

December 28, 2015

## MSS St. Paul Begins Recycling Program

MSS St. Paul has begun the process of creating a formal recycling program to reduce waste and demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community. A recycling committee has been formed, consisting of both persons served and several St. Paul staff. During the committee's first meeting, it was decided what type of bins/supplies would be needed to start a recycling program and where they would be placed in the building. The committee applied for a grant through Biz Recycling and if it is approved, it will pay for the new recycling bins. The next step is to prep the building for the new program. The hope is to start improving basic recycling practices, and eventually expand to other types of recycling, like compost and other non-traditional recyclable materials. In the meantime, we do have recycling bins-please be sure to put your plastic bottles and cans in recycling, not trash. If you have questions about the recycling program or want to be involved, contact Mallorie Johanssen.



Questions or comments? Email Hannah Watkins at [hwatkins@mwsservices.org](mailto:hwatkins@mwsservices.org).

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## Mission Moments

Overcoming fear is one of the hardest and most rewarding things we can do for ourselves. Darcell conquered her fear when she decided to climb the rock wall at Vertical Endeavors. Our staff told her she could come with and watch the others climb, but when she saw everyone else participating, she gained the courage to give it a shot. She has told several staff members that she was so scared while she was waiting for her turn, but the second she started to climb she had let go of her fear. "I felt so free," she said.

# MSS

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## 2016 Employee Satisfaction Survey Results

We appreciate the time you took to give us feedback on your employment experiences with MSS. The information you provided was honest, insightful and will be helpful in the upcoming year as we plan enhancements in service delivery and revisions to policies and procedures.

We were not surprised at the commitment you expressed to improving the quality of the lives of the people we support. We see it in the way that you support the people in our programs and their families, and in the way that you interact with each other. You also told us that we need to improve communication and we hope that this monthly newsletter and the sharing of this report are steps in that direction.

The survey is posted on our web site for your review. Comments are not included in this posting, but they have been summarized and sent to your supervisor and the Leadership Team for review. Thank you for your input! ([link to survey results](#))

## Health Tips for Busy Lives

Fill up on iron! Not eating enough iron can cause fatigue and even depression. Keep energy high by chowing down on oatmeal, lentils, and lean meats. Bonus: Iron boosts muscle strength, making it that much easier to get through the workday and your workout.



## Amazing Glazing

Eagan hosted an Amazing Glazing event where participants were able to glaze pottery the people we support created. The next center event will be a fundraiser for a screen printer in Oakdale this summer. Shannon will be sending details.



## Last Exhibit at the Gallery!

Come check out the JAX! Exhibit, The Show Gallery Lowertown's last exhibit before it moves out of the Jax building into its new location in Lowertown St. Paul!



The logo for Midwest Special Services, Inc. (MSS) features the letters 'M', 'S', and 'S' in large, stylized fonts. The 'M' is orange, the first 'S' is teal, and the second 'S' is red. The background is a vibrant, abstract collage of colors including yellow, pink, red, and green, with a textured, bubbly appearance. Below the letters, the text 'Midwest Special Services, Inc.' is written in a blue, sans-serif font.

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## **A Word from Lyth — March 29, 2016**

Hi Everyone,

Today I attended the MN House Health and Human Services Finance Committee hearing on the Best Life Alliance bill for the 5% increase in our rates. As many of you know, I am not always pleased when I return from legislative hearings, but I am pleased today.

The hearing room was standing room only, filled with people supporting the Best Life Alliance legislation and many were people we support at MSS. I saw at least three of the people we support and two staff members. The deliberations started with a wonderful testimony from Pam Gonella who is the mother of Sarah, a person we support at Eagan. Sarah was with her at the testifying table. Mrs. Gonella gave a superb testimony of how difficult it is to provide services when the pay is not proper for the direct support professionals that provide those services. The effect of the low pay is high turnover rates in the direct support positions. After Mrs. Gonella spoke, the discussion got more technical and questioned parts of the bill, which called for 2% of the 5% to be spent on Quality Improvements and Person Centered Planning. Some people on the committee felt that this watered down the amount going directly to the staff members. To make a long story short, the committee voted to have the 5% go to staff pay and to add another 2% to allow for Quality Improvements and Person Centered Planning. (As this now adds up to 7%, it might be too much for the Legislature to approve this year.) Then they passed a motion from this committee to direct DHS to provide a plan to the legislature to improve the pay of staff to a base of \$15 per hour by 2019. I could hardly believe my ears.

Now, these motions and actions of this committee today have a long way to go in the House to become final. There will also be legislation in the Senate that is likely to complicate things, to say nothing about the fact that the Governor has to sign any bills before they become law. But what I saw today was a bipartisan effort of the members of the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee supporting the good work being done by the people employed by our DT&H providers and the residential providers. I felt good about what I witnessed today and I wanted to tell you about this good news. It was good for me to see this kind of support for your good work!

Best regards,

Lyth Hartz