



Kudos to the Health Department

The other evening I was sitting at home listening to a local news cast, when I was heartened to hear a bit of good news. The newscaster announced that the measles outbreak in Minnesota was over, done, wiped out. Through an extraordinary effort of manpower and resources, no new cases have been reported for longer than the measles incubation period, meaning the outbreak has ceased to spread and those cases reported are under treatment. Great news!

Here are some pertinent facts: there were 79 cases reported; most of the cases were reported in young immigrant children; the cost of the effort totaled \$900,000.

In light of this effort that certainly was a priority I began to wonder, "what if." What if instead of declaring a war on poverty, Lyndon Johnson had declared poverty an epidemic, along with all the resolve both political and public behind it that was behind a measles outbreak?

But Bob, you say, "measles affects children." Well, the largest demographic living in poverty is children. I will throw in that the second largest group in poverty is senior citizens. But Bob, you say, "measles are contagious." Well, it is not a mystery, and is proven with data that poverty is most often passed on to children by their parents. But Bob, you say, "measles can spread and affect anyone." If you had been around Lakes and Pines in 2008, you would have seen that given the right conditions (i.e. the great recession), poverty can strike almost anyone without regard to their personal decisions and choices.

Let's take a look at the resources. With the number of cases reported and the dollars expended, the math would say that \$11,400 was spent on each reported case. The same math says Lakes and Pines receives less than \$670 for each eligible person coming to our doors in a year.

Certainly poverty is ugly and shameful enough in a country with the resources we have that it is "war worthy." It should be eliminated, conquered, and vanquished. But, one has to wonder.

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

53RD ANNUAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING



Left: Rick Olseen from Congressman Nolan's office and the Isanti County Commissioner and Board Member, Greg Anderson.
Right: Representatives, Brian Johnson and Anne Neu and Senator, Mark Koran.



Left: Lakes and Pines staff enjoying the evening and festivities.

Lakes and Pines' 53rd Annual Board Meeting, held on October 2, 2017, was a huge success once again. Over 150 staff, Board Members, legislators and Agency supporters gathered at the Braham Community Center for dinner, entertainment by the musical talent of Kenny Krona and Aubrey Olson, an awards ceremony and some official business.

Throughout the evening a silent auction was held for the Power Action Leadership (PAL) fund. Lakes and Pines is grateful to the area businesses and individuals that generously donated many items. Bidders shopped items such as autographed sports memorabilia, artwork, local gift certificates and much more. Over \$2,400 was raised to support PAL.

During the formal business meeting, the Board recognized community and staff members for their outstanding contributions to families and individuals.

Lakes and Pines recognized Lori Wolf for 25 years of service to individuals and families with low-incomes through Lakes and Pines' Mission. Lori has dedicated her career to working with families with young children achieve their goals by providing resources and guiding them along their path.

Sally Ayers, pictured right with Kanabec County Commissioner and Board Chairman Gene Anderson, was recognized for her commitment to improving early education for families through the Spirit of Community Award. Sally recently retired after 20 years of working in the Head Start Program with Lakes and Pines. After retirement, Sally has continued to play an active role in early childhood education and improving the success of families in preparing their child(ren) for kindergarten. Lakes and Pines was honored to present this award to Sally for her continued commitment to families.



This year's Allies in Action Award was presented to Michelle Soldo, pictured left with Energy Housing Director Richard Fuchs, who is a longtime partner of Community Action and Lakes and Pines. Michelle has had a direct impact on Lakes and Pines' ability to effectively deliver outstanding service to individuals and families in the community. In her work from training of staff to providing legal counsel, she has embodied the Mission of Community Action and her dedication to Lakes and Pines' staff and customers shines through in all that she does.

Brooklyn Schubert was awarded the Volunteer of the Year Award for her partnership with the Chore Services Program. Brooklyn has helped to connect individuals she works with from the Mille Lacs County juvenile work crews to their community by volunteering on projects at the homes of seniors or individuals with disabilities, allowing them to remain in their homes longer. Brooklyn has made the youths' community service a meaningful experience for them as well as those they have served through the program.

This year's Roger E. Corbin (Staff) Award went to Tina Hamilton. Tina has worked at Lakes and Pines for 23 years and is currently the Human Resources Department Assistant. She is known for her supportive, positive demeanor and willingness to help anyone. Her strong work ethic, strive for professionalism and dedication to the Mission make her an asset to Lakes and Pines and an inspiration to those around her.



Left: Ida Rukavina from Senator Amy Klobuchar's office and Board Member, Robert Marcum.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BEGINS

On October 2, 2017, the Energy Assistance Program staff returned to work from a summer layoff and went straight to work, processing the applications for the new program year that had already arrived at the office. At this time, we are unsure of when federal funding will arrive in Minnesota for release to energy companies on behalf of applicants who qualify. In previous years, the funding has been available in mid-November. For now, Lakes and Pines staff are able to work on certifying applications and a limited amount of funds are available to help with furnace repair. Lakes and Pines staff have noticed that more households are calling in with energy related emergencies than in recent years, so we are anxious for funding to arrive so that we can help soon. Approximately 3500 applications have been received already with the number expected to double by the end of the program. Anyone interested in applying should contact Lakes and Pines at (320)679-1800 or download an application from the website at: www.lakesandpines.org.

ITS PLAY TIME!

Lakes and Pines has been busy working with distributors, freight companies and contractors in making the Mora playground dreams a reality. The Mora Head Start play area began as a fenced-in play area consisting of a grassy area mixed with pea rock and a sandbox that was showing its age. After weeks of planning, excavating and assembly, we are pleased to announce the completion of the new Mora Head Start Center playground. The new playground consists of a new storage shed for toys and tricycles, a climber and a new sandbox. For the ultimate safety of the children, a poured rubber fall surface has been installed. A sidewalk around the climber has been added and will double as a bike track to ride the tricycles. We have also planted grass seed to create a plush blanket of fresh grass for the children to play on.



A SECOND CHANCE

A young man got into trouble with the law at the age of 18, when he was found with prescription pills in his possession that had not been prescribed to him. The judge sentenced him with felony possession of a narcotic and five years of probation. However, if he successfully completed the five years of probation without any similar charges, the courts would adjudicate the sentence.

Not only did he successfully complete his probation, he has now been sober for over five years.

Now in his late 20's, life has changed for the better, and he and his girlfriend are expecting their first baby. They had applied for income-based housing and were denied due to the felony possession charges that had not been removed from his record. Needless to say, they were devastated as they were depending on receiving income-based housing.

He spoke with a representative at Legal Aid and because he is low-income and expecting a child, he was determined eligible to receive free legal services. The free legal services will work on his behalf with the courts to get these charges removed from his record. He is hopeful that once these charges are removed, he will be able to provide safe, affordable and stable housing for his family.

ENROLLMENT PROCESS

The Head Start Program offers a variety of options to meet the needs of children and families in the community. Head Start is a family focused, early childhood program with home based services for children ages birth to five years old. The program includes pregnant moms and center based settings for children ages three to five years.

If you'd like to enroll your child in Head Start, please call (320)679-1800 ext. 144 for more information or to be connected to a Family Advocate to assist you in completing an application.

HANDY PEOPLE ESSENTIAL TO LEND A HAND

There is an older neighbor in your community who has all the material needed to replace the leaky pipes under their kitchen sink, but is no longer able to do the job themselves and doesn't have family in the area to lend a hand. Another neighbor needs some help putting plastic on their windows while someone else would really appreciate having their windows washed, so the winter sun has a better chance of brightening their days.

The Chore Service Program is looking for a few skilled volunteers in every community. People who are skilled with a hammer, wrench, saw, pliers, screwdrivers, solder and measuring tapes are especially needed right now. A few homeowners who are older or disabled need some leaky pipes replaced or a drippy faucet repaired. Others need some touch up painting done, a grab bar installed or some other minor maintenance or repair.

Maybe you don't think of yourself as handy, but want to help out someone in your community. You too are skilled and your skills and time are needed. Chores such as washing or putting plastic on a window, clearing out a cluttered garage so the older or disabled homeowner can get their car in the garage are a few volunteer opportunities which could use your help.

Chores such as these are not weekly chores; they are the chores that once finished, stay done for a while and will be appreciated for even longer. These chores will only take a few hours of your time. Some can be done by one person, some will go more quickly if you get together with a friend or a group. You wouldn't be committing to volunteer work on a weekly basis, although if you want to, we can probably keep you busy.



If you volunteer to do a chore in someone's home you'll need to pass a background check. We want to assure the homeowner and the volunteer of the best possible experience.

Contact Valerie at (320)679-1800 Ext. 171 or email her at valerieb@lakesandpines.org for more information or to volunteer. Your skills and helpfulness will be welcomed, valued and appreciated. You may make a new friend or two, and you will definitely feel good after a few hours of volunteering.

COUPONING FOR A CAUSE

Karen Koecher-Zebrasky is always one to help when she can. She has organized many events in the communities of Bruno, Kerrick and Duquette.

Karen's new adventure is couponing. While Karen was thinking of a way she could use her skills to help individuals and families, she met with an Agency-Wide Advocate (AWA) with Lakes and Pines. Karen asked if Lakes and Pines would be able to distribute any of her items that she had purchased while couponing. Karen and the AWA came up with the idea to give these items to individuals and families who were homeless. Karen provided and continues to provide the Moose Lake office with toothpaste/toothbrushes, denture adhesive, razors, shampoo, body wash, bar soap, feminine products, laundry soap and dish soap. Karen also brought in school supplies to be distributed.



The items that Karen has donated have been greatly appreciated by individuals who are homeless. This is just one way that an individual can use their skills to bring small things that most take for granted to people in need.

Karen wants to share her knowledge with others. She is working with Lakes and Pines to come up with a way to make this happen. THANKS KAREN!!

CLOQUET GRAND OPENING

The Lakes and Pines Head Start Program held its Grand Opening for the Cloquet Head Start Center on September 25, 2017. Families, local politicians and the Lakes and Pines' Board of Directors were invited to come see the new center, explore the innovative natural playground, make some goo and enjoyed some refreshments.



The Cloquet Center has been open for children since June, starting with a six week summer program, and moving into a full Head Start



Center September 5, 2017. The site is staffed with a Lead Teacher and an Assistant Teacher. Plans to expand staff by adding another teacher are in progress.

The site is licensed to care for children ages six weeks to five years old. At this time though, the program will concentrate on preschool children with a possible expansion to offer Early Head Start in the future. Thank you to all who were able to attend our Grand Opening.

TAX VOLUNTEERS

The Lakes and Pines Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers free tax sites located in Milaca, Mora, North Branch and Pine City, from February through April. Because of amazing volunteers, in 2017 over 600 individuals and families throughout our communities received FREE tax preparation services. The program cannot run without volunteers like you. No previous tax experience is required and training is provided. Many volunteer tax positions are available:

- Intake specialist - Provide customer support and service at tax clinics. They work closely with the Site Coordinator, keeping the multi-step process smooth running.
- Tax preparer - Works with customers to prepare state and federal tax returns and help claim all the credits they've earned.
- Reviewer - Provides thorough checks of tax returns prepared by volunteer tax preparers, ensuring that every customer receives top quality service.

Volunteering with Lakes and Pines provides you with a variety of benefits!

- Develop new skills and gain valuable experience working with diverse customers, volunteers and staff.
- Improve your community by helping hardworking families increase their income.
- Gain hands-on knowledge of the tax system and improve your tax and financial skills through free training.
- An excellent opportunity for students and jobseekers to demonstrate experience to employers by building your resume.
- Socialization.
- Being part of a team and having FUN!

All volunteers receive high-level training, which takes place in December and January. Volunteers commit to at least one 4-hour shift regularly from January 20 - April 14, 2018.

For more information or to apply to become a volunteer contact Tina Hart, Financial Programs Coordinator, at tinamh@lakesandpines.org or (320)679-1800 Ext. 170.



OUTREACH AND NETWORKING

As an Agency-Wide-Advocate at Lakes and Pines, I was given the opportunity to attend the Transition Fairs in Rush City and Moose Lake prisons, along with many other vendors who offered support from Alcoholic Anonymous, college opportunities, Social Security, workforce center, Minnesota Department of Labor, healthcare, counseling and more.

While setting up at this event, I had the privilege of speaking with a few of the individuals who helped organize the event. These men will be released within a year of the date and were eager to express their gratitude for the vendors who took time out of their busy day to attend. They look forward to events like these for weeks, and talk about them for many days after. Knowing vendors support programs inside the facility and the community supports these men after their release, helps ease the many fears about their future. I heard many of the men express their fear of recurring offenses because they are not able to access housing, employment and financial education or other education to help ensure their success in becoming an active part of the community.

This is one instance that shows how important outreach and networking is. There were a lot of men and other agencies that were not aware of our services, but would benefit greatly from them.

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” –James Baldwin

OPENING DOORS FOR SUCCESS

Lakes and Pines recently advocated for an 18 year old homeless youth from Aitkin County. Homeless Youth Act (HYA) motel funds were used to provide him with a hotel stay. When Lakes and Pines staff first met with him, they noticed that his right hand was bandaged. When they asked him what happened, he said “I punched a wall” after an argument with his mother. He went on to tell part of his story.

He and his mother had moved back to Minnesota from Texas two months ago. His mother had found a seasonal job at the local golf course. He was born in Minnesota and had some prior connection to the area. They lived in one of the “shacks” that served as temporary lodging for employees of the golf course. He slept in this cabin intended for one person with his mother and his older brother. He worked for the golf course at first, but then was laid off after the season was over. He found another job with a local company that makes pallets. He had not finished high school and his mother had no room for him and his brother and wanted them to find their own housing. After an especially intense argument, the one in which he injured his hand, his mother kicked him out. She paid for one night at a hotel. He went to the emergency room to get his hand looked at and was given a cast, but told to get health insurance for physical therapy and other care he would need. When he went to work the next day, the foreman at his job pulled him aside and told him “you can’t work like that,” pointing at his hand in a cast. They told him to come back when he was better, but there was no guarantee that his job would be waiting for him when his hand healed. He was homeless, had about ten dollars to his name, had no health insurance and was not sure what the next step was. That was when he reached out to Lakes and Pines for help.

After ensuring he had a place to sleep at night, Lakes and Pines worked with a MNsure navigator at a local hospital to help him apply for Medical assistance. His youth status meant that proving his identity within MNsure could have been a barrier. Thankfully, because of his age and his injury, his application was expedited and he had insurance within a few days. We helped him apply for Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) and General Assistance while his hand healed and we reviewed his goals. His plan was to find housing and work in Duluth. He told his Advocate that he had already received a bus voucher from the sheriff’s office in Aitkin for a ride to Duluth. Another Door, a youth shelter project through Lutheran Social Services with six beds for homeless youth, was contacted and he was put on their waiting list. Lakes and Pines staff advocated for additional motel stay funds on his behalf while a spot opened up at the shelter. As of this writing, he has made it to Duluth and is staying at the shelter. He is now accessing local youth resources such as Life House, to find housing, finish high school and take the next steps to get his life stabilized.

HAT AND MITTEN DONATION

Lakes and Pines Early Head Start/Head Start program received a generous donation of hand-made hats and mittens from Vernon Heineman of Mora. The donated items consisted of 60 pair of mittens and 66 hats. The donation will be distributed to families enrolled in the Lakes and Pines Early Head Start/Head Start Program. Vernon is a dedicated contributor to the program and says he enjoys keeping his hands busy, and making the items throughout the year.



WEATHERIZATION: FULL OF GOOD IDEAS

Lakes and Pines' Weatherization program is not only about adding insulation to a home, but also ensuring that you are living in a safe environment. To protect your health and home safety, safety checks are made to ensure a home is healthy too. Safety checks are a good idea for homeowners to do on a regular basis to avoid hidden surprises. The Lakes and Pines Weatherization crew has come up with a few tips to protect your home.

The biggest and most obvious home appliance to be checked is the furnace. Furnaces use a variety of fuel sources including propane, fuel oil, natural gas, electricity and/or wood, all of which have different maintenance requirements. The most common trouble spot on your furnace is in the ductwork, which includes a filter that gets plugged with dust and lint and needs to be cleaned to operate efficiently. There is still some disagreement on the efficacy of having ducts cleaned. Changing the filter once a month is recommended, once a year is never enough.

Furnaces running on propane and natural gas often benefit from a cleaning and tune up of the furnace's burners. The burners often get plugged with debris that can disrupt the flow of gas and air. The clean and tune should be done yearly, but if budgets are tight at least every other year. This cleans the burners and resets the flame to burn at the optimum mix of fuel and air.

Fuel oil furnaces operate differently and need to be treated differently. There should be a filter in the line that should be changed at least once per year. Tanks that are located outside need to run a lighter blend of fuel oil when it is extremely cold to prevent jelling of the fuel, leading to problems with heat. Because it is a liquid when burned and not a gas, there is the potential for more carbon during operation, which results in the need for yearly cleaning to prevent poor combustion and loss of efficiency.



Electric furnaces get a pass on cleanings and tune ups, but not on distribution maintenance. Wood furnaces need to have ashes removed and chimneys checked.

There are a few things that people need to know about safety that many are unaware. Ventless stoves and fireplaces (usually natural gas or liquid propane) are illegal to install in Minnesota, but can still be sold to the public. This doesn't make sense, but it is the way the laws were written.

Have a safe and warm winter!



EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

Lakes and Pines Agency-Wide-Advocates (AWA) assist people with applying for health insurance through the MNsure marketplace, at MNsure.org. Recently our AWA met with an older couple who had a recent (within 18 months) major health issue that resulted in a loss of employment for the wage earner in the household. They informed the AWA that they had applied and been approved for Social Security Disability (SSDI) benefits, but were told it would take months for their benefits to begin. They were living on what was left of their savings and it was getting tight.



The Advocate is also a certified assister for SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) and Social Security Benefit Assistance (SSBA). This service provides Social Security application assistance to individuals that are homeless and/or receiving state cash benefits and have a long term disability.

The Advocate contacted the Social Security Administration (SSA), and were told that people do not have to wait an extended period for their benefits after a determination has been made. It was recommended the couple call the SSA office in St Paul (their regional office) and say, “My claim is approved; please adjudicate my case.” The Advocates found the correct number and told the couple what they should say. The couple called back the next day and said they were told there was a glitch in the system and if they hadn’t called nothing would have happened. They were told they would get information from SSA about their claim within a week. They received their first check, with back pay, within a month.

Having the Agency-Wide-Advocate trained in multiple service delivery benefitted this household immediately, with a service they didn’t even know Lakes and Pines provided.

JOB SEEKERS PLUS A COACH

Earning Employment and training services have officially returned to Lakes and Pines.

Advocates are ready to work with you in setting goals and making plans that will improve your ability to find and keep a job that will earn you money. They will coach you to adjust the plan as you need to and channel your energy and dreams to achieve those goals.

If you are receiving or eligible for SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), you may be eligible for SNAP Employment and Training:

- Whether you are a youth or an adult.
- Have less than a high school degree or have an advanced degree.
- If you are an entry level worker or ready to change careers.
- If you have physical or mental health issues or if you have a criminal history.
- Are a displaced worker or are homeless.



If you are eligible for the SNAP Employment and Training services, you may also be eligible for additional support too. Support and services include evaluating work experience, help with assessments to identifying what you’re good at and what jobs will grow and offer good wages, help with costs and equipment for a training or certificate program, clothing for interviews or uniforms for your new job, help with transportation costs and tools or equipment needed for training for your new job.

If you are ready for a new job, are receiving or eligible for SNAP (also known as food support) and want a coach to help you to achieve your employment goals contact Lakes and Pines at (320)679-1800 option 4.

SIX INTERESTING FACT ABOUT MINNESOTA

As older people strive to remain in their own homes longer, repairs and maintenance to their aging homes may become more difficult as costs rise and income remains fixed. Lakes and Pines' Senior Services Program offers a volunteer chore and home delivery service, which is a valuable community resource to help meet the needs of the rural population. We can't offer the chore and home delivery service without our volunteers – won't you please join us in helping your neighbor?

Megan Chmielewski is an analyst at Wilder Research where she supports the Minnesota Compass project. Megan helped compose the six interesting facts about Minnesota, more information can be found at <http://www.mncompass.org/trends/insights/2017-05-30-older-adults>.



1. Minnesota Compass, May 2017 (Megan Chmielewski): There are currently about 806,000 adults age 65 and older in Minnesota, making up about 15 percent of the population. Two decades from now, that population is projected to top 1.3 million, and more than 1 out of every 5 Minnesotans will be an older adult. Twenty years from now is also when Minnesota is expected to hit the peak “retirement-to-working ratio,” with nearly two retirement age adults for every five working-age Minnesotans, compared to the current 1-to-5. This huge demographic shift will have widespread impact on Minnesota’s economy, health care system, and social services.
2. Greater Minnesota is “greyer” than the Twin Cities: Most Greater Minnesota counties have a higher proportion of older residents than the Twin Cities. Many of these counties already have a ratio of one senior for every three working-age adults, compared to 1-to-5 or 1-to-6 ratios in the Twin Cities and suburbs. Communities in greater Minnesota face unique challenges in meeting the needs of aging populations and changing economies, including maintenance and development of transportation and other infrastructure, access to broadband, shifts in traditional industries, and stagnating or declining working-age populations.
3. Adults are less racially and ethnically diverse than the state population overall: Only about 6 percent of Minnesota seniors are people of color, compared to 18 percent of working-age people and 28 percent of children. Older Minnesotans are also less likely to be foreign born than working-age adults (5% of seniors, vs. 10% of people ages 20 – 64).
4. Community engagement among older adults is high: 36% of Minnesota adults age 65+ report volunteering in the past year, the fourth highest in the nation. Minnesota’s older adults are also the most likely of any age group to vote. And 74% of Minnesotans age 65+ report helping or being helped by a neighbor in the past year.
5. Most older adults own their homes: Seventy-eight percent of Minnesota’s older adult householders own their homes. However, about a third of older adult-headed households are paying an unaffordable amount for housing.



6. Many older adults work beyond traditional retirement age: Traditional retirement age is 65 years, but we know that many older adults continue working for years or decades after their 65th birthday. Today, about a quarter of 65 – 74 year-olds are still in the workforce, along with 6 percent of adults 75 and older. Projections show that Minnesotans will have 3.1 million jobs in 2024, but only about 2.7 million working-age adults employed. Older adults could help fill about half of the shortfall if current employment levels continue.



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:

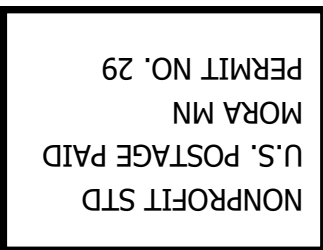
NAME:

ORGANIZATION:

ADDRESS:

CITY, STATE, ZIP+4 DIGITS

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



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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