



SPRING 2021

The Achiever

ACHIEVE SERVICES' QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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The Achiever is published quarterly by Achieve Services, Incorporated, a non-profit day training and habilitation service provider. Achieve Services creates innovative opportunities to inspire people with disabilities, enabling every participant to lead a meaningful-self-determined life.

Find us and follow us on social media



Connecting Virtually



Jenni Muller and Tami Hagen at 2019 Spring Gala



Social Skills Meeting on Zoom

You may recognize Jenni if you've attended an Achieve Services' fundraising event. She wheels around with a big smile selling raffle tickets. Jenni is one of 100 participants who has not been able to return to Achieve for in-person services.

Innovation is one of Achieve Services' four values, and the word innovative is also in our mission statement. Our staff and participants have been asked to embrace innovation this year as we navigate providing services to adults with disabilities during a pandemic.

While Jenni has not been able to return for in person services, she has fully embraced virtual services. She regularly attends social skills, Disney Fan Club, and Show and Tell. Jenni said, "That made my whole entire day!" after being able to connect with her friends and staff members who she hasn't been able to see in person for over six months.

Ralph Vossberg, behavior specialist, is in charge of coordinating Achieve's virtual services. Achieve currently hosts over 22 sessions weekly with over 35 people regularly participating in virtual services. "While we'd rather be connecting in person, virtual services have given participants an opportunity to engage with one another as well as our staff," Vossberg said, "We've celebrated birthdays on Zoom, showed off pets, and shared our feelings and frustrations about the pandemic."

Cow Tipping Press

Thanks to a generous donation from Northeast Public Library in Minneapolis, Achieve Services will be partnering with Cow Tipping Press to offer virtual writing workshops. The workshops will take place from Feb. 10 to March 10 and culminate in an online reading of participants' published work. Be sure to follow us on Facebook for updates on this special event.

To see the full list of virtual service options at Achieve, visit our website:
<https://achieveservices.org/calendar/>



Disability Services Day at the Capitol 2020

Disability Services Day at the Capitol is March 10

Your voice is important! Disability Services Day at the Capitol is going virtual this year. Join Achieve Services and other disability service providers and advocacy groups from all over Minnesota on Tuesday, March 10. It's free to register and attend a virtual rally starting at 10:00 a.m. followed by individual legislator meetings. There will also be a "social media storm" starting at 10:30 a.m. to make sure the voices of people with disabilities are amplified!

For all of the details and to register to receive updates, visit: <https://www.disabilityservicesday.com/>



Tom and Brad at Disability Services Day 2020

Years of Service Celebration

Each year, we host an event to recognize participants who are celebrating milestone anniversaries with Achieve. Once again, we had to flex our creative muscles to shift to a virtual format to recognize these important achievements. Participants and their families as well as staff joined us on Zoom as Program Specialist Steve Simmons shared a special tribute to each individual being honored.

Congrats to the following participants for over 20 years of service at Achieve!

45 years



Gary Eckardt

40 years



Michael Belden

35 years



Robert Boggs

25 years

**Kelly McAlpin
Chad Peterson
Barbara Zimmer**

20 years

**Laura Glauner
Daniel O'Connor
Kristina Svanda
Steven Windhauser**

Superhero Spring Gala

**Scheduled for
May 14**

Thank you to everyone who participated in Achieve's first ever Virtual Gala in September. We were able to surpass our goal and raise over \$240,000 to safely resume in person services, expand virtual services, and retain our superhero staff.

We are currently making plans for this year's event, which is scheduled to be a hybrid event on Friday, May 14.

The event will take place from 5 – 9 p.m. at Bunker Hills (Coon Rapids) or wherever you have internet access! The event will feature an impactful and engaging program emceed by John and Miles and LeTourneau with opportunities to bid on auction items or make a donation to directly support Achieve. We will once again be celebrating the superhero that exists within us all.

Sponsorship opportunities are available and include a table for 8 at the in person event. Individual in person tickets are \$100 and include dinner, or you can participate virtually at no cost. Learn more at: one.bidpal.net/AchieveGala2021 or give us a call at (763) 717-7801.



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Do you have an item or service you'd be willing to contribute to this year's Gala?

We are looking for unique and exciting items that will inspire people to bid high and often! Here are some ideas of items that have been popular at other virtual events:

- * Dinners for 6-8 people prepared by a local chef
- * Local trips/getaways or private cabins
- * Virtual experiences such as online classes or subscription to a streaming service
- * Home delivery: floral, wine/spirits, meals, coffee, dessert, etc.
- * Restaurant gift cards or gift cards to other local businesses
- * Home improvement or landscaping packages

If you have something you're willing to donate, please email us at info@achieveservices.org or call 763-717-7801.

TEAM ACHIEVE WELCOMES NJABULO DIJEH!

Njabulo “NJ” Dijeh joined Team Achieve in October as Human Resources Director. NJ is responsible for recruiting, onboarding, training, and retaining Achieve’s superstar staff.



Njabulo Dijeh

NJ has 5 years of human resources experience working with home care and community-based organizations. Prior to joining Team Achieve, she worked with Mental Health Resources, a non-profit organization that provides community-based social services to adults recovering from mental illness and substance use disorders.

NJ is certified as a Society for Human Resource Management Certified Professional (SHRM-CP) and has a Master of Arts in Human Resource Management from St. Mary’s University of Minnesota.

FUN FACT ABOUT NJ:

She speaks three of the Bantu languages spoken in Southern Africa: Siswati, Zulu, and Xhosa. Xhosa is the language they speak in the Black Panther movie. NJ’s home country has only 1.1 million people, which is smaller than the Twin Cities population.

Dance At Your Own Risk Releases 8th Album – Virtually

Dance At Your Own Risk (DAYOR) has not let the pandemic stop them from making music. The band’s 8th album – *Happy Holidays From Achieve Services 2020* – released in December and can be streamed wherever you listen to music (Spotify, iTunes, YouTube). The album features 14 tracks with lyrics written by DAYOR members.



DAYOR Album Cover

Training Specialist and DAYOR Producer Joe Loskota hosted a virtual release party on December 18, which featured live performances from some of the band members. Josh Larson and Brian Chong, along with Joe, were also featured on KFAI Radio’s Disability and Progress show on January 14. Josh continues to be inspired as he engages with Achieve virtually. He’s written 21 more songs since the album released!

Visit our website for a link to the album and KFAI interview:
<https://achieveservices.org/news-events/>



Anna and Joe



Anna singing



Katya singing



Steve, Pete, and Tom visiting Kelly at home



Abby watching the Virtual Gala

From our CEO

It probably comes as no surprise that 2020 has been a challenging year at Achieve Services. Individually and collectively we have weathered a pandemic and growing disparities that continue to impact our lives today. We, however, have a lot to be grateful for and reasons to be hopeful for the future.



Tom Weaver

I want to take a moment to recognize some of our accomplishments from last year, and the folks that went out of their way to support us during a difficult time:

- Big thank you to Senators Jim Abeler and John Hoffman for their tireless advocacy in the legislature that resulted in relief funding for disability service providers like Achieve during the third special session.
- Our Gala Chair Pam Deal led our efforts to pivot to a virtual gala, which exceeded our goal by over \$40,000. We also had so many donors who increased their gifts, made additional gifts, or made new gifts to Achieve in 2020 to provide critical financial support.
- We added a new job site at Ceramic Industrial Coatings and were able to resume 17 out of 24 community-based job sites after our COVID closure.

- We added virtual services to engage with participants who have not been able to return for in person services. Currently, 93 of 190 participants were able to return by year end to center and community-based employment.
- We introduced our new logo and launched a new website.
- Dance At Your Own Risk received a MOHR Life Enrichment Award and released their 8th album – virtually!

As we look to the future, we are in the process of hiring an employment specialist/job developer who will help people with disabilities find individualized, competitive employment in the community. We already have participants identified who will be a good fit for this type of employment. This position was partially funded by a grant we received from the Otto Bremer Trust.

We are also working with the MN Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop a sustainability plan as part of a grant we received to recover the loss from the rate system changes that took effect in 2019. As part of this plan, we will be evaluating our business model and learning from other providers how we can be more efficient while still providing the quality services our participants deserve.

Participants and staff are starting to receive the vaccine, and we look forward to continuing to welcome folks back to in person services.

Thank you for your continued investment in Achieve Services and commitment to helping people with disabilities lead meaningful, self-determined lives.



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WINTER FUNDRAISING EVENT



Volunteers from TPAC helped us weigh and package nuts for our annual winter fundraiser. Nuts were available at all Village Bank locations and through Achieve’s website. We quickly sold out and were able to raise over \$4,000! Thank you to everyone who purchased nuts to support Achieve!



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