

# LEADER

A Quarterly Publication of Opportunities Unlimited

*"Maximizing Personal Potential through Dignified and Purposeful Living"*

## DV Boys Basketball Team Leads Practice at OU

Persons served of Opportunities Unlimited were pleased to open up their Community Center and gym to have the Dakota Valley Boys Basketball team hold one of their practices in February. For the last four years, Coach Jason Kleis has arranged to have one of the team practices at Opportunities Unlimited, to allow the young men from DV to work out with persons served of OU. This has been a valuable experience for the persons served and staff of OU as well as the young men and coaches from Dakota Valley. Jack McCabe, Senior at Dakota Valley, stated "It's been great coming here throughout high school to practice and get to meet these guys. We have as much fun as they do."

Following basketball practice and shoot around, persons served and staff of Opportunities Unlimited joined the team for pizza at the OU Community Center. This meal was sponsored by Hope Springs Church, who have also been longtime supporters of OU. The fellowship of this event has quickly become a favorite tradition, bringing individuals and organizations of the community together.



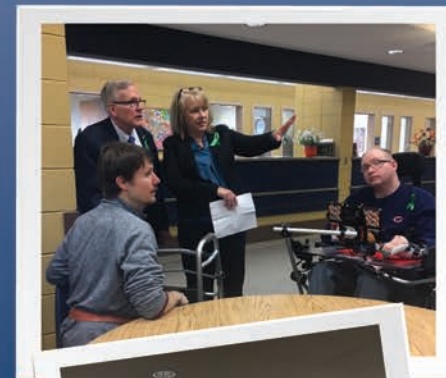
## Brain Injury Awareness Month

Brain Injury Awareness Month is recognized in March and OU was able to show support in a variety of ways in 2018. For over 25 years OU has been supporting individuals affected by brain injury and is dedicated to increasing awareness while also helping to educate the community. Through education and awareness, our hope is to not only support those who have brain injuries but also focus on prevention. No two brain injuries are the same and the effects of a brain injury can vary greatly from person to person. There are two types of brain injuries: traumatic and acquired. A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is caused by an external force and could occur with a fall, motor vehicle accident, sports injury, or assault. An acquired brain injury (ABI) is an injury to the brain which is not hereditary, congenital, degenerative, or induced by birth trauma. Examples of this would include: stroke, tumor, aneurysm, infectious disease that affects the brain, or lack of oxygen supply (i.e. heart attack). OU's Residential and Rehabilitation Program has supported hundreds of brain injury survivors since it originated in the 1990s and is dedicated in doing so while living the Mission, "Maximizing Personal Potential Through Dignified and Purposeful Living." Some of the events supporting Brain Injury Awareness Month included:

- Reception and Proclamation – OU welcomed Mayor Pro-Tem Dan Moore on March 7th for a gathering at OU's Community Center. Persons served, staff, and community

members joined together while a proclamation was read declaring March as Brain Injury Awareness Month and recognizing OU for the efforts supporting those affected by brain injury. Participants were given green ribbons to wear showing their support for this important cause. Following a cake reception, attendees went outside and released green balloons. OU team members also attended the Sioux City Council meeting where Mayor Bob Scott recognized OU for its dedication to serving those affected by brain injury and declaration of Brain Injury Awareness Month.

- Brain Injury Conference – Four OU team members participated in the annual Iowa Brain Injury Conference, held in Des Moines. One of OU's direct care members, Diana Gonzalez, was recognized for the "Young Professional of the Year" award. This was given in honor of an employee who is new to this field but has made a significant impact. "What an honor to have Diana recognized for her extraordinary work at OU" stated Jennifer McCabe, President and CEO. "We have many great people on our team, and Diana exemplifies some of the best attributes of our employees."



# Unmasking Brain Injury

Opportunities Unlimited hosted the traveling exhibit, "Unmasking Brain Injury" in conjunction with the Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa. This artwork exhibit promotes the awareness of the prevalence of brain injury while giving survivors a voice and means to educate others on what it is like to live with a brain injury. Persons served of Opportunities Unlimited are just some of the individuals throughout the state of Iowa who have their artwork featured in this traveling exhibit. Opportunities Unlimited was pleased to be one of the first organizations to offer the exhibit to the public and extended an invitation to community members to visit and view the artwork while it was displayed in Sioux City.

Brooke Hindman, Occupational Therapist, stated, "It is exciting that our persons served are participating in this initiative for the second year and that OU is able to host this traveling exhibit."

"Unmasking Brain Injury" is just one way to show others that those with a brain injury are just like others and want to be respected and prove their value within their communities.



# OU Honors Staff Anniversaries

Opportunities Unlimited honored team members who celebrated five, ten, and fifteen-year anniversaries in an annual event and Mission Meeting. For over twenty-five years, OU has supported persons served affected by brain injury and other special needs. The direct care staff and extended team members are critical to the delivery of quality services that OU has long been recognized for. The OU Staff who were honored during this celebration for their dedication and commitment to the organization are:

### Five Year Anniversary

Brittney Johnson, Direct Support Professional, CBIS  
Susan Vondrak, Executive Operations Manager, CBIS  
Megan Dimmick, HCBS Direct Support Professional  
Christy Braunger, RN, CBIS

### Ten Year Anniversary

Edward Henry, Therapy Support Professional, CBIS

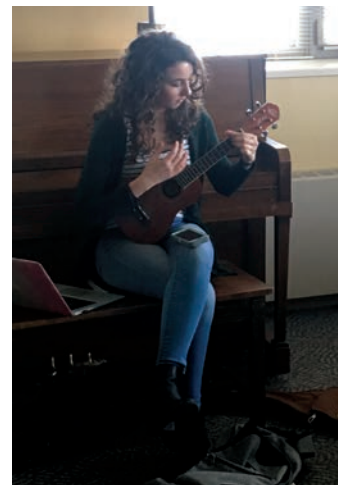
### Fifteen Year Anniversary

Margo Whitehead, Direct Support Professional, CBIS  
Sandy Fitch, Direct Support Professional, CBIS

"Our staff are our most valuable resource," stated Jennifer McCabe, President and CEO. "The employees we recognize for their five, ten, and fifteen-year anniversaries have been critical to the success of our organization and delivery of exceptional services. We look forward to celebrating such milestones with many of our team members!" Those honored for their service were presented with an award and OU gear.

# Music Talents Shared with OU

Each semester, students from Morningside College have participated in service learning hours, some of whom have chosen OU for their chosen organization to lend this volunteer time. In the past few years, many have spent several hours with persons served of OU, and it's been beneficial to have the time and energy from these students. This spring semester, one student has made an impact by sharing her glorious talents with members of the OU family. Tara Meinen, a Junior majoring in Music Therapy, has been utilizing her service learning hours to lead various music and dancing classes at OU as part of the therapy classes conducted as part of daily schedules. Tara brings about a high level of enthusiasm and care for others while she encourages involvement and participation as they sing, dance, and enjoy this musical therapy time. Sharing her gift of music with others has made a positive impact – we're grateful this connection was made through Morningside College!



# CRRN Awarded to OU RN

The Association of Rehabilitation Nurses and The Rehabilitation Nursing Certification Board, has certified another member of the nursing staff at Opportunities Unlimited (OU), Ashley Simpson, as a Certified Rehabilitative Registered Nurse (CRRN). The board was first developed by the ARN in 1984 to develop, administer, and evaluate programs for certification in rehabilitation nursing.

Receiving such certification indicates a specialized level of nursing focused on caring for the patient undergoing physical rehabilitation and provides a higher level of nursing care to those patients with physical disabilities due to acute or chronic illness. In this case, Simpson will be working with individuals who have a brain injury, spinal cord injury, or other special needs.

Simpson had to meet several requirements in order to take the test to become certified. This includes, be a licensed Registered Nurse, be employed for at least two years as a rehab nurse within the past five year period, or be employed as a rehabilitation nurse for at least one year within the past five years and complete at least one year of advanced training beyond a baccalaureate degree. RNs also are required to complete at least 60 hours of continuing education in the field of rehab nursing.

Once meeting those requirements, Simpson took a comprehensive exam, which tested her knowledge on patient care and assessment, along with nursing intervention for rehabilitating patients. A large portion of the exam also tested RNs on working with a medical team to facilitate a smooth transition for a patient to re-enter the community after undergoing in-patient rehab.

# Heart of the Mission



Each year, Opportunities Unlimited honors an employee that has consistently gone above and beyond their typical job duties to provide exceptional service to our persons served. The award also takes into account someone that lives the OU mission, "Maximizing Personal Potential through Dignified and Purposeful Living" and shows respect to and is respected by his or her fellow co-workers.



It is a pleasure to honor both of these women as Heart of the Mission winners. Although OU has several wonderful employees, the dedication that Melody and Mary offer each and every day is valued. Both are great representatives of OU.

In extraordinary fashion, OU recently announced two winners for this prestigious award – Melody Bentson and Mary Holder. Melody has been employed with OU for three years, supporting our persons served in our residential rehabilitation program. Placing persons served first comes natural to Melody, she has a positive approach with tasks, is a team player and supports OU in many ways. Britney Cooper, Program Director, stated, "Melody is a silent leader and is not just here for a job, she is here to impact lives and support our company to be the best it can be." Mary Holder, Manager of Health Services, has been part of the OU team since 2009. She, too, is a natural leader who is humble about the impact she makes on the organization and is valued by many. She has developed strong relationships with persons served, OU team members, healthcare professionals, and many other extended community partners.

# Like us on Facebook



Opportunities Unlimited created a new Facebook page last year and we encourage everyone to check us out and make sure to "Like Us"! We've been posting some of the activities and updates regarding OU more regularly and would like to keep everyone updated!

# OU Golf Tournament

Opportunities Unlimited will be hosting its 21st Annual Golf Tournament on Friday, July 20th at the Sioux City Country Club. This event is the sole fundraising activity for OU and proceeds from this event are applied to a new wheelchair accessible van for the organization. "We've been fortunate to operate with a full tournament in recent years," stated Susan Vondrak, tournament director. If you'd like to participate or support OU in this event, please contact Susan at 712-277-8295 or visit us on our website at [www.opportunitiesunlimited.com](http://www.opportunitiesunlimited.com).

