

Moving On Up With MEPD

I Love My Job!

I love my job; I can say this after years of disappointments, sending out many applications only to be turned down. Because of my disability, I was turned down many times for jobs. Employers were not willing to take a chance with me. When I was given a chance some people did not know or would not try to understand what I needed to handle the job.

I love to work; I was always on time and willing to do what I was asked to do. All I wanted was a chance to prove this. I never gave up; I kept filling out application and applying for jobs. I did get discouraged, but I never gave up.



Holly Hoffman lives in Clear Lake, Iowa. She works for Kelly Services at Kraft Foods and is an MEPD member and has been for several years.

I finally found out about Vocational Rehabilitation Services, in Mason City. Marsha Mott was my Rehabilitation counselor. Marsha interviewed me and got me into the North Iowa Vocational Center (NIVC) services, also in Mason City. Counselors at NIVC helped me get training in different jobs I might like. They encouraged me, helped me with work skills, people skills and building up my endurance. I started working for the NIVC Store, called Affordables. I did different jobs there, sorting cloths, stocking shelves, and checking out customers.

When I felt comfortable enough, I moved on to Job Link, which provided supported employment to

By: Holly Hoffman, MEPD Member

me. They helped me get a job at Kelly Services, where I work at the Kraft foods work center. I have been working there since February. I work on the "Lunchables" line, so when you see them in the stores think of me! I love my job and enjoy the people; they are very supportive and tell me I am doing a good job. I have a Vocational Advisor, an Employment Coordinator, and a Job Coach; through NIVC and Job Link, they all help me both at work and with life problems.

I guess I would tell every one to keep trying, looking for places like Vocation Rehabilitation, and other places that will help you get where you want. Do not give up; always keep looking.

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Important Information About Your New Iowa Medicaid Card

- In August 2007, all Medicaid members received their regular paper Medicaid card.
- During the month of August 2007, Medicaid members also received the new plastic Iowa Medicaid card.
- Each member received his or her own plastic card.
- **Keep the plastic card!** After August, you will no longer receive a new card each month.
- Keep the plastic card even if your eligibility for Medicaid changes.

- Carry your card with you and always show it to the provider of health services every time you request care.

Questions? Contact Member Services at **1-800-338-8366** (in the Des Moines area call 725-1003) or your local DHS office. Please visit our website at www.ime.state.ia.us or e-mail us at IMEMemberServices@dhs.state.ia.us.



Dream Catcher

By: Linda Hildebrand, MEPD Committee Member

In June the Center for Disabilities & Development, Employment Policy Group sponsored a 3-day conference called "A Path and Community Building Workshop." I was privileged to be able to attend. Thinking that it was to learn new ways to help other people, I found myself right in the middle of exploring my own path toward my inner dreams.

I had been a Registered Nurse who last worked in home health care with people left on the fringe of life. After several surgeries, I found myself on that fringe. The little "companion-sitting" that I was able to do was enough to qualify me for MEPD, and it has provided my meds for years. In this newsletter earlier this year, I learned about the Independent Support Broker (ISB) training. I took this training to help other disabled people choosing Consumer Choices Options. After taking the training, I read about this "Path" workshop and thought it would enhance my ISB training.

David and Faye Weatherow of Community Works of British Columbia presented the workshop. This couple originally started searching for ways to include their disabled daughter in the main stream of life. With their daughter, they dreamed of

having her work to her highest ability and to be an accepted member of society for who she was, not categorized by what she lacked. They now "provide innovative service development, training and facilitation in the field of community living." They present tools in the workshops to help in the search for full community inclusion of persons with disabilities.

To develop a path for someone or group takes two facilitators, commitment by the group for a couple of hours, colorful markers and a sheet of 3 foot wide paper about 10 feet long. The tools were presented and used in the dynamic workshop with hands on training. Each of us attending became a pathfinder, a facilitator/guide and a "graphics" recorder.

Imagine the "North Star", or another symbol of your personal standards. Draw this in the upper right hand corner of the long paper. Below this is what your dream looks like, feels like, how it smells. Questions are asked to help explore what it will be like when "you have arrived." Then after being able to visualize and draw your dream, you start believing in it again.

One of the facilitator's asks questions about what should, could, and would need to be

done to be closer to the dream in two years. The recording facilitator keeps track of what is said in pictures. From the far away future, 2-yrs away to 1 yr to 3 mo and back to the present all is drawn in vivid color. This seems very backwards, but it brought my "cob-webby" dreams back to life and helped work out the steps and what or who can help me to get there.

"Dream Catchers" were hung over papoose boards of Native American babies hundreds of years ago. The "Dream Catcher" has become a decoration to many looking for Indian symbols. But great things have been accomplished, invented or completed because someone caught a dream. "Catching" dreams is still vitally important to life-to your life. Medical science has shown that if sleep is interrupted so as to prevent dreams that people become unable to function rationally or normally within only a few days. If your life's dream for a career, gainful employment, personal goals, or self-worth has faded into oblivion or seems to have died since you became disabled, you need to look again to catch your dream.

Remember, living is about helping each other up the next step (or to catch the next dream/vision) in life. Don't miss the next "PATH" Conference.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program—LIHEAP

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is designed to assist low-income families meet the cost of home heating. This program is not intended to pay a household's

total energy costs, but to pay a portion of residential heating costs for eligible households. In most cases, benefits will be in the form of a credit applied to your heating bill by your utility

company. All persons applying for this program will simultaneously be making application for Weatherization Assistance as required by state law.

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Important Dates for MEPD Members with Medicare

Some important dates are coming up this fall for people with Medicare and Medicaid.

October 2007: Medicare drug plans (Part D) announce their plans for 2008. If you have a Part D plan you will get a notice in the mail that tells you if your Part D plan will stay the same in 2008, or change. Check if the plan will cover all of your drugs next year. Also be sure the premium will still be \$0 for people who have both Medicaid and Medicare.

November 15-December 31: You can enroll in a Medicare Part D plan if you haven't already.

You can also change plans for 2008. It is very important that your Part D plan for next year covers your drugs so if you need to change, this is the time to do it.

If you need help finding the best Part D plan for 2008 or have questions, you can call SHIP. SHIP is a service of the State of Iowa and helps people on Medicare with Part D. Call **1-800-351-4664** (TTY 800-735-2942) to connect with a SHIP counselor who can help you compare Part D plans. SHIP counselors are in most Iowa counties so you can sit

down and talk to them face-to-face. This is a free, confidential service. You can compare Part D plans yourself on the Medicare web site, www.medicare.gov.

The most important things to remember:

- Your current Part D plan may change in 2008.
- Watch the mail on October for a notice about changes.
- If you need a new plan next year, enroll between November 15 and December 31 so your new plan is ready to go January 1.
- If you don't have a Part D plan, you can enroll at the same time.
- Call SHIP for help.

Ninth Annual Empowerment Conference, 2007, "Joining Together to Keep Hope Alive"

By: Julaine Jarvis, MEPD Committee Member

The annual Empowerment Conference was held on July 31, August 1 & 2 at the Best Western Regency Inn in Marshalltown, IA. Over 250 mental health consumers and related professionals attended the conference. Attendees were housed at three different motels!

On the first day of the conference, we had a keynote address by Pat Hunt, Director of Child and Family Resiliency Services, for Magellan Health Services' Public Sector Solutions; and Melinda Davis, Executive Director of Advocacy Initiative Network; both from Maine. They spoke about Resiliency and Recovery. Resiliency is the strength and will to advocate or fight for what you want or need, and to keep trying even when frustrated. There was also a panel of young women discussing the mental health issues of youth in Iowa, facilitated

by Lori Reynolds, Executive Director of the Iowa Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. Following a delicious dinner, there was an "Open Mic" night highlighting the talents of several consumers.

The second day had four different workshop time slots with at least 2 workshop choices for each time slot. Jim Overland, Bureau Chief of Community Services, Division of Mental Health and Disability Services at DHS presented on "Anti Stigma." Jill Whitten, Program Manger for DHS in the Bureau of Medical Supports, presented on Medicaid for Employed People with Disabilities (MEPD). I serve on the MEPD Advisory Committee with both Jill Whitten and Jim Overland.

The highlight workshop for me was the session led by Ric Shannon. Ric is the Public Policy Manger for the Iowa Governors

Developmental Disabilities Council. He works on policy priorities and initiatives, including the ID Action Project. The session, called "Active Citizenship" was about getting involved and/or voicing your opinion and thoughts. This could be the political process – at any level, your church, your local school, or your community. Your involvement could be as little as registering to vote or speaking up at a community meeting. It was great, I was inspired to attend the Straw Poll in Ames for the first time after this. The day ended with another delicious dinner followed by a dance.

The closing day had another keynote address by Pat Hunt and Melinda Davis where they challenged us to commit ourselves to do something – to tell others about the conference, or become involved in the community, or maybe to attend the next conference. I vowed to learn more about the political process, and then I went to the Straw Poll!

Applications are accepted on a first come, first served basis from November 1 through April 15 **(October 1 through April 15 for households with an elderly or disabled household member)**. Go to www.iowacommunityaction.com click on Key Programs, then How to Apply for Services on the menu, Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP), then Outreach offices by County. OR Call your county outreach office.

The initial determination of eligibility and benefit amount is subject to review, and payments are dependent on the availability of federal funds.

A household may qualify for assistance during the 2007-2008 LIHEAP Season if the total household income of all persons, 19 and older*, living in the home falls within the 150% poverty income guideline range:

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Annual Gross Income</u>
1.....	\$15,315
2.....	\$20,535
3.....	\$25,755
4.....	\$30,975
5.....	\$36,195
6.....	\$41,415

(For Households with more than six members, add \$5,220 for each additional member)

and whose heat is included in the rent do not qualify for the LIHEAP Program.

Income includes

Wages, self-employment or farm income, FIP, Social Security, SSI, VA benefits, pensions, unemployment insurance, workers compensation, strike benefits, child support, alimony, general assistance payments, training stipends, regular insurance or annuity payments, periodic receipts from estates or trusts, military family allotments, net rental income, net royalties, and net gambling or lottery winnings.

*If a minor under the age of 19 receives SS, SSI or VA income verification will be required.

Households who are subsidized

MEPD Advisory Committee “Working together so all can work”

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People with disabilities, advocates, policy administrators, employers, and medical professionals working together to enhance opportunities for Iowans with disabilities to work and live as they choose.