

# CHOICE, unlimited

In

# Action



Opening Doors to  
Employment & Opportunity

## ONWARD TOGETHER

It is August already! In some ways it feels like this has been a very long summer and in other ways it feels like it is passing by very quickly. COVID-19 continues to impact everything we do, even defining the passage of time: pre-COVID-19, present-COVID-19, and hopefully soon, post-COVID-19.

We are not letting our health crisis get the best of us! We continue moving forward by connecting virtually and/or face to face with our staff and the people we serve. We recently joined other regional Employment and Life Enrichment service providers to help our elected officials understand the importance of our work through a [news story on WDIO](#) on 8/6/20. We are determined to be here serving people post-pandemic. We are asking our state leaders to work together to pass legislation during the third special session slated to begin on 8/12/20. This legislation will grant one time emergency funding to providers like CHOICE, unlimited who are not able to open fully at this time. Emergency funding is vitally important as it will help us get through this time of uncertainty until we can fully open and get back to serving all of the wonderful people we support! In the meantime we continue with positivity moving onward together!

~Kristie Buchman, Executive Director

CHOICE, unlimited  
Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 25, Issue 2

Summer 2020

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-Olga B. Hart -Arc Northland -Thrivent	

### Thank You To Our Angel Mask Makers!



Linda & Bethany  
Erdahl

We would like to thank Kathy Forsman (Mom of our employee, Ann Forsman), Terri-Ann Collins (Wife of our employee Jeff Collins) and Linda Erdahl (Mom of a person we serve) for creating and donating masks for our agency these past few months. We greatly appreciate your generosity and willingness to donate your time and talents to help keep our staff and the people we serve safe during these challenging times!

Thank you most sincerely!



Kathy Forsman



Terri-Ann Collins

# Fundraising Events



## Masquerade Ball Postponed Until 2021

We had to make the hard decision once again to postpone our Masquerade Ball until it is safe for us to gather in larger numbers.

We will let you know as soon as a date is set for 2021.

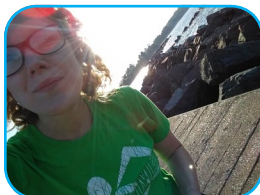
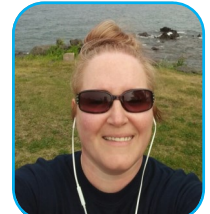
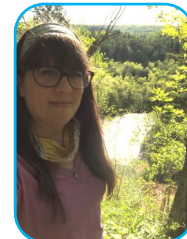
We want to enjoy an evening full of great art and entertainment and will do so when it is safe.

If you already have tickets, they will be redeemable at our future event.

Thanks for your understanding during these unprecedented times!

Thank you to all who participated in our virtual Hike for Health Fundraiser! Through this event we raised \$4,311.26 for our health and wellness program.

Your generous donations are greatly appreciated!

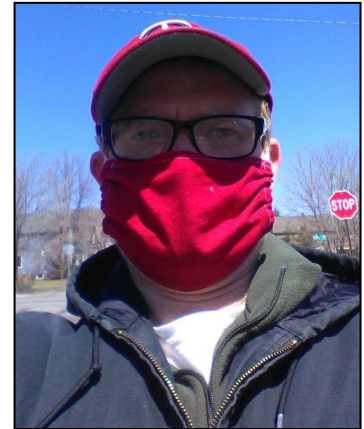


## Social Distance Walking Club Virtually Travels the North Shore

Another creative way we kept connected while staying apart was CHOICE, unlimited's Social Distance Walking Club. Persons served, staff, and the community could either sign up for emails or follow along on our Facebook page. For every 15 minutes someone walked, biked, rolled, or strolled outside (safely, of course) they counted one mile. Then everyone made their way (virtually) up the North Shore.

Starting in Duluth, stops included Brighton Beach (5 miles), where we found out more about Lake Superior Agates. In Two Harbors (26 miles), we learned that artist Pete Barnett sells his yarn goods at Judy's Café. We took virtual tours of many State Parks including Gooseberry Falls (39 miles), Split Rock (46 miles), Tettegouche (58 miles), George H. Crosby-Manitou (73 miles), and Temperance River (80 miles). Along the way we discovered information about peregrine falcons, fish stocking, iron ore and taconite, and much more!

On our [Facebook page](#), we asked where the best "out-of-the-way" place to walk was. Michelle said, "Western Waterfront Trail behind Willard Munger Inn. Then you have your pick of the hiking trail or if there's a wheelchair or mobility issues you can go on the Willard Munger bike trail." Other favorite places are Lincoln Park, Quarry Park, Kingsbury Creek, Congdon Park, Hartley Park, and Lester River trails. Housemates and families cheered each other on while they enjoyed the outdoors. Some people enjoyed walking alone, like Richard Fuentes, who shared his photos with us.



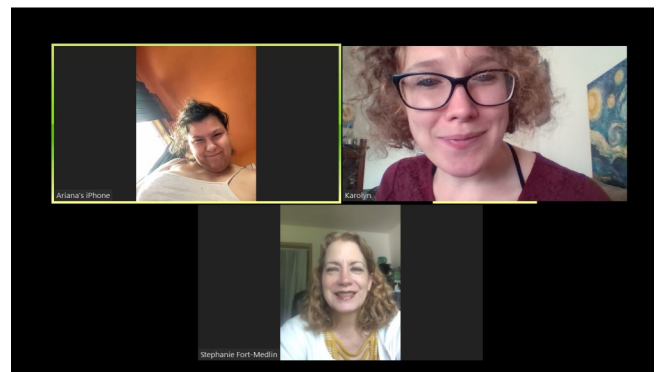
*Richard Fuentes  
participates in the Social  
Distance Walking Club*

## Class Corner: Creative Programming During COVID-19

Ari, her job coach Karolyn, and her Community Support Specialist Stephanie have been taking part in Zoom meetings since April.

Before shelter-in-place became a reality, Ari's interest in forensic science led Ari and Karolyn to work on creating and labelling a skeleton and its parts and molding a skull with clay. They were able to continue this research during their Zoom meetings. Karolyn has used the screen-sharing feature of Zoom to look up and share pictures of various types of ear shapes and sizes, and they talked about why that would be important in re-creating a skull.

In addition, they have virtually toured a police station and will continue with safety lessons they had been doing previously. Ari will be looking up and sharing information she finds about forensic science at their Zoom meetings.



*Ari, Karolyn, and Stephanie use Zoom  
to work on outcomes including virtual tours.*



# QUARTERLY *Highlights*



*Patrick keeping Slumberland Furniture's showroom in tip-top shape!*

## EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER **Patrick Robinson**

Patrick is a faithful and responsible employee. He has worked at Slumberland Furniture since December of 2013. He works two days a week vacuuming and dusting the entire show floor. This is a big job maneuvering around a lot of furniture. Pat says "I love my job; everybody is real nice. This is a good place to work." Patrick's coworkers shared that he brings "A breath of fresh air." Jeanine Johnson, Office Manager, shared that Patrick is always upbeat and has a great sense of humor. He had to take a break from work due to the pandemic, but returned in July to make sure the showroom looks great and is welcoming to all of the Slumberland customers. Great work, Patrick! Your dedication is much appreciated.



## EMPLOYER OF THE QUARTER

"Slumberland Furniture traces back to 1967," states Vaughn Regstad, store manager. It's a Minnesota business created and owned by the Larson Family from Oakdale, MN. There are 125 stores across the Midwest providing quality furniture to our great community.



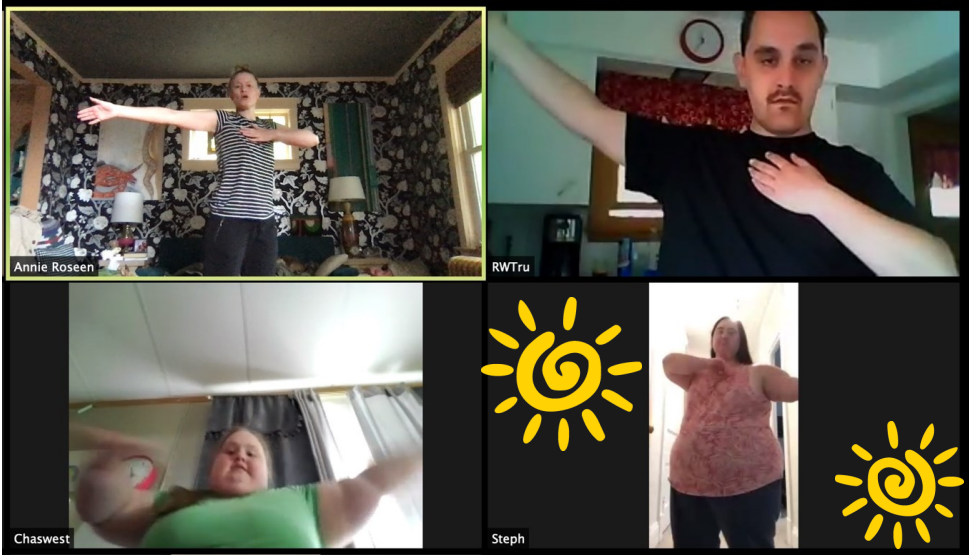
*Vaughn Regstad,  
Slumberland Store Manager*

"In the 1970's and 80's, Slumberland added La-Z-Boys, sofas, bedroom and dining room furniture to their product line." Vaughn is proud to share that he has been with Slumberland Furniture since 1982. Slumberland is located at 4742 Maple Grove Road in Hermantown. Their friendly staff are looking forward to serving you, and please remember to wear a face covering as you peruse their beautiful store.

Thank you, Slumberland Furniture, for partnering with CHOICE, unlimited and creating a wonderful employment opportunity for Patrick!

# Summer ARTS Program Update

This summer is truly one for the history books. These unique and difficult times have led artists to express themselves on new platforms, in new mediums, and about new subject matters. Arts can heal and many of us turn to artists to help light the way. It has been challenging to not meet and create face to face for the last few months. The ARTS Program has tried to stay connected to artists and performers, but everyone misses the in-person connection. However, we have learned new ways to be creative and new ways to connect. Many of our artists are learning the way of Zoom and other virtual formats to share their work and stay in touch.



Starting the first week of June we began offering formal online classes in Dance, Music, Visual Art and Creative Writing with all of our regular instructors. So far it has been a wild ride! Everyone loves seeing one another on the screen, getting to be creative, and having some semblance of their former routine. Creative Writing has even been creating collaborative poems in class to sort out some pandemic feelings. This poem was written by Jenny, Sedric, Bethany, Chris and Henry.

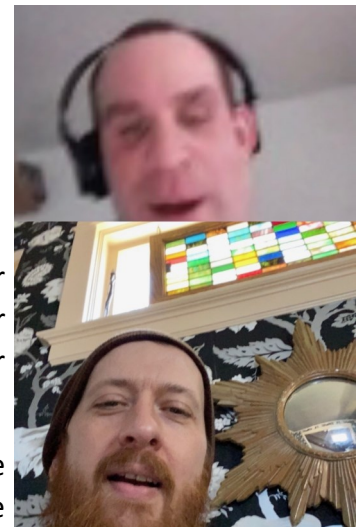
*Zoom Dance Class with Annie, Rob, Chasadie & Steph.*

## **\*Curbside\***

*I wish I could get these delivered curbside:  
Chinese food, good books to read, friends and family,  
kitties (that'd be sweet), my boyfriend.*

Maria Brown, our Visual Arts instructor, hosted an online fundraiser for material for her virtual classes. She collected funds, ordered material that would be a good fit for virtual lessons, and hand delivered packages to the students that were part of her first online Zoom Class. We are so thankful for Maria's initiative and dedication!

Dance, Music, and Creative Writing Class definitely look and feel different, but are still just as fun and rewarding. Students have said they love to be able to do the classes at home, and that it has helped with their stress and overall wellbeing.



*Rob & Toby working on music.*

Even while BOLD-choice has been on hiatus, they managed to win a well-deserved award. CHOICE, unlimited's own BOLD-choice Theatre Company received the 2020 Life Enrichment Award from MOHR: the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation. The award is for BCTC's "outstanding outreach theatre program cultivating inclusion, diversity, and personal pride". An award presentation will happen on August 20th.

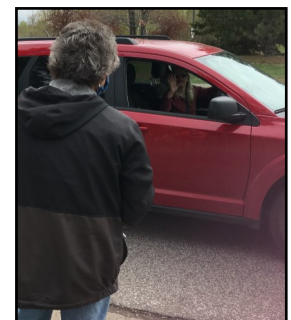
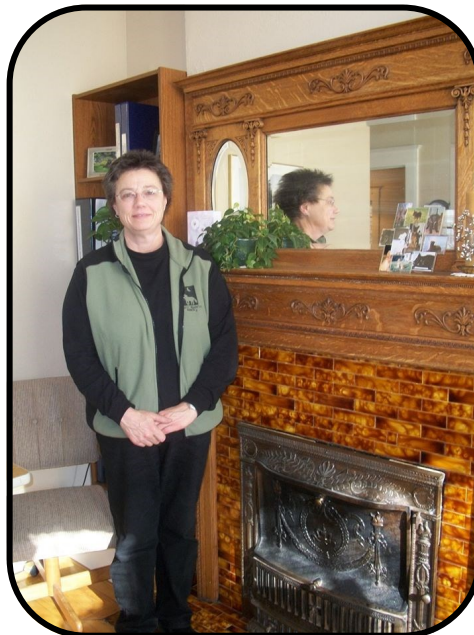
BOLD-choice actors have been taking social distance walks, following each other on social media, talking on the phone, and face-timing one another to stay connected. BOLD-choice is a truly bonded community. Besides working on their craft, BOLD-choice also spends rehearsal time talking about advocacy, history and the state of the world. Many troupe members are missing processing these difficult times together and feel grateful to have alternative ways to stay in touch.



# CHOICE, unlimited Celebrates DeeAnn Trotta's Retirement After 17 Years of Service

On May 22nd, 2020 we hosted a "Drive-by Retirement Party" for our beloved DeeAnn Trotta. She served CHOICE, unlimited for 17 years and her dedication and commitment to our agency has left an indelible mark in our lives and the lives of the people we serve. We had a celebration planned but due to our current health crisis, we opted for a "drive-by" party instead. DeeAnn and members of the Leadership team stood on St. Marie Street in Duluth waving at the many folks who drove by, including people we serve, staff members, parents and guardians, case managers, and various community members who all expressed their respect and well wishes. Thank you to everyone who stopped by and helped us celebrate! But most of all we thank you, DeeAnn. Your tireless dedication and fierce passion for the mission of our agency during your tenure will never be forgotten, and will live on in the countless people you have inspired and mentored over the years! Enjoy your well deserved retirement!

## We will miss you!



## Hobby Hub: People with a passion for a fun and fulfilling hobby!

Cody Beckman's hobby is diamond willow woodworking. With its diamond-shaped segments and alternating colors of red and white, diamond willow is highly prized by wood carvers and furniture makers. Cody enjoys all aspects of working with this very special wood. "I love relaxing and putting my own creation in it," Cody explained. "You have control in what you're doing."

Cody has worked on this project for the past three years with his job coach Al Bugge. The pair started by working out of the back of Al's car at Brighton Beach. Eventually they got the okay to work at Al's garage workshop.

"Cody's really got talent," said Al. "We've enjoyed working together. We can get pretty technical. The sawdust is everywhere. But it's all fun."

Cody said that he mainly makes walking sticks, but other projects have included a paper towel holder, a table, canes, plus "some other little projects lined up". He and Al are currently working on a table.

"We're going to finish up with a couple of lamps after we finish the table," Al said.

Each walking stick that Cody creates has its own unique personality. "Each stick is completely different," Cody explained. "I don't design them--they grow designs like that. I just bring out the beauty of it."

Cody gives most of his walking sticks to other people. "I've given a couple to my family members, to bosses," he said. "One was a wedding gift. I'm planning on selling them when I make enough of them."

Cody said that he enjoys the entire process of diamond willow woodworking with Al. "Diamond willow is a type of tree growing in bushes," he explained. "We have to go out in the woods and find it, often in swampy areas."

Cody and Al load it up on a trailer and bring it back to Al's garage. Next comes the debarking. "We debark them," Cody continued. "You've got to dig out the diamonds in them with dremels and knives. Some can have a lot, some can have a little. They're kind of like knots where branches used to be. The diamonds are made from fungus. We get them nice and clean, depending on how we want the texture of the stick. Then we sand them nice and smooth and clean them up."

The work isn't done yet, Cody said. "After you sand with three types of sandpaper and mechanical sanding--rough to fine--then you start varnishing. Marine varnish to keep it water resistant. Do that three times. Sand between coats. It takes hours to do one stick."

Cody said that he has enjoyed woodworking since he was a boy. He was happy when he learned that Al also enjoyed woodworking and when they decided to work on this project together. "Ever since I was young, I've always liked woodworking and I've always been into carpentry," he said. "Boy Scouts got me into carving wood. I started woodworking because Jesus was a carpenter. When I did it, it felt right. It was always in my plans to have my own business--flood restoration and house building. Building houses for people who didn't have houses. That's what got me into woodworking."



*Cody Beckman displays his beautiful one of a kind bent willow woodworking creations*



**We would like to extend our appreciation to the  
Community Employers with whom we partner:**

**310 Pub**  
**AAR Aircraft Services**  
**AmericInn Proctor**  
**Animal Allies**  
**Barnes and Noble**  
**Bayshore Health Center**  
**Bent Paddle Brewing Company**  
**Bodies in Balance**  
**Burger King**  
**Clyde Iron Restaurant**  
**Dicks Sporting Goods**  
**Duluth Art Institute**  
**Duluth Bethel**  
**Duluth Huskies**  
**Duluth News Tribune**  
**Duluth Running Co.**  
**EconoLodge**  
**Ecuman Lakeshore**  
**Enger Park Golf Course**  
**Entertaining with Sarah**  
**FeraDyne Outdoors**  
**First Lutheran Church**  
**First United Methodist Church**  
**Globe News**  
**Grandma's Marathon**  
**H. Christiansen Co.**  
**Home Depot**  
**Hope United Methodist Church**  
**ISD 709**  
**Key Port Liquor**  
**Lake Aire Bottle Shop**  
**Lester Park Golf Course**  
**Madill Performance Center**  
**Mellin Promotional Products**  
**Men as Peacemakers**  
**Mexico Lindo**  
**Mt. Royal Fine Foods**  
**Northwest WI Community Senior Center**  
**Northwood Children's Services Main**  
**Northwood Children's Services West**  
**Northwoods Family Grill**  
**Old Chicago**  
**Old World Meats**  
**Our Saviors Lutheran Church**  
**Perkins West**  
**Ravin Crossbow**  
**Salem Lutheran Church**  
**Silos/Pier B**  
**Slumberland**  
**St. Ann's Residence**  
**St. Luke's Hospital**  
**St. Mary's Catholic Church – Silver Bay**  
**Super One Foods Kenwood**  
**Super One Foods Miller Hill**  
**Super One Foods West Duluth**  
**The Gymnastics Academy**  
**Twin Ports Dog Training Club**  
**Voyageur Bus Co.**  
**Walgreens West**  
**Whole Foods Co-op**  
**Wild State Cider**  
**William A. Irving/DECC**  
**Wussow's Concert Café**  
**YMCA Hermantown**  
**YMCA Lowell Latchkey**



**CHOICE, unlimited's Annual Report is now available on  
our website at [www.choiceunlimited.org](http://www.choiceunlimited.org)**





## Thank You to Olga B. Hart Education Foundation!

We are thrilled to announce that we recently received a generous donation of \$3,000 from the Olga B. Hart Foundation. The timing could not have been more perfect as we continue to offer training opportunities to our staff during our current health crisis.

The Foundation’s mission is to increase educational opportunities and outreach within communities thus enhancing the skills and knowledge of individuals in our society. This donation will be used throughout our current fiscal year to enhance the skills and knowledge base of our employees.

Thank you again, Olga B. Hart Foundation, for your ongoing and generous support!



## Thank You Arc Northland’s Arrowhead Regional Quality Council!



*Kendra is enjoying her new computer!*

We would like to express deep gratitude to Arc Northland’s Arrowhead Regional Quality Council (ARQC) for their donation of laptops to individuals who had no way of connecting with people virtually. ARQC recognized the need for people to connect with others virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic and set aside grant money to purchase laptop computers. Seven individuals who receive services from our agency filled out the ARQC Technology application and were awarded a laptop computer.

Thank you, Arc Northland’s ARQC, for your progressive action to get technology into the hands of individuals with disabilities who were feeling isolated and unable to connect with friends and family during our health crisis!



*Victor is excited to use his new laptop!*

### Generosity Abounds From Thrivent

We would like to thank the Thrivent Financial Corporate office for their generous donation of paper and office supplies! This special donation will save our agency over \$600.00 in paper and office supplies over the next several months.

*Thank you, Thrivent, for your generous donation!*



### Vision

CHOICE, unlimited envisions a vibrant community that empowers individuals with disabilities and fosters a culture of inclusiveness.

### Mission

CHOICE, unlimited creates and enhances opportunities for individuals with disabilities within local communities.