



### I've Never Done This Before

A short while ago I was meeting with a group of fellow Executive Directors from agencies similar to Lakes and Pines. As we talked about items, both personal and professional, I began to hear a phrase used over and over again. Trying to be an active listener, I started to take note of how many times one of us said "I've never done that before" or "we have never done that before". I looked around the group and noted that we were all rather.....seasoned. I found it astounding that at this point in both our personal and professional lives we were repeatedly being faced with situations that we have never faced, and some for which we had no, or limited, frames of reference. But, of course, we all know the world has changed.

Of course, the world always changes and we often say in "our business" that the only constant is change. What these experienced administrators were attesting to, however, was that the world had changed in a less predictable way and outside the experience of even the most seasoned administrators.

I then began to think about my children. I have two. One that deals with change like a small boat on the ocean just going where life will take her, while the other does not do well without fore planning and predictability. It gave me a new appreciation for how he has been dealing with the last year and three quarters or so. It also brought into focus that while I know my children well, I don't know the person I meet at the grocery store or drive by on the road and interact with at work as well. Nor do I know how they will or have been dealing with change.

It brought to mind an entirely different kind of social distancing. One that, instead of space, we give each other grace. A second or two before we react, to process the fact that the individual who we are dealing with didn't take that second or two before they reacted. A second or two, to reflect that we don't know all this person is dealing with, but we know some of it and it is what we are dealing with too and it is not fun or pretty. A second or two, to breathe so we respond in a way that we really want to present ourselves, in a way that we would appreciate being responded to.

If you've never done that before this would be a great time to start.

### Lakes & Pines CAC, Inc.

#### Mission Statement

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

### Partnering to End Poverty

*Bob Benes*  
Executive Director

## A "WARM" HELLO FROM ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Hello from Lakes and Pines' Energy / Fuel Assistance Team. Staff are currently receiving and processing applications for the 2021-2022 winter heating season. Please send in your applications as soon as possible; if you know someone else who is applying, please remind them to apply early as well.

Some changes to the program this year will be beneficial to many households. For instance, there is now funding available that may help with water bills. If you are in a disconnect status, have been disconnected or are past due, give Lakes and Pines a call at 320-679-1800 option 2, to check if there are qualifying funds to assist you.

Another change for this season is the maximum grant amount. The total amount increased from \$1600 to \$2000 in primary heat benefits. In addition, the crisis maximum stayed at \$1200 when normally it was set at \$600. If you know someone in need, send them our way and staff will be happy to help in any way possible. If you, or someone you know, needs information mailed call Lakes and Pines at 320-679-1800 option 2, and any necessary applications can be sent to you.

*A gentle reminder:* Appointments are required. If you have questions or need assistance, please be sure to call and schedule an appointment. Questions can often times be answered via phone so you do not have to come in. Walk-ins will be asked to call in and schedule an appointment for a later date.

A drop-off box is located directly outside the front door for any forms, papers or applications. It is checked and emptied several times throughout the day. Please utilize this convenient option.

## EVERY MOMENT IS A FRESH BEGINNING

A Lakes and Pines Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) counselor is reaching out to probation and parole officers within Lakes and Pines' service areas, asking them to share with their clients the benefits of SNAP Employment and Training services.

Being armed with the right tools and attitude is necessary for anyone looking for employment. However, those with a criminal history usually need to amp it up a bit, and go the extra mile.

Lakes and Pines' SNAP E&T Program is ready to help set the mark to obtaining employment, to provide one-to-one assistance on the tools and resources specific to folks with a challenging background. One has to put in the effort to get it done, but one doesn't have to do it alone. SNAP E&T is ready to provide guidance on the job search journey, whether there is an unfavorable background or not. If dedication and motivation are in place, let's set and achieve some goals together!

**I have a criminal background; no one will hire me!**

**I have applied and never get a response!**



**A messy background can make it challenging to find work.**

➔ **But**, if you have a toolbox full of tips, and are dedicated to finding work, a job can be yours!

➔ **SNAP Employment & Training is a free/voluntary** program which offers one-to-one guidance on resume development, assessment of your skills, interviewing techniques, suggested responses employers want to hear, questions to ask employers, basic job search techniques and job bank resources.

➔ **Why wait? Get connected with SNAP Employment & Training:**

➔ **Contact Sandra with your questions about SNAP Employment & Training:**



SNAP Employment & Training  
Lakes & Pines CAC., Inc.  
1700 Maple Ave E, Mora, MN 55051  
320-679-1800 Ext 1975 or 320-364-9005  
sandr@lakesandpines.org

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

## REHABILITATION LOAN PROGRAM UPDATE

Great news. After more than ten years, the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency statute was modified, allowing for increased funding for the Rehabilitation Loan Program. For many years, the maximum amount allowed was \$27,000. The new limit has been increased for up to \$37,500. Lakes and Pines' staff have been hoping for an increase like this for many years.

By adding this extra funding to the program, it has made it easier to get jobs done. Ever since COVID-19 started, material costs have increased greatly and contractors are harder and harder to come by. On numerous occasions, by the time the inspectors were done estimating all the needed repairs, the estimates would come in above the \$27,000 limit, putting the contractors, homeowners and Lakes and Pines staff in a tough spot. There were times when a severely damaged roof (pictured on right) had to get put on the backburner because there were so many other issues that needed addressing first if the individuals were going to remain in the homes: lead based paint inside the windows, potentially dangerous electrical repairs or bathroom remodels that included handicapped accessibility. These necessary repairs often had to be paid for from different, and very limited, funding sources.



Roof in desperate need of repairs having to be put on hold.

During a recent loan closing with a client for the Rehabilitation Loan Program, the client expressed how thankful they were that all of the repairs could be done on their home. *"I was going to have to take out my own loan to pay for the roof. Now that it can all be done I am feeling so much less stress, knowing I am not going to have to pay for it myself. Thank You!"*

## NO END TO THE CONNECTIONS, OR GENEROSITY

Throughout the seven county service area, the generosity of our neighbors never ceases to amaze me.

People recognize the brand of Lakes and Pines Community Action Council. Often, when wearing a jacket or shirt with the Lakes and Pines logo, people stop me and tell me about a positive experience with our agency, a connection with a staff member, or a way that Lakes and Pines has had a positive influence in their lives. I always smile brighter after those interactions.

Recently, my day brightened in an unexpected way. While having my cat groomed at a groomer in North Branch, the groomer asked me what I did for work. I shared that I work for Lakes and Pines Head Start. She had a few questions about that, so we chatted while she trimmed my cat's nails and gave him a fabulous new hairdo. After the grooming was done, she asked if we could use donations of school supplies for Head Start or for Lakes and Pines in general. I said of course, "Absolutely!" and thanked her profusely. I have to admit that I've never gotten donations for work at my hair salon! That might be a new goal.



The generosity of our friends, neighbors and pet groomers, as well as the positivity people feel when they hear Lakes and Pines....this is truly the stuff that makes our work possible.

## WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) reduces energy costs for low-income households by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes, while ensuring health and safety. The program supports 8,500 jobs and provides weatherization services to approximately 35,000 homes every year, including 78 from the Lakes and Pines office.

Low-income households carry a larger burden for energy costs, typically spending 13.9% of total annual income versus 3.0% for other households (2020 ORNI- study). Often, they must cut back on health care, medicine, groceries, and childcare to pay energy bills. Weatherization helps alleviate this heavy energy burden through cost-effective building shell improvements such as insulation and air sealing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning systems, lighting and appliances.

Weatherization not only helps households, it also helps revitalize communities by spurring economic growth and reducing environmental impact. Weatherization returns \$2.78 in non-energy benefits for every \$1.00 invested in the program. Non-energy benefits represent tremendous value for families whose homes receive weatherization services. After weatherization, families have homes that are more livable, resulting in fewer missed days of work (e.g., sick days, doctor visits), and decreased out-of-pocket medical expenses by an average of \$514. The total health and household related benefits for each unit averages \$14,148 (Nation Evaluation).

Weatherization has an essential role in introducing and deploying technology and facilitating greater industry adoption. An entire industry—the home performance industry—is based on the skills perfected by weatherization. Over the past five years, the weatherization network and the private sector have established the Guidelines for Home Energy Professionals, including Standard Work Specifications for Home Energy Upgrades (SWS), and Home Energy Professional certifications, along with accreditation of energy-efficiency training programs. Weatherization agencies also create a market for American manufacturing, using products and equipment from local sources, benefiting the business community in the regions they serve. The Weatherization Assistance Program has created an industry—producing new jobs and technologies—all while helping the most vulnerable families in America.

## ONE GOAL AT A TIME

“Joe” (name changed), a client of Lakes and Pines, successfully completed the Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Rapid Re-Housing program. This program helps in preventing homelessness.

Often times, due to high barriers some people face, housing options can be, and usually are, very limited. He is now able to have a safe place to see his children when they visit thanks to this program and his dedication. Joe set, achieved and exceeded his own goals. One of his goals was to obtain long - term employment. Joe started working in June 2019, and continued this same employment until recently when he advanced to a higher paying job.

Follow-up calls are routinely placed to clients after completion of Lakes and Pines programing. This particular call was so exciting as Joe shared he now has reliable transportation too. This had been a huge and ongoing obstacle. How exciting to learn of yet another major accomplishment achieved.

*What if we all had an Attitude of Gratitude?*

## CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP PARTNERS

Outdoor activities are encouraged at all Head Start Program locations. A couple of Child Care Partners have shared some of the ways they've improved their outdoor space to make playing outside more comfortable and fun for the kids.

At Pine Children's in Pine City, shade was needed for their play yard. They were able to purchase a Shade Shelter with the COVID-19 funds. The children are enjoying this new addition to their play yard. They use it for an outdoor dramatic play area and a science/sensory area with benches.

Little B's in Barnum received new dirt for their play yard with their COVID-19 dollars. The children are enjoying this new addition to their play yard, using it for digging and building castles. They have trucks, dump trucks and other toys for the dirt that they are enjoying very much.

In Milaca, the All Stars have brought leaves into the play yard for the kids to rake with child-sized rakes and have been enjoying fall activities. In the classroom they have been talking about apples: what color they are and how they feel and taste. Leaves have been used for printing or put in the sensory table. They've also been having discussions about trees and the type of trees the leaves come from. The teachers have received radios for communicating back and forth from the classroom to outside, which is a big help when a child's parent arrives for pick up.

Our Family Care Center Partner in Milaca, Happily Ever After, has started to talk about fall and what comes with it. In addition, they are adding a reading lesson to the curriculum which focuses on letter sounds, recognizing and deciding words. They are also going on letter hunts each week starting with "A". One activity they are doing is "All About Me". The children are creating self-portraits and journaling with them. They also talk about who makes up our families.

## DONATIONS



Arlene with her many warm and beautiful donations.

Lakes and Pines Head Start would like to thank Vern (right), Dona (photo unavailable), and Arlene (left) for the generous donations of handmade winter gear. They will be divvied up between our sites and distributed to families enrolled in the Head Start/Early Head Start Program. Winter is coming, so these items are not only timely, but will truly be appreciated by the children they keep warm in the upcoming cold months. Thank You all so much.



Head Start Director Tammy A. and Vern with his handmade creations.

## HANDMADE AND HEARTWARMING DONATIONS

Darla L. of Ogilvie is committed to helping her community. Lakes and Pines is honored that she shares that commitment by creating and donating hundreds, probably even thousands, of hand crocheted items to distribute to area residents. She has been donating handmade items to the agency for many years. Her recent donations, pictured here, filled 36 square feet of tabletop and all items are stacked three or four deep. This was a lot of work on her part and is an amazing amount of items.

She buys some yarn, and agency staff gather yarn for her now and again. Every few months her time and talent result in another large tote box full of mittens, hats, scarves, slippers and occasionally a blanket or doll.

Her creations this year have been divided into five portions. One each will go to the Carlton, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec and Pine Operation Community Connect events this fall. Neighbors facing challenging times are surprised, but grateful, to be offered a handmade item.

Darla's creations are appreciated by Lakes and Pines and the individuals who receive them. They provide warmth and comfort. It's heartwarming to staff and the recipients knowing that someone took the time, made the effort and thought of a way to make a stranger's life a bit more comfortable. Thanks Darla.



## HEAD START

Five years ago, I enrolled my children in Head Start. My daughter, four at the time and extremely shy, quickly warmed up to Kala, our first home visitor, *"because her hair looks like Anna's from Frozen."* We had many home visits, and several other home visitors over the following years, and in 2018, we got Kayle. My kids absolutely loved visits from Kayle. They learned so much from her, and I did too. When I asked my daughter, now nine, what her favorite memories of Head Start were, she said, *"I had a lot of fun making everything. We made rubber-flubber dough, volcanoes, Q-tips that zoom across water, and a lava lamp. I loved everything."* My son agreed with the rubber-flubber dough, and described how they tried to launch cars with the volcano. He said, *"I loved everything. All of the days."* They both agree that Kayle was very nice, and they were sad when she left.

I came to hold the program in high regard; I eventually applied for and got a job working for Lakes and Pines. It is interesting to see Head Start from the other side!

This past summer, my five-year-old son attended the Summer Program at the center, and on July 25<sup>th</sup>, he got off the bus from our last day of Head Start. It was bittersweet to be done with Head Start, in a way that watching your children grow can be, knowing Kindergarten is just around the corner. I am glad to retain my connection to this program, and so thrilled that I am now a co-worker to so many of the wonderful people who've been part of our lives for so long. Vanessa



## CHORE AND DELIVERY SERVICES

Back to the Basics: What can be more basic than getting grocery orders delivered to one's home? "Dawn" (Name Changed) thought this too as she called to get some assistance. We joked a bit as I asked questions that would help determine just what level of services she needed. "Do you have internet access and a computer?" I asked. "No" she replied, then asked "How do I know what to order?" Frankly this one stumped me for a bit, then I asked "How do you know what to buy when you go to the grocery store now?" She laughed and told me "Well, I just walk around the apartment building and when something smells good I knock on the door and ask what they are making or I wander around the grocery store and see what looks good to buy."

After that laugh, I pledged to dig deeper to assist customers with "what to buy", vowing to come up with an easier method to help customers shop via phone. My mind came up with all kinds of ideas; the most innovative, but not the most practical, was a scratch and sniff. This might work for the local Schwan's products but not necessarily for our Delivery program, so we settled on using the local ad that comes out weekly and get suggestions from there. Most stores with ordering programs keep record of previous orders so that was helpful to get started. "Dawn" has let me know that she really loves our weekly conversations and for the most part I even get the order correct; but I still need to learn how to virtually pick out the greenest bananas in the bunch. Maybe next time.....

*Thanksgiving Blessings to all*

## HOW CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

The answer is simple!

Volunteer to help your community by being part of the free Volunteer Income Tax Program (VITA). You can learn to prepare taxes and make a difference in your community at the same time.

If you are not comfortable preparing taxes that is okay; there are other positions available too.

You will receive training to provide free tax help for low-to-moderate income families who need assistance preparing their tax returns. As a volunteer, you will join the thousands of others who each year prepare millions of tax returns at thousands of tax sites nationwide.

How does this program work? As a committed tax volunteer you will first receive training. Training is offered both online and in the classroom. After training completion, you will choose which tax site(s) works best for you.

Tax sites are planned to be in McGregor, Milaca, Mora, Pine City, North Branch and virtually. The VITA program cannot exist without volunteers. Lakes and Pines is only able to assist as many individuals and families as volunteer capacity permits. We need you!

For additional information about the program, how to join our team, and next steps, you may call Lakes and Pines at 320-679-1800 option 4. You may also complete a VITA Interest Form located on the Lakes and Pines Facebook page or website: [www.lakesandpines.org](http://www.lakesandpines.org). You will be one step closer to becoming a VITA tax volunteer and giving back to your community.

## VETERANS DAY FACTS

Veterans Day originated as “Armistice Day” on Nov. 11, 1919, the first anniversary of the end of World War I. Congress passed a resolution in 1926 for an annual observance, and Nov. 11 became a national holiday beginning in 1938. Unlike Memorial Day, Veterans Day pays tribute to all American veterans—living or dead—but especially gives thanks to living veterans who served their country honorably during war or peacetime.

Veterans Day occurs on November 11 every year in the United States in honor of the “eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month” of 1918 that signaled the end of World War I, known as Armistice Day.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower officially changed the name of the holiday from Armistice Day to Veterans Day.

In 1968, the Uniform Holidays Bill was passed by Congress, which moved the celebration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. The law went into effect in 1971, but in 1975 President Gerald Ford returned Veterans Day to November 11, due to the important historical significance of the date.

Veterans Day commemorates veterans of all wars. Every Veterans Day and Memorial Day, Arlington National Cemetery holds an annual memorial service. The cemetery is home to the graves of over 400,000 people, most of whom served in the military. Thank you veterans for your service.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION

### **Lakes and Pines Head Start and Early Childhood Special Education: Partnerships That Advocate for All Learners**

Lakes and Pines’ Head Start Program takes pride in the partnerships it has in the seven county service area. Each partnership helps Head Start as a whole to work towards the Lakes and Pines Mission Statement.

The 26 school district partnerships which are maintained with Lakes and Pines Head Start are certainly no exception. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are the school districts which provide Early Childhood Family Education and Early Childhood Special Education. Each of the 26 LEA’s bring its own value and style in service to children and families in partnership with Head Start.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) partners in unique ways in each program and district. Some districts have ECSE teachers providing direct services in standalone centers. Others send paras or support staff to both child care partnerships and standalone centers. Still others provide busing for students who are enrolled in Head Start centers and also going to their school for Early Childhood Special Education. Each mode of partnership creates more opportunities for inclusion, community cohesion, and best of all, increased advocacy for all learners. Lakes and Pines Head Start, in partnership with each school district, walks alongside families through the screening, referral, evaluation and service provision for the special education process. Coordinating these services together, as a team, wrapping around the family and child, creates services which are more individualized, better tailored and the family has a whole team that reaches throughout their community to help them advocate for themselves and their children.

*Together, we can do better work.*

## SENIOR RESPITE SERVICES

The Lakes and Pines Respite program continues to meet virtually each week, helping caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tablets and limited internet services are loaned to those who do not have access to these electronic devices. Also, each participant receives a regularly mailed packet filled with craft projects, brain stimulating worksheets, along with jokes and riddles to enjoy.

Midsummer, a call came in from "Joe" (name changed). Joe is a 72 year old hardworking man who had been struggling with his wife who has dementia. *"I would come home from work to find "Sarah" (name changed) lying in bed crying and upset because she was so lonely and had no one to talk to during the day."*

Lakes and Pines recommended joining the respite program so Sarah could get the social interaction she was so used to having with neighbors and lifetime friends. An application was sent out and within a few short days Joe was enrolled as Sarah's caregiver. A tablet was loaned with written instructions on how to access the virtual meeting. Sarah has not missed one single meeting since and has made great new friends. Joe reports that Sarah now greets him at the door with a great big smile on her face showing him the craft she made and occasionally a joke or riddle she heard during the session that day. Joe recently called Lakes and Pines to express his gratitude for having found the virtual respite program. He is highly recommending it to his friends and family.

COVID-19 has had such a prominent impact on the senior population, with feelings of isolation and loneliness. If you are or know a caregiver who is struggling, please call Kelly G. at 1-800-832-6068 ext. 1902. Lakes and Pines' staff are always seeking to help caregivers in whatever capacity possible.

## WOULD YOU LIKE \$6,000 FOR FREE?

Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) program is a matched savings program that helps Minnesota resident low-wage earners build assets. Participants have four options for their asset track:

- \*purchase of a new home
- \*pursuit of a higher education
- \*launch or expansion of a small business
- \*purchase of a personal vehicle

This is accomplished by the participant depositing up to \$84 of their monthly earned income into a savings account. The participant has 24 months to save up to \$2,000. Upon successful completion of their contract agreement, participant savings may then be matched by the program at a rate of 3:1. That is a \$6,000 match! The participant has 30 months from their first deposit date or the end of the grant, whichever comes first, to complete their final payout and exit the program.

For more information, and to find out if you qualify, contact Lakes and Pines at 320-679-1800 option 4. Call today as limited spots are available.

← TRICK OR TREAT →

## SOCIAL SECURITY ELIGIBILITY

How does Social Security determine if I am eligible?

First of all, everyone should have an account set up with Social Security. To do this, go to: <https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount>. With your “My Account” you will be able to see if you are insured. If so, you can see what your retirement amount will be, and what your monthly payment would be if you were determined disabled now.



Social Security Disability Insurance has five steps to determine whether you are eligible to receive disability benefits. They start with SGA (significant gainful activity) which means if you are working, are you earning more than \$1,310 per month (for 2021)? If yes, it's an automatic denial, if no, go to step 2.

Step 2: Looks at your impairment; do you have a severe impairment? An impairment is considered severe if it significantly limits the applicant's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities for twelve months or longer. If your doctor or medical records support it is severe, you go to step 3; if not, it's a denial.

Step 3: Does the impairment meet or equal the listing? The adult listings are at: <https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/AdultListings.htm> If it doesn't meet the listing, do multiple impairments equal the listing? If not, go to step 4; if yes, you are approved.

Step 4: If you have to go to step 4, they look at whether the impairment allows you to do work like you have done in the past. If yes, it's a denial; if not, go to Step 5

Step 5: Asks if you can do any other work, and they are talking **any** other work, even jobs that are not in your local job market. If you could do any other job, it's a denial; if you cannot do any work at all, you are approved.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) also includes financial eligibility. As a single person, you cannot have more than \$2,000 in cash assets and limited resources.

Please call Lakes and Pines 1-800-832-6082, option 4, if you are interested in getting more information.

## MNSURE IMPORTANT DATES

MNSure is Minnesota's health insurance marketplace which is where Medical assistance, Minnesota Care and Qualified Health Plans can be found. Minnesota residents eligible for Medical Assistance or Minnesota Care may enroll at any time during the year. Qualified Health Plans (QHP) have open enrollment at the end of the year.

Open Enrollment starts November 1, 2021 and will end on January 15th, 2022. You may schedule a virtual appointment with Lakes and Pines to complete the enrollment process by calling 320-679-1800 ext. 178.

### **IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:**

November 1, 2021: Open Enrollment starts-first day you can enroll in a 2022 insurance plan through MNSure.

December 15, 2021: last day to enroll in or change plans for a qualified health plan with coverage starting January 2022.

January 15, 2022: Last day to enroll or change plans for new coverage to start February 1, 2022.

Lakes and Pines has navigators standing by to assist you in enrolling in MNSure. Please call 320-679-1800 ext. 178 to schedule your appointment.

## RENTHelpMN

Have you fallen behind on rent or utilities because of something related to COVID-19? Did you lose your job or have your hours cut back? Did you or a family member miss or lose work due to the COVID-19 illness? Maybe your kids were in school based learning at home, which resulted in higher utility costs or grocery expenses. Maybe you had to have the internet installed in your home or raised your current plan to accommodate data usage for online school or work. These circumstances and many more take money from your planned budget and can cause hardship.

RentHelpMN is a program which was created to help Minnesotans who have fallen behind on their rent or fear that could happen. Eligible Minnesota renters can receive help with rent and utility bills dated on or after March 2020. If qualified, help could be received for up to 15 months of total assistance. For more information regarding the program visit [www.renthelpmn.org](http://www.renthelpmn.org)

As of October 12, 2021 all lease termination and eviction protections were lifted except for eligible renters with pending COVID-19 rental assistance applications. This means to be protected from eviction due to non-payment, you must have already turned in a completed application.

Call 211 for questions on [renthelpmn](http://renthelpmn) or visit the website at: [www.renthelpmn.org](http://www.renthelpmn.org)



## SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARD

The Spirit of Community Award is to recognize an individual or group, who is not a “formal” partner with the agency, however is helping us to meet the Agency’s mission through their work.

An award recipient must display outstanding contributions through commitment of service or advocacy for lower income residents. Their work must positively affect the families and communities of the seven county area served by Lakes and Pines. They must show positive leadership, creativity, dedication and compassion.

Jim Townsend is the owner of Ace Heating and Air Conditioning located in Princeton, MN and is the recipient of the Lakes and Pines Spirit of Community Award for 2021.



Jim exemplifies the meaning of Community. He has established a program called Heat is On, which is designed for those unable to afford regular maintenance checkups on their heating systems. The program is especially for elders and veterans, providing services at no cost to the homeowner. Jim and his technicians perform maintenance and minor repairs, with parts provided from his vendors and volunteering their time to make his program a success. When a major issue is found and the heating plant needs to be replaced, he notifies Lakes and Pines and requests that his company is not included in the bidding process, as to remove any conflict of interest. Customers who receive these services are selected by the energy assistance providers (Lakes and Pines and Tri-CAP). Ace Heating and Air Conditioning contacts 25-30 individuals each year to receive the free service.

## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD



To receive this award an individual or group must make a significant, long lasting impact in the life of the community and its residents of the CAP area.

It recognizes volunteers that display dedication and passion for our mission. Their service for the lower income individuals and families is beyond service to one’s self.

Vernon Heineman has been visiting Lakes and Pines, bringing his hand crafted items, which he works on all year, for several years. Community children and families have benefited from the warmth of his colorful and beautifully created hats and mittens. It is a joyful day at Lakes and Pines when Vern stops in, bringing his many boxes of donations. His delightful smile and spirit is contagious. In a recent conversation, while a staff person was expressing appreciation for all of his hard work, he said "I just want to give back." We are grateful for Vernon's generosity and handiwork.



## ALLIES IN ACTION AWARD

The Allies in Action Award recognizes an individual or group who is a formal partner with our Community Action Agency. To be eligible for this award, the individual must demonstrate excellence in their partnership through exceptional quality service for the lower income consumers, again providing positive leadership through creativity, dedication and compassion.



Lakes and Pines recognizes Jennifer Thienes as a longtime partner through our Allies in Action Award. She is a leader in the nonprofit accounting and audit field. Her passion to teach, share and encourage others to become strong in their financial health is immeasurable. Lakes and Pines has had the pleasure to work with Jennifer during our annual agency audit in previous years and more recently as a consultant. We value her experience and the excitement she brings to fiscal financial education. Recently, she has helped the fiscal team strengthen their knowledge of nonprofit accounting. She has a terrific ability to guide and question to help us determine solutions to challenges and achieve our goals. Jennifer is kind, thoughtful and truly cares about Lakes and Pines' Mission. We are looking forward to continuing the partnership now and in the future.

## ROGER E. CORBIN AWARD WINNER



The Roger E. Corbin award recognizes a staff member who has served Lakes and Pines in an exceptional manner, whose performance and dedication has made a difference in the lives of others. The award recognizes outstanding performance and service to the community. This award recognizes an employee who goes above and beyond to support the Mission of the Agency and the individuals we work with.

This year's recipient has shown dedication and qualities that shine through each day. Debbie Bachman is an amazing person and deserves this honorable award for the excellence she has shown to Lakes and Pines and to all that we serve. Debbie started with the Agency in October 2004 and has served as a Certifier in the Energy Assistance Program for 17 years. Throughout her time, she has dedicated herself to helping new staff, clients that need additional assistance, answering questions, and in whatever other capacity she is needed. In addition to her dedication to clients and staff, she organizes Christmas Family deliveries. This is a tough project at times because there are a lot of working parts and deadlines to adhere to. She takes this all in stride and takes pride in being able to give to others who are in need. She is an amazing person with a big heart who is always ready to help if needed and is deserving of this honor.

## SILENT AUCTION FUNDRAISER



Lakes and Pines would like to extend a huge thank you to all the businesses, staff and individuals that so generously donated items for our annual Silent Auction Fundraiser. Due to COVID-19, this year's auction was held virtually and was a big success, raising over \$2000. Thank you bidders! Your support and donations are what made this fundraiser possible and successful. Pictured are just a couple of the items that were up for bids.





stands for "FOR YOUR INFORMATION." It is a quarterly newsletter provided to the area's officials, partners, Board Members 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  
lap@lakesandpines.org  
Equal Opportunity Employer

For the Agency to continue savings in postage, it is important to maintain current addresses on file.

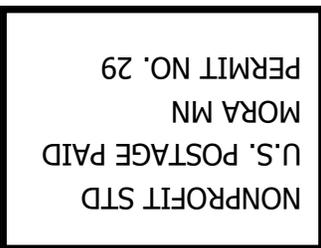
Please take a moment to review your address label and notify Lakes and Pines of any appropriate corrections.

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

Mail to: Agency Administration, Lakes and Pines CAC Inc., 1700 Maple Ave E., Mora MN 55051



LAKES AND PINES CAC INC  
1700 MAPLE AVE E  
MORA MN 55051  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED