



Brother and Sister Reunite After 33 Years

Nick Wakanabo from DRCC-Soft Hands lived in Grand Rapids, MN until he moved to Duluth in 1977. During a conversation with Soft Hand's Program Director Doug Davis, Nick mentioned that he had a step-sister and step-brother that he lost contact with when he moved to Duluth. With some encouragement and help from Doug, Nick took action to find his long-lost sister.



Nick and Bonita.

Nick and Doug decided that they should seek out Donna. Donna was Nick's foster mother in Grand Rapids shortly before he moved to Duluth. Nick attempted to use Google to search for both Donna and his estranged siblings but little information was gained from the internet. Doug and Nick decided that they were going to have to get in the van and travel to Grand Rapids.

They visited a nursing home in Grand Rapids and also a tavern in Taconite in an attempt to find Donna. Both were unsuccessful. They stopped for lunch in Coleraine, where they happened to hear a waitress mention Donna's name. After Nick and Doug excitedly asked the waitress about Donna, she said, "I know her and she is playing cards right now at the church." They arrived at the church, but Donna had eluded them and was one step ahead. The investigative duo was told that she was now out shopping. After attempting to contact her via phone throughout the day, Nick finally got through to Donna and she warmly invited Nick into her home the same way that she did 30 years before.

The trip to Donna's home was not in vain. Nick and Doug received information that Nick's sister, Bonita, lived in Deer River which was 15 miles away. Unfortunately, it was too late for a surprise visit and the search had to be called off for the day. But this story ends happily. Doug and Nick were determined as ever and through internet searches and phone calls, a meeting between Nick and Bonita was scheduled. In April 2011, Nick visited Bonita in Deer River. He even got to see where she worked. "It's an amazing story" says Doug. I think that we would all agree. Nick's next project is to find his step-brother who lives somewhere near Aitkin.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Legislature Update.....	2
Shaw Presents at Conference...	3
2011 Self-Advocacy Conference.....	4
Trips and Activities	5
Employee Milestones.....	6
Golf with the Stars.....	7
Friday Fest Expands.....	7

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Legislature Update

It is an uneasy time - as I write this, it is the middle of June and the State of Minnesota still does not have a budget in place for the next fiscal year. Because the state is required to have a budget in place by July 1st, a tremendous amount of time and energy is now being expended working through the many issues related to the potential shut-down of state government. The courts will be asked to decide what state services are so critical that they must continue even if there is a state government shutdown. Much of this is uncharted territory. We take so much for granted that, until specific things are missing, we won't fully understand what this might mean. Will the state continue paying for medications needed by clients? Will background checks be completed? Will the state pay providers?

When a budget agreement is finally reached, there is little doubt that services for Minnesota's elderly and individuals with disabilities will have fewer resources. It is likely that fewer people will receive services and that the rates paid for these services will be lower. How will this impact DRCC?

Our focus will be to make sure it doesn't impact the services we provide. I believe we can successfully accomplish this. We have been amply warned that this is coming, so we have been very careful in making spending decisions. Most notably, we have implemented a wage freeze for the past two and a half years. We anticipate that this will need to continue for the next couple of years. Obviously, the concern we have is the toll an ongoing freeze will have on our employees. On one level, they understand that we are in the midst of a lengthy (4 to 5 year) period of rate cuts/freezes, but on a personal level it is becoming increasingly difficult.

It is unfortunate that there is this continual underlying worry about funding for services for the elderly and individuals with disabilities. However, this is not going to change unless there is a state or national consensus that we value and are willing to pay for certain basic services. We are a long way from that.

— *Michael Mills*

Mandy Shaw presents at the Self-Advocacy Conference

Mandy Shaw, self-advocate from DRCC/Lambert attended the 2011 Self-Advocacy Conference at the Crowne Plaza St. Paul Riverfront Hotel on May 20th and 21st as a presenter on “Reiki” (*a Japanese Relaxation Technique*). She went down with Luann Johnson (*Staff*), Carol Dinius (*SAM Community Organizer for Northeast Region*), Jody Guy-Kroc (Reiki Instructor), and Linda Markle (*Self-Advocate from Duluth*). A Self-Advocacy leadership circle meeting was held on Thursday, May 19th at the hotel prior to the conference which covered many areas of concerns for all individuals with disabilities that was attended by all. On Friday, May 20th at 1:00 pm, Mandy gave her Reiki presentation to a full house. She was very excited about the turnout for her Reiki Presentation and stated “Next time they need to give me a bigger room.”

Mandy and staff were able to attend other sessions lead by Self-Advocates which included “I Love My Body” by Johnny Crescendo, “Old-Time Dance”, “Going Beyond Everybody Else’s Expectations” by Ben Anderson, Bingo, “Sons of Freedom Group”, and an “Energizer Group” led by the ACT Committee. Mandy and staff enjoyed the opening and closing ceremonies and dance on Friday evening as well and recommend to all individuals to take the opportunity to attend this powerful and moving conference held every two years. She would like to thank *IHFS/Duluth* for letting her practice the Reiki presentation on before the conference, DRCC and Michelle Hooey as well as all her supporters that went with her for the opportunity to fulfill her dream of sharing Reiki with others.



Mandy and her presentation.

Mandy Shaw became interested in learning about Reiki through a newspaper article she saw and encouragement from PD and staff to try out a half-hour session. The PD knew the Master Reiki Level Instructor Jody Guy-Kruc who would be teaching the session. Mandy started her level 1 training shortly after her first session

with Jody which involved all the booklet learning information and symbols, and also took a level 2 training to be able to perform Reiki on others. ARC provided Mandy with the funds through a scholarship to assist her in being able to attend the training sessions.

Mandy has always had the interest in relaxation techniques and has taken a reflexology class, Pilates and yoga class in the past. She really wanted to learn a lot about Reiki (*Japanese Relaxation Technique*) because of her cultural heritage. The next step for her was an invitation to demonstrate Reiki at the Self-Advocacy Circle Meeting in November of 2010. She was thrilled to share something important to her and helping others to learn to relax. It was well received by her peers. Following her dream to share her skill with Reiki she put in an application as a presenter for the 2011 Self-Advocacy Conference in January. She was accepted as a presenter and practiced weekly for 2 months prior to attending the Conference in May.

Afterwards, she said it was a dream come true and felt good about herself to share her Reiki skills with others. Mandy would like to attend more training opportunities in the next level where she could possibly assist Jody with the relaxation teaching and possible employment, thereof.

Learning as we Go-Go-Go, 2011 Self-Advocacy Conference

Advocating Change Together,

a Minnesota Self-Advocacy group held their conference on May 20th and 21st at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in St. Paul. Ten clients and support staff from DRCC attended the conference this year. There was a variety of educational sessions and keynote speakers at this year's event.

This is a great opportunity to meet others in Minnesota and participate in learning how to be a good self-advocate. Those in attendance from DRCC were very positive about their experience and felt that they had not only had fun but learned about themselves and how important it is to speak up for themselves.



Above: Richard and Amanda; below - Sarah and Ryan



Happy 80th Loren!

How do you celebrate an eightieth Birthday? Well, **Loren Gradine**, DRCC-Noumenon, celebrated his 80th birthday in style at the

Black Bear Casino. Spending two nights at the casino, he had a pool side party one night and attended a Polka Fest the next day. Loren enjoyed his party and shared "remember when" stories with many former staff from previous residences (*Moose Lake and RSI*) as well as friends from People with Disabilities for

Change. For at least the last ten years Loren has been raising money for the MDA telethon and he presents his earnings on-air.

In lieu of gifts Loren requested that donations be made to MDA. He did, however receive a few cigars, chocolate and even some tasty Bailey's. Regardless, he is still looking for MDA donations. You would think at 80 years old a person would want to slow down - not Loren. He still intends to continue volunteering at Grandma's Marathon, ringing bells for the Salvation Army, caring for animals at Animal Allies, working in the mail room at the MDA telethon, working the Lion's Club Pancake Feed, and being active with People with Disabilities for Change. And, he is always looking for more, wow!



TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

Branson

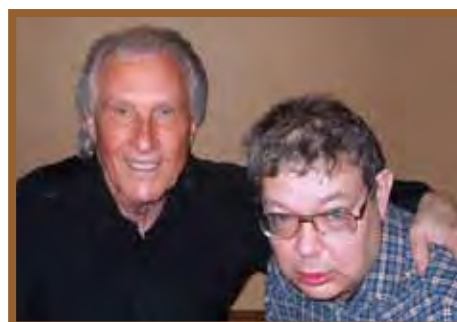
Steven Dulinski from *DRCC-Riverside* drove with his sister Darlene to Branson, Missouri on May 4th. Steve had a great time on the scenic drive, listening to Johnny Cash and Elvis the entire trip. Steve's other sister Linda, and Linda's husband Frank, drove from Arizona to meet them there. The weather was beautiful and just the right temperature. While in Branson, Steve was able to see some shows and went to Silver Dollar City for an entire day. The group also went on a steamboat cruise on the river. While on the boat, Steve had a great dinner and got to watch more entertainment. He enjoyed everything. Steve will be 50 years old in August and this was a special birthday celebration for him.



Darlene, Linda, Steve and Frank.

Time Of His Life

Kim Lofdahl, *DRCC-Woodland*, recently went to see Bill Medley from the Righteous Brothers. Kim has been a life-long fan of the Righteous Brothers and was thrilled to be able to sit in the audience and sing along to all the old Righteous Brothers' hits.



Bill and Kim.

Not All Downhill

This past winter, **Teresa Shega**, *DRCC-Laverne*, joined the Courage Duluth Skiing program at Spirit Mountain. Years ago, Teresa used to be an avid downhill skier, winning medals and being featured in local newspapers. Unfortunately, due to knee problems, she was unable to continue to participate in the sport that she got so much pleasure from. Teresa joined Courage Duluth with the intent of revisiting the old passion of hers. During the first session, Teresa was a bit apprehensive, but with encouragement from the amazing staff and volunteers, Teresa was skiing down the hill like she had never taken a break from skiing! The Courage Duluth staff was so impressed with her progress that she was able to move over to the big hill in no time! Teresa had so much fun participating in the program that her enthusiasm for skiing has returned, and she looks forward to skiing during many winters to come.

Teresa and her Courage volunteer.



Employee Milestones



The work of DRCC is carried out by its many dedicated staff. We are again recognizing employees who have reached a milestone anniversary between January 1, 2011 and June 30, 2011. Without exception, the following employees have shown a commitment to the people they work with - staff and clients, loyalty to DRCC, and a desire to make lives better.

30 YEARS

In April of this year **Michelle Hooley** celebrated her 30th anniversary of employment with DRCC. In 1981 she began working part-time at *DRCC-Baldwin* as a direct-care staff. What started as an interim job until she got her "real" job has turned out to be a wonderfully successful career. Michelle brought with her a set of values and skills that were a perfect match for her newfound career.

20 YEARS

Kris Collins started at DRCC Aurora June 5, 1991 shortly after the program opened. She began as a Program Implementer (Assistant) and was promoted to Program Coordinator on December 4, 1994. We at Aurora notice that she is generous, caring, and has a smile on her face every day.

In 20 years, her family has grown and she has owned her own business besides working at DRCC. In her spare time she likes to ride bike, garden, spend time with her 4 yr old daughter, 25 yr old son, and husband.

15 YEARS

We have three employees who reached their 15-year anniversary during the first half of 2011.

Beth Anderson - Harbor 15
Kathy Larsen - Triggs
Elsa Erickson - Soft Hands

10 YEARS

We are very pleased to have so many employees reach their 10-year anniversary during the first half of 2011.

Mary Ann Leoni - South Grove
Jane Lilya - Fairview
Kevin Buffenbarger - Wheeler
Jennifer Gallant - Triplex
Vicky Blais - Triggs
Carolyn Sturdevant - Meridian
Brandon Lee - Carlton
Desiree Menucy - Noumenon
Denise Colemar - Carlton
Sharon Shofner - Carlton
Gregory Duncan - Wheeler
Kevin Sternal - IHFS-Duluth
Linda Saaristo - IHFS-Lake
Jennifer Roner - Triplex
Michael Stopski - IHFS-Lake
Dorothy Gault - Carlton
Michele Elling Tatro - IHFS-Lake
Shirley Smith - Respite
Lynne Pickart - Glendale
Edith Nelson - Carlton

Employee Promotions

DRCC is very appreciative of our staff and would like to recognize the following employee promotions over the first half of 2011.

*The following employees have been promoted to **Program Director**:*

Amanda Davis - Meridian

*The following employees have been promoted to **Program Coordinator**:*

Aimee Granlund - Merritt

TRIBUTE

MaryAnn Omerza

On April 28th 2011 MaryAnn Omerza passed away at her home surrounded by her South Grove family. MaryAnn was 77 years old and had lived at the *South Grove* program for the last 20 years of her life. MaryAnn was born and raised on the Iron Range. She was very grateful for her sister Mickey and her two nieces Lisa and Terri.

MaryAnn enjoyed the simple pleasures in life such as going out for coffee and pie, visiting the cats at the animal shelter, bird watching, looking at photo albums, visiting with family and spending time with staff. MaryAnn took great comfort when staff sat with her and just held her hand; there didn't need to be conversation. She knew that somebody was by her side and it reassured her that she was loved and was taken care of.

MaryAnn was a very special part of the *South Grove* family; she will be greatly missed and forever remembered in our hearts.



*Front - Jim Hencinski, Elsa Erickson
Back: Andrew Massengill, Kathy Didrickson,
Danee Hanki, Kelly McKinnon*

Who Cares? We Care...

The Annual ARRM Conference was held on May 18th and 19th at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in St. Paul. ARRM (Association of Residential Resources in Minnesota) is the lobbying provider support agency in Minnesota. As part of the conference, providers nominate direct support staff for ARRM CARE awards.

This year DRCC nominated the following individuals: Mike Barker, Woodland, Virginia Engman, Lambert, Andrew Massengill, IHFS-Duluth, Kelly McKinnon, Daniels, Elsa Erickson, Soft Hands, Kathy Didrickson, Wheeler, Jim Hencinski, Harbor 15, and Danee Hankee, Fairview.

Each was recognized at the ARRM Conference. We thank each of the nominees as they are great representatives of the DRCC mission and work to assure that our clients are served with integrity and a true commitment to individuality.

Golf with the Stars This Summer!

The Twelfth Annual “Golf with the Stars” event will be held on Friday, August 19th at Big Lake Golf Course in Cloquet.

DRCC has raised over \$75,000.00 since the inception of this event. Proceeds are used to provide funding for requests made by our clients. A committee comprised of DRCC staff meets to review and approve grant requests. Below are some specific examples of how funds have been used:

- Provide funds to purchase adaptive equipment that assists our clients with independence.
- Provide funding for Friday Fest, a recreational/ social program for DRCC’s clients.
- Purchase recreational equipment such as bikes, snow shoes and sleds as well as canoes and kayaks for the DRCC cabin.
- Assist clients with travel costs to visit family.
- Purchase memberships/passes for area fitness clubs.

Through the annual golf event DRCC is able to meet many of the unmet needs our clients have due to their limited financial resources. We want to thank everyone who has contributed to this event and invite you to consider participating this year. **For more information on corporate sponsorship and team registration call Michelle Hooey at (218) 722-8180 ext. 101**

DRCC Thanks the following Contributors

- George and Dadee Reilly
- Dennis and Kari Ramberg
- Greg Kamp – *Coldwell Banker East/West Realty*
- Dave and Theresa Corbin – *Coldwell Banker East West Realty*
- Mary Peterson
- Michael and Marilyn Sullivan
- Teresa Nelson
- Maryann Rot
- Warren and Marjorie Spannaus
- Margaret Bahl
- Judy and Gerry Bakken
- Kenneth Buehler
- Nick and Joan Ostapenko
- Janice Osbakken
- Fran and Howard Maki
- Charlotte Rantala
- Odyssey Development

In memory of Lyle Carpenter:
George and Dadee Reilly

Friday Fest Expands

Friday Fest events bring together all DRCC consumers to a mutual social venue once a month. While Friday Fest has had mass appeal to the consumers in Duluth, people on the Range have had a difficult time attending events due to high gas prices and the long drive. Program Manager **Jeanette Curry**, also involved in the origination of the Duluth Friday Fest, has found a way to please Rangers. Range Friday Fest opened their inaugural event with a Sock Hop dance at the Holy Spirit Church in Virginia in February. Since then, there has been a Craft Night, a Bingo Night, and a Dance in June. Karaoke and a cabin trip are planned for the near future.

Friday Fest in Duluth has continued to be successful, with nearly 100 people at every event. In January there was a Bingo Night. Mother Nature canceled our February event, sledding in Proctor. Lucky Lads and Lasses danced a jig at the

St. Patrick’s Day dance in March. In April, people met for an ice cream social and arts and crafts



Debbie and Elaine.

night. The marigolds that were planted in decorated terracotta pots are hopefully thriving. For the third straight year in May eager passengers boarded the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad train and enjoyed a pizza dinner. In early June, DJ Kevin and DJ Marshal emceed the DRCC Gala. The Gala is a semiformal plated dinner and dance, really the highlight of Friday Fest events.

Friday Fest in Duluth is in its third year and it is exciting to see the inception of the Range Friday Fest.



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MISSION STATEMENT

*DRCC is a non-profit agency
committed to providing quality services
to individuals and families across the
age and disability spectrum.*



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*The Duluth Regional Care Center is
a private, non-profit organization.
Services are paid with a combination
of funds from St. Louis, Carlton, Cook,
and Lake County Social Services, the
State of Minnesota and the Federal
Medicaid Program.*