

Transitions News!

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THE NEW YEAR AT TRANSITIONS ST. JOHNS

Transitions St. Johns
by Michelle Sheren

The new year is in full swing at Transitions St. Johns and everyone is anticipating a year filled with fun, adventure, personal growth and change. At Transitions St. Johns the focus is on having fun and remembering that every experience is a new adventure and something new can be learned. Participating in the Clinton County community by serving as volunteers at sites in the area and exploring paid work opportunities is a priority.

New interests are emerging with consumers attending Transitions St. Johns as they become more comfortable with their community. Some areas in which folks have expressed interest are weight loss, greater independence in the kitchen, musical entertainment and the arts. The staff will actively search for ways to provide support to folks as they attempt to achieve their goals.

The Consumers at Transitions SJ have set goals which have inspired the staff. Some of the goals staff hope to achieve during this year include continued success for The Pet Pantry and increasing the options available to consumers in Clinton County. Of course, meeting the needs of the individuals being served while providing meaningful opportunities for them is first and foremost. There is tremendous excitement about the possibilities a new year brings!!

WANTED

Employers or businesses that can provide employment opportunities or production work for the Transitions North Workshop. The Work Services Team of Transitions wants to enlist the help of consumers, friends, and families of consumers in our efforts to find community employment and production work. Should you have any ideas, please contact:

**Steve Frese
323-9558**

FLEXIBILITY IS KEY

Transitions Central

by Beth LaFleche-Hall

When one door closes, another one opens. This was true for Alice, who stopped working at Burger King last year due to health reasons. Arthritis pain made working in a physical job impossible, so Alice needed a job which would allow her to sit while working. Although her paid employment ended, Alice continued volunteering at the American Cancer Society and March of Dimes, where she sits while collating forms, labeling envelopes and completing other paperwork tasks. However, Alice continued to express a desire for paid employment.

Craft shows at Community Mental Health provided the perfect opportunity for Alice. With the assistance of Transitions Central staff, Alice assembled "gifts in a jar," which consisted of various ready-to-make cookie and candy mixes. After creating her gift jars Alice "went on the road" with them to craft shows where she practiced sales techniques. The whole experience was delightful for her.

Alice was also presented with an opportunity to work at Central Snack Station one afternoon every week. Central Snack Station is a micro-enterprise operated by Transitions Central and sells snacks twice weekly at the Jolly Road CMH building. Alice sells snacks while remaining comfortably seated. She enjoys greeting customers and selling products. A major change in Alice's life has unexpectedly presented new opportunities for growth and experience.

frese@ceicmh.org

or

John Root

346-9568

root@ceicmh.org

A TIME OF CHANGE

Transitions Mason
by Elizabeth Putnam

The Holidays are over and everyone at Transitions Mason is getting back to their regular schedules.

February 2, 2006

Everyone had a great time at the annual Chrimakwanzaakuh (OK, just Holiday) party held in the community building at the Ingham County Fairgrounds in Mason. Eighty consumers from Transitions Mason, Transitions Charlotte and Transitions South got together to catch up with old friends and make new friends. Everyone celebrated with too much pizza, pop, dancing, bingo and gifts. Many family members of the consumers also came to join in on the fun.

Al Walters, long time staff person, officially retired from CEI-CMH at the end of December. He is still going to work though, as the tax man at H & R Block. Some of the consumers at Transitions Mason have known Al for almost 25 years and he is missed.



The year ahead has great potential for developing new work sites, new inclusion activities and new micro-enterprise endeavors for consumers.

TIES THAT BIND US TOGETHER

Transitions South
by Deb Voss

The last 2 months of 2005 marked the passing of two people who were active with the Senior Team at Transitions South. They had different roles within the team. They both gave of themselves to the program.

Both Bud and Stella will be remembered as generous people who have touched many lives in good ways.

ABBIE AND BUDDY PET THERAPY

Transitions North
by Nathan Wood

Pet therapy has been known to be a beneficial intervention for many years. Many of us growing up have had pets as important members of our families. The pets were the ones we went to because they provided unconditional acceptance. They were the ones we talked to when no one would listen. Remember?

Transitions North recently introduced Pet Therapy on a regular basis. Each week Abby (the dog) and Carol (the dog's handler) visit. Abby is a thoroughbred Smooth Collie, resulting in the consumers automatically calling her Lassie. Abby goes to each room and consumers pet her. At other

Stella Marusich passed away in December. She was the Senior Companion for more than 15 years at Transitions South. Faithfully, she showed up each week to spend time with consumers trying to improve lives. Not a birthday passed without a home baked cake from Stella's kitchen. Plain colors were unacceptable as she decorated them with every imaginable color and topping! Stella invited her entire "work family" to her personal family's annual fall party every year. She enjoyed people and she surrounded herself with people. She made people smile.

Harold (Bud) Lyons passed on just before Christmas. He had been involved with CMH Services in Holt for 20+ years. He was previously employed at Bretton Square Industries and later was a member of the Senior Team. Bud had lots of friends in the program and in his home town of Mason. His level of community support was evident at his funeral which was packed! Extra chairs had to be squeezed into the room to accommodate the huge community response. Bud had the pleasure of maturing in age in his sister's home where she cared for him as long as she was able. Marie, his sister, was very generous toward Transitions South by naming the Senior Team as the beneficiary of donations in honor of Bud. Envelopes continue to arrive and donations have added up to more than \$900.00. The money will be used to enable Bud's friends at Transitions South to enjoy some community activities. Bud continues to give to others in the after life.

times Buddy (another dog) and Gigi (the handler) stop by for a visit. Buddy is a mixed breed, rescued from the Capital Area Humane Society.

Some consumers have been reluctant to touch or pet the dog. Other consumers have gotten over their initial fear and are willing to stroke the fur. Most have fully embraced the idea of having a dog they can pet. Their eyes light up, their facial expressions change and their body movements become energized.

One consumer who usually sits and observes really comes alive when one of the dogs enters the area. The other day she literally pushed aside another consumer to pet the dog. She wanted to make really, really sure she got a chance as she really enjoys seeing both Abbie and Buddy.

Therapy dogs go through obedience training first. These dogs have passed the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizens Test and have had a temperament evaluation. The training looks to see if the dog can remain cool, calm and collected, while being around individuals who may pull on their hair, tail or an ear. In addition, they are further observed

February 2, 2006

being around other animals, hospital equipment and loud sounds. This process is assessed by Certified Therapy Dog International Evaluators.

Abbie and Buddy have successfully completed these evaluations and they enjoy being with consumers. Both dogs know when they are going for a visit and become excited. All parties look forward to the visits – consumers, dogs and staff.

Thanks to each dog and owner for putting forth the effort in time and training. This is all volunteer time. The dogs are thanked with a pig ear as a token of appreciation!!! More information about Pet Therapy is available through the Capitol Area Humane Society at 626-6060.

q PROGRAM CLOSINGS q

Monday, February 20th, 2006
in honor of President's Day

Friday, March 3rd, 2006
for a Staff Inservice Day

BACK IN THE SADDLE

Transitions Charlotte
by Jean Stroesenreuther

It's so great to be back and helping make dreams become reality for Eaton County consumers. I want to thank everyone for their cards, prayers and words of encouragement. It really helped keep my spirits up during the recovery process. I especially wanted to thank Dawn McLeod and Carol Kron. All of their hard work and long hours spent keeping the office running and holding down the fort was very helpful. They made sure that people were happy in their chosen activities and they caught up my paperwork which was considerably behind. Many changes occurred in the last 5 months but Transitions staff and consumers made it all go so smoothly. As I'm getting caught up with where everyone is at, I'd like to remind you of my phone numbers:

517-543-5100, ext. 205 (office)
517-930-3132 (cell phone)

Please call if you have any questions regarding Transitions Charlotte or if you have anything you'd like to share that's happened in the last 5 months. Your calls are always welcomed.

MICHIGAN SKI FOR LIGHT

by John Root

An organization to promote and train people with blindness and visual impairments to cross country ski just celebrated their 30th anniversary. Several CMH consumers have participated in the program over the years. A regional event is held every winter in January at the Higgins Lake Ralph McMullen Conference Center. The last event was just held January 20, 21 and 22, 2006 with approximately 35 people who have blindness or visual impairments taking part. The weekend consists of 2 days of cross country skiing, races, a talent show, a dance and lots of good food. Most people who lack sufficient vision are afraid of getting out in the winter for fear of falling on snow and ice. By attending these events the participants gain self-confidence and a "can do attitude." They believe that conquering skiing enables them to do most anything. The benefits are both mental and physical in nature. To find out more about Michigan Ski for Light please call John Root at 346-9568.



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February 2, 2006

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