

DECEMBER NEWS



As we look ahead to 2025, we're thrilled to celebrate 50 years of empowering lives and making a difference in our community! Be sure to watch for our January Newsletter as we kick off this milestone year!

Exciting Update

NEW PATIENT LIFTS ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY ACROSS OUR AGENCY

We are thrilled to announce that, thanks to the generous support of a grant from UCare, our agency has successfully received and deployed four new patient lifts and four powered toilet lifts within our agency. These lifts will be strategically deployed in areas with the highest need, ensuring that those requiring immediate access to mobility support have the assistance they need.

This initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to improving the quality of life for the individuals in our care, particularly as many face complex and evolving mobility needs. As the individuals with developmental disabilities we serve age and experience changes in their functional abilities, these lifts will help support their independence and preserve their dignity. Whether it's assisting with transitioning between spaces or supporting basic activities, these lifts play a vital role in preventing injury and enhancing safety, both for residents and staff.

While some individuals may eventually secure their own personal equipment, many will benefit from short-term access to these lifts. This ensures that the equipment is continually circulated and maximally utilized, allowing us to serve a larger number of individuals with varying needs. This approach not only optimizes resource allocation but also reduces redundancy, contributing to the environmental and economic sustainability of our operations.

With these new lifts now in place, we are bridging a critical gap for those we serve. This proactive approach ensures that those in immediate need of mobility assistance can move freely and safely, while also ensuring our staff can provide support with confidence and reduced risk of injury.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to UCare for their generous grant, which has made this initiative possible. Their support not only addresses immediate mobility needs but also strengthens our agency's long-term ability to improve the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities. This grant will have a lasting impact, fostering an environment where everyone, regardless of mobility challenges, can live with dignity and independence.

For more information on how you can support our efforts, please reach out. Together, we can continue to make a difference in the lives of those who need it most.



GETTING TO KNOW THE AGENCY

Policy Review Committee

The Policy Review Committee plays a crucial role in ensuring that all policies of Home and Community Options, Inc. are formulated to align with the corporation's mission and comply with regulatory standards. This committee is comprised the Board Vice President, the Board Secretary, and a minimum of one additional Board Member.

The Policy Review Committee carries out several key functions essential to the effective governance of Home and Community Options, Inc. Firstly, it is responsible for establishing a robust system for the periodic review of all corporate policies. This entails ensuring that each policy undergoes at least an annual evaluation to assess its relevance and effectiveness in meeting the organization's objectives.

Secondly, the committee plays a vital role in offering recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding necessary changes to existing policies. Through thorough review and analysis, the committee identifies areas where policy adjustments may be required to enhance operational efficiency or address emerging challenges.

Additionally, the Policy Review Committee reviews policy change suggestions forwarded by other committees within the organization. By carefully considering these proposals, the committee provides valuable input to the Board of Directors, helping to inform decisions regarding policy alterations that may impact various aspects of Home and Community Options, Inc.'s operations.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Policy Review Committee contributes significantly to maintaining the integrity of Home and Community Options, Inc.'s operations, safeguarding its alignment with organizational objectives and regulatory requirements. We extend our sincere gratitude to all committee members for their dedication and contributions to the organization's success.

Q & A

with Amanda



1. What is your name? My name is Amanda.

2. Where do you live? How long have you lived there? I live in Winona at one of HCO's homes. I have lived here for 22 years!

3. Where do you work? I work in retail at Kwik Trip. I help stock shelves and make sure the store is looking nice and clean!

4. What do you like to do on your free time? I enjoy watching TV, coloring, doing word searches and reading. I love reading books written by Corey Ann Haydu.

5. What is your favorite tv show/movie? I love Ghost Busters and Star Trek.

6. Do you have a favorite band/song? My favorite singers are Maroon 5, Arianna Grande and Selena Gomez.

7. What meals do you like to cook? Fridays are my days that I cook! My favorite meals are definitely Italian or Mexican foods!

8. Where do you like to go out to eat? Subway and Culvers are my two favorite places to get food!

9. Do you like to exercise? I go on the exercise bike at our house for 30 minutes every day!

10. What is your favorite holiday? I love Christmas and Valentines Day. But really all the holidays are my favorite!

11. What is your favorite season? I love Spring and Summer so I can go outside and enjoy the warmth!

12. Tell us about growing up and your family. Do you spend a lot of time with them? I was born in the Twin Cities but later moved here and went to Winona Senior High. I still stay connected with my family by going home for dinner every Tuesday night!

13. Do you have any goals for the future? My goal is to live a healthier lifestyle.

14. What do you like about HCO? I love HCO because the staff is so nice to me. HCO also brought me to my boyfriend so I am thankful for that. We have been together for 7 years!

A HEARTFELT HOLIDAY PERFORMANCE

Join us for an afternoon of soothing Christmas music performed by the talented Heart Strings Harp Ensemble. This special concert will serve as a fundraiser to support the important work of Home and Community Options.

Heart Strings is a cherished group of folk harp players who bring their unique artistry to special events throughout the year. Known for their calming and low-key performances, their concerts offer a peaceful escape—a perfect opportunity to pause and recharge during the busy holiday season.

We warmly invite you to this event, held on **Sunday, December 22nd, at 2:00 PM, at Wesley United Methodist Church**, located at Main and 6th Street. Admission is free, and a free-will offering will be collected, with all proceeds going directly to benefit Home and Community Options.

Bring your friends and family to experience the soothing sounds of the season while supporting a great cause. We look forward to sharing this special afternoon with you!



HEALTH SERVICES *update*



WELCOME TO HCO

As our Health Services Department continues to expand, we are thrilled to welcome Jennifer Augustine as a new part-time nurse in our agency. We are excited to collaborate with Jennifer and work together to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. Welcome aboard, Jennifer - we're glad to have you with us!

Living with Purpose

(SERVANT LEADERSHIP)

SERIES THREE: SKILLED COMMUNICATOR

In our October newsletter, we launched the "Living with Purpose" series to explore our servant leadership initiative. The program highlights seven key traits of effective servant leadership: being a person of character, putting people first, being a skilled communicator, being a compassionate collaborator, having foresight, being a systems thinker, and leading with moral authority.

This month, we focus on the trait of being a Skilled Communicator. A skilled communicator listens with empathy, creates a safe space for open dialogue, and frames feedback as an opportunity for growth. They celebrate achievements and align their messages with others' values and goals, inspiring engagement without relying on authority.

In the workplace, managers can hold one-on-one meetings or implement peer recognition programs. In everyday life, a friend can listen attentively, or a community leader can host forums to gather input from residents.

Putting It into Practice: Real-Life Examples at Our Agency

At our agency, we make skilled communication a cornerstone of our interactions, both professionally and personally. For instance, Arielle, a coordinator in one of our programs, ensures staff meetings are both engaging and informative. By clearly explaining the "why" behind support plans, she builds trust and empowers her team. Arielle also holds one-on-one meetings with staff, offering personalized feedback that fosters a supportive, respectful atmosphere. Our peer recognition program further encourages staff to acknowledge one another's contributions, strengthening collaboration and morale. Arielle's engaging training sessions not only ensure staff understand complex material but also inspire them to take initiative. Beyond formal settings, our team members practice active listening and empathy in everyday interactions, creating a nurturing, cohesive environment.

By prioritizing skilled communication, we foster a workplace where everyone feels valued, respected, and motivated to contribute to our shared mission. As we continue to develop these skills, let's remember the profound impact we can have by listening deeply, offering constructive feedback, and celebrating each other's successes. Together, we can create environments—both at work and in our communities—where everyone feels heard, valued, and inspired to do their best.

CELEBRATING IMPACTFUL CONTRIBUTIONS AT THE HCO

Friends Event

At Home and Community Options (HCO), we are deeply committed to enhancing the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities, and this November, we had the privilege of honoring some extraordinary individuals and organizations that have made a lasting impact on our community. During our HCO Friends Event, we presented three prestigious awards to recognize the tireless efforts of those who help us build a more inclusive, supportive, and compassionate world for all.

HCO's Neighbor Award: **Honoring Richard Burmeister**

The HCO Neighbor Award recognizes individuals or organizations whose contributions have been pivotal in enriching resources for individuals with developmental disabilities. This year, we were honored to present the 2024 HCO Neighbor Award to Richard Burmeister, an extraordinary individual whose unwavering support has made a profound difference in our community.

Dick's journey with HCO began many years ago when his brother received our services. From that moment, Dick became a dedicated ally in the fight for the rights, dignity, and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities. His generous donations have allowed us to provide vital resources, and his advocacy has empowered countless families facing significant challenges. Dick's kindness, integrity, and wisdom inspire everyone who knows him.

His life truly exemplifies the essence of being a good neighbor—embracing empathy, understanding, and an unshakeable commitment to making the world a better place. We are deeply grateful for Dick's continued dedication to our mission and are proud to present him with this well-deserved honor.



Community Builder Award: **Celebrating Valley Transport**

The Community Builder Award is given to individuals or organizations who selflessly dedicate their time and talents to foster a stronger, more inclusive community. This year, the award was presented to Valley Transport, a business that has gone above and beyond in supporting individuals with developmental disabilities through their transportation services.

Valley Transport has been a crucial partner in our mission, not just by providing reliable rides, but by treating every individual they serve with respect, kindness, and care. Their drivers make a point of engaging with passengers, listening to their stories, and ensuring they feel valued. Whether they're walking someone to the door or waiting patiently, Valley Transport goes the extra mile to make sure individuals are safe, comfortable, and respected.

This exceptional service extends beyond just the ride—it's about building a sense of trust and community. On behalf of all of us at HCO, and especially the individuals whose lives are positively impacted every day, we proudly presented the Community Builder Award to Valley Transport for their outstanding contributions to our community.



Self-Advocate Award: **Honoring the Legacy of Nicole Mosher**

The Self-Advocate Award recognizes individuals who have used their voices to advocate for change and inspire others. This year, we honored Nicole Mosher, a remarkable woman whose legacy of advocacy continues to inspire us all.

Nicole, who passed away just over a year ago, was a tireless advocate for accessibility and equality. Despite her own disabilities, she never allowed them to define her or prevent her from speaking up for those who needed a voice. Whether addressing issues at HCO or engaging with city officials and state legislators, Nicole worked relentlessly to break down barriers and ensure a better world for people with disabilities.

Her advocacy was instrumental in improving accessibility, from better bathroom facilities at HCO to more accessible voting stations and bus stops in Winona. She even made her voice heard at the Minnesota Capitol, advocating for better funding for Direct Support Professionals and advocating for legislative changes to support her ability to live with her husband at Iverson Court.

Although Nicole was quiet, her impact was profound. Her courage and determination have left a lasting mark on our organization and the broader community, and we will always remember her legacy of self-advocacy and strength.



Each of these awards highlights the powerful role that individuals and organizations can play in creating a more inclusive and compassionate society. We are proud to honor Richard, Valley Transport, and Nicole for their outstanding contributions. Their dedication enriches the lives of so many and reminds us all of the power of kindness, advocacy, and community. Thank you for your continued support of Home and Community Options, and for helping us build a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

Celebrating Compassion

Local Heroes Awarded for their Support of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

In a heartwarming ceremony held in early November, we gathered for the Providers' Network, Inc. Good Neighbors Banquet to celebrate individuals across southeastern Minnesota who go above and beyond to support individuals with developmental disabilities.

Home and Community Options was honored to recognize two remarkable champions of kindness: Kwik Trip, a beloved local business, and Mary Jansen, a dedicated volunteer. Both have made significant strides in fostering inclusivity and compassion for individuals with developmental disabilities, earning them the prestigious Providers' Network, Inc. Good Neighbors Award.

Kwik Trip has long been more than just a convenience store; it has become a cornerstone of community spirit. Since opening its doors, the establishment has worked tirelessly to create an environment where everyone feels welcome. Staff members consistently go above and beyond to ensure that all individuals feel valued and included. Their commitment shines through in everyday acts of kindness, such as checking in on individuals who may have been missed for a while or offering comfort during times of loss. In an era where many rush through their daily routines, Kwik Trip stands out as a beacon of genuine care for the individuals that we support.

After dedicating many years to HCO before her retirement, Mary Jansen remains an inspiring figure in our community. Her unwavering commitment has enriched the lives of many, especially for one individual who has greatly benefited from her kindness. From organizing joyful birthday parties to planning outings for pizza and milkshakes, Mary created countless cherished memories and brought happiness and connection into the lives of those around her. Her nightly phone calls not only provided companionship to her friend, but also fostered a deep bond that many aspire to achieve. She provided essential support with transportation and shopping and played a pivotal role in helping her friend plan his retirement, helping to ensure that his dreams were realized. Mary's selflessness extended even into life's most difficult times, when she helped plan his funeral when he unexpectedly passed away.

The PNI Good Neighbor Award presented to both Kwik Trip and Mary Jansen serves as a testament to their inspiring dedication to uplifting those in our community. They remind us that the impact of compassion and kindness can ripple through the lives of many, creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals with developmental disabilities.

As we celebrate their achievements, let us carry the spirit of these local heroes into our daily lives. Together, we can foster a community where everyone is valued and included.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Mary, Kwik Trip, and all those who provide support and friendship to those in our care. Whether spending time with individuals, serving on committees, or just offering a friendly smile and a hello, your thoughtfulness and compassion are truly appreciated. It is because of individuals and committed partners like you that we can continue to provide vital support to our friends and neighbors with developmental disabilities, enabling everyone to thrive in our Winona community. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.



a very special thank you **TO OUR DONORS**

We extend our deepest gratitude to each of you who have generously supported Home and Community Options. Your commitment to our mission of empowering individuals with developmental disabilities has made a profound impact on the lives of those we serve. Whether through financial contributions, volunteering your time, or sharing our story, your dedication inspires us every day and allows us to provide essential services and opportunities that promote independence, dignity, and community inclusion.

We are especially grateful to the Winona Lions for hosting a wonderful fundraising event earlier this fall. Their generosity in donating 50% of the proceeds to Home and Community Options—and using the other 50% to support their own meaningful projects—is a testament to their community spirit and dedication to making a difference.

We also want to recognize Merchants Bank, whose partnership and steadfast support over the years have been instrumental in helping us grow and sustain our programs. Their ongoing generosity continues to be a source of strength for our organization.

Your unwavering support is a testament to the compassion and generosity of our donors. Because of you, we can continue to create meaningful programs, offer vital resources, and ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities are empowered to live fulfilling lives.

On behalf of the entire Home and Community Options family, thank you for standing beside us and believing in our vision. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive community, and we couldn't do it without you.



RECENT

Healthy Lifestyles

On December 9th, our Healthy Lifestyles group gathered for a delightful evening filled with holiday cheer! Together, we decorated festive cookies, created a fun holiday craft, and enjoyed the sounds of seasonal music. There was also an exciting drawing, giving two lucky individuals the chance to win a special holiday prize. The winners were Fawna and Jon!

It was a wonderful opportunity to come together, share laughter, and connect before the busy holiday festivities begin.



Making Memories AT THE MALL OF AMERICA

The ladies from our 1450 program recently enjoyed a fantastic outing to the Mall of America! They kicked off their day with coffee from Dunn Brothers, followed by lunch at the food court. Each lady treated herself to a little something special from the shops, making it a fun and memorable experience.

We extend a heartfelt thank you to Jenna's sister, Evon, for her generous donation, which helped make this wonderful day possible. Moments like these create lasting memories, and we are so grateful these ladies had the opportunity to spend time together, explore, and enjoy the nation's largest mall!



HOME & COMMUNITY OPTIONS HOLIDAY PARTY

This month, Home and Community Options hosted a joyful holiday party to celebrate and show gratitude for our amazing staff. The evening began with a touching recognition ceremony, where we honored employees celebrating significant work anniversaries—a moment to commend their dedication and hard work. We also recognized our entire board of directors, with special appreciation for two members retiring this month. Additionally, we celebrated two exceptional employees who retired in 2024.

Following the ceremony, attendees enjoyed a delicious dinner and lively music, creating a warm and festive atmosphere for conversation and connection. Some guests even hit the dance floor, adding extra energy and fun to the evening!

This gathering was a wonderful opportunity to come together, relax, and enjoy each other's company outside of the workplace. To all our HCO staff, thank you for your unwavering commitment and all you do to help our organization thrive!



special THANK YOU

This holiday season, Home and Community Options was delighted to bring back the Friendship Tree! This cherished tradition provides a meaningful way to brighten the holidays for individuals who might not otherwise receive a gift.

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in this year's Friendship Tree. Your generosity and kindness will make a real difference, bringing joy and warmth to someone's day.

We are truly grateful for your support and for embodying the spirit of giving this holiday season. Thank you for helping us spread cheer and make this time of year extra special!





spreading HOLIDAY CHEER

The holiday spirit is alive and well at the 745 program! At a recent staff meeting, the group kicked things off with a fun and festive activity—building gingerbread houses. The room was filled with laughter and creativity as everyone got into the holiday mood.



To make the moment even more magical, an unexpected treat came when members of St. Mary's Seminary stopped by to share the joy of the season with beautiful holiday carols. Their heartfelt performance brought smiles to everyone's faces and truly set the tone for a cheerful and festive atmosphere.



The holiday excitement didn't stop there! Staff and individuals at the program joined forces to bake cookies and craft more gingerbread houses together. Carol had a wonderful time designing her gingerbread house. It was a delight to see her imagination come to life as she built her masterpiece.

Moments like these remind us how special the holidays are—a time to come together, celebrate, and make memories that warm the heart.



Since 1975, Home and Community Options (HCO) has been dedicated to supporting individuals with developmental disabilities, helping them live, work, and thrive in their communities. This year, HCO expanded its services, including enhanced respite care, to meet the growing needs of the community. However, with an aging population and rising demand for care, challenges remain, including resource shortages and the need for home modifications to ensure safety and accessibility. As funding remains limited, we ask for your support this holiday season to help sustain and expand HCO's programs, ensuring that those in our care continue to receive the support they deserve. Together, we can make a lasting impact and transform lives.

There are so many different ways that you can support HCO! Whether it's material donations, volunteer time or purchasing a gift for our Friendship Tree (click the button for more information), there's numerous ways to give back! Click below for more details.

[DONATE NOW](#)

If you'd like your donation to be included in your 2024 records, **we kindly ask that all checks be delivered to the Home and Community Options Central Office by 3:00 PM on December 30th.** This ensures we can process your contribution in time.

Your generosity makes a meaningful impact on the work we do, and we are deeply grateful for your support. Thank you for helping us make a difference!

HCO

**HOME & COMMUNITY
OPTIONS**

Mission

To empower and support people with developmental disabilities

Vision

For everyone to thrive and be valued members in their community

Core Values

- Respect for all people and their differences
- Quality services that balance independence with safety and security
- Opportunities for all individuals to learn, build meaningful relationships, and enjoy life