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PEP Talk

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PCA Wage Cuts



On July 1st, funding for disabled people's health care was slashed yet again with the legislature's passing of the HHS Omnibus billed, signed into law by Governor Dayton, impacting the Minnesota PCA Services Program, outlined in Statute 256B.0659 subdivision 11.

On September 1st, the state of Minnesota was set to save money by cutting pay rates for PCA's across the board by 1.5%. Over previous years, some PCA agencies have not cut wages, but have absorbed the loss of reimbursement from the state. Another year of cuts has put tremendous strain on agencies across the state, as the cost of doing business has increased, not decreased. In addition to facing another year of cuts, on October 1st, the pay rate for PCA's related by blood or through adoption to their clients was slashed by an additional 20% (on top of the 1.5% cut to all PCA's) through additional legislative measures within the HHS Omnibus bill that went into effect this year. According to the Minnesota Disability Law Center, "persons who live in rural areas, immigrant/refugee families whose first language is not English, other minority communities will be particularly hurt by this harsh cut. The 20% cut will reduce the modest earnings of many family members, including many women in their 50's and 60's who care for their adult sons and daughters with significant disabilities for many hours beyond those authorized to be paid as PCA services. Families who have cared for a loved one with total and permanent disabilities have all slid down the economic ladder, sacrificed personally and economically, and provided reliable, loving care at a much lower rate and higher quality than would otherwise be available. This cut saves the state about \$23 million and results in a PCA service cut of \$46 million due to the loss of federal Medicaid matching funds." The dollar amount is significant to the state,

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On Volunteerism

In Minnesota, 37.5% of residents volunteer - ranking us **3rd** among the 50 states, according to the Corporation for National & Community Service. In Minnesota, volunteer work is valued at \$ 28.52 per hour-- that's how valuable it is, for charities and nonprofits like PEP-- often without volunteers they couldn't function!

People volunteer to meet friends with common interests, to gain skills, as well as to figure out what work they strive to do in their careers. I volunteer reading for the blind, for all these reasons, and I've also been visiting communities where I could live & volunteer full-time. One of them is Community Homestead in Wisconsin, where people with and without developmental disabilities

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NEW STAFF MEMBER

PEP is happy to welcome a new member to the PEP administrative team.

Karla Hernandez is currently completing her team training and should be ramped up with the PEP team over the coming weeks.

Karla comes with a background in PCA work and is excited to get to know everyone in our PEP family!

Please welcome her and introduce yourself when you call in or stop by the office.

On Volunteerism Cont'd

work side by side to take care of the animals, orchard and extensive garden. People with disabilities are invited in for the day program, whether they live there or not, to work on textile and woodworking projects and contribute to the financial success of this small self-sufficient community.

It's a place where a committed volunteer could intern for a season or a year or eventually find a home, similar to another organic farm I visited: Camphill Village in Sauk Centre, Minnesota. People focus on holistic healing, helping each other with life issues, companion planting on the farm, and the principles of anthroposophy. Besides just farm chores there are many ways that people must, and want to, help each other. Volunteering is a way of life, and everyone puts forth their best effort, whatever their ability.

When I consider volunteering in my spare time or as an intern, I'm reminded I have something to contribute.

I have to listen much, much more than I talk.

I learn clearer ways to communicate & fair ways to facilitate & how to manage volunteer expectations, with volunteer training I took in the Summer of Solutions program.

I've gained patience & hope in common goals. When volunteering, other people have opened up & shared their stories & reminded me what cool unique & strong individuals are here, nearby, working behind the scenes!

I feel like I'm not being held hostage by money, and like I'm part of something very important. That's what volunteering means to me. ~ Becca Reilly

PCA Spotlight *Cheryl Hofseth*

This issue recognizes our long-time PCA Cheryl Hofseth. Cheryl is one of our amazing PCAs who has been providing quality support to a relative. As her Client, Chrystal shares, "She is hard working and dedicated. She has made a lot of sacrifices to make my life better. Cheryl not only cares about my physical needs, but is invested in my emotional health. Cheryl is invested in my wellbeing, so I achieve the best quality of life." We extend our gratitude to Cheryl for representing what the mission of our organization is about—improving the quality of life for those we serve. As shared by our Care Manager, "Cheryl is one of the most dedicated PCAs I know. She is always there for her Client through any circumstances. Cheryl never complains about her Client or her PCA responsibilities. She approaches her job with enthusiasm and a zest for life. Cheryl is an outstanding sister and definitely a wonderful example of an outstanding PCA." Our hats off to you, Cheryl, for the wonderful way you choose to be actively involved in your sister's life as a care giver!

Safety Notes

Do you know how to maintain a safe work environment? Here are some key points to ensuring you are safe at work. First, always follow your safety training. At PEP, every new staff member receives detailed safety training with their orientation session. In addition, there are annual refresher training programs at the start of each year. Following the training you have invested time in is the first step to working safely. Second, strong communication with your Client and with the PEP Care Manager will help you to clarify any work methods you may have questions on. Following proper procedures is a great way to keep yourself safe. Third, don't take shortcuts! Take your time to do the job right the first time. And finally, report all injuries to both your Client and the PEP Care Manager IMMEDIATELY. This is a performance expectation of all staff members and is a process intended to help keep you whole and well at work.

2012 “In Action” Photo Contest

People Enhancing People wants to highlight the quality elements of the relationship between Clients and PCAs. This is a professional relationship that is often misunderstood and tainted by misperceptions created by the few individuals who have not been successful in building professional, quality working relationships with those in need of home care. PEP wants to celebrate the valuable work that goes into building relationships that are successful endeavors. We know it is with care that PCAs invest their time and energy in helping Clients successfully maintain independent living, and the care put into this work also helps care providers achieve their professional development goals.

In the spirit of celebrating this wonderful relationship, PEP is hosting a photo contest, welcoming pictures of our Clients and PCA’s “**In Action**.” Let’s dispel the myths of what the working relationship between a Client and PCA is and share the TRUE story of this valuable relationship! Submit photos of you “**In Action**,” engaged together in the daily activities that allow truly independent living. Photos will be displayed in the PEP office in celebration of the work we do. Winning entries will be featured in upcoming issues of PEP Talk, as well as other PEP publications. Please email your photos to bethi@pepeople.org.

Dash of Cash Recognition!

Thank you for Above & Beyond Work Performance!

- * Jackie B. nominated by Jason for outstanding service.
- * Elizabeth R. nominated by Jim & Claudia for outstanding service.
- * Sarah B. nominated by Jim & Claudia for self motivation.
- * Bethany T. nominated by Jim & Claudia for great Reliability.
- * Susan S. nominated by Jim & Claudia for a positive attitude.
- * Pat F. nominated by Jim & Claudia for going above and beyond.
- * Zoe L. nominated by Joshua for going above and beyond.
- * Julie M. nominated by Joshua for outstanding service.
- * Deb G. nominated by Joshua for outstanding service.
- * Rebecca R. nominated by Kerry for outstanding service
- * Mariana E. nominated by Jamie for great reliability.
- * Brenda H. nominated by Jamie for great reliability.
- * Gloria V. nominated by Jamie for outstanding service.
- * Kristine R. nominated by James for outstanding service.
- * Katie M. nominated by Anita for going above and beyond.
- * Jeanette P. nominated by Joshua for great reliability.
- * Pauline B. nominated by Heather for outstanding service.
- * Nelly T. nominated by Shaleen for outstanding service.
- * Monika F. nominated by Lance for great reliability.
- * Jessica G. nominated by Stephanie for outstanding service.
- * Michelle M. nominated by Stephanie for going above and beyond.
- * Christina O. nominated by Stephanie for outstanding service.
- * Gloria V. nominated by Oscar for out standing service.

Each PCA received a thank you card.

Drawing winners received a \$25 gift card as well.

Congratulations and Keep up the great work!

Remember to nominate your PCA for the Dash of Cash Award!



Client Spotlight

Kerry Nelson

He found his talents suited for being either clergy or a scientist. In many ways he keeps observing, like a social scientist, how people treat each other and how they could do better. Also, like clergy, he keeps on helping his neighbors, babysitting, and using the power of prayer to help people. Today he enjoys visiting the Science Museum of Minnesota. "My goal in life is that disabled people should have life & have it more abundantly," he said, quoting John 10:10. "But the way that the state's heading right now," he says, "nursing homes are not having life more abundantly. It's regression. It costs more money-- more than double."

He has used PCA services since 1984. His independent living situation gets him out there in a position where he can achieve his goals, according to Kerry. Things have changed since 1984, from PCAs being self-employed to going through vendors and agencies like PEP.

"They had to do that because of fraud-- which was worse then." Kerry talks often of his goals for greater disability awareness. He credits the support of friends and his 15-year-old cat Sandy.

"Disabled people should discover the help of having a pet. Sandy does the same thing hearing dogs do, because my hearing's diminished. Sandy will meow when someone's at the door." Sandy and Kerry are both very vocal. They are the ones to talk to disability issues, access and the ADA, and current events.

PCA Wage Cuts Con't

but what about those family members who gave up more profitable careers years ago to care for a loved one? How are they supposed to get back out into the workforce now, in today's economy with an unemployment rate hovering near 10%, find meaningful employment to cover their loss in income, and coordinate bringing in new staff who might not care as much? PEP's role in selecting and training PCA's becomes ever more important. Yet with all the cuts, where are the funds to support Minnesota agencies with the recruiting, screening, etc to find quality staff to meet the needs of those who prefer to save the state MILLIONS and MILLIONS of dollars every year by living at home, not in assisted living facilities and nursing homes? What is sad is that the vast majority of people who choose this profession do not do so for lucrative health care positions. People investing their time in bringing up the quality of care for the most vulnerable citizens in Minnesota already receive very low pay, and they do their work because they have big hearts and they care about the well-being of

all the members of our Minnesota community. With years of cuts and a negative trend in our home healthcare decisions, we are creating an environment where both our disabled citizens and our direct support professionals are vulnerable citizens in our community. It is time to move in a better direction and stand up for the well-being and quality of life of ALL members of our community. ~ Becca Reilly with contributions by Beth Ismil

Client Spotlight

Among PEP's clients there is a wealth of knowledge about history, privilege, discrimination, cultural taboos, assistive technology and success strategies for disabled people. You can find it in Kerry Nelson, longtime advocate for equality and awareness, avid volunteer through Abbot Northwestern and AmeriCorps, and a former volunteer coordinator

himself.

Kerry hails from Fairmont, Minnesota. He came to Minneapolis to participate in high school sports for disabled people, which wasn't available where he grew up. Improving access and awareness among the disabled minority has always been important to him.

Voices from the Field: Your Red Carpet Awaits

Have you ever heard yourself say... "One of these days I am going to..."(You fill in the blanks)

Perhaps you have dreamed about writing your personal life story?

Well, I've got good news.

The next time that thought or any thought comes into your mind, do not treat those words like they are just silly, no count words. Instead, pretend that thought is uniquely sent to you like the most beautiful butterfly that lands on your lap and refuses to leave you until you fulfill its needs. Because your thoughts are specially gift wrapped and sent uniquely to you. I hear many people with medical challenges, who are thinking about writing their memoir. But did you know, that "write now" is the best time ever to write anything. I can't say that my chronic pain disappeared completely, but I can confirm that by engaging my mind in researching, reading and writing my depression lifted, I made less trips to my Physician and Emergency Room. And I had less time to think about my pain. My Physicians are pleased with me writing.

Both Hennepin and Ramsey County have free computer classes. All services available at the public libraries are generally free with an up to date library card, and one county card can be registered in another county you be eligible for all services. Hennepin County has a private room with adaptive technology computers. hclib.org also offers free writing classes, free author talks where best-selling authors (like Elizabeth Gilbert and Minnesota author, Kevin Kling) speak to small audiences and sign their books. The Library offers many books written by authors who suffer from a host of disabilities. But sadly, these memoirs are becoming outdated and fresh new insights written by the people who live these experiences are needed. Muscular Dystrophy, Multiple Sclerosis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Cerebral Palsy, and para and quadriplegia to name a few.

Minneapolis and St. Paul, Mn. have been competing for the past few years for the title of "MOST LITERARY CITY IN THE UNITED STATES. Currently, Minneapolis dropped from it's number one position (2007/2008) to third place, for 2010. This rating confirms the accessibility to all Minnesotans of all ages not only to read and write books but also reasonable rates and options to publish. The secret is to stop thinking about writing and grab a pad and pen and a chair to sit in. Think of one event in your life. Forget about anybody reading it or spelling and grammar. Write one page and then one more page and so on. That is all it took for the looming list of Minnesota Authors who are published. Your red carpet awaits. ~Patricia Anita Young

Voices from the Field: Power of the People!

Power of the People! Four small words that have a huge impact when it comes to making a difference regarding something you believe in. This addition to the Newsletter is to talk about the 20% pay cut for family members and the huge impact it may be having on family member PCA's, non-family members and clients, who feel an injustice has been done and asks themselves what can we do about it.

We work hard to take care of our family members and we deserve the same rights and pay as non-family member PCA's. My name is Teresa Herron and I am a PCA for my adult son who has Down Syndrome and had a major surgery this year and therefore, needs a lot of hands on help with everything he does during the day and night. He's has never been in daycare, an institute or anywhere else but home his whole life. He is not comfortable with strangers taking care of him, so I left my career as a Paralegal, where I make a lot more money than staying home to take care of my son, but I did. And why; because my son needs me here. So, why am I being discriminated against, just because I am his mother and not a stranger? Why does the stranger get paid more than I do to take care of my son? AREN'T YOU UPSET ABOUT THIS 20% PAY CUT????? Do you ask yourself, "what can I do about it?" I hope you believe that you can do something. I would love to talk to you about how we as "POWER OF THE PEOPLE" can do something about it and how it will make a difference.

Please call me at 651-675-9117 or email me at lherron1585@hotmail.com to talk about it. We can do something about this and we can make a difference but I can't do it alone, so I need everyone's help. I can't wait to hear from you. ~Teresa Herron

Attention All PCAs!!!

Please inform Kim if you are looking for more hours and would like to be listed on the Hours-Needed PCA List.

If you would like to contribute an article, upcoming event, or other item (including help wanted or looking for work) to PEP Talk, please submit them to one of the following options:

Via e-mail:
info@pepeople.org or

Via Fax:
651-917-4214

Via Mail:
1600 University Ave W, Ste 301
St. Paul, MN 55104

Via Phone:
651-450-5960



1600 University Ave W.
Suite 301
Saint Paul, MN 55104

ANNOUNCING OUR NEW LOCATION



We will be moving to a new location on December 7th, 2011. We are excited to announce that our new office will be located just minutes north of downtown Minneapolis in St. Anthony, Mn. The PEP board is excited to have found a location that is accessible, has a private conference room, suits all our business needs, and allows us to keep our overhead as low as possible in a convenient Metro location. We continue our diligent efforts to provide superior service to our Clients and PCA's, with a new location to support this mission more fully. Our office will close at our current location at noon on Monday December 5th, 2011. We will open at our new location on Wednesday December 7th at noon. Beginning December 7th, our new address is:

**People Enhancing People
2817 Anthony Lane South
Suite 311
St. Anthony, Mn 55418**

The mission of 'People Enhancing People' is to nurture a rewarding personal care experience to fortify the independence of person with disabilities.