

LEADER

A Quarterly Publication of Opportunities Unlimited

"Maximizing Personal Potential through Dignified and Purposeful Living"

OU Awarded Three-Year Accreditation

CARF International announced that Opportunities Unlimited has been accredited for a period of three years for the following programs:

- Residential Rehabilitation Programs: Brain Injury Specialty Program (Adults)
- Vocational Services: Brain Injury Specialty Program (Adults)
- Community Employment Services: Employment Supports
- Community Employment Services: Job Development
- Community Integration
- Employee Development Services
- Employment Planning Services
- Home and Community Services
- Organizational Employment Services
- Respite Services
- Supported Living
- Services for Children and Youth: Child and Adolescent Services



This accreditation decision represents the highest level of accreditation that can be awarded to an organization and shows the organization's substantial conformance to the CARF standards. This represents the 7th consecutive three-year accreditation that OU has achieved. An organization receiving a Three-Year Accreditation has put itself through a rigorous peer review process and has demonstrated to a team of surveyors during an on-site visit that its programs and services are of the highest quality, measurable, and accountable.

CARF is an independent, nonprofit accrediting body whose mission is to promote the quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process that centers on enhancing the lives of the persons served. Founded in 1966 as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, and now known as CARF, the accrediting body establishes person served focused standards to help organizations measure and improve the quality of their programs and services.

Success at its Finest

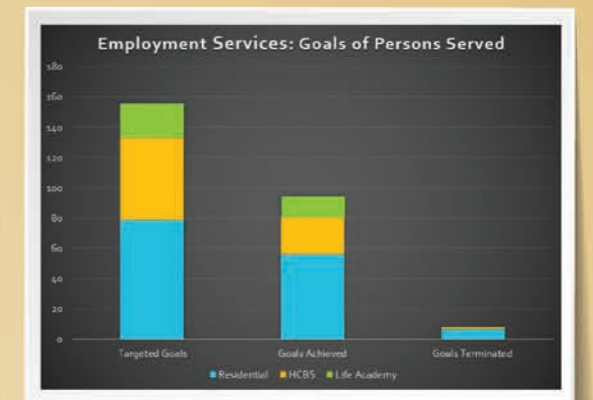
OU's Employment Services program serves approximately sixty individuals including referrals from Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation, Sioux City L.I.F.E. Academy, and Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). John is just one of our persons served in this program who has successfully completed all components of OU's Employment Services program and continues great work through his accomplishments.

John began his employment journey with Opportunities Unlimited through the L.I.F.E. Academy program (a program with the Sioux City Community Schools) that focuses on "adult skills and behaviors" in 2012.. He graduated from the L.I.F.E. Academy program in the spring of 2013 and began work with OU through the Pre-Employment Services program, where he worked on developing job skills until the summer of 2017 when he began Supportive Employment Services work with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation. Through this program, John worked with Job Coach Monica Barajas where job skills were

further developed, and employment opportunities were explored and pursued. In the fall of 2017, John and his job coach obtained employment with his current employer, Michael's (a craft store in the Siouxland area).

When asked about his employment journey, John stated his favorite part of receiving employment services is, "All of it." Some of the businesses that John and others have developed their vocational training have included the Siouxland Center for Active Generations, Hope Springs Community of Faith Church, and the LaunchPAD Children's Museum.

John admits that some tasks are challenging, specifically laundry. With the support from his OU team, John overcame these deficits to obtain job skills which are utilized in his position at Michael's. When asked about his experience with OU's Employment Services program, John stated, "It's a nice program and they can teach you anything you want to know."



Service Day Projects

Opportunities Unlimited gladly opens our Community Center doors to schools, organizations, and businesses who encourage acts of service throughout the Siouxland Community. OU was fortunate to have several of these volunteer-oriented schools and businesses spend their time and energy on the OU campus this fall. Multiple groups, such as the Morningside College Men's Basketball team, Bishop Heelan High School students, Sacred Heart Middle School students, and Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. toured OU, visited with persons served and helped clean in and around the OU campus.

The Morningside Men's Basketball team stopped by OU as they participated in their college's community service day project, Into the Streets. The young men helped clean our fleet of vans and assisted our maintenance crew by tidying up our campus grounds. Other groups, such as the team from Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. spent time in the gymnasium with persons served, participating in games and activities. Both Heelan and Sacred Heart students participated in their Homecoming Week Service Day projects at OU by cleaning the gymnasium floor and tackling random tasks throughout campus.

Regardless of size, these acts of kindness make a direct impact on the lives of our persons served and staff. We offer our sincerest gratitude to the students and community members who go above and beyond to make OU and the rest of the Siouxland Community a better place.



Fall Festivities

Halloween is a holiday that has become an OU favorite. It is not unusual for persons served and staff to spend weeks planning and preparing costumes, which are proudly displayed on Halloween Day. OU's Therapy Department takes the lead in planning numerous activities for our persons served each year which includes crafts, scary movies, and a murder mystery event.

In addition to the typical OU excitement that coincides with Halloween, OU hosted its fifth annual "Trunk or Treat" event on October 25th. What began as a typical outside "trunk or treat" event for thirty individuals has moved indoors to anticipate inclement weather as well as the growing numbers of guests. This year OU hosted twenty separate "trunks" for the event; supported by employees of OU as well as other organizations with connections to OU. Each designated area was decorated in a theme, with interactive games, prizes, and treats for all guests. "We try to make it inclusive and safe for people of all abilities" stated Brooke Hindman, Occupational Therapist. "We include the teal pumpkin and other gifts including non-food items. It's not just about the candy but the environment."

OU has celebrated other various fall festivities by participating in the **Zombie Walk** organized by the Disabilities Resource Center for Siouxland, as well as **All Abilities Day** supported by the Miracle League. Persons served and employees continue to stay engaged in the community by taking advantage of the various events and organizations hosted by the Siouxland Community!



OU Celebrates DSP Week

OU celebrated Direct Support Professionals (DSP) Week, September 10th – 14th. This national week of recognition is designed to celebrate the role of caregivers, including those who care for persons served with brain injuries and other special needs. "Our employees are our most valued resource," stated Jennifer McCabe, President and CEO. "They are dedicated to our mission and supporting our persons served. We look forward to this week and opportunity to honor them; they make an incredible impact on the lives of others." The OU Leadership team had a variety of activities and treats for employees each day to remind them just how much they are appreciated. The Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP) also held a contest to recognize DSPs throughout the state; OU had three individuals selected and included in their tribute to DSPs. Congratulations to Thomas Medbourn, Monica Barajas, and Sandy Fitch!



Family Day

Every September, Opportunities Unlimited invites family members of our persons served and staff along with the surrounding neighborhood to **Family and Community Day**. We celebrated this year by enjoying the beautiful fall weather with plenty of indoor and outdoor activities to keep everyone entertained. Equipped with the notorious bouncy house for the kids to jump and play in, there were endless activities which included crafts, Jumbo Jenga, and Bingo. Along with the standard favorites, we had a few small, yet exciting changes occur this Family and Community Day. Our therapy team made a conscious effort to promote healthier food alternatives for the kids by switching out our ring toss soda for flavored carbonated water. We were also blessed by a performance by West High School's Dance Team. Furthermore, we had a noticeably larger number of staff volunteer for the day, which helped keep the activities and food lines running efficiently. We appreciate the willingness of our staff to lend a helping hand during this annual event, because it serves as an inclusive opportunity for families to meet one another, staff, and leadership. We are already looking forward to next year!



Bacon Fest

As a local non-profit organization, Opportunities Unlimited relies on the support and generosity of the Siouxland Community to help us excel in the services we provide. This fall, OU reciprocated this community support by participating in the Siouxland Habitat for Humanity's 5th Annual Bacon Fest on September 29th, 2018 at the Sioux City Hard Rock and Casino's Battery Park. As a first-time supporter, our OU team did not know what to expect from the outdoor festival, but at the end of the event our team was blown away by the friendly atmosphere, live music, and of course, the bacon inspired recipes.

Our OU team served up two dishes, Bacon Mac and Cheese and Pancake Cake Balls, which were both hits among the 1,000 bacon enthusiasts who stopped by Bacon Fest. It took many helping hands from OU staff members to make our booth a success. From Wednesday to Saturday, we had staff helping with the food preparation process, set up, working the booth, and cleaning up. We are humbled to have staff volunteer their time to help make a difference for Opportunities Unlimited. The proceeds that OU earned from Bacon Fest will be applied to OU's Annual Angel program which supports persons served.

