



BOARD AND EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 2013

Where Are Those Voices Coming From?

In my spare time I enjoy reading "Popular Fiction," a category of literature that my sister (the book snob) calls junk food for the brain. Although, in general not particularly deep material, it has given me, I think, the ability to discern the difference between authors that throw words on a page because it is their chosen profession, those that have a story to tell and know how to tell it, and those that use words to create art. Art and I don't generally get along (picture stick people here). No matter how hard I try to be "artistic," it still comes out as stick people. It is pretty much the same with me and words. It is not my chosen profession and I can, at best, write in hopes of communicating so that I can be understood, so you will have to excuse my attempt here to convey something that is beyond my grasp.

Lakes and Pines is in the midst of mourning the loss of a long time Board member to cancer. Duane was first elected to the Lakes and Pines Board of Directors to represent the group to be served sector of Mille Lacs County before I became Executive Director. He was elected to the Board in 1997 and served with only one small break until his passing this past February. To get a true sense of the man, you really had to spend some time getting to know him. When you met him, what you saw was a man who was rail thin, not in a frail way but in a tough way, like braided rope. His hair salt and pepper was worn long, in a way that must have been fashionable during the time in which he grew up. He wore a mustache, full and bushy, so that it covered his mouth, masking at times either a deep frown or a huge smile; leaving you to guess his mood or intent. His voice (when he used it) was rough as gravel and varied very little in tone, no matter the topic or circumstance. It was only his clear blue eyes that gave you a clear sense as to whether he was impassioned, spitting nails mad, or was just having some fun with you. His were the kind of eyes they are describing when they talk about either "twinkled or spit fire." They had that range.

To say Duane was quiet would be giving you an exaggerated sense of his verbosity. Duane didn't say much *unless* he needed to. He needed to when the Board had strayed from the path and had somehow forgotten who we are, what we do and exactly who we are here to serve. He needed to when someone (more often times than not, me) got too big for their britches and needed a reminder of their place within this organization. He needed to when we somehow got too serious and we forgot to have some fun on this path. These are all roles he took to with a passion.

My point here is to remind myself which voices it is we need to listen to. It is not always the loudest, the most voluminous, the smoothest, the most articulate or even most persuasive. The voices we need to listen to are the ones that have the most to say. For us in Community Action, those voices will always be those of the people we serve. They are the only ones that are backed by *their* stories and hold the clues we need to help them move from where they are to where they need to be. We at Lakes and Pines, can feel fortunate that we had Duane and so many others like him who are willing to serve and give those we serve a voice.

I need to post script this with an apology and a thank you. The apology is for me taking, and the thank you for you giving, the indulgence of me grieving here in such a public way.

Bob Benes
Executive Director

Mission Statement

To build prosperous communities by serving local families and individuals in their pursuit of self-reliance.



LAKES AND PINES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lakes and Pines Staff would like to thank the following people for their dedication to our mission. Without your dedication, all Lakes and Pines does for our community would not be possible.

Board Member	Representing		Board Member	Representing
Don Niemi	Aitkin County Commissioners	*	Lilly Turner, Secretary	Aitkin County Sector to be Served
Gary Peterson	Carlton County Commisisoners	*	Pauline Strand	Carlton County Sector to be Served
Mike Robinson	Chisago County Commissioners	*	Joy Erickson	Chisago County Sector to be Served
Greg Anderson	Isanti County Commissioners	*	Ron Duke	Isanti County Sector to be Served
Gene Anderson, 2 nd Vice Chair	Kanabec County Commissioners	*	Liane Heupel	Kanabec County Sector to be Served
Genny Reynolds	Mille Lacs County Commissioners	*	Duane Droge	Mille Lacs County Sector to be Served
Mitch Pangerl	Pine County Commissioners	*	Roberta Folkestad	Pine County Sector to be Served
Liz Dodge, Board Chair	Area Social Service Directors	*	Mary Oja	Carlton County Council on Aging
Steve Walbridge	Area Lions Clubs	*	Kathy Krenik-Minkler	Area Public Health Directors
Wayne Boettcher, 1 st Vice Chair	Farmers Union Groups	*	Scott TenNapel, Treasurer	Mental Health Services
Wendy Walburg	Head Start Policy Council	*		

New Member	Representing		Outgoing Member	Representing
Ron Duke	Isanti County Sector to be Served	*	Jeri Hirsch	Isanti County Sector to be Served
Gary Peterson	Carlton County Commisisoners	*	Ted Pihlman	Carlton County Commissioners
Greg Anderson	Isanti County Commissioners	*	Alan Duff	Isanti County Commissioners
Genny Reynolds	Mille Lacs County Commissioners	*	Dan Whitcomb	Mille Lacs County Commissioners



In Remembrance of Duane Droge.

*Lakes and Pines Board of Directors,
Proudly representing Mille Lacs County 1997 - 2013*

You will be missed Butch!

**Greater Twin Cities United Way Building Blocks for Success Program Partnership
has Positive, Long-Lasting Effects**

Developing and delivering effective program services and working closely with community partners are things that the Lakes and Pines' Early Childhood & Family Development Department has a lot of experience with. However, one partnership in particular turned out to have some unexpected benefits in more ways than one.

In February 2012, Lakes and Pines' Building Blocks for Success Program, funded by the Twin Cities United Way, was in full swing recruiting child care providers to partner with the school readiness program. One of the contacts made was with Billi Jo Peterson, a licensed Family Child Care Provider in Isanti, MN. Billi Jo informed the staff that she was thinking about closing the doors to her *Care a Lot Home Daycare* (in operation since 2007) due to lack of enrollment. The economy hit her hard, as it did many child care providers. During this time many parents of preschool children opted for less expensive options, utilizing family, friends, and neighbor care. At the time Lakes and Pines contacted her, she had only three families and four children total (one full time child, one child that came Tuesdays only, and two part-time, school-age children). Her State Child Care License allowed her to have ten children enrolled at one time. The Building Blocks for Success staff encouraged her to work with Lakes and Pines and join into a partnership.

Billi Jo accepted the proposal and jumped on board. In April 2012, she signed a partnership agreement. She began advertising her business and identifying her child care as offering a school readiness program. By partnering with Lakes and Pines' Building Blocks for Success Program, this effort paid off. The number of children enrolled in her child care increased, and four children were enrolled in the Building Blocks for Success Program.

Billi Jo currently has five families (nine children) enrolled, and one of her families increased their hours due to the Building Blocks for Success (BBFS) Program.

Billi Jo says she has gained many things since partnering with Lakes and Pines. Some of these benefits include:

- * Having the Child Care Partnership Specialist out to our home every week! We all LOVE her!
- * It is very easy to get isolated doing home daycare. Isanti County does not have a daycare association, so I don't know many area providers.
- * The Child Care Partnership Specialist is always available for questions and concerns I may have. She also offers so much encouragement and support.
- * Additional resources, such as having a Disabilities/Literacy Coordinator out and curriculum materials.
- * I have been introduced and trained on Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies Gold (child assessment program). I have a better understanding of child development.
- * I think the home visits are wonderful to get families' input and involvement. The parents appear to really enjoy these too.
- * Help with learning to develop and implement lesson plans.
- * Additional income to purchase furniture, supplies, materials, hire additional staff, and better the program without additional work hours.
- * The program makes me strive to be a better daycare provider.
- * I was able to lower my daycare rates. This accommodates many of the new families. The rates and hours work great for stay-at-home moms who want an affordable preschool experience for their children.
- * Having the Building Blocks for Success Program is a great benefit to the new families I interview with and to the children currently enrolled in my child care. Even the children who aren't enrolled in the Building Blocks Program receive a lot of the benefits (researched-based curriculum, added resources, provider knowledge gained from increased trainings). Families can trust their children are getting a top quality program.
- * I have increased training opportunities available to me.

There are currently 41 licensed Family Child Care Homes in Isanti County. However, in the past six months four Family Child Cares have closed. Some had been operating since 2001 and others as new as 2012. They found it was not economically feasible to either continue or to see how long it would take to develop an income from their business. Working in partnership with Billi Jo has not only increased the quality of education the children are receiving, but has created (maintained) a viable option for working parents to receive care/education for their children so they can maintain employment. Partnering with the Building Blocks for Success Program not only benefits Billi Jo, the children and the parents during these current times, but will have lasting effects far beyond and into the future for upcoming children and parents enrolled in her child care.

Vehicle Donation Program Receives Generous Donation

In February, the Otto Bremer Foundation generously granted \$60,000 to support the Vehicle Donation Program at Lakes and Pines. These funds will be used to help Lakes and Pines solicit and repair more donated vehicles and match them to low-income families in need of a vehicle to find or maintain employment.

The Community Services Department started the Vehicle Donation Program with billboards throughout the area late last summer and letters to local newspaper editors announcing the program. Three households donated vehicles, two of which received some basic repairs and have been donated to area families to get them to work and increase their self-sufficiency.

To qualify for the program, applicants must be referred by one of the area WorkForce Centers or other agency employment specialists and be a family with children that is either receiving county cash assistance, actively searching for employment or recently started a job. Applicants that are selected to receive a donated vehicle are required to pay for 6-months of insurance prior to receiving a vehicle and participate in financial literacy training to learn how to budget for repairs and save for their next vehicle.



Lack of reliable transportation is not just a result of poverty, but it is also an obstacle to escaping it. The Vehicle Donation Program is in need of more vehicles, so if you are interested in donating, contact the

Community Services Department or go to our website, www.lakesandpines.org, click on "Self-Sufficiency" and then on "Vehicle Donation". Vehicle donors will receive a receipt for their donation and may be eligible for a tax deduction.



May is Community Action Month

This May, Community Action will mark 48 years of serving communities across America, making it a better place to live. Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope and improves our communities.

Early in the month, Lakes and Pines staff will be available from 10 am to noon at thrift stores across our seven county area. Check Lakes and Pines website, www.lakesandpines.org, to see what day we will be at your community thrift store and come see what we do. Also, check electronic community boards throughout our service area for messages about Lakes and Pines.

Tax Assistance Program is Busy!!

Lakes and Pines provides free income tax preparation services through valuable, trained volunteers. We are within days of the tax deadline, and the past few months have flown by. Our new Milaca site was a big success and filled to capacity every session. Pine City and Mora have also been busier than usual this year due to the fact that Seven County Senior Federation discontinued their AARP tax site.

All the volunteers have worked super hard to make this program a success once again. This year we faced some challenges because of the new tax laws and the delayed start for filing. We appreciate every single volunteer, as this program would not exist without them.

As of April 1st:

	MORA SITE	MILACA SITE	PINE CITY SITE	TOTALS
Federal	337	46	110	493
State	353	53	116	522
Earned Income Credit Refunds	\$237,598	\$48,436	\$101,682	\$387,716
TOTAL REFUNDS	\$493,824	\$79,824	\$183,889	\$757,537

The Community Services Department is always looking for additional volunteers to help deliver this valuable service to the community. Consider volunteering a few hours of your time to help bring more money into your community. Contact Pam at 800.832.6082 ext.185 or at pamd@lakesandpines.org.



Fresh Vegetable Seeds for Garden Seed Program



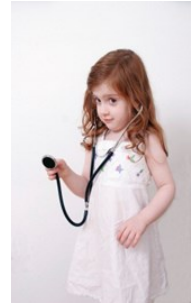
Each year, Lakes and Pines works with a non-profit agency (America the Beautiful) to provide free vegetable seeds to area food shelves to help promote healthy, inexpensive eating. This year there has been one change to the Garden Seed Program due to the increase need in our service area. Rather than relying solely on donated seeds, string beans, peas, cucumbers, carrots, zucchini, acorn squash and pumpkin seeds have been purchased in bulk from a local supplier. A local garden center (Peterson's in North Branch) generously donated sweet corn seeds. All seeds have been repackaged into small envelopes by local volunteers (thank you!) and will be distributed through local food shelves and a few extension offices. Seeds will be available for pick up mid to late April. Last year 813 households received seeds through the Garden Seed Program. If you are interested in donating seeds or your time next year, please contact Community Services Department at 800.832.6082 ext. 115 or at dawnb@lakesandpines.org.





Health Literacy Pilot for Lakes and Pines Head Start Families

This year, fifty families with children ages 0-3 and ten families with children ages 3-5 who were enrolled in Lakes and Pines' Head Start, took part in a pilot project to promote Health Literacy for parents and their children. The project utilizes the book, "*What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick?*" Authors: Gloria Mayer, R.N. and Ann Lulkierus, R.N.



This book, along with health education from their home visitor on how to use the book, is designed to:

- *Provide resources to parents to help them become more engaged in their health care system.
- *Empower parents to make good decisions about how to care for their child when they are sick.
- *Teach parents how to utilize health care resources in the most appropriate way.

The parents involved in this project completed a pre and post survey that indicated any changes that the family has made due to their use of the book or the health education they received in Head Start.

Several parents have commented that they have used the book on different occasions to help them determine what their child needed for care. The book is in no way to be used as a substitute for health care assistance. It is used as a base line to determine if their child's condition is something that they can try to resolve on their own with the strategies discussed in the book, or to inform families when a symptom is severe enough that they should seek immediate health care attention.

This project is a collaboration of Minnesota Head Start Association and four Minnesota Health Plans (Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Blue Plus, HealthPartners, Medica, and UCare) in an effort to inform and educate families on the importance of Health Literacy in understanding the needs of their children and how to care for them when they are sick. It is a state-wide goal to reach as many families as possible.

On March 20, 2013 we received 64 additional books to distribute to families next year. It is the project's hope to reach as many families as possible to increase "Health Literacy" and help families be more proactive in their child's health care needs.



LAKES AND PINES URGES THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET APPLIED FOR FUEL ASSISTANCE TO DO SO

The cold weather is still here and the cost to heat your home continues to rise.

Lakes and Pines encourages those who have not yet applied for fuel assistance to do so now. You should also encourage a neighbor or a senior citizen to apply.

Income guidelines are 50% of State Median Income or 110% of Federal Poverty Guidelines. For a family of two, to determine eligibility, the program uses a gross income of \$7,274 for the past three months.

Renters and homeowners may qualify.

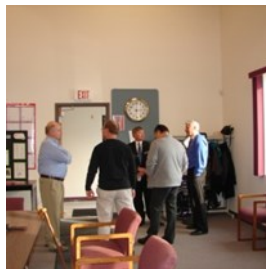
To obtain an application, call Lakes and Pines CAC, Inc. at 320-679-1800 or (800) 832-6082. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday; or download an application from our website at www.lakesandpines.org.

February 1st Legislative Coffee a Fantastic Success

February 1st Lakes and Pines hosted a coffee hour for newly elected legislators as well as those reelected and returning to office. “The goal is to provide a local format for those new to office to mix and mingle with those that have been around for a while” said Executive Director, Bob Benes.

The coffee hour had representation from Federal, State and local levels and conversations were lively and plentiful. “As I was passing through and among conversations I heard things like ‘I’ve been trying to get in touch with your office about that issue’ and ‘while I have you here.’ Those are the types of opportunities we hope to foster. Of course, having it in our offices, we hope that conversations come around to the services that Lakes and Pines offer and what the future needs of the legislator’s electorate might be,” Benes said.

It was an opportunity for local legislators from all levels to interact and for new Board members to meet with veteran Board members in an informal setting.



Reach Out for Warmth

The Reach Out for Warmth Fuel Fund continues to be an important resource to families that experience a crisis with their energy bills. Households whose incomes are at or below 60% of the state median income, which is slightly above the income guidelines for the Energy Assistance Program, are eligible for help.

Reach Out for Warmth funds are made available to low income consumers residing in Aitkin, Carlton, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties served by Lakes and Pines CAC, Inc.

The Reach Out for Warmth Fund provides one time home energy crisis help up to \$400 for those facing an energy emergency.

The Lakes and Pines Energy Assistance Program would like to thank all current and future donors of the Reach Out for Warmth Fuel Fund. Current donors include Cambridge Medical Center, Lutheran Social Services and other private donors.

These funds are subject to Lakes and Pines’ Reach Out for Warmth Fuel Fund guidelines. The need far exceeds the available funds. If you or your organization would like to help, you may contact Lakes and Pines at 320-679-1800.

The Lakes and Pines Connection with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)



Many people are not aware that they may be eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, (SNAP) formerly known as food support. Particularly seniors, on a fixed income and struggling to make ends meet are likely eligible. Some people do not apply for SNAP because of the belief that they will be taking food out of a child's mouth or from someone worse off than they are. This isn't true.

SNAP is a boost for the economy, not a drain. Research shows that for every \$1 spent on the program, \$1.84 is generated in economic activity. Think of the jobs that are needed to grow, pick, process and transport the food to stores. They all stimulate the economy and are supported when people purchase food, either with cash or use of the SNAP funding.

The Community Services Department has staff trained and available to help people complete their Combined Application Form to screen people for SNAP eligibility.

Increasing partnerships throughout the area, however, is needed to connect SNAP benefits to eligible people. Connections have been established with Carlton County, Chisago County Human Services and the Second Harvest staff assigned to Isanti and Chisago counties. Other County Human Services departments have been contacted, however, we can also partner with food shelves and pantries, Work Force Centers and senior centers. Contact the Community Services Department at 800.832.6082 ext. 115 or www.dawnb@lakesandpines.org for more information.



Lakes and Pines FYI is going **GREEN** in 2013!



If you prefer to receive this newsletter via email, please contact
Denise at lap@lakesandpines.org

Please provide current contact information and email address that you
would like the newsletter sent to.

Save for a Better Future

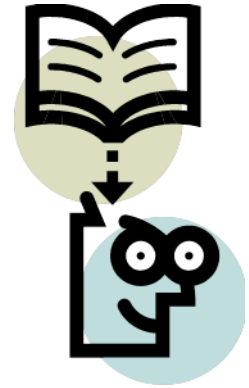
We are pleased to announce additional opportunities available for the Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) Program. The FAIM Program exists to help working Minnesotans build assets and long-term economic self-sufficiency. The FAIM program is a matching savings program that provides \$3 for every \$1 saved, when the savings are going to be used to:



- Buy a first home;
- Go to post-secondary school; or
- Start or expand a business.

There is funding available for households that meet the following requirements:

- Be 18 years of age or older;
- Be a resident of Minnesota;
- Have assets less than \$10,000;
- Have earned income at or below the following income guidelines:



Family Size	Income
1	\$22,980
2	\$31,020
3	\$39,060
4	\$47,100

Each accountholder has two years to save beginning from the date of the first deposit. Accountholders place monthly savings, up to \$480 per year, into a savings account, which will be matched upon completion of asset contracts.



Accountholders complete a minimum of 12 hours of financial management classes and an additional ten hours of asset-specific education such as improving their credit score or learning how to write a business plan if they are saving to start a business.

If you or your organization are helping people learn to save for their future, contact the Community Services Department for additional information or to arrange a FAIM informational presentation.



stands for **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**. It is a quarterly newsletter provided to the area's seven county officials and personnel of Lakes and Pines CAC, Inc.

We hope our Newsletter will present you with timely, interesting, and sometimes lighthearted information. In turn, we hope that you will present us with your thoughts and suggestions.

For further information, please contact:

LAKES AND PINES CAC INC
1700 MAPLE AVE E
MORA MN 55051
320-679-1800
Toll Free 1-800-832-6082

Visit Lakes and Pines on the web:

www.lakesandpines.org



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For the Agency to continue this savings in postage, it is important to maintain current addresses on file. Please take a moment to review your address label and notify Lakes and Pines of any appropriate corrections. If you are interested in receiving the FYI electronically in the future, please email: lap@lakesandpines.org.

CORRECTION IN MAILING ADDRESS

PLEASE PRINT:

- NAME:**
- ORGANIZATION:**
- ADDRESS:**
- CITY, STATE, ZIP+4 DIGITS**

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