Seasonal changes? Precautions are urged

Leaves turning color, cooler days and nights, and the return to school are among the signs of fall. Another sign health officials are watching for is whether Minnesotans will see another autumn surge in cases of COVID. Surges in illness have been seen in the fall for the past few years. Health officials say that’s a good reason to get a booster vaccine at this time of year.

Keeping vaccines up-to-date and testing for COVID symptoms is still urgent. 2023 will be the first fall and winter seasons without a federal public health emergency in place. That will mean being vigilant about COVID, as well as flu and RSV.

Respiratory syncytial virus or RSV causes infections of the lungs and respiratory tract. It’s so common that most children have been infected with the virus by age 2, according to the Mayo Clinic.

In adults and older, healthy children, symptoms are mild and typically mimic the common cold. Self-care measures are usually all that’s needed to relieve any discomfort. But it can cause severe infection in some people, including babies 12 months and younger (infants), especially premature infants, older adults, people with heart and lung disease, or anyone with a weak immune system (immunocompromised). People with disabilities need to be aware of RSV.

So, what to do with three diseases to think about? Many people routinely get flu every fall. RSV vaccines are also becoming available. And of course, many people with disabilities are advised to keep up on COVID booster shots. Health care providers and local health departments can provide information.

The risks of COVID are not over and everyone is advised to continue to take precautions. Just as a surge in cases was seen after this year’s July 4th holiday, surges could also be seen after the Minnesota State Fair. Fair attendance was strong as this issue of Access Press went to press, and fewer people were seen taking precautions.

Minnesota hospitalizations after July 4th increased from 41 on July 30 to 93 after the holiday. Increases in viral material were also found in wastewater samples. What health officials are watching closely is the new EG.5 coronavirus variant, which became the dominant source of COVID this summer. EG.5 was found in May in Minnesota. These wanting a booster shot should watch for a new vaccine booster that specifically targets that variant and other shifts in the dominant coronavirus strain.

Around the nation, health officials have emphasized that while COVID hospital admissions have inched upward in the United States since early July, it is in a small-scale version of the past three summers. And the surges are not nearly as great as those in the past. Still, it is a reason to be vigilant and take precautions.

Voters with disabilities need to know their rights

Susan lives with a traumatic brain injury. She makes her home with her sister, who is also her legal guardians. Susan follows public affairs and is interested in voting for her next state senator. She and her sister don’t agree on politics. Can Susan’s sister prevent her from voting?

Craig lives with developmental disabilities. He resides in a group home, holds a job at a grocery store, and take part in community activities. He has met some city council candidates and wants to vote for one of them in the next election. He has a conservator who oversees his financial affairs. Should Craig vote?

The answer to both questions is yes. Persons under guardianship and conservatorship in Minnesota can vote. This is often misunderstood, by people in these roles, family members of people with disabilities and even election officials.

Ramsey County provides useful information outlining guardianship and conservatorship issues. Guardianships or conservatorships are designed for those who cannot take care of their own affairs. Should Craig vote?
Protect disabled voters from those who would block their vote

As long as a judge did not restrict a person's right to vote through court order, disabled voters have the right to vote even when under guardianship or under conservatorship.

Voting is a fundamental right for us as Minnesotans and as U.S. citizens. Many of us remember the first time we cast a ballot. We were called to vote for the candidates of our choice. We at Access Press often emphasize the ease of early voting in Minnesota. We are thankful that, if we choose, we don’t have to cast our ballot the day of the election. We also respect that many people like to vote on a polling place and cast a ballot.

Those of us with disabilities have not always had that right of passage experience when we cast our first ballot, or as we continue to practice our rights as voters. We may have sat in a wheelchair or on a scooter, and pondered the staircase in front of us. We may have had no assistance with a visual disability. We may have encountered a less-than-stellar election judge who tried to improperly influence us. Instead of simply marking a ballot.

Annoyed and frustrating as these experiences can be, we especially take issue with people who try to prevent people with disabilities from voting. It is an incredibly disempowering form of disrespect, to deny someone a basic civil right. It’s just wrong.

Our voting rights have been protected for many years, going back to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It requires election officials to allow a disabled voter to receive assistance from a person of the voter's choice. It prohibits tying the right to vote to a person’s ability to write, attain a certain level of education, or pass a test. The Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984 puts further access requirements in place for us.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a leading mandate to widely protect individuals with disabilities, including when someone is voting. The U.S. Department of Justice offers guidance on how to apply the ADA on voting issues at www.ada.gov, with a comprehensive checklist for accessible polling places and information on common problems.

We also rely on the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002, which spells out how voting must be accessible for individuals with disabilities, especially for people with visual disabilities. It also requires that each polling place be at least one accessible voting device in place for federal elections. But we’d like to see done more in cases where a disabled person’s competency is questioned. Wouldn’t we like to see better, stronger protections, and more sanctions against those who would unfairly prevent others from voting.

We all too often read of family members who try to prevent a disabled person from voting. Or, election judges may unfairly question someone’s competency and try to keep someone from voting. These people need to face consequences.

So let’s all remember this:

As long as a judge did not restrict a person’s right to vote through court order, disabled voters have the right to vote even when under guardianship or under conservatorship. That also applies if a voter has a brain injury, has a cognitive disability, experiences memory loss or has given someone else the power of attorney.

No one else can make a decision on voting on a voter’s behalf, including a spouse, children, attorneys, doctors, or conservators. The only disabled Minnesotans who cannot vote are those who have been declared legally incompetent by a court.

Residents of a group home or other residential facility for people with disabilities can vote, typically if they bring a staff member to the polls to vouch for them. Residential facilities can include assisted living facilities, facilities for victims of domestic violence, homeless shelters, nursing homes, residential alcohol and chemical treatment facilities, supervised living facilities, transitional housing and veterans’ homes. This can be a form of election judges as voters are verified and assigned in. But it is a process that nevertheless must be followed and must comply with the law.

People who try to block our voting rights as disabled citizens need to be called out. Disability law advocates need to know when our voting rights are threatened, even if family members are involved.

Local election officials need to know if an election worker tries to prevent someone from voting. The news media needs to know.

We people with disabilities need to vote, freely and unencumbered.

---

HISTORY NOTE

Minnesota’s services for the blind mark century of progress

Break out the birthday party hats! State Services for the Blind (SSB) is marking 100 years of service to Minnesotans in 2023. To commemorate this special milestone, the Minnesota Board of Control was created on July 1, 1923. Recognizing the importance of education, independence and employment of people who are blind or live with visual disabilities. The Minnesota State Academy for the Blind, which was started in 1866, began a first year of its kind education program in 1907. An academy graduate earned his PhD from Yale University. It is believed to be the first degree of this kind to have been earned in residence and received in this country by a blind man.

On May 27, 1920, a group organized to improve the quality of life for all blind Minnesotans, called the Minnesota State Organization of the Blind. That group today is the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota. It is one of many advocacy groups today working on issues including social justice, accessibility, literacy, employment discrimination, and sexuality.

Employment efforts came later. It wasn't until 1941 that Minnesota appropriated $3,500 for vending stands to run by blind entrepreneurs. And on May 1, 1947, Business Enterprise Program vendors were provided rent free space throughout all state buildings vending soft drinks (excluding cola), food, candies, tobacco, souvenirs, notions and related merchandise.

In 1953, the Hamm Recording Project was started. It was on air. It was the world’s first radio talking book. The Minnesota Radio Talking Book Network has served Minnesota residents with disabilities, especially for people with visual disabilities. It also requires that each polling place be at least one accessible voting device in place for federal elections.

On May 27, 1920, a group organized to improve the quality of life for all blind Minnesotans, called the Minnesota State Organization of the Blind. That group today is the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota. It is one of many advocacy groups today working on issues including social justice, accessibility, literacy, employment discrimination, and sexuality.

Employment efforts came later. It wasn't until 1941 that Minnesota appropriated $3,500 for vending stands to run by blind entrepreneurs. And on May 1, 1947, Business Enterprise Program vendors were provided rent free space throughout all state buildings vending soft drinks (excluding cola), food, candies, tobacco, souvenirs, notions and related merchandise.

In 1953, the Hamm Recording Project was started. It was on air. It was the world’s first radio talking book. The Minnesota Radio Talking Book Network has served Minnesota residents with disabilities, especially for people with visual disabilities. It also requires that each polling place be at least one accessible voting device in place for federal elections.

On May 27, 1920, a group organized to improve the quality of life for all blind Minnesotans, called the Minnesota State Organization of the Blind. That group today is the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota. It is one of many advocacy groups today working on issues including social justice, accessibility, literacy, employment discrimination, and sexuality.
Meet the other 2023 nominees for the Access Press Charlie Smith Award

The return of the annual Charlie Smith Award gives Access Press the chance to spotlight outstanding Minnesota people, events and volunteer organizations. Thanks to all who submitted nominations.

Access North Center for Independent Living’s Accessible Deer Hunt

The Access North Center for Independent Living’s Accessible Deer Hunt is nominated for the work dedicated volunteers do to provide an outdoor experience for people with disabilities.

As a center for independent living (CIL), Access North is dedicated to supporting people to achieve independent lives in the community.

The accessible deer hunt has always been more about spending time with enjoying nature, and time with family and friends, than it is about harvesting a deer. Multiple generations gather at deer camps each fall. When a person becomes disabled, it is all too easy to be excluded from these lifelong traditions. Disability can take away the ability to enjoy the outdoors and can be emotionally devastating.

The accessible deer hunt restores this tradition for people with disabilities by providing all necessary support to embrace the outdoors and the connection to family, friends and the thrill of the hunt.

Access North has partnered with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and McCarthy Beach State Park for past four years to plan and implement an accessible deer hunt within the park. The deer hunt provides activity for 10 disabled hunters each fall.

Park rangers scout out hunting blind locations with CIL staff. Access North provides full support for hunters including specialized transportation if needed, motel stay, food and beverages, hunting blind access, heaters, hunt tripods, transportation into and out of the field, support while in the hunting blind, and support to track, field and process a deer. Everything a hunter needs is provided for an enjoyable hunt. Hunters greatly appreciate the experience.

Access North coordinates with local emergency management services to provide GPS coordinates for hunting parties. Everyone can have a safe event.

At least three hunters earned one more memory before they died. Families have shared that this was a very meaningful experience for everyone.

Anecdotally about half of the hunters are military veterans. One said that being able to enjoy hunting again gave him a sense of community he had enjoyed since returning to civilian life.

One military veteran became homeless after discharge and was alienated from his son. His transition back to civilian life was a journey of despair and hopelessness that brought personal accomplishment and meaning. He and his son enjoyed hunting and special time together.

Deer hunting is a big part of northeastern Minnesota culture. The Access North program is the first of its kind in the region. It relies on area businesses and the Hibbing and Sturgeon Lake Minnesota Deer Hunters Association chapters. About 40 volunteers support each hunt.

The state park in collaboration with Access North has also added an accessible beach mat for easier entrance into water, a flotation water bike and an action track chair. Both are available for use at no cost.

Disability Hub MN

Disability Hub is nominated for its ongoing efforts to be a comprehensive resources and guide for Minnesotans with disabilities, and its work in helping tens of thousands of Minnesotans since 2005.

The Disability Linkage Line/Disability Hub is a Minnesota-specific service providing information directly to people with disabilities, family members, caregivers and allies about their problems or issues, either through in-person phone, calls or online.

Counselors are trained specifically on the various topics important to Minnesotans with disabilities, the counselors also conduct continuous training to help consumers in areas of concern. The most common issues asked about are health benefits, cash benefits, house/shelter and health wellness. In 2021, there were 64,979 contacts with the Disability Hub, serving 23,841 people. The average wait time was one minute, eight seconds.

Consumers report high satisfaction with the help received. The service has a thorough list of Minnesota service providers to make referrals to.

In 2017, the Minnesota Department of Human Services updated the Disability Linkage Line and relaunched it as Disability Hub MN in recognition of an evolution in its services. Since then, Disability Linkage Line has focused on providing information and assistance. Today, counselors not only help people find information, they are also trained to make it easier for people with disabilities to review and understand the scope of their benefits, understand their health insurance options, create a plan to enter the workforce or maintain employment, make sure they are getting the most out of employment and benefits, and strategize ways to live more independently.

The Metropolitan and Southeastern Minnesota Centers for Independent Living provide Disability Hub services for people throughout Minnesota. Disability Hub operates as part of the MinnesotaHelp Network, which includes SeniorLinkAGE Line (800-333-2433), Veterans Linkage Line (888-LinkVet) and the online resource database MinnesotaHelp.info.

At Disability Hub MN, there is no such thing as a wrong question. Whether people are facing an immediate concern or planning for the future, Hub staff are available to help. A toll-free number, 1-866-333-2466, connects callers with an options counselor who will help the person understand options, manage benefits, overcome service barriers and plan for the future.

People who are helped learn how to live more independently and use services they may not have been aware of. They are also assisted in working through frustrating ability to live independently and to be of benefit to their communities. Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts

Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts is nominated for its work to provide access to艺术, and for its commitment to its “home” neighborhood and the region.

Interact is a theater and visual arts center, based in the Hamline Midway neighborhood of St Paul. Interact encourages and welcomes individuals with disabilities to join, create, exhibit and perform works of art across multiple media and performance spaces. Interact’s mission is “to create art that challenges perceptions of disability has opened doors for artists with disabilities and audiences eager to experience their work. Artists might never have seen the arts as a life choice, but now see the arts as essential to their humanity. With more than 100 artists working in theater and studio arts, Interact is multi-cultural, intergenerational, and embraces the entire spectrum of disability labels.”

Interact exists in a very interesting space. It is not a “day program,” but neither is it an employment placement agency. It exists as an affirmation for people with disabilities who wish to express themselves in creative ways to explore their creative energies and provides them with resources and outlets to do so. It is a full-blown art gallery and theater company that puts on exhibits and performances featuring their members, just like any other gallery or theater company may do, with the slight exception that the artists themselves have disabilities.

The core strength of INTERACT CENTER FOR THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Be part of great resource! Join the Access Press Directory today.

Our next print edition is October 2023

In print four times annually and online 24/7, the Access Press Directory offers quick access to an array of services and supports Minnesotans with disabilities.

From housing to health care, recreation to clubs, consumer-directed community support; we offer the information you need for your best life.

Have a business, service provider or organization needing visibility at a low cost? Contact us today! accesspress.org/add-listing/directory 651-644-2133 access@accesspress.org

Are you a current Directory member? To renew your listing, make updates and add new categories, visit accesspress.org/renew

Thanks to our advertisers for their ongoing commitment to Access Press!
Independent living requires many steps to address our care crisis

Staf are burdened with overtime, at higher risk for infection, and received minimal wages and benefits to support when exposure led illness or injury.

Direct care workers are the backbone of our workforce, providing care to those with disabilities. They work 24/7, often in challenging environments, and are critical to our communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of direct care workers and the need to support them.

JUDGE FRANK

From page 1

Disabilities. One is the case involving Minnesota Extended Treatment Options, a state-run facility in Cambridge. Staff there worked with patients living with disabilities, even those with little capacity for meaningful community engagement. The other case was Frank's involvement in Olmstead v. L.C., the 1999 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that requires states to ensure that individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to live in the community and receive the support they need to participate fully in community life.

Frank has presided over other cases involving disability issues, including a recent case related to Olmstead. He has also worked within the Olmstead planning process, which requires states to develop and implement plans to ensure that individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to live in the community and receive the support they need to participate fully in community life.

Direct care workers are the backbone of our workforce, providing care to those with disabilities. They work 24/7, often in challenging environments, and are critical to our communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of direct care workers and the need to support them.
Two schools in Minnesota were among those that provided training for print industry workers who were deaf. What is now the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf in Faribault offered training in its great-great-grandparent, the Dunwoody Institute, now Dunwoody College of Technology, trained many people who worked in the region’s print industry. Both schools offered linotype training into the 1980s.

The National Center for the Deaf (in a conservatorship) or a ward (in a guardianship) or conservatorship need to know their competency to vote. The guardian or conservator of a person with disabilities and other voters advice and help.

The Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities provides information on voter’s rights, in the form a single-page sheet that outlines a voter’s legal rights, and which state and federal laws apply. The Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf in Faribault offered training in its great-great-grandparent, the Dunwoody Institute, now Dunwoody College of Technology, trained many people who worked in the region’s print industry. Both schools offered linotype training into the 1980s.

The Guardians and conservators are subject to the control and direction of the court at all times and in all things. They can control many aspects of a person's life and sometimes that control becomes controversial. But conferring this kind of status on someone does not mean that person can tell their ward how to vote.

People who are under guardianship and, or conservatorship need to know their rights. Unless a person’s right to vote has been specially resolved by the court, being under guardianship or conservatorship does not prohibit a person from voting. Voting with disabilities, especially developmental disabilities or other disabilities that may affect their ability to communicate, may encounter election officials who question their competency to vote. Bring ready to defend one’s right to vote is crucial.

The Food and Drug Administration will have issue recommendations for their use. It’s not clear exactly when people can start rolling up their sleeves for what officials hope is an annual COVID-19 shot. Pfizer, Moderna and smaller manufacturer Novavax all are brewing doses of the XBB update but the Food and Drug Administration will have to sign off on each, and the CDC must then issue recommendations for their use. Dr. Mandy Cohen, the new CDC director, said she expects people will get their COVID vaccines that contain one version of the omicron strain, called XBB.5. It’s an important change from today’s combination shots, which mix the original coronavirus strain with last year’s most common omicron variants.

“It is ticking up a little bit, but it’s not something we need to raise the alarm bells over,” said Dr. David Dowdy, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. AP also pointed out that while infections may be rising, one challenge comes in how to track them. Federal authorities ended the public health emergency in May. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and many states no longer track the number of positive test results.

Since early June, about 50 to 60 people have died each week, according to AP. The number of deaths appeared to be stable this summer, although past increases in deaths have lagged behind hospitalizations.

This fall, officials expect to see updated COVID vaccines that contain one version of the omicron strain, called XBB.5. It’s an important change from today’s combination shots, which mix the original coronavirus strain with last year’s most common omicron variants. It’s not clear exactly when people can start rolling up sleeves for what officials hope is an annual COVID-19 shot. Pfizer, Moderna and smaller manufacturer Novavax all are brewing doses of the XBB update but the Food and Drug Administration will have to sign off on each, and the CDC must then issue recommendations for their use. Dr. Mandy Cohen, the new CDC director, said she expects people will get their COVID vaccines that contain one version of the omicron strain, called XBB.5. It’s an important change from today’s combination shots, which mix the original coronavirus strain with last year’s most common omicron variants.

“It is ticking up a little bit, but it’s not something we need to raise the alarm bells over,” said Dr. David Dowdy, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. AP also pointed out that while infections may be rising, one challenge comes in how to track them. Federal authorities ended the public health emergency in May. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and many states no longer track the number of positive test results.

Since early June, about 50 to 60 people have died each week, according to AP. The number of deaths appeared to be stable this summer, although past increases in deaths have lagged behind hospitalizations.

This fall, officials expect to see updated COVID vaccines that contain one version of the omicron strain, called XBB.5. It’s an important change from today’s combination shots, which mix the original coronavirus strain with last year’s most common omicron variants. It’s not clear exactly when people can start rolling up sleeves for what officials hope is an annual COVID-19 shot. Pfizer, Moderna and smaller manufacturer Novavax all are brewing doses of the XBB update but the Food and Drug Administration will have to sign off on each, and the CDC must then issue recommendations for their use. Dr. Mandy Cohen, the new CDC director, said she expects people will get their COVID vaccines that contain one version of the omicron strain, called XBB.5. It’s an important change from today’s combination shots, which mix the original coronavirus strain with last year’s most common omicron variants.

“It is ticking up a little bit, but it’s not something we need to raise the alarm bells over,” said Dr. David Dowdy, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. AP also pointed out that while infections may be rising, one challenge comes in how to track them. Federal authorities ended the public health emergency in May. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and many states no longer track the number of positive test results.

Since early June, about 50 to 60 people have died each week, according to AP. The number of deaths appeared to be stable this summer, although past increases in deaths have lagged behind hospitalizations.

This fall, officials expect to see updated COVID vaccines that contain one version of the omicron strain, called XBB.5. It’s an important change from today’s combination shots, which mix the original coronavirus strain with last year’s most common omicron variants. It’s not clear exactly when people can start rolling up sleeves for what officials hope is an annual COVID-19 shot. Pfizer, Moderna and smaller manufacturer Novavax all are brewing doses of the XBB update but the Food and Drug Administration will have to sign off on each, and the CDC must then issue recommendations for their use. Dr. Mandy Cohen, the new CDC director, said she expects people will get their COVID vaccines that contain one version of the omicron strain, called XBB.5. It’s an important change from today’s combination shots, which mix the original coronavirus strain with last year’s most common omicron variants.
Disability advocacy and leadership training for parents of young children with developmental disabilities and adults with disabilities is provided through Minnesota’s groundbreaking Partners in Policymaking program. Some of the 2023-2024 graduates shared their experiences in the program, which was developed by the Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities.

One parent was motivated to talk with Anoka County Commissioners Mindy Meisner and Julie Jeppson to discuss the county’s need for adaptive recreation and inclusion services, from parks and recreation to library services. Her goal is to have services that will provide her daughter and others with expanded interactions with the community and a range of community experiences.

Another parent applied for the program, to better understand government programs and policies that apply to people with disabilities and how to make them better. The family has a teenage daughter with Down Syndrome. This family found themselves taking months to get through the waiver services process, and now is committed to helping others do the same. The class also pushed this parent to plan for the next phases in her daughter’s life in the areas of customized employment, housing, and transportation. Her goal is to give her daughter the “dignity of making choices” to guide her growth and the “dignity of risk and failure.”

Another parent, with a daughter with autism, didn’t know where to begin when advocating for her child. She said, “Partners in Policymaking class appeared to be the best place to learn advocacy skills. The class emphasized the inclusion of people with disabilities in home, work, school, and community life… This class helped me not only advocate for my son, but also helped me feel less alone. I found a community of individuals who were without judgement and will be lifelong friends.”

When another parent learned that her son had autism, she realized that she had never met anyone with autism and had no idea of what to do or what his future would be like. She applied to Partners to become a better advocate for him and assist him in having a good relationship with others. In the class she befriended several class members with disabilities, realizing that she would want the same for her son when he is an adult.

“The speakers, and the adults with disabilities in my class, helped me realize that my son could someday be employed, live on his own, be independent and learn to be an advocate for himself,” she said. She also credits the class with opening doors to “amazing friendships” with people whom she would have not met any other way. She sees parenting a child with disabilities as a lonely challenge and requires each parent to take time to recharge. “The class causes you to miss work and family obligations, but it is worth the effort because it changes how you feel about your child,” she said. “When a parent feels ashamed that their child has disabilities, it is Partners graduates look back on experiences, accomplishments

GRADUATES To page 7
Elquist to lead Olmstead office

Aisha Elquist will be the next director of the Minnesota Olmstead Implementation Office (OIO). She has an extensive history of serving people with disabilities, most recently as the deputy Ombudsman for Long-Term Care. She has also worked as an attorney for the law firm of Fox Rothschild LLP, clerked for U.S. District Court Judge John R. Tunheim, and served as a staff attorney at Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid.

She has a long history of fighting for the civil rights of people with disabilities, including rights under Olmstead v. L.C. She is experienced with leading large-scale, collaborative efforts. Her hiring comes at the time as the state is starting to develop the next Olmstead Plan, bringing the work of ensuring that people with disabilities live, learn, work and enjoy life in the most integrated setting to a whole new level.

She is a graduate of Carleton College and the University of Michigan Law School and a recent Policy Fellow at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

She took on her new duties at OIO at the end of August.

Six are Rise’ing Stars

The disability service provider Rise has given six people its annual Rise’ing Star award. The six are doing big things in their communities. They have overcome obstacles, met and surpassed personal goals to achieve great success.

Taiye Ajoba has always had an impressive work ethic and a strong desire to be independent. He began working on the production floor in 2014 through a sensory program for people who are deaf, blind, and hard of hearing. While he had occasionally worked at community sites, late last year an opportunity arose to consistently switch from production to a community site at Ajax Metal Forming Solutions in Fridley. He works through uncertainties with sensory staff support and now works independently at Ajax.

Ajoba’s independence and diligent work attitude have allowed him great success. He continues to thrive while overcoming his naturally introverted personality to communicate more with coworkers and supervisors. He shows up early and works until the very end of his shift.

The first to file Ryan Courtook took on when he became a Finley’s Dog Treats store ambassador was to “practice his smile” because he hadn’t been out in the community much. He was shy, quiet, and hesitant to engage. But his practice and persistence paid off. He is now outgoing and social that he was promoted to Senior Finley’s Brand Ambassador. He is an outstanding leader who trains new ambassadors in a fun and supportive way.

Teddy Harrison, Jr. nurtures an artistic talent that has become a great source of pride and joy. He lives with a brain injury sustained during a car accident when he was three years old. He took up painting through the art therapy program shortly after coming to Rise two years ago and has embraced his talent with extreme passion. Because he is happiest when creating new and beautiful art, Harrison paints daily. His favorite day of the week is Friday when he paints one-on-one with our Art Therapist, Stacy Gross. He entered his work at the Anoka County Fair, where judges recognized his talent, awarding him a blue and a second-place ribbon.

Jason Henchuck is a devoted worker and problem solver. Any goal Henchuck sets, he achieves. He works incredibly well with his colleagues and staff, whenever he notices a problem or sees someone struggling, he’ll be the first to volunteer to help.

He works at Westfall Technik in New Richmond, Wisconsin, where he is called upon to do many different tasks. He loves these new opportunities because he enjoys learning new things and problem-solving to be more efficient. He is also skilled at teaching tasks to his coworkers.

Daniel Dooley possesses all the qualities of an accomplished person. He has found meaningful work, creating the life he wants, and continues to rely on his support while giving back to our community.

Currently, Dooley is working at bowling alley and arcade Bowlero, where he takes great enjoyment from upbeat customer interactions.

Earlier this year, he testified before the Minnesota Legislature to publicly advocate for the Legislative Mental Health Network bill. Daniel participates in Rise’s IPS supports program in Hennepin County.

Stacey Goede has been a mainstay through some major changes this past year. As Rise transitions production work to community worksites, she has become an expert in the processes of our Cummins Powder扩 Workers and dedicated to the work. Goede has become an expert troubleshooter, and learned many new things while going above and beyond communicating the changes at Cummins.
Nexus family healing to open facility

A shuttered psychiatric residential treatment facility will reopen with a new owner. Plymouth-based Nexus Family Healing announced that the nonprofit will open its first psychiatric residential treatment facility in East Bethel. Nexus acquired the property for $35.5 million and will reopen it in 2024.

The Hills Youth and Family Services of Duluth opened Cambia Hills facility in 2020 at a cost of $18 million. After community debate over whether it should be located in the facility closed a year later. The Hills, which had been in operation for 12 years, closed in 2022.

Nexus Family Healing is a nonprofit mental and behavioral health organization. It serves Minnesotans in Minnesota and Pennsylvania. It provides treatment for mental/ behavioral health issues, community mental health services, foster care/adoption, and residential treatment for children, families and adults.

Nexus plans to serve up to 40 clients, male and female, aged 10-19 with mental health and behavioral needs at the East Bethel facility. Up to 40 staff will be employed there.

"Minnesota urgently needs more options for young people with behavioral health needs," said Edmund K. Adams, president for Behavioral Health, Housing, and Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services for the Minnesota Department of Human Services, in the Nexus announcement. "We are grateful for Nexus Family Healing’s work to create this PRTC and will continue to partner with them and all providers who are standing up new programs and capacity to meet these critical needs."

The Hills closed Cambia Hills, and finally closed all its operations, blaming the COVID pandemic to restart checking people’s eligibility for their insurance,“ said Human Services Commissioner Jodi Hirsh. "DHS and our partners have been reaching, from text reminders, to letters, phone calls, posters, events and extended deadlines as we urge people to return their paperwork. We add new approaches every month and will keep making adjustments to reach as many Minnesotans as we can."

States across the country were required to check people’s eligibility for Medicaid programs earlier this year after a nearly three-year-long pause during the pandemic, which already happened. People who did not have health insurance when coverage was needed most. National estimates show that about 5.8 million people in other states have lost coverage when coverage was needed most. People who missed their renewal deadline should still turn in their forms because they may be eligible for one or even qualify for retroactive coverage. Enrollment for Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare is always retroactive coverage. Enrollment for Medical Assistance ended for about 3,600 people who submitted renewal forms and were found ineligible, or referred to MinnesotaCare, the state’s health insurance marketplace.

Coverage also stopped for about 32,600 people whose status is unknown. Some likely didn’t submit forms or had already insurance when an employer or they were no longer qualified for MinnesotaCare or Medical Assistance. Others may not have an updated mailing address on file or did not realize that the documents were important.

People who missed their renewal deadline should still turn in their forms because they may be eligible for one or even qualify for retroactive coverage. Enrollment for Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare is always retroactive coverage. Enrollment for Medical Assistance ended for about 3,600 people who submitted renewal forms and were found ineligible, or referred to MinnesotaCare, the state’s health insurance marketplace.

Two Richfield mothers filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against Richfield Public Schools, alleging that the district imposed discriminatory disciplinary practices against their children after gunshots were fired at a homecoming game last year. Although the three Richfield High School students were attending the Richfield High School administrators attempted to keep their children from participating in extracurricular activities, including athletics and prom, according to the lawsuit. Outside of passing time, lunch, recess, the three teenagers could only go to the bathroom if they had an adult escorting them. The lawsuit also alleges that Richfield High School administrators attempted to keep the students’ parents from enrolling their children at Richfield’s alternative high school for at-risk youth, South Education Center (SECA).

A lawsuit filed by Leah Harris and her twin sons, who are African American and Asian American, and Tara Behl and her daughter, who has a disability. The districts and several administrators in Richfield Public Schools are named as defendants in the case.

The boys found various restrictions humiliating and confusing, said attorney Margaret O’Sullivan Kane, who is representing both families in the lawsuit. Richfield Public Schools declined to comment, citing the open litigation.

The lawsuit was filed by Leah Harris and her twin sons, who are African American and Asian American, and Tara Behl and her daughter, who has a disability. The districts and several administrators in Richfield Public Schools are named as defendants in the case.

Travis Thompson’s academic and research career helped many people with disabilities. Thompson died in August. He was 86 and lived in Roseville.

Thompson’s long career is summarized in his biography on the Association for Behavioral Analysis International. He received his doctoral training in psychology at the University of Minnesota and completed postdoctoral work at the University of Maryland and at Cambridge University. His earliest work dealt with the relations among concepts from behavior analysis, etiology, and pharmacology. He was director of the F. Kennedy Center for Human Development at the University of Minnesota and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Kansas Medical Center before returning to Minnesota in 2005.

Thompson co-authored the first textbook in behavioral pharmacology and did basic and applied interdisciplinary research in developmental disabilities, including genetics, pharmacology, and neuroscience. He was involved in developing one of the first large-scale behavioral intervention programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities, and for several years directed home-based early intervention services for young children with autism in Minnesota. His research and practice had a profound effect on improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

Thompson also loved art and was an accomplished stained glass and tile artist. He is survived by his wife, Anneke; children and grandchildren. Memorials are planned for the Autism Society of Minnesota and the Minnesota Public Radio. A celebration of his life will be held at 2:30 p.m. Saturday, September 24 at the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis 900 Mt. Horem.

Kennev gave spiritual gifts Rev. William “Bill” Kenney considered himself to be a servant of God, who focused much of his life to serving those with disabilities through the Catholic Church. Kenney died this summer. He was 93 and lived in St. Paul.

He attended Creighton High School, Nazareth Hall, and later pursued his higher education at St. Paul Seminary where he received Master of Divinity and an MA in history degrees. In 1950, he was ordained a priest. Throughout his career, Kenney served in several parishes and held various roles. His compassionate nature led him to serve as a chaplain at St. Mary’s Hospital in Minneapolis, Faribault State Hospital, Minnesota Braille and Sight Saving School, and Minnesota School for the Deaf in Faribault. In his later years, he dedicated himself to serving as the chaplain for the first time.

In MEMORIAM

From page 7

Thompson’s research helped many people with disabilities. Thompson passed away in August. He was 86 and lived in Roseville.

Thompson’s long career is summarized in his biography on the Association for Behavioral Analysis International. He received his doctoral training in psychology at the University of Minnesota and completed postdoctoral work at the University of Maryland and at Cambridge University. His earliest work dealt with the relations among concepts from behavior analysis, etiology, and pharmacology. He was director of the F. Kennedy Center for Human Development at the University of Minnesota and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Kansas Medical Center before returning to Minnesota in 2005.

Thompson co-authored the first textbook in behavioral pharmacology and did basic and applied interdisciplinary research in developmental disabilities, including genetics, pharmacology, and neuroscience. He was involved in developing one of the first large-scale behavioral intervention programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities, and for several years directed home-based early intervention services for young children with autism in Minnesota. His research and practice had a profound effect on improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

Thompson also loved art and was an accomplished stained glass and tile artist. He is survived by his wife, Anneke; children and grandchildren. Memorials are planned for the Autism Society of Minnesota and the Minnesota Public Radio. A celebration of his life will be held at 2:30 p.m. Saturday, September 24 at the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis 900 Mt. Horem.

Kennev gave spiritual gifts Rev. William “Bill” Kenney considered himself to be a servant of God, who focused much of his life to serving those with disabilities through the Catholic Church. Kenney died this summer. He was 93 and lived in St. Paul.

He attended Creighton High School, Nazareth Hall, and later pursued his higher education at St. Paul Seminary where he received Master of Divinity and an MA in history degrees. In 1950, he was ordained a priest. Throughout his career, Kenney served in several parishes and held various roles. His compassionate nature led him to serve as a chaplain at St. Mary’s Hospital in Minneapolis, Faribault State Hospital, Minnesota Braille and Sight Saving School, and Minnesota School for the Deaf in Faribault. In his later years, he dedicated himself to serving as the chaplain for the first time.
Barnett "Bud" Rosenfield

Rosenfield, although worthy, was not eligible for the award because he no longer continued living at the time of nomination. The newspaper staff and board wished to highlight his work and contributions again. Read his obituary at https://accesspress.org/rosenfield-made-an-impact-for-disabled-minnesotans.

Barnett "Bud" Rosenfield was nominated posthumously for the Charlie Smith Award. Rosenfield, Minnesota’s Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack July 8. He was 97 years old.

Rosenfield had served as ombudsman since December 2021. He was appointed to the post with a long record of committed service to Minnesotans with disabilities. He had also worked at the Minnesota Disability Law Center for almost 25 years. Following law school graduation, Rosenfield clerked for the Honorable Harriet Lansing, then served as the staff coordinator for the state’s Special District Apportionment Panel.

Steven Schmidt, his colleague at the Disability Law Center, said, “At the Minnesota Disability Law Center, Bud will be remembered for his brilliant legal work on significant litigation and public policy involving Home and Community-Based Services waiting lists, budget methodology, and reimbursement rates, as well as the rights of people living in their own homes and entering into facilities and improvements to Personal Care Assistance (PCA) services. Bud consistently worked to prevent cuts to PCA services when the proposed language failed to recognize a person’s needs. Bud influenced a huge effort to set rates for home and community-based services. As one colleague noted, this was a huge granular detail requiring sharp math skills and an eye toward assuring folks who needed more staff had access. He served on numerous task forces, workgroups and committees, including the Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities, the ICI Community Advisory Council, the Department of Human Services Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Committee and many, many others. He represented clients in large scale litigation brought by the office, including Masterman v. Goodno, Guggenberger v. Minnesota, and Murphy v. Hartsstead. Bud did big things that changed services for people with disabilities on a broad scale across the entire state. His colleagues, and so many of the people and family members that he represented over the years, will also remember him as a tireless advocate for the individual person. For nearly 25 years, first as a volunteer at MDLC, and later joining the staff in January 1998, Bud always put the person and the person’s needs first. He represented thousands of people with disabilities in their efforts to access services, supports, and accommodations, sometimes representing the same person multiple times over years, not giving up until that person was able to access services and supports ‘to live a completely different, engaged life.’ When you think of all of the ‘big work’ he did (and there was a lot of it), we at the Disability Law Center will also remember him for every individual he represented that made a big difference for that one person. His life touched so many other lives and leaves a void that will be felt for many years to come.

Editor’s note: Rosenfield, although worthy, was not eligible for the award because he no longer continued living at the time of nomination. The newspaper staff and board wished to highlight his work and contributions again. Read his obituary at https://accesspress.org/rosenfield-made-an-impact-for-disabled-minnesotans.
Learn about Radio Talking Book

Radio Talking Book is a program that allows listeners to take "reading material" on their summer adventures. The Minnesota Radio Talking Book Network is available for loan through the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library in Faribault. The catalog is at www.mnlib.org, click on the link to Search the Library Catalog. Call the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library at 651-722-0550, Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. CST.

For updates, go to the Facebook site Minnesota Radio Talking Book. Audio information about the daily book listings is on the National Federation for the Blind (NFB) Newsletter. Register for a NFB's Mind subscription by going to www.nfb.org/newsletter-service NFB-newline@listserv.nfb.org. The NFB-NEWSLINE service provides access to more than 500 magazines and newspapers. To learn more, visit www.nfb.org/services-services@nfb-newline.

The sampling published monthly in NFB Newsline doesn't represent the full array of programming.

Chautauqua* Monday - Friday 6 a.m. Sacred Nature, Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature, Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Chautauqua*

Monday – Friday 6 a.m.

Sacred Nature,
Wingspan Life Resources offers 
Rainbow Support Group
for LGBTQ adults with Developmental Disabilities.

We provide education, resources, peer support & monthly activities. Now seeking guest speakers and volunteers.

Membership is free.
Contact Deb Hofbauer, Program Director
dhofbauer@wingspanlife.org
651-353-7747
wingspanlife.org

We hope to see you at Columbia Pride and Bloomington Pride in September!

Accessible, Affordable Housing

- For adults with qualifying disabilities.
- Over 50 barrier-free apartment communities & homes throughout the Metropolitan Area, Greater Minnesota and the Midwest.
- Locations also available in many other states. Income limits apply.
- Immediate openings in Hibbing, Willmar and Hibbing, Minnesota

Affordable Senior Apartments

- For qualifying senior households age 62 or better.
- Metro & Greater MN locations available. Income limits apply.
- Accessible apartments, available for seniors in these locations.
- Immediate openings in Worthington and Albert Lea, Minnesota

Housing with Care*

- 24-hour Assisted Living Services
- Independent Living Services
- Resident Community Setting (Adult Foster Care)
- Eligibility for or selection of ASI services is not required to qualify for housing. ASI services are not available in all locations.

Services openings. Call Today!

www.accessiblespace.org

EXPERT SEXUAL HEALTH CARE.
IT’S WHAT WE DO.

Services Include:
- Birth Control
- STI Testing and Treatment
- HIV Testing
- Cancer Screenings
- PEP/PrEP
- Transgender Hormone Therapy
- UTI Screening and Treatment
- Annual Exams
- HPV Vaccines
- And More!

Care, no matter what.
Whether in person or online, with or without insurance, we offer the care you need. Low- to no-cost options available.

PPNCS.ORG | 1.800.230.PLAN (7526)

Wingspan Life Resources offers Rainbow Support Group for LGBTQ adults with Developmental Disabilities.

We provide education, resources, peer support & monthly activities. Now seeking guest speakers and volunteers.

Membership is free.
Contact Deb Hofbauer, Program Director
dhofbauer@wingspanlife.org
651-353-7747
wingspanlife.org

We hope to see you at Columbia Pride and Bloomington Pride in September!

Accessible, Affordable Housing

- For adults with qualifying disabilities.
- Over 50 barrier-free apartment communities & homes throughout the Metropolitan Area, Greater Minnesota and the Midwest.
- Locations also available in many other states. Income limits apply.
- Immediate openings in Hibbing, Willmar and Hibbing, Minnesota

Affordable Senior Apartments

- For qualifying senior households age 62 or better.
- Metro & Greater MN locations available. Income limits apply.
- Accessible apartments, available for seniors in these locations.
- Immediate openings in Worthington and Albert Lea, Minnesota

Housing with Care*

- 24-hour Assisted Living Services
- Independent Living Services
- Resident Community Setting (Adult Foster Care)
- Eligibility for or selection of ASI services is not required to qualify for housing. ASI services are not available in all locations.

Services openings. Call Today!

www.accessiblespace.org

EXPERT SEXUAL HEALTH CARE.
IT’S WHAT WE DO.

Services Include:
- Birth Control
- STI Testing and Treatment
- HIV Testing
- Cancer Screenings
- PEP/PrEP
- Transgender Hormone Therapy
- UTI Screening and Treatment
- Annual Exams
- HPV Vaccines
- And More!

Care, no matter what.
Whether in person or online, with or without insurance, we offer the care you need. Low- to no-cost options available.

PPNCS.ORG | 1.800.230.PLAN (7526)