



A Letter from the CEO

Thanksgiving and Christmas is a time of the year when I like to look back and reflect back on everything that has been occurring. I like to reflect back on goals and events and where we are with them. I have a long list but there is one in particular that stands out which I think everyone needs to hear about. In 2018, MRSI went through a major transformation with our Mercer ADS program. It was at that time we began to make necessary improvements to the program. Unfortunately we did not have the buy in of all employees involved. In June 2018, MRSI was faced with two options; either shut down the Mercer ADS program or restructure the program from ground up. We chose to continue the original goal and immediately began restructuring the program from ground up.

Many people do not truly understand the giant leap this program has taken to get where we are today. Many people do not understand that the changes that were being made in the beginning of 2018 were necessary if the program was going to survive.

To make the program a success several things initially needed to occur. MRSI had to hire employees and provide the required and necessary training to help make the employees successful at their job. We also had to put in place support systems as most of these new employees had zero to minimal experience working with individuals with developmental disabilities and they did not have a department head who could guide them. These employees also had to learn our documentation system, State / Federal regulations as well as agency policies. These employees had to learn all about the individuals we serve and immediately begin building relationships with the individuals. The individuals also had to get to know the new employees.

MRSI had some internal employees who definitely stepped up to help keep the program open during this major restructuring. We had one ADS employee who helped out for a couple months and we have had employees from our WSGH and Van Wert ADS who helped us to remain open as well as our Director of Operations. I cannot say thank you enough to all of them.

In June 2018, when faced with 2 decisions, either shut the program down or restructure it from ground up we had one current Direct Support Professional (DSP) who graciously agreed to return to the Mercer ADS program. This DSP originally worked at the Mercer ADS program for 4 years before transitioning to our Van Wert ADS program. We reached out to her and she graciously agreed to return and became instrumental in not only saving the program but also restructuring the program so we could continue to move forward. The employee I am talking about is Jennifer Bishop.

Jennifer became our go to person on how everything should run from documentation to transportation questions, meal time questions, hygiene care, planning activities, etc. She has been instrumental in helping the individuals become included in the community not just integrated in the community. She was instrumental in helping to train new employees as new staff were hired for this program. She helped the individuals we serve get to know the new staff and she helped staff connect to the individuals. She was placed in a position that she did not ask for and she stepped up and took charge to help us succeed without any hesitation.

Jennifer has taken a program that had been providing services almost inclusively in-house to moving services more into the community. The ultimate goal is to be facility free and have our clients not only integrated into the community but also included in the community. As employees who work in the developmental disability field know integration and inclusion are not the same. While we have not reached our ultimate goal we have definitely taken a giant leap in the right direction and continue to move forward. All of our individuals are getting out into the local community and surrounding areas so much more than ever before. They are also being included in the community when they are out and about rather than being a bystander. We have individuals who are volunteering with the Human Society, local food pantry and the Angel Tree program. They have also been active with the Operation Child Boxes. For the last two years they have participated in the Celina Chili Cook – Off. They continue to be active in the community and surrounding areas visiting and experiencing new places. They continue to participate in the Grand Lake Marathon and in 2019, we had the largest attendance yet by the individuals we serve. Community members are beginning to know our individuals by name and are happy to see them and expect to join in on whatever is occurring.

Jennifer has been instrumental in making all of this happen. There have been multiple hurdles to overcome such as finding community opportunities when some individuals have medical needs that cannot be tended to while in the community. There is the national healthcare staffing crisis. It is a challenge to hire employees when developmental disability agencies income relies on the Medicaid reimbursement rates.

Through all the hurdles, Jennifer has continued to persevere. I believe she should be recognized for all she has done for MRSI and the individuals we serve.

-Janelle Wehrman, CEO



Park St.

In October, the residents of Park St. enjoyed the "Haunted House" at T.E. Center as well as a party at TEGH. Some house staff attended a DSP Appreciation luncheon sponsored by NOWAC. A buffet lunch was served and games were played to earn tickets for chances to win raffle prizes. It was a fun

bonding experience for staff. In November, the ladies traveled to Ft. Wayne for the day. They shopped at Burlington Coat Factory and Hobby Lobby, went to a movie, had lunch at Cracker Barrel, and supper at KFC before returning home tired but in good spirits! On Dec. 7th the ladies went to the Niswonger PAC for a matinee of

"Twas the Night before Christmas." It was a very entertaining show with lots of action and music. Our house Christmas party was on Dec. 18th when all of the residents and staff ate pizza, opened presents, and participated in an ornament exchange. Much goodwill towards all was shared.
-Heidi Leindecker, Home Coordinator



Linden Dr.

Linden drive ladies are enjoying activities outside of the home as much as possible due to the cooler weather. The ladies attend the movies at least once a month. They also went to the

movies on a day where they could bring a supply for the humane society for admission into the movie. With the New Year here, we look forward to new adventures and

beginnings. Linden will be attending the Shrine Circus and Disney on Ice in the near future.
-Jasmine Goins, Home Coordinator

Mike Trace Award Winner- Francie Carmain

Francie is the ADS Coordinator for Van Wert ADS and has been with MRSI since 2015. Francie executes her assigned job duties all while building strong relationships with the individuals that MRSI serves. She is very knowledgeable of policies and procedures, follows state and federal guidelines, is flexible when it comes to adjusting to changes and strives to improve her skills to meet a higher level of productivity.

Francie is constantly looking for new ideas, volunteer opportunities, outings, and community events for the individuals to participate in. Throughout her time with MRSI, Francie has formed a strong bond with the Veteran's Hospital in Fort Wayne where the ADS is welcomed weekly by not only the staff, but the patients in their care. She has received many letters of recognition from the VA Hospital thanking her for her dedication and has been

featured in the newspaper on multiple occasions for different activities that VW ADS is involved in. Our individuals are able to form their own relationships with the community members as well as learn about different aspects of life because of the relationships that Francie has formed with the community. Thank you Francie for all of your hard work!



Gay St.

The ladies at Gay St. enjoyed fun activities, volunteering, and making great holiday memories. This last quarter they went bowling, played some billiards, and went to the movies. They also passed out candy for Trick-or-treat and volunteered for the Salvation Army, ringing the bell and collecting donations. In December they enjoyed decorating the house and preparing for Christmas!



Van Wert ADS

At Van Wert ADS, we continue to exceed expectations. We have big dreams and have been doing extraordinary things. Van Wert ADS goes on small group outings, volunteers in our community and continuously works on volunteer projects that affect change throughout Van Wert and beyond, work on reading, practice making measurements and cooking recipes, help with soft skills, and our Healthy Fit Club exercises every day of the week and spends two of those days at the YMCA. We stay busy, too busy to mention everything we've done this quarter, so please follow us on the MRSI Facebook page for more details and cool pictures.

The Van Wert Healthy Fit Club continues to make progress toward individualized health and fitness goals. At the YMCA we do a tabata style boot camp, dance (hip hop, jazz, contemporary, ballet), stretching, yoga/tai chi, lifting weights, cardio machines, walking, swimming, and cardio drumming. We do various exercises throughout the week for the exercise challenge, but ADS members have recently asked to lift weights more often.

For community outings, we have been on Trailblazer hikes, walks at the reservoir, touring Steele Farms and MVP Dairy, bowling, festivals, shopping, botanical gardens, advocacy meetings, and eating out. We had a Christmas party, with gift exchange, and special lunch. We were happy to attend the Nutcracker Ballet at the Embassy Theater and go out to eat in Fort Wayne. We won the MRSI Christmas decorating contest with three rooms – the Sweet Side of Christmas, Santa's Workshop, and the Nutcracker. We won third place in Van Wert Manor's Gingerbread House contest. We had a New Year's celebration including our Coffee and Convos. We had a 50th (29th) Day of the Dead birthday party for Missy. We had a Halloween party, including escape rooms, and posted our Thriller dance on YouTube.

The most rewarding part of what we do is volunteering, finding (or making) a place in our community and giving back to it. Regularly scheduled, we volunteer at the food pantry, Treasure House for the rescue mission, visit nursing home residents and make them gifts or treats, volunteer for the humane society at the pet store and the shelter, veterans hospital, preschool (including teaching them sign language), and cleaning and decorating a local church. In addition to that, this quarter, we handed out gift cards for Veteran's Day at the veterans hospital, shopped for and packed Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes, made Thanksgiving meals and cookies and shared these with community friends/YWCA residents/nursing home residents, handed out homemade Christmas ornaments and treats at the veterans hospital, participated in Operation Evergreen by making ornaments to send to deployed military troops, gave decorated coffee cups full of treats to the Sheriff's office, police and fire departments, made a menu and donated meals to YWCA's Feed a Family program to feed those in need, donated winter sets to YWCA's Scarf bombing for families in need, donated clothing and other items to fire victims, participated in the Salvation Army's Red Kettle bell-ringing program, we participated in Make a Dog's Day, by celebrating our friends at the humane society and trying to get our best friend Walley adopted (he did subsequently get adopted), wrote letters to deployed troops (collected through the radio station), we took treats to and went caroling at the nursing home, we went caroling to our (retired) friend Randy's house and took him some Christmas gifts, we made and sent cards to a family struggling through medical crisis.

Giving Tuesday was on December 3, 2019. It is a day that encourages people to work together to give back to their communities. Van Wert ADS had a list of options/ideas of ways to give back on Giving Tuesday and to continue throughout the month. ADS members and staff generously donated to each item on the list. We donated another meal to YWCA's Feed a Family for families struggling with having enough food to eat. We donated money (and continued throughout the month) to our own little Salvation Army Red Kettle that we kept at ADS. We donated money to buy more gift cards for veterans. We donated money to buy angel gifts for residents at the YWCA and at the nursing home. We donated needed items to the food pantry and humane society. We collected donations for the Treasure House that benefits the homeless shelters of the Rescue Mission. We collected used blankets to repurpose and make into blankets for the animals at the humane society. We collected birthday cards and sent them to a 100 year old female WWII veteran. All of this done in one day!

Van Wert ADS members, in cleaning and decorating a local church, were given \$100 to spend on something fun. They instead decided to use the money to give back to their community. On December 31, Van Wert ADS members held their first Coffee and Convos. They used the money they had been given by the church to pay it forward and buy coffees for any community members coming into Brewed Expressions cafe that morning. Through Brewed Expressions gift card bonus, we were able to purchase \$125 worth of coffees for the community. We made cards to give out to those who got free coffees, asking them that if they want to pay it back, they could donate to our furry friends at the humane society from a list of needed items. We sat at Brewed Expressions and enjoyed our own cups of coffee, while we got to meet some of the community members. This was recognized in an article in the Times Bulletin newspaper.

Our ADS members and staff have an incredible ability and opportunity to transform our community. Thank you for your continued support of Van Wert ADS! We couldn't do what we do without you.

Francie Carmain

Van Wert ADS Coordinator



Mercer ADS

Mercer County Adult Day Program ended the year by completing many opportunities that positively impacted our individuals, our staff and our community members. The individuals have continued to commit their time, effort, ideas and enthusiasm to participate in many activities that allow them to grow and reach their personal and group goals. Each and every one of them have shared the opportunity to change the lives of others all while learning different life skills.

This quarter, Mercer ADS participated in many activities. One of their favorite outings is visiting Pet Valu and the Humane Society where they show their love for animals. Each week, individuals visit these locations and clean out the cages, feed and water the animals and of course share some love by cuddling them. The individuals have grown attached to the fur babies and have mentioned plenty of times they wish they could

adopt them all and bring them back to the ADS.

While continuing to show their adoration for animals, our individuals were also given the opportunity to attend the Old Fort Cluster Dog Show in Fort Wayne this fall. This was an all-day outing which allowed the individuals to watch many different breeds of canine compete for different titles. After the competition was over, the individuals were able to meet some of the canines who participated in the competition as well as their owners.

In December, our individuals partook in the local Angel Tree program and the Operation Christmas Child program. Both of these programs allowed our individuals to give back to the community by donating their time and small items to help those in need. The Angel Tree program focuses on our local community while Operation Christmas Child reaches out to 100 different

countries world-wide. While volunteering at the Angel Tree program and participating in Operation Christmas Child, our individuals helped sort and bag different toiletry items, small toys and other items that were passed out to families and children before Christmas. The individuals were excited to learn about the impact they were having on both our local community as well as other communities all over the world.

As we begin a new year, remember that ADS Director, Maureen Hughes, continues to schedule tours of our Mercer and Van Wert County ADS programs for interested individuals. Each tour typically lasts thirty minutes and is scheduled at the individual's convenience. For more information about our programs or to schedule a tour of your own, please call 419-586-4709 today!

-Maureen Hughes, ADS Director



Wayne St. Group Home

The Residents of Wayne Street Group home have had a very busy quarter. Residents have had the opportunity to go to the Columbus Zoo to see the Christmas Lights, to Fort Wayne, Indiana to the Glenbrook Mall to Build a Bear and to see a production of the Nutcracker Ballet. Residents were able to select an animal and an outfit at Build a Bear. During each of these outings, residents were able to go to Red Robin and Frisch's Big Boy restaurants. People First meetings occur 1 time a

month and the residents have the option to attend. Staff and residents are always looking for outings and activities to do to integrate the residents into the community.

During the last quarter the individuals the group home have been involved in several activities in the area. Residents have gone Bowling and to the movies on several occasions. Residents and staff also participated in the house decorating contest through Mercer Residential Services. The Residents would like to announce that the Wayne Street

Group home came in second this year, but they all had a great time helping. A Christmas party was held at the group for the residents, families, staff and staff families. We would like to thank all of the families that attended the Christmas party. This quarter has been a busy one for the residents for getting out into the community. At Wayne Street Group Home we work very hard to get the residents out into the community

-Tacey Blakeley, Program Director



Spotlights

Mercer County Staff Spotlight

Chris Walters began working with MRSI in August 2018 and split his time between Mercer ADS and Wayne St. Group Home (WSGH). Chris' previous work experience allows him to be an extraordinary team member as he previously was a Hospital Corpsman in the Navy and also worked as an STNA in a hospital in Texas. While working at ADS and WSGH Chris ensures that all individuals are well cared for as well as making sure he is educating them on daily life skills. Chris is very eager when helping the individuals reach their personal goals and will make sure he supports them every step of the way. From day one, Chris has been able to form strong relationships with the individuals and staff which has given him more confidence in his abilities. MRSI is very thankful to have Chris on our team!



Individual Spotlight

MRSI wanted to spotlight Teka M. this quarter. We have lost a wonderful person but heaven has gained quite an angel. Teka loved spending time with staff and the other individuals at our ADS. She loved going to Pet Valu and seeing the animals. She enjoyed when people would talk with her and listen to 90s music with her. Teka loved being around people and doing things that involved her senses. She enjoyed sitting in the sun and relaxing on the recliner at ADS. Teka's spunky personality and her big bear hugs drew everyone to her. MRSI will miss Teka dearly and our thoughts go out to all of her loved ones during this time.



Van Wert County Staff Spotlight

Heidi Leiendecker has been working with MRSI since May 2007. She is the Home Coordinator at Park St. Heidi is also one of our CPI instructors. Before she became CPI certified she was certified to teach "Do the RIGHT Thing" which was another crisis intervention program. She takes great pride in her job and is very good with the individuals served and our staff. When staff were asked about how they feel about Heidi they said, "She is kind and caring. She is also very patient. She does a very good job at training others and she always works well with others." MRSI values the work that Heidi puts into keeping the Park St. home running smoothly as well as the time she puts into training staff in the CPI program!



Award Nominations

MRSI had a couple of award nominations at the OPRA Fall Conference that was held at the end of October 2019. Each year the Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA) has an awards luncheon and honors employees across Ohio on the positive work that they do.

Francie Carmain was nominated for the **Front Line Supervisor Award**. The nomination read:

Francie is the ideal candidate for this award. Francie actively seeks out new and fun activities for the individuals to do. She also continues with activities that the individuals have shown to enjoy. Francie shows up to work before the ADS day begins to start planning for the day and stays well after the day has ended to prepare for the following days and weeks. Francie has started a Healthy Fit Club for individuals to participate in where they spend 2 days of the week at the local YMCA. They also do cardio drumming routines and cardio dance routines to help stay fit. Some of the individuals enjoy this so much that they have learned how to teach some of the routines. It also became so popular with the individuals that Francie teaches a class along with another MRSI employee at the YMCA on Thursday evenings that is open to the public. A few of the individuals served show up to this class routinely. Francie not only cares deeply about the individuals, but she also genuinely cares about the direct care staff that she supervises. Her team always rallies together to give the individuals a good day. Staff respect Francie because she is working right alongside them. She develops the plan for the day and is executing it wholeheartedly with everyone else. She is truly deserving of the frontline supervisor award.

Wayne Street Group Home and **Mercer ADS** were nominated for the **Team Award**. Their nomination said:

MRSI's Wayne Street Group home and Mercer County ADS deserve the Team award. These two locations work together to ensure the individual receive the best life. Like every other agency, our group home is in need of more staffing. While we work on getting more staffing in place, our employees at our ADS have stepped up to the plate and have begun picking up additional shifts at the group home on top of their full time schedules at the ADS. Staff communicate well between each other to ensure there is a continuity of care between the group home and the ADS, where most of the group home residents go during the day. This has strengthened the relationship and teamwork between the two locations and it has help the individuals thrive. Because of this teamwork, individuals are choosing to leave the house and the ADS more. This has led the individuals to enjoy their lives more. When talking with them you can tell that they are happier now that the two locations have created a great team together.

Christmas Decorating Contest

In 2018, MRSI had its first annual Christmas Decorating Contest and this year the 2nd annual contest was in full swing. Every home and ADS location is welcomed to decorate their location for the holidays as they see fit. Staff and individuals served all enjoy decorating their locations and they all eagerly await the judgement of which location won. The locations can only use decorations that were already at the location, donations, or they can make their own decorations. They are NOT allowed to use funds from the location to purchase new decorations.

This year **Van Wert ADS came in first place!** They had one room decorated to show the sweet side of Christmas. There were decorations all over the main room that looked like candies. Another room was Santa's workshop where they had a live Mrs. Claus checking the naughty and nice list, a live reindeer (an employee's dog dressed as a reindeer), and elves working on toys. They had the last room set up for the Nutcracker play and had individuals perform the Nutcracker dance. Everything was so well done and the judges were all very impressed!

Second place went to the Wayne St. Group Home. They had many homemade decorations that turned out great! The house was welcoming and personalized to the residents. Someone had made Santa's sleigh and reindeer. Each reindeer had the face of a resident on it!

Third place went to Mercer County ADS. They decorated with the theme of old farmhouse Christmas. They had buffalo plaid on many of their decorations. Homemade ornaments hung in the windows and on the trees. They also created a "Twas the Night before Christmas" story that incorporated each individual served and staff's name into it. It was such a unique poem!

Everyone did such a great job decorating that it was very hard to pick a winner! Pictures of each location that participated have been posted to our Facebook page, so please go check it out and follow our page to keep up on all of the cool things that clients are doing!

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Individual's Birthdays

Happy birthday to the individuals that celebrated their birthdays during the last quarter of 2019!

October:
Rosella W.
Jeff R.

November:
Fred B.
Justin W.
Michelle M.
Patty D.
Jackie W.
Ted B.

December:
Nick H.
David P.
Tammy P.
Frances S.
Scott B.
Matt B.

New Hires

MRSI is so thankful to have 5 new hires in the last quarter of 2019! We want to welcome all of our new hires to the team and we hope that

you love being here as much as we love having you! Welcome to the team:
-Jennifer Newman, Shift Supervisor

-Chloe Runyon, DSP
-Bev Boroff, Finance Coordinator
-Makayla Wenning, DSP
And welcoming back:
-Emily Mabry, DSP

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We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.mrsinc.org
