

# Positive Outcomes Fall 2023



## From the Executive Director's Desk



Dear North Star Community Services' Family and Friends,

As we prepare for the holidays, I am reminded of all the good things...and who doesn't need a good dose of goodness when it is easy to get distracted by the not-so-good things? Let me fill your cup a bit with some of the good things here at North Star Community Services, Inc.:

- Summer of 2023 was filled with excitement:

> Our Day Hab programs performed **Cyrano De BurgerShack** at Waterloo West High's Auditorium in June for 1,200 of our family, friends, and community members.

> In July, we hosted the **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Great Rubber Duck Splash** where nearly 5,000 rubber ducks raced through the lazy river at the Cedar Falls Aquatic Center, and added the first **Duck Dash 5K Run/Walk & Kid's Fun Run**, with 50 racers crossing the finish line. Jenny Allen adopted the fastest duck and won \$1,000. And thanks to the sponsors, and the persons who adopted ducks, North Star raised \$26,288.

> In September, we hosted the **27<sup>th</sup> Annual North Star Community Services' Van G. Miller Memorial Golf Outing**. We had 80 golfers spend the day with us. A shout-out to our golfers and sponsors for helping us raise \$23,500!

- Each job position at North Star has a purpose and role in fulfilling our Mission, hence it is important to recognize and celebrate the work they do. I encourage you to also take time to say "Thank you" or to give a high-five/fist bump to show your appreciation. There are no "cushy" jobs at North Star.
- We celebrated our **Direct Support Professionals** as part of the nationally recognized DSP Appreciation Week. This year's theme was **DSP's Lift Us Up** and we celebrated with daily tokens of thanks for the work they do. North Star is truly fortunate to have the crew that we have – they are creative, caring, innovative, dedicated... and the list goes on. This year we have added other celebrations to recognize the hard work of our **Custodial Crew**, our **Supervisors via Boss's Day**; and soon we will celebrate our support teams via **Recognition Day**, **Administrative Assistant's Day**, and **Nurse's Day**.

North Star continues to work through our **Strategic Plan**...we have just wrapped up year one with good progress, by taking steps to position ourselves to remain financially stable. This included discontinuing the CACFP program (aka the food program) with no negative impact on the participants; and reviving the growth of our Quasi-Endowment with a goal of \$1,000,000 (more information coming soon on how you can participate).

*continued on page 3*

## Who We Are:

### ADULT DAY SERVICES

Waterloo, Waverly  
Newel Post  
Canterbury Center

### SUPPORTED COMMUNITY LIVING

Serving people from offices in:

Waterloo  
Waverly  
Mason City  
New Hampton  
Vinton  
Marshalltown

### MISSION

North Star Community Services  
empowers each person to realize  
potential, pursue dreams, and enjoy life.



Accredited for Community Integration  
and Supported Living

## SAVE A TREE

In an effort to be good  
stewards of our earth,  
not to mention saving some  
green, we would like to e-mail  
our newsletter to you.

Join our online community.  
Please send your  
e-mail address to:  
jmuller@northstarcs.org

## Where is he now?



In the fall of 2014 Erik Larson from Boy Scout Troop #44 built a pretty cool bridge that was meant to help with some drainage problems for North Star's Garden at 3420 University Avenue as his Eagle Scout project. A junior at the time, Erik had stated he chose North Star for his Eagle project because he "saw an opportunity to help others live an improved daily life." The bridge still looks

great, and since that time, Erik has indeed been living an interesting life of service!

After obtaining his Eagle Scout rank in 2015, Erik graduated from Columbus High School in 2016, joining the United States Navy and serving for five years. During his time in the Navy, Erik explained that he served aboard the USS Wyoming (SSBN 742), which is an Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine, as a Torpedoman's Mate.

A Torpedoman's Mate's main objective is to operate and maintain underwater launching systems. He related that his time on the submarine "was one of the most interesting life experiences one will ever have. It's a unique and challenging job that tests you mentally every day. I completed four strategic patrols (deployments) during my time on board and loved every moment of it!"



Leaving the Navy, Erik enrolled in Texas Southern University's flight program in Houston, Texas and will graduate in the spring with a bachelor's degree in aviation science management, with a pilot focus. He has completed his private pilot's license, drone license, instrument rating, and has nearly completed his commercial license.

Besides attending college, Erik's a Cadet at Southwest Airlines and a contractor at NASA, working in the Airspace Operations Lab at NASA as part of several projects involving the implementation of drones and future aviation travel concepts. He expressed that, "I am not sure what future holds with NASA or the airlines, but my ultimate goal is to make a difference in the aviation community." We are sure that will be true!

let's get social!



## Welcome to North Star...



Admittedly we are a little behind, since she has been making a difference at North Star for just over a year, but we would like to introduce you to Sara Morford, who joined North Star as our new nurse! She has been doing a great job and is always willing to join the fun and try something new, like jumping in an icy lake (Special Olympics) or taking part in the musical! Among her many responsibilities, Sara teaches North Star employees first aid and CPR, and has recently been introducing CPR, and handling a medical emergency to persons served.

Sara grew up on a farm until she was in sixth grade, when her family moved to a lake house by Elm Lake, near Clarion, Iowa. Growing up by a lake she enjoyed everything from swimming to ice fishing – she relates that she loves anything involving water! Currently living outside of Washburn with her fiancé, Josh, and beautiful daughter, Bella, she continues to enjoy the outdoors, and what the Cedar River has to offer.



She detailed how she and her fiancé do quite a bit of boating, kayaking, and fishing, and in the winter, they enjoy ice fishing and snowmobiling. Some of Sara's other favorites include watching X-Files (with the lights on 😊), long walks on the beach, and enjoying live music with friends.

Sara declared, "This job is great because the population we serve is a blast! I love this job, and I was so excited to be a part of this year's play!" She participated in "Cyrano," both as an actor (a fencer on the Lady Cadet's team), and by supporting some of the other actors – she reported that it was so much fun! We are glad you are here, Nurse Sara!

*continued from page 1*

We are also proud to announce that we have been approved to proceed with the **1<sup>st</sup> DSP Apprenticeship** within the state for our industry. Our first apprentices will begin their journey on October 30<sup>th</sup> to learn about the responsibilities of being a direct support professional, with the anticipated end-goal to grow the DSP workforce and to redefine how the DSP position is viewed. Currently, the DSP position is widely viewed as an entry level, non-skilled position, when it should be viewed as a skilled profession and a respected career.

Thank you for being a part of the North Star family. Your support is most appreciated, and I hope you will consider supporting us as we continue to grow our Quasi-Endowment Fund.

Sincerely,

Valerie L. Schwager  
Executive Director

### Meet North Star's Board *(eighth in a series)*



Meet Kelsey Jorgensen who joined North Star's board of directors in 2022. She was born and raised in Waterloo and shared that she is proud to continue to call Cedar Valley home. She lives in Waterloo with her husband,

Ben, and two kiddos, Max, and Rory.

Kelsey is a licensed REALTOR® and certified Seniors Real Estate Specialist® with Vine Valley Real Estate. When (or if) she has any free time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, traveling, and simply savoring any time she finds to slow down and relax.

She explained, "I am excited to serve on North Star's Board of Directors because the mission of North Star closely aligns with my core beliefs. I firmly believe that everyone should have the opportunity to live a full and meaningful life. I'm proud to support an organization that is actively working towards making this belief a reality in our community."



## Cyrano de BurgerShack Serves Up Super-Sized Fun!

On Wednesday, June 14, 2023, the stage was set with a happy burger-shack world at West High School's Kersenbrock Auditorium in Waterloo, welcoming the actors and theatregoers to North Star's latest musical, an unlikely combination of "High School the Musical" meets "Cyrano de Bergerac" (the tragic classic tale of a French nobleman with a gift for poetry, the sword, and a ginormous nose).

"Cyrano de BurgerShack," directed by Mr. Greg Holt, with sets designed by Mr. Bill Close, was the ninth inclusive theater production for North Star, and featured an ensemble cast, volunteers, and support staff of 62 individuals. There was a positive, almost palpable energy, within the auditorium as the audience laughed, sang along, and cheered when (spoiler alert) Cyrano won the fair Roxanne, played by volunteer, Cassidy Atchison, in the end!



The hero of our story, famous for his enormous nose, is king of the local burger joint, where all the high school kids hang out. Cyrano can't seem to share his true feelings with the woman he loves, Roxanne – his best friend since kindergarten, who also happens to be the captain of the local high school fencing team, the Lady Cadets.



One day, Cyrano finds out that Roxanne has a crush on the "Shack's" new burger-flipper, Christian – a good-looking, tongue-tied, self-proclaimed turtle lover. Deciding it is better to play Cupid than to sit on the sidelines, the loquacious Cyrano decides to help Christian by ghostwriting his love letters (by text, of course)! What could go wrong? This jukebox musical was jam-packed with upbeat hits (old and new) by The Go-Go's, The Proclaimers, Pink, Debbie Gibson, Bruno Mars, Katy Perry, and even Chumbawamba gets into the act.



The play, Cyrano de BurgerShack, was loads of music, fun, a little fencing action, and humor, combined with a timeless lesson: the importance of looking beyond what you see on the outside, and truly seeing the person beneath the façade (or immense nose 🤪). To quote a favorite line in the play, Roxanne was speaking to Cyrano "We've all felt different, but don't change who you are. Can't you see you're special? Everyone loves you because you are an incredible person." That's the



moral of the story – we should all judge people by what's on the inside, not by appearances!

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## North Star's New Arcade ★ (Star-cade?)



Thanks to the wonderful generosity of long-time North Star supporters, Miller & Sharon Roskamp, we were able to turn an unused room in our Waterloo building into a bright, entertaining arcade space with a comfortable couch and client artwork on the walls! There's plenty of great games to choose from; an old-school pinball game, several video games, a foosball

table, Skee-Ball, and even a jukebox. Participants are having a blast, using it for a fun leisure-time pursuit.



*Foreward: At North Star our employees get to know the people we serve well. They are creative, “think outside the box” individuals who care about who they serve, and are motivated to help someone live their best life, and realize a personal wish or goal, if possible. The short story that follows is the result of an employee, Lacey Yarbrough, recognizing that someone served by Waterloo’s Day Hab program (Dan Hansen), wanted to author and “publish” a story. Hope that you enjoy!*

## North Star Goes Camping....

*Short Story written by: Dan “The Man” Hansen*



Once upon a time, in a place called “North Star,” there was a man named Dan. He dreamed about going on a camping trip. Dan spoke to his friends at North Star, and they were all excited for an adventure with Dan.

On a beautiful, sunny July 15th day, North Star consumers and staff loaded the buses and took off for an adventure to the campground. Upon arrival at the campsite, Dan and his friends unloaded the buses and observed cake, presents, and pizza on the picnic tables!

They continued to look around to see what they could see, and found games such as Farkle, Pin the Tail on the Donkey, horseshoes, baseball, and disc golf. Keegan and Sharnelle started a fire after Jeff S. and McKenzie gathered firewood.

Marvin, Richie, and Deb made hot dogs, chicken, chili dogs, baked beans, hamburgers, corn dogs, green bean casserole, and chips for everyone. Dan and his friends ate the food which gave him and some of his friends gas. After everyone’s bellies were stuffed, they played games with each other.

Everyone then gathered around the campfire and took turns telling stories, knock-knock jokes, and making S’mores. Everyone by then was tired and went to their cabins and tents to catch some sleep. Then in the middle of the night they were woken up by 500 chickens clucking and bawking around their tents and cabins.

Dan and his friends chased the chickens. Then Dan began to pick up the chickens and make chicken strips. Dan’s friends all laughed and sat with Dan and ate the strips. Just then, a giant hot air balloon came down from the night sky and scooped Dan and his friends up and away, just in time to escape bears entering the campground to eat all the delicious food!

Dan said to his friends, “This was so much fun. I have so many more dreams and adventures to plan.” All Dan’s friends clapped their hands, laughed, and smiled in agreement to go on many more adventures with Dan the Man!



### Meet the Author



Daniel C. Hansen is the author of “North Star Camping Trip,” his first short story. A life-long resident of Waterloo, he graduated from Waterloo’s West High School, and currently resides with his parents, sister, Courtney, and dog, Emmett. Dan’s dream job is to become the mayor of Waterloo!

Dan’s favorites include Halloween, Xbox One, lots of food (chicken strips & burgers), and “the ladies.” He related he dislikes “dairy, getting mad easily, and Mom’s dog, Gracie!” When he isn’t writing, you might find Dan playing Yu-Gi-Oh! or spending time with girlfriends.

The camping story came about based on experiences during family camping trips and vacations, and took him three days to write. He had this advice for others who want to write their own books, “Put people you know into the story!”



## Announcing Our New Day Hab Addition...

In April, North Star began a Day Habilitation (Day Hab) program in Vinton to support persons with disabilities from Vinton, and the surrounding area. Day Hab is a program designed to help those living with an identified disability to develop self-sufficiency and satisfying, rewarding community connections and relationships. Each day in Day Hab brings new experiences, opportunities for growth, and increased independence and integration for the individual.



Currently offering programming on Thursday and Friday, from 9:30 to 3:00, a third day will be added soon. Those who have been participating have been enjoying getting out-and-about. There have been walks for exercise, coffee runs, picnics, bowling, museum visits to Waterloo and Cedar Rapids, and so much more! It's gratifying to note that a few of the locations they have visited, have been firsts for a few people! It's all about providing opportunity and new experiences!



Helping others is key to living successfully in the community, and so the group has been volunteering their time by providing acts of kindness. They cleaned the kid's room at the church where the program is located, made, and donated bookmarks to the library in Vinton, and painted kindness rocks, leaving them around town for people to find. It's been great for the people participating who shared these comments, "I like doing activities, and getting out in the community." And, "I like having friends and having a good time!" Another person related, "I just like it here!" Please contact the Vinton office at (319) 472-4924 for more information.



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## Great Rubber Duck Splash "QUACKTASTIC" Success!

On July 29<sup>th</sup>, 5,000 ultra-cool rubber ducks descended into the Cedar Valley as North Star hosted their second "Great Rubber Duck Splash." It was 9:00 a.m. on a nice, sunny Saturday morning at The Falls Aquatic Center as a few hundred attendees and volunteers converged on the pool in Cedar Falls. The event featured a Duckling (kid) Zone with games and prizes, balloon twisting by Living Characters, face painting by students from Capri College, and the Hearst Center for the Arts proving a ducky craft, plus food from Scoopski's Ice Cream, Good Morrow Pizza, and Chick-fil-A.



Thanks to T.C. from the UNI Panthers for making an appearance - it was a fun surprise!

5,000 rubber ducks were dropped into the lazy river feature at The Falls by several members of Hudson Girl Scout Troop #1568, with play-by-play commentary provided by Gary Kroeger. It took just over five minutes for the ducks to float, tumble, and bob their way around the river for some great cash prizes for the adoptive "parents" of winning ducks. New this year was the addition of the Duck Dash 5k Run/Walk &

Kid's (duckling) Fun Run, with 50 racers competing.



Keep watching North Star's social media for ducky appearances throughout the year, and "Quacky aka Bob McQuacken," will be returning with 4,999 of his best friends next summer for even more fun!



*Oh Snap! So much to say, and so little space! Watch for our next newsletter for more stories and photos surrounding the Great Rubber Duck Splash and Van G. Miller Memorial Golf Outing!*