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TIM'S STORY FINDING HOME AT HCO

For Tim, Home and Community Options has been part of his life for many years. He lived in his own house while receiving support services from HCO, building a life and routine that were familiar and comfortable to him. Then, his support needs changed, and in 2021, he made the move into an HCO home.

It was a significant transition. Leaving his house and adjusting to a new living environment wasn't easy at first. But with time, what began as a difficult change became the beginning of a great new chapter.

Today, Tim says the move has made his life better, safer, and less lonely. Through the relationships he has built with staff, he has developed trust and a sense of comfort. He appreciates being able to make his own choices while having the support he needs to live a life that is meaningful to him.

And it's often the everyday moments that make a house feel like home.



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DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL *recognition week*

SEPTEMBER 13TH - SEPTEMBER 19TH



This week, we're celebrating Direct Support Professional (DSP) Recognition Week! DSPs are the backbone of our agency, whether they're helping with daily cares, supporting community involvement, or being a steady source of encouragement. Their dedication and compassion make an incredible difference every single day. Join us in showing appreciation and support for our DSPs, they truly deserve it!



FRIDAY SEPT. 18

100% OF PROCEEDS
BENEFIT CHARITIES

**HOME & COMMUNITY
OPTIONS**



Annandale
VILLAGE



The Joseph Sams School
Serving Children With Special Needs

TIDAL WAVE CHARITY DAY

We're pleased to partner with Tidal Wave Auto Spa again this year for their annual Charity Day on Friday, September 18, 2026!

This special one-day event brings the community together to support local nonprofit organizations, and we're grateful to be one of the organizations benefiting from this year's event. Stop by Tidal Wave Auto Spa at 1037 Frontenac Dr. in Winona on September 18 to get a wash and support Home and Community Options!

We're thankful to Tidal Wave for continuing to partner with HCO and support our mission of empowering individuals with disabilities to live meaningful lives in their communities.



GRASSROOTS
Advocacy Task Force

GRASSROOTS Advocacy Task Force

Grassroots Advocacy Task Force Begins a New Year

The Grassroots Advocacy Task Force is back for another year!

Individuals we support and HCO staff came together on August 20th for the first meeting of the 2026–2027 session. The group began the year by learning more about democracy and asking a simple but important question: Why is it important to be an active citizen?

What Is Democracy?

The group talked about some of the basic ideas of democracy:

- Rule by the people: People have the power to choose their leaders. Power does not belong to one person or a small group.
- Voting: People choose their leaders by voting in fair and regular elections.

- Rights and freedoms: People have important rights, such as freedom of speech and the freedom to share their opinions.
- Equality: Everyone is important and should be treated fairly under the law.

Why Be an Active Citizen?

Being an active citizen means taking part in your community and using your voice. There are many ways to do this. You can vote, learn about what is happening in your community, volunteer, attend local meetings, or speak up about issues that matter to you.

The group talked about how active citizens can help make their communities stronger. When people pay attention and speak up, elected leaders know they are responsible for the decisions they make. When people get involved in local projects and meetings, they can help find solutions to problems in their own communities. Being involved can also help protect people's rights and make sure everyone has a voice. When community members take part, they can help make sure laws and decisions consider the needs of everyone, not just a small group of people.

Why Does Voting Matter?

The group also talked about why voting is important. The choices made by elected leaders can affect our everyday lives, including local services, laws, budgets, and how community resources are used.

Voting gives people a chance to choose who represents them and have a say in decisions that affect their lives. It is one important way to make your voice heard and take part in your community.

The meeting ended with an opportunity for those who wanted to participate to complete the Winona Transportation Survey. The survey is open to anyone who would like to share their experiences and ideas about transportation in our community.

The Grassroots Advocacy Task Force will continue meeting throughout the fall to hear legislative updates, learn more about the candidates in this fall's elections, take part in a voting workshop, and review the election results. As the group moves into the new year, members will continue learning, sharing their ideas, and finding ways to be involved in their community.

Let's keep learning, speaking up, and working together to make a difference!

Sisters Finding Purpose **TOGETHER AT HCO**

For sisters Grace and Mackenzie Wenger, working at Home and Community Options (HCO) has become more than just a job. It has given them an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others, grow in ways they never expected, and share experiences that have brought them even closer as sisters.



Growing up in Fountain City, Wisconsin, Grace and Mackenzie have always shared a close bond. Grace enjoys hiking, spending time outdoors with her two dogs, and being with family and friends. Mackenzie loves being outside, spending time on the river, relaxing with her cats, and making memories with the people she loves.

Grace joined HCO in 2023 after hearing friends speak highly of their experiences working for the organization. Their stories about the meaningful relationships they built and the rewarding work they were doing inspired her to apply.

"After almost three years here, I can honestly say they were right," Grace said. "HCO has given me so many opportunities to grow while doing work I truly enjoy."

Grace's experience at HCO eventually inspired Mackenzie to follow in her footsteps. After hearing her sister and other friends talk about the relationships they had built and the difference they were making, Mackenzie decided to join HCO in 2024.

"My sister always talked about the relationships she had built with the individuals she supported and how much she loved coming to work," Mackenzie said. "It made me want to experience it for myself."

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HCO'S AGENCY PICNIC



On September 10th, HCO hosted its annual agency picnic at LaCanne Memorial Park! It was a beautiful evening filled with good food, great music, fun activities, and time spent together with HCO individuals, families, friends, and staff.

Everyone enjoyed a delicious pork sandwich dinner from Steak Shop, along with fresh popcorn made right at the park. A special thank-you to Steak Shop for donating the popcorn machine for the evening! Guests could also enjoy fun activities throughout the evening, including hair chalk, temporary tattoos, and face painting. We were also treated to wonderful live music from Jack Norton, which helped make the evening even more memorable.

It was the perfect way to wrap up summer 2026 and enjoy time together as an HCO community. Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make this year's picnic such a great success!

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

TIE-DYE & WATER GAMES



In August, the Healthy Lifestyles group gathered at LaCanne Park to enjoy an evening of creativity, outdoor fun, and the last days of summer. Everyone got creative with tie-dye, making headbands, scrunchies, and drawstring bags, while some even brought their own T-shirts to personalize. There was plenty of excitement as everyone waited to see how their colorful creations turned out! The fun continued with water games, including reusable water balloons and squirt guns. Others simply enjoyed spending time outdoors, soaking up the warm weather and enjoying the beautiful evening at the park. It was a fun way to come together, get creative, and make the most of summer!

MORE THAN A JOB:

The Heart of Being a Direct Support Professional

This week, as we celebrate DSP Appreciation Week, we are taking a moment to recognize some of the Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who make a difference every day at Home and Community Options (HCO).

DSPs play an important role in helping people with developmental disabilities live meaningful, self-directed lives. Their work can look different every day. They may help someone learn a new skill, encourage independence, support health and well-being, help someone get involved in their community, or simply be there to share in the everyday moments that make life meaningful.

Being a DSP is about much more than completing a list of tasks. It is about building relationships, earning trust, recognizing potential, and celebrating the progress that may sometimes come in the smallest of moments. While every DSP has a different story and reason for choosing this work, they share a common desire to support others and make a positive impact.

For Emmalyn, becoming a DSP was inspired by seeing the difference she could make in people's lives. Watching individuals enjoy their communities and accomplish their goals motivated her to become part of that journey. One of her most memorable experiences was helping an individual develop their fine motor skills and watching their confidence grow.

"Seeing the smile on their face when they accomplish something is all I need to remind myself of why I do this work." — Emmalyn



For Vesna, helping others has been a lifelong calling. She began volunteering in a nursing home as a teenager before becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant and later pursuing nursing. After taking time away to raise her family and focus on her health, she found HCO nearly four years ago and rediscovered the passion that first inspired her. Caring for her own mother during a difficult illness also reinforced the importance of compassion and advocacy.

“Being a DSP is a highly rewarding job knowing you are making a difference in an individual's life. It teaches patience, flexibility, and compassion while helping individuals continue to grow and thrive.” — Vesna

For Hillary, the greatest reward comes from witnessing the everyday victories. Whether it's learning a new skill, reaching a personal goal, or simply sharing a conversation, she says those moments are what make each day meaningful.

“Every day is different, but filled with little wins. I believe the little wins are just as important as the big wins. Watching those I support learn and grow every day is my favorite part of being a DSP.” — Hillary

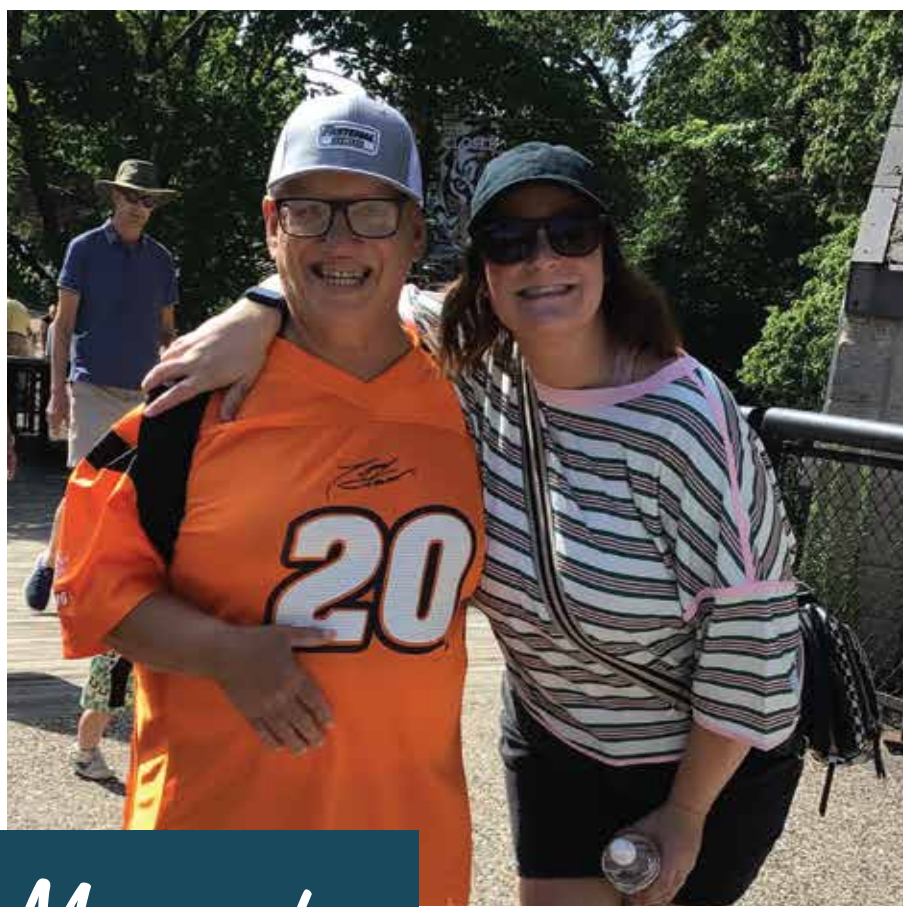
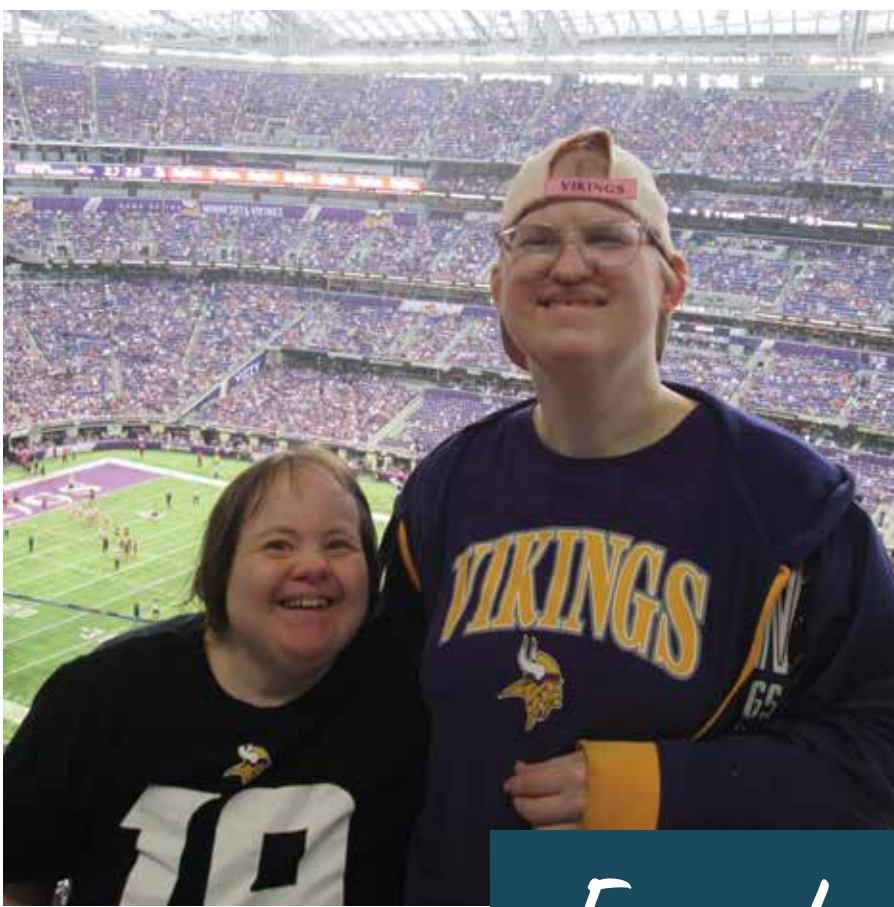
For Loryn, her passion for supporting others began at a young age after growing up alongside one of her closest friends who had a disability. That experience inspired her to pursue nursing and eventually led her to HCO. One memory that stands out is taking the individuals she supports to the Country Boom music festival, where she watched them sing, dance, and experience the joy of being part of their community.

“Knowing I can make a positive difference in their lives is what makes this work so fulfilling.” — Loryn

These stories are just a few examples of the many DSPs who make a difference at HCO. Their impact can be found in big milestones, everyday accomplishments, new experiences, and the relationships built along the way.

This DSP Appreciation Week, we are grateful for the compassion, patience, dedication, and heart that DSPs bring to their work each day. Thank you to all of our DSPs for the meaningful difference you make in the lives of those we support.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL OUR DSPS!



Everyday Moments



MONTHLY *quote*

True character is revealed in everyday choices, in kindness, honesty, and the courage to do what's right over what's easy.

Are you Living with Purpose?

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