



Everyone Counts... When Everyone is Counted

Nothing makes me feel like time is flying past more than when I have to consistently use future year's dates. With multi-year grants and contracts, not to mention having to, at least on a daily basis, use 2020 in planning, has me feeling like the calendar has somehow hit an accelerator button. This, however, serves as a good reminder that some important things will be happening in 2020 and it is not too early to start thinking about them.

I know what you are thinking, but no, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the census. It is kind of like a solar eclipse; it doesn't come around that often in a lifetime. If we are lucky, we get to be on eight, maybe nine or ten in a life span.

Although some may not realize it, participation is a very patriotic thing to do. The census is outlined in our Constitution that every ten years all those living in the country should be counted. Yup, it's in there, right along with freedom of speech and the right to bear arms. I'm going to skirt an immigration quagmire here because the Constitution does not call out citizenship or legal or illegal status, just simply all those living here.

The importance of participation by everyone cannot be over stated. No matter what your views are on any issue, the importance of this activity is agreed upon by everyone. The information gathered is vital to almost every aspect of our lives. It goes well beyond simply knowing how many people live in our country.

Census data influences how and where we shop, eat and do business; it affects our tax rates as well as how we are represented at all levels of government and what types, or if any at all, services are provided. The information is not just used by government, but by private business as well. It informs them when making decisions about where they are located, what they offer, to whom and when. Quite frankly, this data touches almost every aspect of our lives and as such, there are really no sound arguments against participating.

So get ready! Just a heads up and a bit of a preview, although you will be contacted by mail, the upcoming census can only be completed on line.

Bob Benes
Executive Director

Lakes & Pines CAC, Inc.

Mission Statement

*To build prosperous communities by
serving local families and individuals
in their pursuit of self-reliance.*

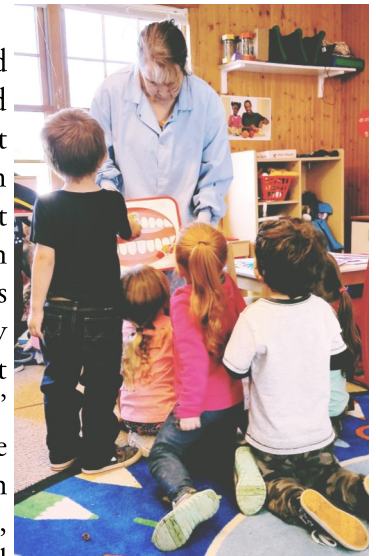
Partnering to End Poverty

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO DENTAL CARE

The fact is, throughout the United States and our beloved Minnesota, low-income families are faced with multiple barriers as they try to access basic oral health care for themselves and their children. The lack of dentist offices within Lakes and Pines' rural service area who are accepting new Medicaid (MA) patients into their practice is by far the most common and difficult barrier for families to overcome. Where can they take their children for basic dental care? Some of the few dental practices in the state that are willing to accept a new patient are hours away, which would require a working parent to take time off of work. How will they come up with the money for gas for that far of a trip? The barriers can be endless and daunting.



Long before receiving the dental grant from Medica in May 2016, Lakes and Pines has cherished our partnership with a mobile children's dental clinic based out of Minneapolis, Children's Dental Services. The initial goal for the grant funds was to expand this partnership, host one dental clinic in each of the seven counties and serve 250 pregnant women and children. One year later, that turned into an extension of the grant funds and an added goal of seven additional dental clinics. With the dental grant from Medica, Lakes and Pines has been able to proudly offer 28 dental events throughout the seven county service area from May 1, 2016 through June 1, 2018. The space for each event location was generously donated for the cause through Lakes and Pines' partnerships, including churches, child care centers and school districts. Due greatly to these community partnerships, 490 pregnant women and children graciously participated in our 28 events and received free oral health care, education and supplies right in their own communities. Children's Dental Services offered exams, cleanings, x-rays, fluoride treatments, fillings, caps and crowns, some treatment needs even being completed the same day.



Since the start of the Lakes and Pines "Dental Day" project in 2016, five out of seven (soon a 6th) Public Health/Family Services agencies in the service area have formed partnerships of their own with Children's Dental Services and are now offering multiple free and/or reduced cost dental care events in each of their respective counties. Although the area does not boast many MA accepting dental providers, Lakes and Pines, along with community programs and agencies, have worked together to break down barriers for families needing dental care by successfully bringing accessible and affordable oral health care into our communities.

ENERGY RELATED REPAIR PROGRAM

The Energy Related Repair (ERR) benefit is a crisis benefit that addresses hazardous and life threatening situations or cases where a home has no heat due to a malfunctioning or non-functioning heating system. If a homeowner qualifies for Energy Assistance and has furnace problems, Lakes and Pines is usually able to help.

Lakes and Pines works with local contractors to replace or repair furnaces for households that are receiving Energy Assistance. This benefits the households served, the local economy, and contractors doing the work. During this past season, 415 eligible households were helped with furnace-related repairs or replacements for a total cost of \$749,834.

ALLSTAR CHILD CARE CENTER



The new Allstar site is officially open in Milaca!

Facts about the new site:

- * The building sits on 5 acres of land and has a large fenced environmentally friendly playground
- * The center is 7200 square feet including a music room, infant and school age classrooms, two toddler classrooms and three preschool classrooms
- * There is a secure entrance with individual pin codes for each parent and is fully equipped with security/monitoring cameras throughout



Left: Head Start Partnership Classroom



The space above is being enjoyed by the children.

ENERGY CRISIS BENEFITS

When a household qualifies for Energy Assistance, they also qualify for Crisis benefits. Energy Assistance Program (EAP) Crisis benefits of up to \$600 can be used to prevent the shut off of residential energy sources, to reinstate service of residential energy sources, and to enable delivery of residential fuel. Crisis benefits can only be used after a household has used all of the primary heat benefit, has a disconnect notice, had service disconnected, is out of fuel or low on fuel. This season 2,287 households applied for Energy Assistance while currently facing an emergency situation. By the end of the season a total of \$1,263,277 in crisis benefits was granted to 2,710 households. Oftentimes a household's crisis can be resolved using their primary heat grant. Unfortunately, at other times applications are incomplete and cannot be fully processed to determine their eligibility for Energy Assistance, delaying or preventing them from receiving a grant. This year there was an increase in the use of Crisis funds due to the severity of temperatures and length of winter.

“You’re a drug addict and a criminal and you will never amount to anything. You have kids you cannot care for and you are a kid yourself. No one will ever trust or love you” is all she heard for the past five years from her parents and other close relatives.

Over the past seven months this has all changed for the better with hard work, drive, dedication and commitment, and heart to make a life worth living, as she frequently told her Advocate.

Although this young mother of three has made mistakes in her young life, as many of us do, she has learned valuable life lessons and instead of shaming herself, she has dedicated her life to sharing her past struggles with other youth who are starting down that same path of drugs and destruction.

Being a young mother who was homeless and who was addicted to drugs was never the way she pictured her life. She always wanted to be a lawyer or doctor, but she stated that life just didn’t go as she planned and today she is okay with that. She reported that all of the horrible things that she has gone through, some of her own doing and some with the doing of others, all came down to the choices she made. The things that happened were the consequences that she had to endure, which helped her to overcome her addictions, face her past and take charge of her life.

After going to inpatient treatment, she began working with Lakes and Pines for emergency housing. Being a homeless youth with a lot on her plate as well as many barriers, she was in need of assistance and guidance to locate affordable housing for when she completed treatment.

This was only the beginning. After her first meeting with her Agency Wide Advocate and discussing all of the resources available, she began the development of her case plan and goals; a whole new world of possibilities opened up and she began to accomplish them one-by-one.

Lakes and Pines was able to provide financial support by helping her pay the damage deposit required to move into her new place, but as she states, “Lakes and Pines has helped me change my life for the better.” She told her Advocate that it was not because Lakes and Pines paid her damage deposit that her life changed, it was because for the first time in her life she felt supported, encouraged and cared for and not judged for her past. She was given the resources and opportunities to get the help she needed to move forward with her life.

Her Advocate provided a wide range of supportive services and helped her develop a case plan that would best meet her needs. Some of the services included applying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), Medical Assistance and Women Infant and Children Program (WIC), connecting to the pregnancy resource center and daycare assistance application assistance. Her advocate connected her with outside resources so she could attend support groups for Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous and attend church, engaging in motivational speaking at other treatment centers, sharing her story with other recovering addicts. Her advocate helped her gain skills to build and maintain an ongoing monthly budget and she gained important life skills such as learning to budget and pay bills on time. They worked together to develop a bills calendar, and plan to keep an up to date agenda so she didn’t miss appointments. They worked on mock interviewing, what to wear at an interview, how to stretch your money when buying groceries and meal planning to save money. She has now graduated Chemical Dependency treatment and graduated outpatient relapse prevention after care. She moved into income-based supportive housing, gained and maintained meaningful employment, is in the process of getting her children back into her custody 50/50. She enrolled in Adult Basic Education to get her GED and plans to graduate in the next couple of months, and she is more than thrilled to be searching for colleges with the best bachelor’s degree programs for a career in the judicial system working as a probation officer for at risk youth.



TEACHING STRATEGIES GOLD OUTCOMES

Fall-Winter-Spring 2017-2018

Lakes and Pines' Head Start Program's spring checkpoints and family conferences have been completed. There was an increase in the percentage of children who meet or exceed the Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) objectives (as seen in the chart below). The growth in the areas of Literacy (18.1 points) and Math (22.4 points) is particularly remarkable.

These results are very encouraging with this being the first full year of implementation of the curriculums (Creative Curriculum for Center-based and Growing Great Kids for Home-based). Lakes and Pines will continue to provide professional development for all staff using the curriculums to fidelity.

Teaching Strategies GOLD Domains	Percentage of children who meet or exceed TSG objectives Fall Overall	Percentage of children who meet or exceed TSG objectives Winter Overall	Percentage of children who meet or exceed TSG objectives Spring Overall
Social Emotional	67.46	80.47	85.02
Physical	88.36	96.15	96.26
Language	73.63	83.33	85.21
Cognitive	71.69	83.61	86.54
Literacy	64.1	79.02	82.2
Math	61.63	75.49	84.03
AVERAGE	71.15	83.01	86.54

VALUE IN SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

The value of supportive services can mean the difference between being housed and being homeless. Recently Lakes and Pines worked with a supportive services participant with physical disabilities and who recently lost his mother, his main source of support. He had been living with his mother for almost his entire adult life. His disability and social isolation led to a lack of income and assets, relying on General Assistance and food benefits provided by county services. After his mother passed away, his siblings urged him to move out and find his own housing, as they had plans to remodel the house and put it on the market. Having no income, he negotiated with his siblings to forfeit his share of any sale proceeds in exchange for being able to stay rent-free in the house while he located affordable housing. With the support of his Advocate, he worked to find low income housing. Due to some previous criminal charges and a lack of rental history, he struggled to find a property management company or landlord willing to work with him. After months of searching, he applied for an opening that would be a good fit, but he was denied. He lost hope and came close to giving up on the whole thing. However, his Advocate, made a case for his willingness to turn his life around and assisted with the appeal process. A short time later, his application was reconsidered, and finally approved. He will be able to move soon into a unit that will be income based, close to his support network and hopefully will be stably housed. Although Lakes and Pines wasn't able to help directly with rental assistance, such is the true value of supportive services: it can be more valuable than money.



GENEROSITY AND A WARM HEART

Lakes and Pines' Early Head Start/Head Start received another generous donation of hand-made hats and mittens from Vernon Heineman of Mora. The donated items consisted of 52 pair of mittens and 56 hats. These items will be distributed to families enrolled in the Lakes and Pines Early Head Start/Head Start Program in the fall. Vernon is a dedicated contributor to the Program and says he enjoys keeping his hands busy and making the items throughout the year.

Our families look forward to receiving his hats and mittens. Thank you, Vern for your continued support of families in our community!

Pictured Right: Vern Heineman
with Jennifer Henthorn.



ROADBLOCKS TO YOUR BETTER FUTURE?

“I’ll never have a better life”

“There’s no way out of this rut I’m in.”

“I guess I’ll just be poor forever.”

Lakes and Pines staff are ready to help you crash through, get over or go around the roadblocks to your better financial future.

If you are on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – food support, Lakes and Pines may be able to help you set goals and make a plan that will improve your ability to be prepared for, find and keep a job that pays well.

If you want to buy your first house, start or expand a small business or have a dream of furthering your education, Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) is the way to go. Lakes and Pines can help you set a path to achieve your dream, whatever it is, working with an experienced coach to make that path just a bit smoother.

Maybe you want to get a better handle on the money coming into your home. Trained staff will help you do that too. Some people have said that the staff they worked with actually made budgeting fun. The first step may be to think of it as a spending plan rather than a budgeting plan. It starts with a card game. It ends with you being in control of your money.

Or maybe you’re not accessing services that might be helpful for a little bit. Lakes and Pines has staff ready to help you answer questions about how to get around roadblocks such as childcare assistance, health care coverage, tax preparation and refunds, Energy Assistance and energy savings.

Still think you can’t have a better future?

Imagine if you exercise all of these services, and it will be “exercise” because you’ll be doing some work and learning new ways of doing things. You’ll have someone coaching you and helping remove some of the roadblocks, and sharing tips to overcome others.

If you’re ready to start, Lakes and Pines is waiting to hear from you.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM YEAR 2017—2018

The 2017-2018 Energy Assistance Program (EAP) opened October 1, 2017 and ran through May 31, 2018. EAP Certifiers worked hard throughout the season to process a total of 7,285 applications in a timely and accurate manner. Out of that number, 6,509 applications were approved, 708 were denied, 23 were closed and 45 were voided. The program also saw 2,287 households apply for EAP while facing an emergency situation. Emergencies include having a disconnect notice, being disconnected, having less than 20% of delivered fuel remaining, or being out of delivered fuel. A total of \$4,554,348 in primary heat benefits were awarded to eligible households. The average primary heat grant was \$699.



GARDEN SEED PROGRAM



Between snow in April, rainy weekends and overzealous mosquitoes, some gardeners got off to a slow start this year. With about half of the distribution partners reporting, the Garden Seed Program is on track for a successful year.

The Garden Seed Program is intended to help people stretch their food budgets. The seeds are purchased by Lakes and Pines in bulk and repackaged into small packets by Town and Country Garden Club members, a few of the Agency's regular volunteers and staff members on their breaks and lunchtime. Staff members volunteered to deliver seeds to 23 community partners such as food shelves, extension offices and community gardens that generously agreed to be seed distribution sites. There are two or three sites in each of the seven counties served by Lakes and Pines, that volunteer to distribute the seeds to area low-income residents.

Included with the seeds was a handout of basic gardening information printed from the University of Minnesota Extension's website and reminders that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits may be used to purchase vegetable seeds and plants. This program not only creates new gardeners, it also frees up money for other needs, provides access to fresh produce, helps people get some exercise and promotes a sense of accomplishment and self-reliance.

If you are a member of a club with community project funds, know of a community minded garden center or are an individual who wants to donate to improve next year's program, please contact Lakes and Pines. A donation from you may be the difference between a good Garden Seed Program and a great Garden Seed Program!

REACH OUT FOR WARMTH PROGRAM

Reach Out For Warmth (ROFW) is funded through donations and is a program run through Lakes and Pines to help households in crisis situations. Lakes and Pines was able to serve 13 households with donations received so far this season. Even though the Energy Assistance Program is closed, we are still able to utilize ROFW funds to help households in crisis situations. This program serves households at 60% State Median Income or less. This also reaches families that are over the 50% State Median Income guidelines used for the Energy Assistance Program. Donations were received from First National Bank of Milaca, Hope Lutheran Church, and Grandy Lions. Donations to ROFW are no longer matched with federal funds, so Lakes and Pines is very grateful to those who keep this program going through their generous donations. For more information or to donate, call: 320-679-1800.

HEALTH AND FREEDOM ON WHEELS



Pictured left:

David Engberg donating a bicycle to be gifted to Randy, pictured right.



David Engberg, a Lakes and Pines employee, recently donated his bicycle and accessories to the organization. Due to his generosity, Lakes and Pines was able to gift the bike to a new Live Well at Home (LWAH) participant, who had recently shared during his visit with his Advocate that he wanted to start riding bike again for multiple reasons, including improving his health and providing him with the transportation so he could accomplish some of the goals he set for himself. When the bike was delivered, he was so grateful and his response was, “Lakes and Pines had made my entire year!”

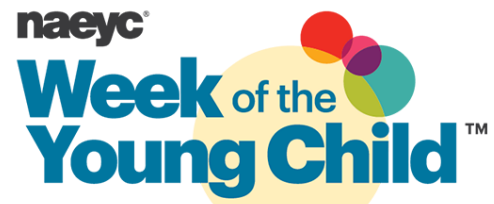
SENIOR RESPITE CARE IMPACT



Recently, a Lakes and Pines staff member was approached by a member of the community asking what senior respite is all about. She mentioned she had heard about Lakes and Pines’ Senior programs and wondered if she and her husband could access any of the services offered. After enjoying a marvelous cup of her old fashioned percolated coffee and raspberry scones, she shared about her daily routines and the staff member helped her develop a plan for her to meet with Lakes and Pines’ chore services coordinator. It was apparent that her days were running over with medical appointments, bathing and shaving her husband and many, many other commitments for her husband’s wellbeing. The staff member spoke with her about the Senior Respite Program offered in both Pine and Chisago counties. They discussed how all of these responsibilities are what make her a caregiver and that the most important thing she can do for her husband is to take care of herself.

She now enjoys bringing her husband to the Lakes and Pines respite program twice a month so she may enjoy an afternoon swimming at the local pool, which she has done for many years. For more information about Lakes and Pines’ Respite program, please call: 320-679-1800 or email at: lap@lakesandpines.org.

WORKS OF ART



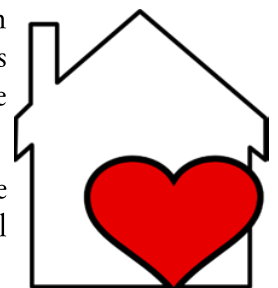
If you roamed the hallways of Lakes and Pines during the week of April 16-20, hopefully you had the pleasure of seeing the beautiful balloon artwork that was displayed. These balloons were created by Lakes and Pines' Head Start children and their parents. This annual celebration is hosted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This particular week in April is a time for local early childhood programs to celebrate early childhood and the work that is done for children and their families. This year, Lakes and Pines celebrated with balloons!

EMERGENCY HOUSING FOR SENIORS

Over the past decade, the number of older people who are homeless has increased across the country. Every three years, Wilder Research conducts a one-night statewide survey of homeless people in Minnesota to better understand the prevalence, causes, circumstances, and effects of homelessness. The most recent study was conducted on October 22, 2015. The survey results indicated that the average age of older adults facing homelessness is 60, compared to 67 for Minnesota older adults in general. Forty-five percent of older adults who are homeless did not become homeless until they were age 50 or older. At the time of the survey, three in ten were experiencing homelessness for the first time. Lakes and Pines' Community Needs Assessment also reflected the need to increase senior emergency services. Lakes and Pines responded by applying for Live Well at Home funding through the Department of Human Services in hopes of receiving funding to assist seniors who are experiencing a housing crisis causing them to become homeless or facing an eviction.

The Result: Lakes and Pines was awarded funding from the Department of Human Services Aging and Adult Services Division to provide assistance to older adults age 65 and older who are experiencing a housing crisis (facing eviction or experiencing homelessness) to stabilize their housing and reduce their risk of experiencing homelessness again. Lakes and Pines Agency Wide Advocates guide program participants through goal setting and bi-weekly face to face interaction in order to help them achieve their goals of stabilizing their housing. With this funding, Lakes and Pines has already been able to assist thirteen senior headed households into safe and affordable housing, while also providing ongoing support.

If you know a senior who is facing eviction or experiencing homelessness, please have them contact Lakes and Pines at (320) 679-1800 or (800) 832-6082 option 4 or email at: lap@lakesandpines.org for assistance.



LIFE AFTER DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse by a loved one can change your life drastically. All sense of security and trust is gone.

Lakes and Pines recently worked with a woman who was experiencing domestic abuse by her husband. With circumstances out of her control, she was the one who had to leave her home of 13 years, which left her and her child homeless. After working with an Advocate for one month, she located an apartment. Lakes and Pines was able to help pay the deposit and rent. After a few court dates, she was able to get their belongings from her soon to be ex-husband and their apartment now became their home. Lakes and Pines continued to pay part of the rent for four months. She was able to move on and get her life in order. She finished a refresher course in her career and is now employed. So within a few short months of help from Lakes and Pines, she is now back on her feet and is able to maintain her housing on her own.

SENIOR CHORE AND DELIVERY PROGRAM

Lakes and Pines' Senior Services chore and delivery program is funded, in part, by a Live Well at Home (LWAH) grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). The primary goal of the LWAH program is to help older people and those with disabilities remain in their own homes longer. This is accomplished by assisting the homeowners with tasks they can no longer do for themselves, screening them for possible risks that jeopardize their ability to live at home, and helping them connect with other community resources to minimize and manage those risks.

So, why do older people move from their homes into assisted living or nursing homes? Forbes.com contributor Gary Bevitch responds, "It's not necessarily declining health itself, but how ailments prevent people from living independently." (2013/09/13). Many times, small adjustments to improve the safety of their homes, or a little community support is all that's needed to postpone that move.

Lakes and Pines responded to a call for help from Grace, an 84 year-old woman who was being released from rehabilitation after a fall in her home. Her home health care worker had assessed her environment for safety issues, and told Grace she needed grab bars in specific locations to help her successfully navigate her home. Without the grab bar installations, she could not safely remain in her home. Lakes and Pines couldn't help Grace recover from her health issues, but the support provided by the chore service program improved her living environment enough to allow her to stay in her own home.

Sometimes, the services offered bridge the gap between "can do and can't do" while an older person recovers from an illness or temporary condition. Helen was having difficulty carrying her groceries to her car and into her apartment after an illness left her feeling weak. As a 92 year-old, she wondered if she could ever regain the strength and stamina she once had, or if her weakness would put her into an assisted living facility. She is a very social person and also worried that her fatigue would isolate her. Lakes and Pines found an equally social volunteer, Joan, who was looking for an opportunity to help an older person, so Joan began delivering Helen's groceries every week. Their weekly visits became more than just a grocery delivery as a true friendship grew between them. Helen often told me how much she looked forward to Joan's weekly visits and recently she felt she was growing stronger. Last week she called to say she felt ready to resume her own grocery shopping (if that was okay!), and asked if Joan and the program staff would be offended if she didn't use the Groceries to Go program any more. She was feeling so much better and wanted to try doing it herself. The staff member reminded her that she is indeed a success story for our program – senior services were there when she needed them, and without our LWAH program, she may have given up trying to remain in her own home.

Resource: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2013/09/13/how-we-can-keep-seniors-in-their-homes-as-long-as-possible/#5757a06b569a>

FREE
HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS
PROPERTY TAX REFUND
PREPARATION

Do you need to file your 2018 Homeowners' Property Tax refund or 2017 Renters' Property Tax Refund?

Let us *teach* you how to *prepare your return*
and *file* for *FREE!*

CLASS LOCATIONS

Aitkin, Cambridge, Cloquet, Milaca, Moose Lake, Mora, North Branch,
Pine City, Princeton and Wyoming

CALL TO REGISTER FOR A CLASS NEAR YOU!



Lakes and Pines CAC
320-679-1800 Option 4



Special thanks to the East Central Regional Library system, Cloquet Public Library, Kanabec County, and PTCC Employment and Training for partnering and providing space for classes.

Paid for by a grant from Minnesota Department of Human Services, Office of Economic Opportunity



stands for "FOR YOUR INFORMATION." It is a quarterly newsletter provided to the area's officials, partners, Board Members and personnel of Lakes and Pines CAC, Inc.

We hope our Newsletter will present you with timely, interesting, and sometimes lighthearted information. In turn, we hope that you will present us with your thoughts and suggestions.

For further information, please contact:

LAKES AND PINES CAC INC
1700 MAPLE AVE E
MORA MN 55051
320-679-1800
Toll Free 1-800-832-6082
lap@lakesandpines.org
Equal Opportunity Employer

For the Agency to continue savings in postage, it is important to maintain current addresses on file.

Please take a moment to review your address label and notify Lakes and Pines of any appropriate corrections.

If you are interested in receiving the FYI electronically in the future, please email: lap@lakesandpines.org.

CORRECTION IN MAILING ADDRESS

PLEASE PRINT:

NAME:

ORGANIZATION:

ADDRESS:

CITY, STATE, ZIP+4 DIGITS

Mail to: Agency Administration, Lakes and Pines CAC Inc., 1700 Maple Ave E., Mora MN 55051

NONPROFIT STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MORA MN
PERMIT NO. 29

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

LAKES AND PINES CAC INC
1700 MAPLE AVE E
MORA MN 55051