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WE WANT TO STAY IN TOUCH
if you have not been receiving breaking news emails and invitations to meetings, please send me your email address so we can add you to the email list. Write me at ldunshee@linkassociates.org

KEEP CURRENT
Check out our website at www.linkassociates.org
Hello everyone,

Today marks my 25th Anniversary as the Executive Director of this amazing organization. It is a very humbling day and I am deeply appreciative of all that you as families, guardians and advocates have given to me. Together we have learned, laughed, cried, forged so many changes and battles. I have learned so much from all of you. I am reminded of my very first day at Link Associates, 25 years ago when I came to Link because I believed Link Associates was a company that shared my passion for helping others, and advocating for those with disabilities. I saw then, how clearly Link empowered people to do magical things and took risks to start new programs that eventually make the world a better place for those we serve. I knew there was no better company to join if I wanted to make a difference. This is the very same inspiration that continues to drive me today. It is an incredible honor for me to lead and serve this great company of ours. I remembered being awed by the depth and breath of the services offered by Link Associates, and as I look back, I can clearly see that because of our staff we have continued on that same path of continuing to make opportunities available for so many. While we have seen great success, we are hungry to do more. Make no mistake, we are headed for greater places — we have weathered very tough storms in 2020 but we still remain strong and solid, largely because your your continued support and encouragement.

As we wrap up our last fiscal year Fiscal Year 2019/2020 (July 1, 2019 TO June 30, 2020) we undertake significant projects to ensure we remain on track. Here are some of those pieces:

1. Business Function Improvement Plan - this is a written report presented to multiple committees of the Board of Directors as well as the Board of the Link Associates Foundation. The contents of this report demonstrate Link Associates’ dedicated to the delivery of services in an environment characterized by strict conformance with the highest standards of accountability for administration, business, marketing and financial management. Link Associates leadership is fully committed to the need to prevent and detect fraud, fiscal mismanagement and misappropriation of funds and therefore, to the development of a formal corporate compliance program to ensure ongoing monitoring and conformance with all legal and regulatory requirements. Further, the organization is committed to the establishment, implementation and maintenance of a corporate compliance program that emphasizes (1) prevention of wrong doing, whether intentional or unintentional, (2) immediate reporting and investigation of questionable activities and practices without consequences to the reporting party and (3) timely correction of any situation which puts the organization, its leadership or staff, funding sources or persons served at risk. Jay Bruns is Link Associates’ Corporate Operations Director and as such serves as the official Corporate Compliance Officer. In this capacity Jay, assisted by all the directors of Link Associates compiles the data, information and verification to prove our oversight in meeting all standards. Shout out to Jay Bruns!

2. Program Evaluation - This report is Link Associates’ document that describes how we have monitored and evaluated our programs and services. It presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for each service, including recommendations for how evaluation results can be used to guide program improvement and decision making. Link Associates is committed to continuously establish goals to help improve our overall effectiveness as an organization. This report is intended to relay information from the evaluation to program staff, stakeholders, and funders to support program improvement and decision making. There are three significant reasons for communicating and reporting evaluation results:
   • Build awareness and/or support and provide the basis for asking questions
   • Facilitate growth and improvement
   • Demonstrate results and hold our organization accountable

This written report presented to multiple committees of the Board of Directors as well as the Board of the Link Associates Foundation.
3. Annual External Audit - Link Associates hires an external audit firm to annually to conduct a full audit. An external audit provides an independent, third-party assessment of whether a company’s annual financial statements adhere to generally accepted accounting principles. The purpose of external audit is to verify that the annual accounts provide a true and fair picture of Link’s finances; and that the use of funds is in accordance with the aims and objects as outlined in the constitution. Internal controls are vital for protecting Link’s financial and physical assets. Auditing is a method of testing the effectiveness of internal business controls and is itself a control mechanism. Formal and random internal audits work to uncover instances of fraud, errors and actions that can our reputation and put our future at risk. External audits not only provide another layer of control, but also create transparency and enhance Link’s public image. Exceptional performance by Bryon Christensen, Finance Director at Link Associates and his team. Very positive outcome and they can all be very proud of the work they performed.

Not long ago, I sent out a survey and asked you to provide us with information to help our ongoing strategic plan process. I sincerely appreciate each and everyone of you who took the time to respond to that survey. The purpose of the strategic plan is to advance Link Associates’ vision to be the recognized leader in providing quality services to persons with intellectual disabilities. Link Associates was scheduled to conduct a full strategic planning session with the Board of Directors and staff in the spring of 2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, these plans were modified and the new strategic plan was initiated and information obtained in multiple approaches. Survey Monkey was used to obtain the feedback of all staff, stakeholders and Board of Directors of Link Associates and staff interviews with those we support added additional information. From the time we were originally planning to hold our Strategic Plan Process, our world underwent an international pandemic, a social crisis and a once-in-a-lifetime derecho storm here in Iowa. The feedback on the next pages represents information received from the stakeholders regarding Link Associates current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Utilizing this information, leadership will create specific objectives and activities and assign person responsible, due dates and resource allocations. Based on feedback obtained, the next pages outline identified initiatives in six major areas. These will continue to be developed with progress and new targets established on a regular basis. These updates will be reviewed by leadership and presented to the Board of Directors for review and discussion.

May I say in closing - THANK YOU - it is my extreme honor to work for Link Associates and to serve you and your families. Thank you for all of your help and support. I appreciate you all immensely.

Linda Dunshee, Executive Director
### S  STRENGTHS
- Variety of services
- Longevity of employees
- Unity of staff
- Seriousness of mission
- Commitment to persons served
- Caring and professional staff
- Support of co-workers
- Forward thinking leadership
- Diversity of staff
- Family friendly workplace
- Our building & vehicles
- The Executive Director & leadership integrity
- Training
- Whole organization focus
- Open door

### W  WEAKNESSES
- staff turnover
- Communication
- Continuing educations
- Not enough teamwork
- Funding limitations
- Wages
- More truly committed staff
- Overworked supervisors
- New eMAR system
- Staff recognition
- Recognition of leadership
- Seeing more MI in those served
- Lack of support from Iowa
- PTO
- Lost matching 401K

### O  OPPORTUNITIES
- Skilled level for persons with ID/DD or age in place
- Organizational advancement opportunities
- Fundraisers
- Pass down the knowledge of long-term staff
- Explore service opportunities – collaboration with non-medical programs
- Finding new and better ways to support people
- Overtime at 37 hours
- Expand coverage area
- School aged youth programs
- Benefit planning for persons served
- Links response to the pandemic included exploring ways to provide virtual programming. Link should explore opportunities to expand online programming. Maybe even as a way to expand volunteer opportunities especially during the public health emergency.
- Those served appear to have greater opportunities for activities out in the public and thus I have observed greater public acceptance and actual employment
- As an industry leader elected officials listen to the needs of Link
- Community awareness of people with disabilities, they really are no different, just need help to accomplish things
- Expanding to provide more individuals with service.
- Fundraisers.
- Expanding housing and they habilitation opportunities.
- Using new technology to help people serve learn in rooms or remotely at their homes by zoom or other providers.
- Advertising.
- Community integration.

### T  THREATS
- Persistent staff openings
- Government/health care system
- MOCs
- Figuring out the responsibilities of external CM
- Aging population
- Increasing aggression
- Constant changes due to MCO
- Ignorance of the general public
- Stretching people too thin
- Government officials who do not understand
- Other business exceed what we can pay
- PTO
- Turnover rate
- Lack of interdepartmental support
- Difficult to serve families
- Lack of adequate funding
- The funding required seems to be massive particularly as a result of governmental requirements
- Do United States administration’s threats to disability and Social Security
- COVID-19
- Health in germ control
- Strangers entering buildings and lack of staff understanding of person served verbal requests

### M  MISSION
- Add in providing opportunities that we provide to support and encouragement to reach their desired goals
- Needs a positive spin for more pizzazz
- The mission statement should be providing people with disabilities opportunities to achieve their personal goals
- At a sentimental phase about how we really care for the people we serve
- Change the word people to adults
- Should include something like been a prepare place to work yet people served should always be the focus
- Maybe something about being part of the community
- Maybe add something about helping each person be as independent as they can be
- It says achieve personal goals through what means?
- Change personal goals to achieve a meaningful life
- Underline Medicaid goals equal employment I think real goals equal happy, enjoying life
- This should pertain to all levels of disability not just higher functioning
- I would say intellectual and social goals
- There is more to life than personal goals. Mental, physical, spiritual well-being is very important and different for all in subtle certain ways

### V  VISION
- Emphasizing people centered focus
- It sounds like we are focusing on ourselves not the people we serve I would suggest want to be the best not want to provide the best
- Adults versus people
- You cannot provide quality services without quality employees so something in that regard
- It would be great to be recognized as the leader in the field
- Link Associates continues to be the recognized leader in providing quality services to people with intellectual disabilities
- Add something about getting more involved in the community
- How can you involve the community
- Dare we use “is known as “rather than “will be”
- I would say intellectual and social goals
- Providers in care and well-being. Being a leader is comes off a little arrogant. Lead by example and good work
-
VALUES

- Quantifying training and investing in our staff and developing professional goals
- Done on personal choice
- Any way to include consumers and employees so employees feel as well cared for as consumers appreciation would be a good one too
- A caring environment means being caring and warm and welcoming it does not mean ignoring or being rude it includes actually spending time with those served
- Look at the community, job opportunities, more Goodwill Stores, let people know that many people care about others who do contribute to society in their own way
- Passion
- Personal growth
- Community

Link Associates US Bank Representative Payee Debit Cards

To Families & Guardians,

Link has recently begun adopting a U.S Bank Rep Payee Debit Card program. Eventually, the hope is to have every Link person served with their own personalized debit cards. These cards operate much like a gift card. Funds are preloaded onto the cards to be spent accordingly. Persons served will never be able to spend more than what is on their card. Link Accounting staff working with the representative payee program will have full access to the persons served transaction data, and funding data. The online portal will allow Link Accounting staff to monitor exactly how funds are being spent, as well as give real time updates to funds remaining on the cards.

This program is still very new to Link, and we will be taking a course of caution in implementation of these cards. Beginning in early October, Link will start testing this program with two identified Link sites. These sites have a limited number of transactions on a weekly basis, so we can learn the functionality of these cards before fully implementing them to all Persons Served with Link Representative Payee Services.

Link is very excited about the new program, with a goal to have all persons served phased into the program by years end.
Would you be willing to take a survey? Two of our community partners are seeking community wide information and have asked me to share their survey links with you.

United Way of Central Iowa

Below, please find information on the Beyond 2020 Town Halls I mentioned in my 9/22 email. In addition, you will find the Beyond 2020 Survey we released today. We are looking for a broad community response, but especially important for us to hear from those who are marginalized and most vulnerable in our community.

I am making a special request for you to share the survey with your networks but more importantly with the clients, families, and students you serve every day. This information will play a very important role in how we design strategies and where we focus our time and resources. We need your voice, too!

Please take time to complete the survey, ask your staff to complete the survey, and make a special effort to have the individuals you serve share their voice by responding to the survey as well.

We are so grateful to partner alongside all of you as we shape the next iteration of United Way of Central Iowa’s focus and we, collectively, build a Resilient Community!

Much appreciation!

United Way of Central Iowa

United Way of Central Iowa is planning for the future. We need your help! Below you will find the Beyond 2020 Survey we released to the community yesterday. We are looking for a broad community response, but especially important is for us to hear from those who are marginalized and most vulnerable in our community – Polk, Dallas, and Warren counties.

I am making a special request for you to share the survey with your networks and with people and groups whose voices we need to hear – especially those most vulnerable. If you serve on any other nonprofit boards or in another community-focused role (school board, city council, etc.) we’d appreciate you sharing in those spaces as well. If you are a social media user – we also encourage you to go to our United Way of Central Iowa Facebook Page and share to your page. This information will play a very important role in how United Way of Central Iowa designs our strategies and where we focus our time and resources beyond 2020. We need your voice, too!

Please take time to complete the survey yourself. Ask your friends, neighbors, colleagues and teams to complete the survey. And make a special effort to ask those who intersect with our vulnerable and marginalized community members to share their voice by completing the survey as well.

We are so grateful to partner alongside all of you as we shape the next iteration of United Way of Central Iowa’s focus and we, collectively, build a Resilient Community.
The Get Healthy Challenge:

**What is it?** This is a group you can join on Facebook, for those who have goals to be more healthy. There will be daily challenges for everyone in the group to complete. Once you complete the challenge you can comment on how you completed it. Everytime you comment that you finished a challenge, you will be put into a drawing for a weekly prize (the more challenges you complete the better your odds are at winning). At the end of the challenge there will be an overall large prize! Leisure will be posting daily encouragement, go "LIVE" weekly to provide exercises, nutrition information, and other fun healthy related activities.

**Who is it for?** This is for the people we serve at Link Associates, or anyone in the community with a disability. If you know someone that might benefit from this group, feel free to invite them! Staff are welcome to join the group to assist the person's served they are working with.

**How do I enter?** All you need to do is join the "Get Healthy Challenge" group on facebook - located here:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/3195777610540689

**When does it start?** You can join the Facebook group now, but the actual challenges will start on October 11th and finish on November 7th.
**Leisure Program Updates!**

- Leisure is still doing Virtual programming on a daily basis! We had a fun virtual healthy nutrition series in August, as well as a virtual cookbook fundraiser! You can view our activities here: https://www.facebook.com/linkleasureservices
- In July we started in person activities. We are limiting people in each activity, as well as socially distancing and wearing masks!
- This fall we have lazer tag, archery, toured a farm, and started our LA Social Club!

**Whats NEW in Leisure!**

- We are currently doing a virtual "Get Healthy Challenge" for person's served. We will post daily challenges, do exercises, and provide nutritional info. There will also be weekly prizes as incentives! You can join the group here: https://www.facebook.com/groups/3195777610540689

- We are starting back doing Special Olympics with a return to play plan, that allows certain sports to start again under 10 people.
- Partnering with Omega Nu Sorority for Pen Pal Program with Leisure participants
- Partnering with LEEP to have an intern in Leisure, as well as with VIP to have participants do LIVE activities on our Facebook page!
**Link Associates Leisure Services Approved for a $1,150 Grant from the Iowa Arts Council!**

This grant will support on-line art classes through Leisure Services Facebook LIVES: Virtual Doodling Experiences taught by Candace Camling, a professional artist. Next April the grant will pay for in-person Illustration Classes taught by Candace Camling and offered through Leisure’s evening community recreation program. These are wonderful artistic experiences for persons served!

Support provided by the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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**Upcoming changes to Link’s Policies**

In the Handbook for Persons Served TEXT IN RED INDICATES CHANGES SECTION-INCLUSIVITY

At Link Associates, we believe in recognizing uniqueness and promoting inclusion for those we serve as well as those we employ. Link Associates has an Inclusivity PLAN focusing on respecting and valuing the different skills and experiences we all bring to the organization. The agency recognizes the diversity of both those we support and our employees being on the basis of gender, gender identity or expression, age, culture, religion, language or personal circumstances and is committed to building on the richness of the perspectives, experiences, knowledge and skills that this diversity brings.

Link as an organization and each of us as individuals can’t ignore federal, state and local policies that ban discrimination on the basis of the various diversity’s listed above. The staff of Link are also protected under HIPAA and their medical status is not available to families, advocates or persons served unless the individual staff member chooses to share this information. For Link Associates to truly integrate inclusivity, we all play a role in recognizing the value of individual differences in the workplace to realize the full potential of each employee to help us achieve our mission, vision and values.
One year ago Link began the GEM recognition awards. This is awarded to an employee who goes above and beyond to make Link Associates a better place. Someone who makes work fun! Someone who lives and breathes positive behavioral supports. Someone who displays dignity and respect when supporting those we serve and someone who provides services that fit with the saying it would be *"Good Enough for Me"*. For fiscal year 19/20 the GEM winners were:

- Tasha Palmer-Lead Float
- Emily Eaves-Health Services Administrative Specialist
- Adam Stout-Employment Training Specialist
- Andrea Price-Residential Counselor
- David Volpone- General Store Specialist
- Ian Beatty-Employment Training Specialist
- Barb Hitsman- Residential Supervisor
- Joyce Jones-Direct Support Professional-FLEX
- Andrea Sykes-Residential Supervisor
- Ashley Young-Developmental Instructor
- Audrey Dell-Day Program Administrative Specialist
- Adria Smith-Leisure Specialist

**Congratulations to all!! So proud to have you on our team!**
CONGRATULATION

We are proud to announce ALINA CHAPMAN as the LINK GEM for July 2020

Our Values
Digital and Paper Quality Services
Caring Environment
Personal Choice
Long Term Commitment

About Alina
Alina is an Employment Specialist & has been employed by the LINK Associates for 6 years. Alina is really passionate about the work she does & enjoys being part of the team of person-centred support workers. Her job being able to advocate for them & helping them become more independent. She also enjoys the challenge of being a supervisor & mentor building relationships with staff & helping them to grow. She does also has a great sense of humor & enjoys being part of a team & working in an enjoyable environment. Alina’s greatest accomplishment at LINK is the talent and drive of the many disabled individuals she supports. She is definitely at the top of her job. However, she’s also proud of being able to look back & feel proud about the person she is & the staff she has helped grow. Alina is also a dedicated wife & mother. Her husband, Peter, makes her laugh the most. He has a great sense of humor & enjoys being part of a team & working in an enjoyable environment. Alina has a lot of good co-workers here at LINK & we all support & help each other.

Words from her Supervisor
Alina is a wonderful worker. She always ‘strives’ to be the best support to those we serve, to the staff & to everyone. She’s the agency as a whole a wonderful & reliable worker to the incredible person she is. I can’t thank her enough for all she has done & continue to do for our department but for the entire agency.

Well Done Alina

We are proud to announce ROGER MORENO as the LINK GEM for September 2020

Our Values
Digital and Paper Quality Services
Caring Environment
Personal Choice
Long Term Commitment

About Roger
Roger has been a LINK Associates employee for 9 months & works at the Oak Park Program in an Administrative Support position. Roger has shared with us how he uses his own experience of living with schizophrenia, his time as a service user, to benefit the people he supports. Roger uses his own experiences to share the strength in positions of depression, anxiety & self esteem. Roger is extremely good at managing his boundaries. Roger is very good at supporting others in finding their own strengths in mental illness. Roger also has great sense of humor & finds great satisfaction in making others laugh. Being a Carer brings many challenges, but also great rewards. Roger enjoys sharing knowledge & experiences with others. Roger appreciates the support he receives in the role & looks forward to continuing to support others.

Words from his Supervisor
Roger is consistently amazing at his performance. He is not only respectful & supportive to those persons served but his own shining personality serves those around him. Roger is always available & supportive for those with tasks to be done. Roger is also a very supportive & supportive individual. Keep up the great work Roger!

Company Director of Finance Employees, Inc.

Well Done Roger

We are proud to announce CRAIG WOODS as the LINK GEM for October 2020

Our Values
Digital and Paper Quality Services
Caring Environment
Personal Choice
Long Term Commitment

About Craig
Craig is a supervisor with Link Associates for 4 years & is a Residential Caregiver within the Oak Park Program. Craig is also a social worker in the community. Craig’s philosophy is: Everyone is capable of living a full life. About Link: I am very confident in the ways they work, however, I also think that they would be better if they were to have a more structured environment. Craig has always been a person who is always there for others. Craig is always very helpful, always willing to help others. He always has a positive attitude, which is important.

Words from his Supervisor
Craig is a great worker. He works well with the people he supports & also with the other staff members. Craig is very helpful & willing to help others. He is always there for others. Craig always has a positive attitude, which is important.

Well Done Craig

July, August and September GEM Winners
On March 18th, 2020 the state mandated all Day Habilitation programs close by noon due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Link Associates gained approval to provide Day Habilitation services within the Link residential setting during the closure. This had a huge impact as the program went from serving an average of 148 FTE’s daily to 46. The agency really pulled together to combine forces in supporting person served and all Link employees.

Below is some more detailed information regarding all the transitions:

- **March 19th** - transitioned all Developmental Instructors (DI) to Residential sites to provide Day Habilitation services in persons served homes
  - provided Day Hab supports in Link Residential sites/homes alongside Residential Counselors to 46 FTE
    - this allowed us to continue billing for some services instead of a complete loss of revenue for the Day Habilitation program
- **June 2020**
  - outreached to all persons served/teams to see if anyone was interested in returning July 1st
  - hired 2 temporary employees (from our SE program) to help clean high touch areas
  - implemented many safety/cleaning strategies for when folks returned (taking temperatures upon arrival & throughout the day, cleaning activities between each use etc)
  - implemented new drop-off/pick-up procedures (assisted with social distancing)
- **July 1st** - Phase 1 implementation began: approximately 41 persons served returned for Day Program services (33 to in-house Day Hab & 8 to VIP)
  - 6 program areas opened: 108, 111, 113, 211, 212 & 222
  - 2 VIP groups (A & B) re-opened
  - 9 DIs returned to the building
  - throughout month of July 2020 Link Case Coordinators outreached to all persons served receiving Link Day Hab services with external service providers/family to see if anyone was interested in returning on Aug 1st (prioritized folks with no other supports)
- **August 1st, 2020** - Phase 1.5 implementation began: approximately 20 persons served returned for Day Program services (15 to in-house Day Hab & 5 to VIP)
  - 1 VIP group re-opened (C)
- **September 1st, 2020** - Phase 2 implementation began: approximately 31 persons served returned for Day Program services (31 to in-house Day Hab & 0 to VIP)
  - 4 new program areas opened: 109, 110, 210 & 213
  - 8 DIs returned to main building
  - allowed persons served with Link Residential to return to building for Day Hab services: 17 PS with Link Residential services returned
- **October 1st, 2020** - Phase 3 implementation began: approximately 35 persons served returned for Day Program services (28 to in-house Day Hab & 7 to VIP)
  - 4 new program areas opened: 107, 112, 217 & 218
  - 1 new VIP group re-started: VIP-D
  - stopped providing Day Hab services in SCL setting
    - all remaining Day Hab staff (4 employees) returned to the building
we say thank you for believing in us!
MISSION ~ VISION ~ VALUES

MISSION
PROVIDING PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES OPPORTUNITIES TO ACHIEVE THEIR PERSONAL GOALS

VISION
LINK ASSOCIATES WILL BE THE RECOGNIZED LEADER IN PROVIDING QUALITY SERVICES TO PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

VALUES
DIGNITY AND RESPECT-QUALITY SERVICES-CARING ENVIRONMENTS PERSONAL CHOICE-LONG TERM COMMITMENT

Website: www.linkassociates.org
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/linkassociates
Twitter: https://twitter.com/linkassociates