Person-Centered Goal	
Best Practices	vs. Historical Language
<b>Francesco wants to go to college to become a teacher.</b>	Francesco will attend transitional programming until age 21 to learn independent living skills and explore opportunities to take classes at the community college.
Action Steps	
Francesco	Francesco will partner with natural and formal supports to work towards their goal of becoming a teacher. They will reach out to their local elementary school to explore opportunities to volunteer in the classroom.
Parents	Francesco’s parents will explore college programs in the area.
Case Manager	Francesco’s case manager will provide resources surrounding college programs and supplemental supports through available state-plan and waiver-funded services.

Person-Centered Goal	
Best Practices	vs. Historical Language
<b>Khalil wants to resign from his job to focus on his artwork.</b>	Khalil will work 12 hours per week to pay for his rent. Khalil will participate in activities with an artistic focus a minimum of two days per week.
Action Steps	
Khalil	Khalil will partner with natural and formal supports to develop a plan that will support his transition from his current job, keep his apartment, and focus on his artwork. He will submit his artwork to the local art show in May.
Case Manager	Khalil’s case manager will provide support and resources to Khalil to help him achieve his dream job of being an artist.
Individualized Home Supports	Khalil’s support staff will help him come up with a new budget and provide guidance surrounding resigning from his job. They will help set up transportation to and from the art gallery to display his artwork and attend art classes.

Coordinated by: Molly Henningsgard, Supervisor

## Provider Spotlight:

### *Rise*

#### **No one should feel limited by their life situation.**

Rise is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded on the belief that everyone deserves opportunities to achieve meaningful growth and live a purpose-filled life. Their programs in Minnesota and Wisconsin take a whole-person approach, pushing the boundaries of what's possible through supportive access to employment, housing, and life-enrichment services.

*Rise will never leave you hanging; they will be at your side when you need them.*

#### **People Served:**

- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities;
- People with mental illness;
- People with brain injuries;
- People who are deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing;
- People with criminal backgrounds;
- People experiencing homelessness; and
- People with barriers to employment.

#### **Guiding Principles:**

- We attract and retain the best people and partners.
- We expect excellence from ourselves and each other, every day.
- We ensure that everyone feels valued and respected at all times.
- We encourage and reward innovation and creative problem solving.

- We are tireless advocates and trusted supporters for the people we serve.
- We not only embrace change, we drive it as industry leaders.
- We never shy away from a challenge.
- We continually inspire personal growth, professional development, and greater self-sufficiency.
- We put the people we serve and our partners first, and always do what's right for them.

#### **Programs:**

- ARMHS (Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services);
- Center-Based Employment Services;
- Community Group Employment;
- Day Support Services;
- Housing Services;
- Individual Competitive Employment;
- Remote Services;
- Ticket to Work; and
- Vocational Evaluation Services.

We are collaborative, committed, and accountable in everything we do.

Washington County locations in Cottage Grove, Forest Lake, and Oakdale.

For more information, visit [Rise's website](#).

Jenny's Case Manager: Katie Figueroa, Social Worker

Written By: Winna Bernard, Senior Social Worker

## Person-Centered Best Practices Video Series

In 2019, Washington County partnered with STAR Services to create a series of 20 short videos that discuss Person-Centered Best Practices. These are available on the Washington County Person-Centered website as training tools for providers, staff, as well as the people and families we support.

Topics range from person-centered language and goals, the power of dreams, person-centered planning

experience, and working through challenging situations while being person-centered. Some videos feature Washington County staff!

Please check out our [video series on the Washington County Person-Centered Best Practices website](#).

## What's 'Working' in Washington County

Welcome to What's 'Working' in Washington County - All things employment!

This section provides updates, news, and success stories about employment for people with disabilities.

- **E1MN is Minnesota's** state agency partnership to advance Employment First outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities. The state agency partnership evolved from Minnesota's [Employment First policy](#) adopted by the Olmstead sub-cabinet in 2014.

Employment supports for people with disabilities span multiple state agencies, which can be complicated for all involved. E1MN coordinates and brings things together to help the system make more sense. Any reference to E1MN signifies shared efforts and agreements across DHS, DEED, and MDE.

For more information, visit [Disability Hub MN's - E1MN Partnership website](#).

- **Need funds to support your employment goals? Check out The ARC Minnesota's Microgrant.**

You may be eligible for a microgrant if you are an individual with a certified disability living in Minnesota. *The microgrants must be used to complement not replace other existing resources.*

Please know that the Minnesota Department of Human Services will be the first to review all applications to determine if the requested funding can be supported by other resources. If it cannot, the application will move forward in the review process. Applications will be accepted from individuals or from their staff, family, friends, or supporters. *Only one microgrant per year may be awarded to an individual.*

### **What is your employment or housing goal?**

Do you have a goal to get a job in the community? Would you like to live as independently as possible, maybe even in your own home or apartment?

- Could a job coach, training, or a uniform help you reach your employment goal?
- Would a rental deposit or home furnishings help you achieve your ideal housing situation?

When you apply, be sure to tell us how \$100-\$2,000 could help you reach your goals.

Proposals that are innovative, sustainable, and measurable are most successful.

*Microgrant money may not be used for monthly rent, utility bills, camps, or vacations.*

### **How do I apply?**

The application opened January 1, 2023 and the link has been posted to the [The ARC Minnesota web page](#). Call us at 952-920-0855 if you need help or a paper application sent to you.

### **How long does it take to hear about an application?**

The application review and grant award process may take up to 45 days. We will let applicants know if they request an item or service which is available through their waiver services.

A volunteer panel will review each application. They make recommendations to ask for more information, approve, or deny proposals. Applicants may apply more than once but applicants may only receive one microgrant per calendar year.

*Microgrant staff make all purchases and cannot reimburse for items already purchased.*

We look forward to your proposal. Please contact us with questions by [emailing us](#) or calling us at 952-920-0855. Good luck!

- **Youth looking for summer work experience? Check out Tree Trust.**

Want your summer job to make a difference? Improve your community and earn up to \$2,000 or more!

Youth, ages 14-21, are able to earn and learn through hands-on experience working on outdoor construction and landscape projects in local parks and green spaces!

Tree Trust is now accepting applications for summer 2023! For more information, visit [Tree Trust's Summer Youth Employment Program website](#).

*Winna Bernard, Senior Social Worker*

## Artist Spotlight:

*Linda Hood: Advocate, Athlete, and Artist*



Linda, her husband, and other advocates at the State Capital fighting for safer bathrooms.

You may have seen Linda in the news recently. Linda was Ms. Wheelchair Minnesota 2022 and has been fighting for more accessibility in public bathrooms. She wants adult changing tables in all of Minnesota's major buildings. Her first success was advocating for adult changing tables at U.S. Bank Stadium.



Linda with some of her paintings.

This is a major accomplishment for anyone, but Linda is not just anyone. She has more talents beyond advocacy. When the stadium manager, John Drum, gave Linda a tour of the newly renovated bathroom at U.S. Bank Stadium, she presented them with a piece of her original art to hang in the new space.

Yes, Linda is an artist. Linda has been doing art since elementary school, but really starting focusing on her craft in 2019 at the M Health Fairview's Achievement Center.

Linda, an oncology clinical research scientist, marathoner, and a woman who climbed Kilimanjaro, became paraplegic in 2018.



Linda with her art at U.S. Bank Stadium.

Doctors think undercooked chicken caused a rare autoimmune disease, Guillain-Barre.

Linda shared, "I always thought of myself as being a chemistry nerd," she laughs. "Since my illness, I find doing art allows me to share all my other talents."

Linda likes the use of color and exploring a variety of mediums such as fiber/sewing, painting, and doing ceramics.

Linda's inspiration as an artist comes from Michelangelo's *Sistine Chapel* ceiling during a visit to Italy. She had seen the famous *Madonna and Child* by Duccio di Buoninsegna, she had seen *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci, but she was not truly moved until she saw the *Sistine Chapel*.

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Linda has her art for sale and on display at Courage Kenny in Stillwater. [Email Linda](#) if you are interested in purchasing her artwork. Linda hopes to be selected to have her art on display at Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport this fall.

[View the CBS News-Minnesota online article, "A great update in Ms. Wheelchair Minnesota's fight for more adult changing tables in bathrooms."](#)

Linda's ceramic pieces.



Linda's ceramic vase.



Linda's ceramic flower.

Referral for this story was provided by Linda's case manager: Cassidy Parnell Velasco, Washington County Community Services Social Services' registered nurse.

Written by: Winna Bernard, Senior Social Worker.

## More Information

- [Minnesota Department of Human Services Person-Centered Practices Overview](#)
- [Washington County Person-Centered Culture and Practice](#)
- [What does person-centered mean for me? An introduction. \(DHS-6803\)](#)

## Contact Us

For questions or article and spotlight submissions, contact:

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