



BOARD AND EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 2013

NEW DIRECTIONS

Not unlike most years, this past year Lakes and Pines was taken into a number of new directions. All too often Agencies are taken into directions not of their own free will and/or not of their choosing. This past year was a mixed bag in terms of directions, some of which were chosen for Lakes and Pines and others which were chosen by Lakes and Pines. Regardless of the origin of the change, each “new” direction can be said to have had a profound impact on communities and individuals in need.

It was important this year, as always, that changes and new directions honor and build on the past rather than be undertaken simply to escape the past. The success that Lakes and Pines has had in the past in serving the communities and individuals in the seven county service area has allowed us to be in a position to take some great risks in reaching out and trying new things.

This past year Lakes and Pines tackled two huge “elephants in the room” from as many Community Assessments that can ever be recalled. Those two new directions for the Agency were transportation, delivered through a car donation program, and health care addressed through our initial involvement in the Affordable Health Care Act and MNsure. Both of these areas for a long time seemed too monumental for Lakes and Pines to take on. One by choice and one by circumstance, this past year Lakes and Pines dipped more than a toe in the water in addressing both areas.

Other new directions this past year were taken in the areas of advanced technology, flood relief, housing and new kinds of community partnerships. All of this was done under a new plan, which rather than create a blueprint, provided a framework outlining the Agency’s strengths and possible challenges, tied new initiatives to our mission and analyzed risk vs. reward.

The Agency’s new measure of *Capacity for Strategic Response* puts into place, rather than a plan which is shelved at the first “crisis,” a strategy that allows the Agency to take on the new and unknown in a way of knowing what we can do and where our limitations might be.

Mission Statement

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

Bob Benes
Executive Director



Energy Myth Busters

From the Weatherization Department to help you save \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Energy Myth:

Turning down the thermostat doesn't save energy because it takes as much energy as was saved to reheat the house.

Fact:

The bigger the difference between indoor and outdoor temperatures, the faster heat escapes your house. So when you turn down the thermostat, the indoor temperature is closer to the outdoor temperature—you lose less heat—the furnace runs less—you save a lot of energy.

Energy Myth:

You need really hot water to sterilize dishes and clothes.

Fact:

Even at the hottest setting on your water heater, your dishes and clothes are not sterilized.

Energy Myth:

Turning on a light causes a "surge" of power, meaning it's better to leave a light on instead of turning it off when you know you will be using it again a short time later.

Fact:

A bulb that is on for one second uses one second's worth of electricity – no more, no less. This is true even for fluorescent bulbs –so turn lights off whenever they're serving no purpose.

Energy Myth:

Using hot water to flush grease down drains prevents clogging.

Fact:

Cold water helps solidify grease, preventing it from sticking to pipes. So save some hot water by using cold water to flush grease down drains and also through garbage disposals.

Energy Myth:

When air conditioning, setting the thermostat at a very low temperature will cool the house faster.

Fact:

It only causes the air conditioner to run longer, not cooler or "faster". A low setting causes the air conditioner to over shoot the desired temperature and wastes energy.



More people are eligible for WIC than you may think...



WIC participants receive...

Healthy foods like milk, cheese, cereal and eggs
Breastfeeding promotion & support
Infants who are partially or not breastfed may receive iron fortified formula



Nutrition & health information
Referrals to health and social services



For more information and for a clinic near you, call 1-800-WIC-4030

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/wic>

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ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM 2014 BEGINS

The 2013-2014 Energy Assistance Program (EAP) officially started October 1st, 2013. EAP helps low-income Minnesotans receive assistance with their heating and light bills throughout the winter months. The EAP Program also works with households to build their self-sufficiency skills by referring them to other programs that can help them become more self-sufficient.

The State of Minnesota has mailed 7,436 EAP applications to pre-logged households within the Lakes and Pines seven county area. As of October 8th, we have received 3,156 EAP applications. EAP Certifiers came back to work October 1st and are working hard to get all of the EAP applications processed in a timely and accurate manner.

There are several ways that a household can apply for the Energy Assistance Program. EAP applications will be available at each county's Family Resources Department. Households can request that EAP applications be mailed to them by calling Lakes and Pines at 1-800-832-6082, or they can print them off of the Lakes and Pines website at: www.lakesandpines.org.

We are hoping to receive funding for the program sometime in November. Once we receive funding, we will also be able to help households with energy emergencies and homeowners needing furnace repair or replacement. At this time, we are contacting households in emergency situations and referring them to outside resources that may be able to help them until funding is received for the Energy Assistance Program.



BIG Move for Head Start Partnership

Four years ago, the Lakes and Pines' Head Start program began partnering with child care providers in a new and innovative way. Taking a combination of the Special Start Option (center-based partnerships) and the Family Child Care Option, the Program created a new type of partnership where five children in the classroom are enrolled in both the licensed child care center site and the Head Start program. In these classrooms, the Program works with existing staff to offer the same curriculum in the classrooms that is used in Special Starts, Family Child Care, and 3-5 Home Based options.

This model began as a way to help licensed child care centers begin the process of partnering with Lakes and Pines and moving to a full partnership working agreement. For some sites, it was time to build up the clientele that would qualify for the Head Start Program; for others it was a chance to change programming to meet the standards that Head Start follows. The sites have a Child Care Lead visit weekly to coach them through the standards, help with educating and supporting best practices, mentoring classroom staff by role modeling adult-child interactions and offer endless resources. The goal for this option, known as the Child Care Partnership, is to become a full partner (Special Start) where 10-12 children are enrolled in Head Start and a Lakes and Pines employed teacher is in the classroom.

All We Can Be Child Development Center in Cloquet was one of the first Child Care Partnerships and as of September 16, 2013, became a full partner with Head Start. It is very exciting to move this partner to a full partnership. Many things fell into place for this to happen and the All We Can Be Board of Directors was committed and ready to move to the next level.

We hope to work with more sites in the future. Factors to consider when expanding this option is funding and community need. The Program will continue offering quality care through our Special Start option and is always open to exploring future partnerships with child care sites.

Lakes and Pines CAC, Inc. Provides Donated Vehicle to Mother in Aitkin County

“It is our mission to assist people in obtaining reliable transportation so they can get to work”

Lakes and Pines CAC, Inc. received a donated vehicle from a woman from North Branch, MN. This donation made it possible for Melinda, who was in need of reliable transportation to continue to actively job search and volunteer. She was referred to our program by an Employment Specialist from Aitkin County Workforce Center.

Melinda was very excited to receive this donation from the Vehicle Donation Program. She explained that the day she received the news that she was chosen to receive this donation she had been riding her bike 30 minutes prior and was praying that she would be able to receive a vehicle. Shortly after that moment, her prayers were answered. She was so excited that she was able to drive her son to school and explained that she was so thankful to finally have reliable transportation, especially with the seasons changing fast and winter being right around the corner.

This program can only continue to be a success if additional vehicles are donated. Help your neighbors continue to move forward with their goals to become self-reliant.

Contact Lakes and Pines, 1-800-832-6082, extension 115 or visit our website: www.lakesandpines.org for more information or if you have a vehicle to donate.



Pictured above, Melinda, Megan B. and Kari P.

Budgeting at Lakes and Pines CAC, Inc.

The Community Services Department offers a wide variety of services to the clients that we proudly serve. One of the many services offered is financial literacy and budgeting to help clients learn about better ways to manage their money.

Some clients feel they don't need budget counseling, just more money. After completing budget counseling, however, they are not only able to pay their rent on their own, but they are proud to see that they had money left over at the end of the month. After the counseling, they are able to write all their bills and monthly expenses down on paper and really look at where their money was being spent. This is the first step, where they begin to make changes in their spending and implement ways to start saving. At the end of sessions, we talk extensively about setting financial goals and they set financial goals for themselves. Follow up calls are made at 30, 60 and 90 days to check on their progress of reaching their goals. Most of the clients set a goal to create an "emergency fund" so that if their car breaks down or unexpected life events and bills come, they will be financially ready to tackle the issue without requesting assistance.

A recent client had increased income by picking up a second job, but still was behind on bills every month. Through participating in face-to-face budget counseling, the client was able to see exactly where the money was being spent, ways that they could save and even set a financial goal. They were thankful for the service that Lakes and Pines was able to assist with and cried saying; "If it wasn't for this service being offered, I would not have been able to feel as though I could get out of this financial rut I have been in for so long. I know I can do this on my own and it feels great!"



STRESS MANAGEMENT

This article is being reprinted with permission from Tim Burkhardt, Seven County Senior Federation:

A psychologist walked around a room while teaching stress management to an audience.

As she raised a glass of water, everyone expected they'd be asked the "half empty or half full" question. Instead, with a smile on her face, she inquired: "How heavy is this glass of water?" Answers called out ranged from 8 oz. to 20 oz. She replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute, it's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my arm. If I hold it for a day, my arm will feel numb and paralyzed. In each case, the weight of the glass doesn't change, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

She continued, "The stresses and worries in life are like that glass of water. Think about them for a while and nothing happens. Think about them a bit longer and they begin to hurt. And if you think about them all day long, you will feel paralyzed – incapable of doing anything."

Remember to put the glass down.....

FAMILY ASSETS FOR INDEPENDENCE IN MINNESOTA

The Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) program is a matched savings project to help Minnesota low-wage earners build assets through purchase of a home, pursuit of a higher education or launching of a small business.

This is accomplished by FAIM participants placing up to \$40 monthly savings from their earned income into a Family Asset Account (savings account) which will be matched 3-1 upon completion of asset contracts.

Matched savings are funded in part by the US Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Community Services; the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Office of Economic Opportunity; the McKnight Foundation and the Greater Twin Cities United Way.

The Mission Statement for the FAIM Program: *Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM), which are Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), enable people to escape poverty and achieve wealth through asset acquisition.*

It's easy to apply, simply contact the Community Services Department at Lakes and Pines or go to Minnesotafaim.com for more details.



Tax Assistance Program Needs Volunteers!!

Lakes and Pines provides FREE income tax preparation services through valuable, trained volunteers. It is again that time of year when we need your help.

Between our three sites in Milaca, Pine City and Mora, last year volunteers helped almost 700 families file their taxes and receive valuable tax credits and refunds of over \$1,000,000! We want to do even more this year!

We welcome any and all volunteers for the many duties needed to offer this valuable and much needed program. If you have a knack for numbers, some tax preparation experience, prepare your own taxes and/or have interest in helping others, we welcome your time and enthusiasm! This kind of work gives instant gratification, seeing first-hand how your hard work impacts our local home towns and communities.

There are day, evening and Saturday morning hours. If you can donate 4-6 hours a week or a month we would welcome your assistance.

Please contact Pam at 800.832.6082, ext. 185 or pamd@lakesandpines.org.

49th ANNUAL BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING

Lakes and Pines' 49th Annual Board Meeting, held on October 1st, 2013 was a huge success once again. 150 staff, Board Members, legislators and Agency supporters were all treated to dinner served at Bowe's in Mora and enjoyed local entertainment by comedian, Priscilla Mitchell. Priscilla involved many audience members, but one very special guest, Lynn Olson, shared her vocal gift, which was a real treat!

Throughout the evening a silent auction was held for the Power Action Leadership (PAL) fund. Lakes and Pines is grateful for the area businesses and individuals that generously donated many items. Bidders shopped items such as autographed sports memorabilia, tools, artwork, local gift certificates and much more. Over \$1,500 was raised to support PAL.

There was also business to attend to as Board Members participated in the Annual Meeting. Highlights included the election of Board officers and the Executive Committee selection. Lakes and Pines annual award winners were also introduced and recognized for their outstanding service within the community. Award winners included:

Spirit of Community Award: Allstar Childcare Center

Linn Otto has been a true collaborative partner with Lakes and Pines' Head Start for the past four years. Her commitment to helping low income families has shown through during the past year. Believing in helping those of lower income, Linn has worked with Head Start to expand the partnership, increasing the availability of services for lower-income children and families at her center. She also worked closely with Head Start to arrange a mobile dental unit to "set up shop" and encouraged all parents of children enrolled in her center, not just those in Head Start, to make an appointment to get their dental needs met. Families enrolled in the home-based option were also invited to have their children receive a dental exam. Linn is always looking for more ways to expand the partnership and to reach out to serving those in need. Possessing a true commitment to service and to those less fortunate, Linn's focus is in parallel alignment with the Lakes and Pines' mission.

Allies in Action Award: Greater Twin Cities United Way

Lakes and Pines Community Action Council, Inc. has three contracts with the Greater Twin Cities United Way. One is to provide outreach to persons and households that may be eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Support / Stamps Program. Another contract is to operate the Building Blocks for Success Program, which focuses on school readiness for eligible children in partnership with licensed child care centers and family child care providers, incorporating a high level of parent involvement. A third contract is to operate the Bright Beginnings Program, which provides year-round, comprehensive home-visiting programming for infants and toddlers, again with a high level of parent involvement.

The Greater Twin Cities United Way's work focuses on three areas: Stabilizing Families, Helping Children Succeed and Empowering Healthy Lives. Their comprehensive plan attacks poverty's root causes through measurable goals such as: reducing hunger, improving housing stability, increasing earnings, reducing domestic violence, supporting early childhood education, ensuring reading success, providing quality afterschool programming, providing health care access, increasing healthy behaviors and maximizing independence.

The willingness of the Greater Twin Cities United Way to assist Lakes and Pines in the two areas of reducing hunger and ensuring early childhood education has allowed over 7,400 individuals to access resources they need to become more self-sufficient and improve their chances of stepping out of poverty. Lakes and Pines is grateful to have developed a positive relationship with Greater Twin Cities United Way in order to work towards common goals and provide support and resources to those in need.

Volunteer Award: Kari Moe

Kari joined our audience via Skype from South Korea, where she is putting her talents and good heart to use, while her parents joined us live to accept the award on her behalf.

Dedication, commitment to helping others, and genuinely kind are common phrases that describe Kari. Kari began volunteering for Lakes and Pines EC&FD Department in the summer of 2012. Over the past year, she has dedicated over 300 hours of volunteer time doing various tasks and projects which greatly impacted the Head Start Program. Kari also spent time in other departments helping out wherever she was needed and was a frequent volunteer at the Tax Clinics, where her positive attitude and smile were welcoming to clients and other volunteers alike.

It is obvious that one of Kari's goals is to better the world, in whatever avenue that leads her. Kari has a very positive attitude, hopeful outlook and a willingness to try new things. She definitely has a heart for service to others. Lakes and Pines is much appreciative of the time Kari spent volunteering and views her contributions as immeasurable.

Roger E. Corbin Award: Dixie Danielson

Dixie has been committed to fulfilling the Lakes and Pines Mission since her first day on the job in July 2001. She has experience working in the Energy-Housing Department, the Early Childhood Department and her ultimate position in the Fiscal Department, using her talent with numbers to maintain the highest level of integrity with the programs she helps oversee. Her commitment is seen in her willingness to do whatever it takes to help those she works with be successful. Dixie's true value is seen in her interactions with other staff, where she is highly respected and appreciated. Her infectious laugh and humor make her a joy for all to be around and her ability to maintain a professional and positive attitude at all times and ability to produce high quality work in her position is an inspiration to her peers.

Lakes & Pines CAC Annual Report was also distributed at the Annual Meeting and is available on our website: www.lakesandpines.org.

HUNGER FREE MINNESOTA (HFMM) PLANNING GRANT

Hunger-Free Minnesota is a statewide campaign to fight hunger in our communities. It unites a coalition of business people, community leaders, government policy specialists, communities of faith, food banks, food shelves, aligned agencies and thousands of community members in a challenge to close the missing meal gap in every county in Minnesota.

The Hunger Free MN mission is to ensure that no Minnesotans go without food in their time of need. Minnesotans will work together to provide enough food for our neighbors who need it most. The Hunger Free MN goal is to close Minnesota's gap of 100 million missing meals, annually and sustainably, for Minnesotans in need by 2015.

In July Hunger Free Minnesota (HFMM) awarded Lakes & Pines a \$5,000 planning grant to be used in five months to develop a plan to build capacity and efficiently coordinate and collaborate Lakes & Pines' and emergency food providers' efforts, staff and ideas to reduce the number of missed meals and increase area food security.

County specific Missing Meals meetings were held in Aitkin, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine counties this quarter, as they have the greatest food insecurity in the seven county service area.

LAKES & PINES SEVEN COUNTY FOOD INSECURITY RATE					
Per 2011 Feeding America Data					
Area	Total # of Food Insecure People	% of Food Insecure Adults	Total # of Food Insecure Children	% of Food Insecure Children	Average Meal Cost
MINNESOTA	607,920	11.4%	209,830	16.6%	\$2.56
AITKIN	1,750	10.7%	580	19.7%	\$2.60
CARLTON	3,550	10.1%	1,370	16.6%	\$2.64
CHISAGO	4,490	8.4%	1,970	14.1%	\$3.26
ISANTI	3,530	9.3%	1,530	15.4%	\$2.61
KANABEC	1,930	11.8%	770	19.5%	\$2.54
MILLE LACS	3,240	12.4%	1,330	19.9%	\$3.01
PINE	3,470	11.7%	1,330	20.3%	\$2.57

At these meetings, a neutral facilitator provided by HFMM explained the data sets for each county, highlighting the number of missing meals, rate of food insecurity and also the number of meals in each county's food supply. These meetings were attended by area schools' food service directors, nurses and counselors, food shelf and food distribution site directors, senior dining site coordinators, county health and human services staff, senior service providers, faith based and other concerned community members to discuss specific needs and possible solutions to food insecurity.

Hunger Free MN and Greater Twin Cities United Way announced the availability of Implementation Grants to start the work required to reduce the number of missed meals. When applying for this grant, Community Services will collaborate with potential partners identified at the Missing Meals meetings to prioritize the strategies that will most efficiently reduce food insecurity and missed meals. If you are willing to work on reducing the number of missed meals in the area please contact the Community Services Department.

MNsure AND POSITIVE POINTS OF THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Open enrollment for MNsure started on October 1, 2013, and will begin covering folks on January 1, 2014. Lakes and Pines did not receive MNsure funding to provide extensive outreach, navigation or in-person application assistance, but is a Consumer Assistance Partner of MNsure. As a MNsure Consumer Assistance Partner, staff are trained as Certified Navigators.

Certified Navigators are:

- Persons who help individuals and families achieve successful enrollments into health plans through the MNsure marketplace;
- Listed on the MNsure website;
- Obligated to help any consumer that contacts them for assistance.

Navigators are not insurance agents or brokers. They help people work through the process of applying and enrolling. They cannot give advice as to which policy someone should purchase. With limited funding, Lakes and Pines' certified navigators will be able to assist a limited number of people each month. Overflow callers will be placed on the Lakes and Pines MNsure waiting list or will be referred to other MNsure certified agencies for assistance. While there may be some points of the Affordable Care Act that some don't agree with, there are a number of positive points:

- Insurers will no longer be able to put a lifetime cap on the amount of benefits you will receive;
- Will not be able to drop you or not cover you if you have a pre-existing condition;
- Will be prohibited from charging you more based on your gender;
- Insurance companies are required to spend 80 cents of your premium dollar on health care or improvements to care;
- Young adults, under 26, can stay on their parents' health plan;
- All new health plans must cover preventive services ranging from mammograms to FDA approved birth control and vaccinations, with no co-pay or deductible.

Additional MNsure information can be found at www.lakesandpines.org and <http://www.mnsure.org>.



Lakes and Pines on Facebook!

Want to know what's new at Lakes and Pines? "Like" Lakes and Pines Facebook page to find out what is happening at the Agency. You will get details on programs, volunteer opportunities and links to other services.

You can help yourself, the people you serve, friends or even family members. The three "Small Cities Grants" have had over 600 views each! Check it out; you may be eligible for some home repair assistance. Suggest your friends "like" Lakes and Pines Facebook page. We have some exciting services to help folks get out of poverty, which actually need more participation!

School Readiness Goals for Infants and Toddlers?

It's All About Relationships!

In the past year, Lakes and Pines 0-3 Head Start Program has been working on establishing school readiness goals for the wee ones that we work with. The process has been daunting at times, but in the end we feel we have moved our Program toward better outcomes for children.

You may be asking "What kind of kindergarten goals can you set for a newborn?" The simple answer is found in relationships. The ability to bond and attach to a caregiver or lack of it is directly related to that child's chances of school success.

In order for healthy brain development to occur, a child must have a secure base from which to explore their world. This secure base is typically found in their relationships with their parent and other caregivers. When a child knows that there is a loving, consistent person cheering them on and there for them when they fail, they are able to explore freely. If a child does not have that base because of inconsistent caregiving, their natural tendency to explore is blocked and brain development is slowed. It is with this understanding that the 0-3 Head Start Program's focus has always been on the parent-child relationship. That focus was reinforced as we began our search for an appropriate assessment tool for tracking infants and toddlers school readiness goals. In the end, the tool that was chosen was the OUNCE SCALE assessment. It places a high value on the social emotional growth of children starting with the parent- child relationship.

The OUNCE SCALE assessment tool covers four main areas of development: Social/Emotional (being the largest focus), Communication and Language, Cognitive and Physical. These areas align with the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. By using the OUNCE Scale, the Program is able to affect children's development on three levels. First, as children are assessed, parents are given specific feedback on how they are progressing and are directly included in setting targeted goals. Second, the home visitors are better able to tailor their interactions and planning with the families based on assessment outcomes and goals set. Third, the assessment tool provides data that reflects how the Program is doing overall at the administrative level. This allows us to respond with training and materials to better meet the needs of the families we serve. We can also use the data to report to our State funder, the MN Department of Education, as to how the Program is doing.

We began using the OUNCE SCALE in July of 2013, and are excited to see where it takes our Program. If you would like to know more about the OUNCE SCALE and/or Lakes and Pines 0-3 School Readiness Goals, feel free to contact Kelly Kehr, 0-3 coordinator, at (320)-679-1800 ext. 142.



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

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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:**
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