



2013 Annual Report

At our  
heart

# Midwest Special Services



## Who we serve

At Midwest Special Services (MSS), we believe that possibilities exist for every person, regardless of age, ability or gender and that each client brings special talents, interests and goals to their experiences at MSS. In 2013, we served more than 650 clients, ranging in age from 18 to 90. While the majority of our clients have some type of developmental disability, we also support clients living with mental illness, significant medical and physical disabilities, traumatic brain injuries and other challenges.

## Where to find us

MSS serves the seven-county Twin Cities metro area through its facilities in St. Paul, Eagan, Apple Valley, Brooklyn Park, Shoreview and our newest location in Oakdale. You'll also encounter our clients and staff members throughout your community... as volunteers, advocates for people with disabilities, as members of mobile work crews and employees working in competitive jobs. MSS also reaches clients outside of the Twin Cities through eTrac, our online employment readiness curriculum.

## When we began

MSS has served people with disabilities for 65 years. During that time, our organization has changed and grown dramatically from its beginnings as United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of St. Paul. Our rich history of respectfully and creatively serving people with disabilities provides a strong foundation for the next 65 years!

65  
years

## What we do

At MSS, we see possibilities in every person who enters our doors. We also see unlimited possibilities to help each client maximize his or her individual talents and interests by mastering independent living skills, exploring the arts, working at meaningful jobs, developing social skills, socializing with peers and giving back to the community. Our services fall into five key areas: Vocational Services, Autism, Creative Arts, Day Training and Habilitation (DTH) and services specifically designed to support older individuals with disabilities.

An abstract painting with a textured, layered appearance. The colors are primarily warm tones of orange, yellow, and brown in the upper half, transitioning to cooler tones of teal, blue, and green in the lower half. The brushstrokes are visible and expressive. Overlaid on this background is the text 'Why we do what we do' in a bold, purple, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in three lines: 'Why we' on the top line, 'do what' on the middle line, and 'we do' on the bottom line. The text is semi-transparent, allowing the underlying colors and textures of the painting to be seen through it.

Why we  
do what  
we do

A woman with glasses and a young boy are smiling together. The woman is leaning over the boy, and they both appear to be looking at something off-camera. The woman is wearing a blue shirt and large hoop earrings. The boy is wearing a striped polo shirt.

Because it's right.  
And because the lives  
of our clients — and *our* lives  
— are richer for it. **Because...**



## ...a life is supported.

Sometimes, activities that most people take for granted bring priceless rewards. Take Emily's situation, for example. Emily has been part of the MSS client family in Eagan since 2012, working hard to develop basic life and social skills and learn strategies for reducing challenging behaviors. MSS staff members were floating on air when one of Emily's family members described the best Christmas gift the family had ever received. For the first time, Emily had sat with the rest of her family through an entire dinner — on Christmas no less! **Family dinners are why we do what we do.**

Our Day Training and Habilitation (DTH) programs are the backbone of Midwest Special Services. In 2013, 626 individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities accessed our DTH programs for ongoing support, training, planned activities, social opportunities and physical care.

Our DTH services include employment assessments, training to use adaptive equipment and assistive technology and opportunities to explore the creative arts, leisure and recreational activities. Clients also receive training in independent living skills, such as self-care, self-advocacy, communication and interpersonal skills. Opportunities to volunteer in community events and community-based programs help to promote inclusion.

Our full spectrum of DTH services is available at all six locations, including our newest facility in Oakdale. This new location opened its doors in August 2013, following a competitive selection process initiated by Washington County to fill a void in services in the area.

In 2013, we also expanded our Eagan facility to meet increasing demand in that area. This expansion included a new performance space for our fast-growing theater arts program, as well as additional space for DTH and our award-winning autism services.



# DTH Programs



## ...the quality of a life is improved.

MSS is committed to serving the needs of all adults with disabilities, whether they are fresh out of high school or in their golden years.

In 2013, more than 30 older individuals with developmental disabilities or significant health issues took part in the MSS CARES program (Continuing Achievement for Retirees and Seniors). CARES staff members are specially trained to understand and respond to issues that commonly affect an aging population, such as memory loss and other issues associated with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

CARES clients can choose from a variety of planned activities or can opt to simply relax and socialize with their peers. In 2013, CARES clients flexed their creative muscles through unique arts and crafts activities, musical events and other entertainment, and adaptive exercise programs designed specifically for senior citizens. Volunteer activities, such as Feed Meals on Wheels and Store to Door, and community outings also provided opportunities to stay engaged and active.

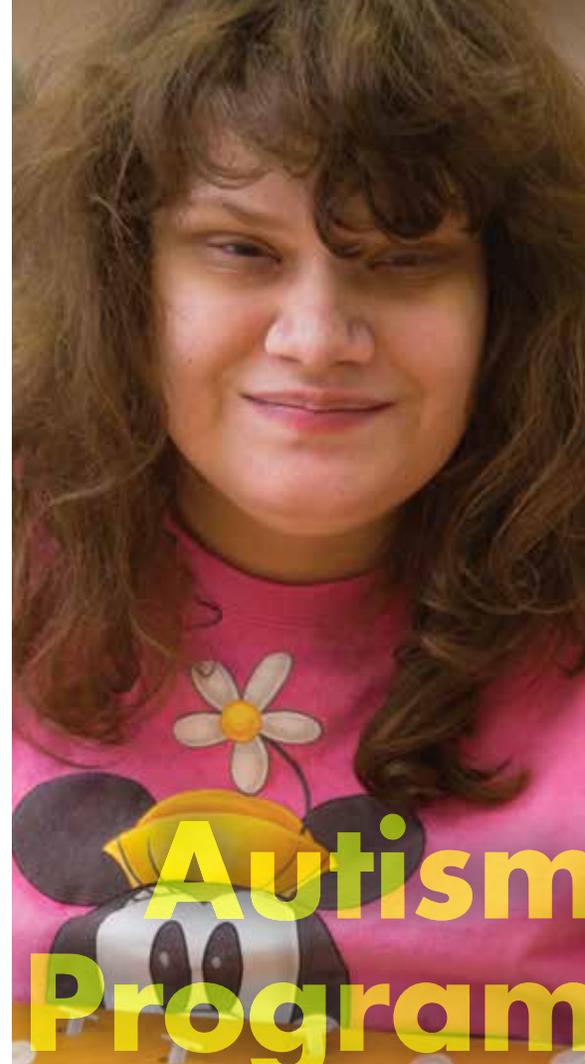
## ...possibilities are created.

In 2013, more than 35 clients participated in our nationally-recognized Autism Program. Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) affect each person differently, requiring a highly individualized response.

Our goal is to create and implement a customized program for each client that responds to each person's unique challenges in a safe, supportive environment. The MSS Autism Program focuses on helping adults with ASD to develop and enhance daily living skills. Our specially-trained staff looks for opportunities to maximize each client's unique talents and interests to engage in meaningful life experiences. Staff members also integrate opportunities to work on challenges shared by many people with ASD, including social skill development, anxiety management techniques and skills to better adapt to unexpected changes in schedule, routine and location.

Because many people with ASD are particularly sensitive to their physical environments, our autism program areas are "autism-friendly" and designed to minimize sensory impacts from sound, lighting, textures, furnishings, etc.

While MSS locations in Apple Valley and Brooklyn Park specialize in autism programming, autism services are available at all six MSS locations



## ...a sense of self-worth is heightened.

Amanda loves working in the community, earning money and spending time with friends on an MSS mobile crew. Since joining MSS in 2012, Amanda has blossomed, eagerly exploring new interests and building skills. Over time, Amanda was able to increase her work schedule until she was working five days a week. Unfortunately, mental health challenges threatened to derail her progress and forced Amanda to step back from her work until the situation was under control. Amanda's patience was rewarded and she's now back doing the work she loves.

**Helping to overcome roadblocks is why we do what we do.**

At MSS, we understand that meaningful work is more than a paycheck. It is also about self-esteem, contributing to society, being accepted, independent and included. Work also presents opportunities to socialize and collaborate with others. Unfortunately, people with disabilities often encounter significant barriers that make it difficult to find meaningful work. In fact, just 17 percent of adults with disabilities in the United States were employed in 2013, compared with an employment rate of nearly 65 percent for people without disabilities.

MSS is changing that statistic, one individual at a time. In 2013, 296 MSS clients participated in vocational services at all six MSS locations. Our job placement and other vocational services are designed to help clients find employment opportunities that reflect their unique situations.

For many clients, competitive employment is the ultimate goal. In 2013, we helped 27 clients find and retain jobs in the community. More than 250 clients who preferred or required a more structured employment option participated on one of MSS' 24 mobile work crews or worked on-site at the MSS fulfillment center.

The MSS vocational rehabilitation process starts with an individualized assessment of a client's work readiness. Our staff then helps clients who are interested and able to work to explore their employment goals, interests, skills and preferences and learn about the job search process.



# Vocational Services



## ...a job is found.

eTrac continues to be a fun, engaging option for teaching MSS clients about the job search process and introduces key job retention skills. eTrac is an innovative online curriculum created by MSS that addresses the unique employment challenges that people with disabilities encounter. A video of a young MSS client's reaction to being offered a job, viewed online by thousands of people, offers an emotional testament to the effectiveness of the eTrac curriculum and reinforces the importance of what we do.

eTrac is changing the employment prospects of individuals with disabilities outside of MSS, as well. In 2013, more than 100 students with disabilities in 4 high schools in the Twin Cities area completed eTrac as part of their transition programming. And, thanks to a generous 2013 grant from the Otto Bremer Foundation, access to eTrac is being expanded to 650 job seekers with significant disabilities who live in outstate Minnesota.

## ...connections are important.

While the safety and happiness of our clients is our primary focus, we recognize that caregivers are an important, sometimes unrecognized, part of that equation.

While caregiving can be rewarding, it also can be exhausting, isolating, confusing and overwhelming at times. MSS created the Caregiver Connections program in 2013 to support caregivers and provide a forum for caregivers to share their experiences and discuss issues and challenges with others who “get it.”

An MSS staff member facilitates the support group, which meets once a week at a different MSS location. A Caregiver Connection blog also was created in 2013 to help connect caregivers and make it easier to share their thoughts, experiences and ideas.





# Creative Arts Program

## ... a voice is found.

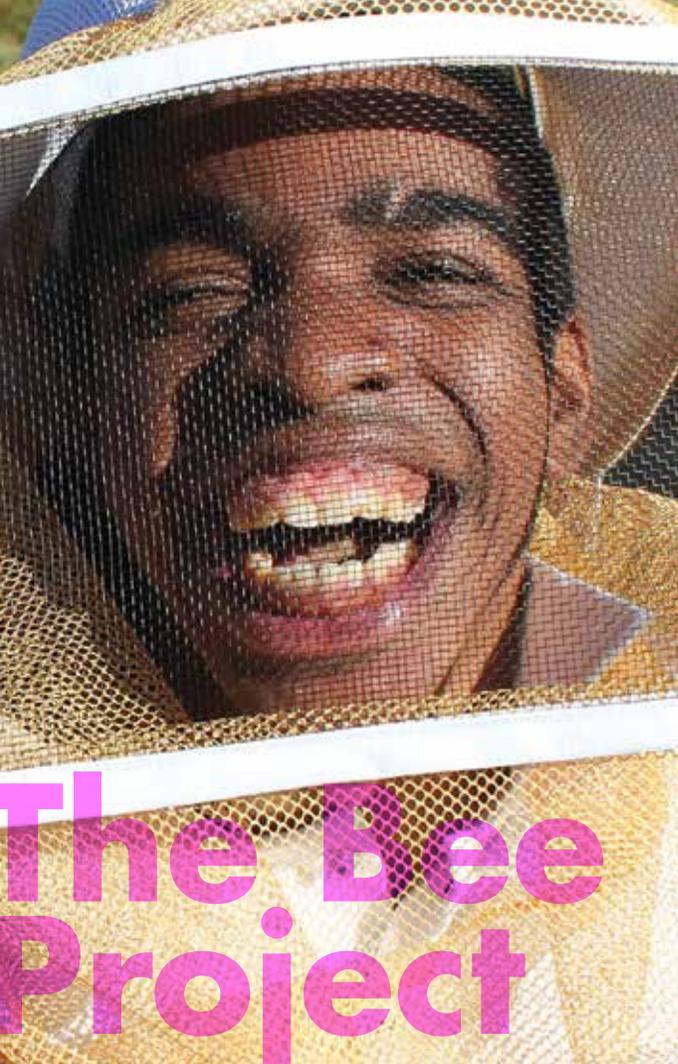
2013 was an exciting year for the MSS Creative Arts program. More than 375 MSS clients participated in visual, digital and theater arts activities offered at all six locations in 2013.

In July, MSS had the honor of hosting Chris Coyle, a nationally-recognized composer and recipient of the McKnight Foundation Visiting Composers Fellowship, for eight weeks at our Eagan and Brooklyn Park facilities. Chris spent his time working on “Outside Sound,” an original mixed media composition inspired by artwork created by adults with developmental disabilities and his personal experiences at MSS. Chris also conducted workshops for MSS clients, photographed their artwork and recorded sound and video to be incorporated into “Outside Sound.” In September, Chris performed several original pieces inspired by his time at MSS. The event, held at our new performance space in Eagan, also featured performances by several MSS clients and a visual arts exhibit.

The handiwork of dozens of MSS artists also provided the creative spark for the design of the 2013 Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon poster. The poster features the number “26.2,” depicted in bright, vibrant colors. The numbers, which represent the length of a marathon route, are actually images of tiny segments of a beautiful 40-foot long piece of textile art created by MSS clients. The images are blended together to form the striking graphic.

Kong takes great pride in doing things well. He’s also very reserved, preferring to work on a jigsaw puzzle alone or silently act out scenes from his favorite show or video game. In 2013, Kong participated in “Upstream Arts” workshop offered through the MSS Creative Arts and quickly blossomed into a talented thespian, artist and writer. A simple improvisational acting exercise gave him the confidence he needed to begin expressing his thoughts and feelings through writing, painting, drawing, music, and dance and collaborating with others

**Releasing the artist that dwells in each person is why we do what we do.**



## ... and a world buzzes with life.

A declining bee population has farmers, policymakers, even the President a-buzz! MSS is doing its part to address this serious problem by initiating a unique adapted beekeeping program.

In 2013, with assistance from the University of Minnesota Bee Squad, MSS staff and 60 clients at our Shoreview facility created a small apiary, including building and hand painting 4 hives for over 40,000 honey bees. One of these hives, collaboratively painted by a group of MSS clients, was featured in the University of Minnesota's 2014 Bee Squad Calendar. The colony is flourishing under the careful stewardship of MSS staff and clients and is expected to grow to over 240,000 by the end of 2014.

As beekeepers-in-training, MSS clients are learning important life skills, such as patience and concentration, improving fine motor skills and, perhaps most important, building self-esteem and confidence.

Not only has the MSS beekeeping effort made local headlines, it also has made news as far away as Charleston, South Carolina.

## Employee of the Year **Alison Mertens**



The MSS 2013 E.O.Y. has worn many hats in her service to the agency. Alison began as a Designated Coordinator in our Employment Program in 2005. Since then

she was promoted Program Supervisor and now she is the Program Director at our Oakdale Center.

Alison exemplifies the MSS way with her servant leadership style, seemingly endless energy and willingness role with the punches. Alison was instrumental in the successful opening of our Oakdale Program center which has grown by leaps and bounds under her direction.

## Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon **Possibility Challenge**



In 2013 MSS expanded a partnership with the Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon by participating in race weekend events as an official charity partner. For more than a decade, MSS has provided the Marathon organization with wheelchair accessible vehicles to provide transportation to the visiting wheelchair athletes. All together we sponsored 22 members of the MSS community who either ran or walked the 5K, 10K and/or marathon events. Way to go Possibilitarians!

## Dear friends and family

*We see possibility.*

These three simple words became our mantra in 2013. They capture the essence of Midwest Special Services and help to keep us focused on our core mission — finding meaningful ways to celebrate each client's unique gifts.

This report outlines a few of the many accomplishments in 2013 that helped to solidify our reputation for providing innovative, high quality programs and services, including several first-of-their kind creative and community partnerships, a new location, expanded performance space and other program enhancements. We also introduced a new web site to make it easier learn more about us. It features an energetic and exciting graphic design that better reflects the way we serve our clients.

However, the real story of our success in 2013 lies in the hundreds of personal connections and small successes that we shared with our clients during the year.

These experiences, while often intangible and difficult to pinpoint, are the reason we do what we do. If asked, most MSS staff members can quickly recall a specific incident or connection that makes their job worthwhile and leaves a feeling of satisfaction that is hard to put into words. It might be the sense of pride a team

experiences after learning that the skills they worked diligently to instill enabled a client to be part of her family's holiday dinner for the first time. Or, it might be the joy a team member feels when a client who is unable to communicate in words finds her voice through painting, sculpture or music. Or, it might be the satisfaction of witnessing a young man's glee when he's offered a job that he's worked so hard to find or watching a client use newly-acquired confidence and self-advocacy skills to make real choices about his life. And, sadly, it's the heartfelt grief that we share when a client passes away.

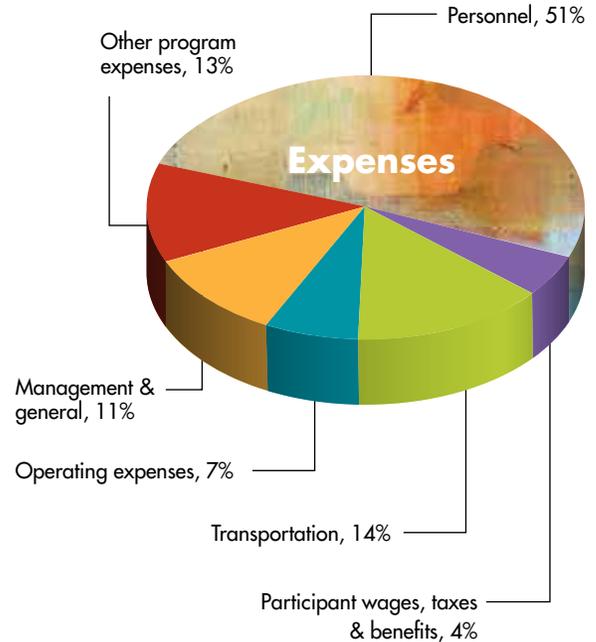
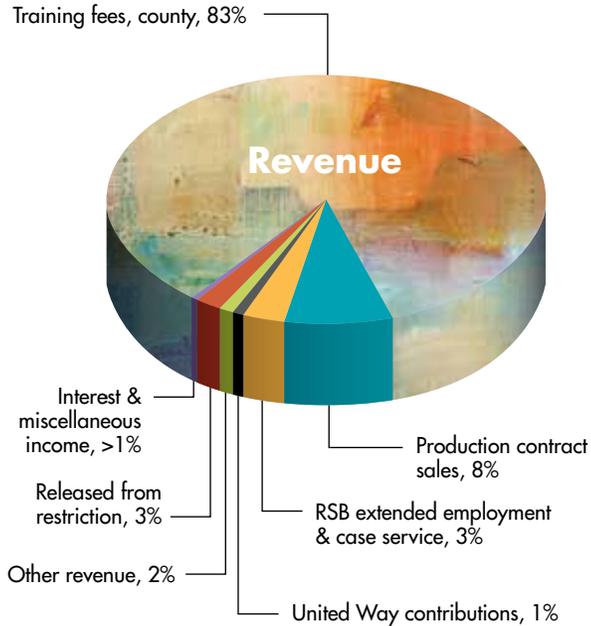
There are as many reasons for doing what we do as the people we come into contact with every day and the unlimited opportunities we have to support them. Thank you for your support. It allows us to make the most of the possibilities we see.



**Lyth J. Hartz**, President



# Financial Highlights



## Statement of Unrestricted Activities

Year ending December 31, 2013

<b>Revenue</b>	<b>2013 Agency</b>
Training fees, county	\$9,102,542
Production contract sales	921,614
RSB, extended employment & case service	277,097
United Way contributions	107,087
Other contributions & investment income	156,843
Released from restriction	327,524
Interest & miscellaneous income	35,341
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$10,928,048</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Personnel	\$5,486,738
Participant wages, taxes & benefits	459,861
Transportation	1,477,677
Operating expenses	808,993
Management & general	1,171,489
Other program expenses	1,440,999
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$10,845,757</b>
<b>Net Operating</b>	<b>\$ 82,291</b>
<b>Unrestricted – Non-Operating</b>	
Impairment of asset held for investment	\$ (125,000)
Other contributions (special event)	5,032
Trust & endowment investment income (loss)	27,048
<b>Net non-operating</b>	<b>\$ (92,920)</b>

## Statement of Financial Position

Year ending December 31, 2013

<b>Assets</b>	<b>2013</b>
Cash & investments	\$ 313,985
Accounts receivable & prepaid expenses	1,132,210
Land, building & equipment, net of depreciation	2,677,198
Intangible assets	416,881
O'Neil Endowment Fund	1,211,368
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$ 5,751,642</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Current liabilities	\$ 824,196
Long-term liabilities	406,250
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 1,230,446</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	
Unrestricted:	
Undesignated	\$3,174,962
Board designated for O'Neil Endowment Fund	–
Temporarily restricted	580,053
Permanently restricted	766,181
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>\$ 4,521,196</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$ 5,751,642</b>

# 2013 Donors

**Midwest Special Services would like to thank everyone – clients, staff, volunteers, donors and business partners – who contributed to our success in 2013.**

We sincerely apologize for any errors or omissions in our list of donors and funders. Please call 651.793.4126 with any corrections.

## 5,000+

Anonymous  
Andersen Corporate Foundation  
Gerald D. Deeny Trust  
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## \$1,000 – \$4,999

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Glen Giachetto  
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Caroline Groten  
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Archie Lortis  
Bernadine Lortis

A close-up photograph of a man with glasses, wearing a brown t-shirt, laughing heartily. He is in a warehouse or office setting with cardboard boxes and other people in the background. The text 'for making the' is overlaid in large orange letters.

**for making the**

Suzanne Loscheider  
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Betty Lucivansky  
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Beverly Mahachek  
Mandy Malloy  
Joan Mancuso  
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Gene Pals  
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Melinda Peulen  
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Richard Ronnan  
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David Rudolph  
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Mallory Schmidt  
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Alexis Swits  
Gregory Swits  
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Oliver Wasow  
Donna Weiss  
John Wenstrom  
Sarah Wickman  
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possibilities

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Andrea Kuennen  
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## **Gifts In Honor of**

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Dave Capatske Family  
Marie Cepress  
Jane Christenson  
Nancy Crook  
Steve Flanigan  
Amanda Thompson

## **Gifts In Kind**

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Renee R. Chinn  
Debra Claussen  
Dean Hoffman  
Minnesota State Fair  
St. Paul Osman Shrine Circus  
West 7th Street Boys Club

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### **Lyth J. Hartz**

Midwest Special  
Services, Inc.

possible.

A close-up photograph of a man and a woman looking at a screen together. The man, on the left, has a serious expression and is wearing a plaid shirt. The woman, on the right, is smiling and wearing glasses and a green shirt. The background is blurred.

**Our Vision:** through the advocacy and person center services provided by MSS, our clients will be regarded as full, vital and contributing members of society. **Our Mission:** the mission of MSS is to serve adults with disabilities by supporting them in the achievement of their full potential and as vital and contributing members of the community.

## **MAIN OFFICE**

### **ST. PAUL**

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**TDD:** 651-772-8592

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**Fax:** 952-891-1922

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**Fax:** 763-557-1458

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**Fax:** 651-454-9011

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**Fax:** 651-483-5994

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Oakdale, MN 55128

**Phone:** 651-777-7220

**Fax:** 651-777-7233



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