



# Stevens County Developmental Achievement Center

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## DAC Fall News

9/26/2016

Leaves are falling and summer has blown away. Here at the DAC we have local conditions and they are good. Across the country we have the winds of change blowing in from Washington DC. and they are harder to understand.

Locally we are busy with lots of work from Recycling, Superior Industries, and Country Pet Foods. Plus, we have community supported employment in 20 local businesses. The new school year has started and we are back at the UMM in the cafeteria and St. Mary's School cafeteria too. We have so many jobs and opportunities that we have recently hired another Job Coach.

Plus, we have people running, walking, and swimming all week long out at the UMM Recreation & Fitness Center. DAC clients are excited about Special O Bowling and Halloween is just around the corner too. Fall is well underway.

This summer we had a wonderful trip to the Chanhassen Dinner Theater to see "Beauty and the Beast". Belle was indeed beautiful, the Beast fell in love with her, and love made the world a better place once again. Thank you for sponsoring our charter bus to take our clients on the annual trip. We couldn't do things like this without the support of the Stevens County ARC. Verna Zieher from ARC volunteered her time and helped us chaperone this trip too.

We also built a set of metal steps from the main building up to the Car Wash this summer. No more slippery walks down the icy driveway this winter.

Nationally we are learning about the new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that became law in July of 2016. Congress has decided that group work settings are unnatural and although I am insulted when they say it; they call what we do "Segregated". The WIOA statute says that no one 24 years of age or younger can be referred to a traditional work program until they have spent at least 2 years working with the Vocational Rehabilitation staff trying to find and hold an independent job in the community that pays at least minimum wage with benefits. Their coworkers may not have disabilities either. They call that "Integrated" and they want everyone to start there regardless of their limitations or challenges. We recently had to turn away a young man that wanted our services because he was under 25 and he hadn't spent the 2 years working on independent community placement. We believe that this one size fits all approach will help some people and we believe that it will hurt others. Worse, it takes the decision making away from the clients and tells them that everyone needs to work downtown or fail their way into a DAC.

Here in MN, the DAC funding system is also being changed slowly to a system where the state pays us a different rate for every client to use our services; depending on how much estimated staff they require and where they live. People that live in Stevens County can live for 6% less than people in Mpls they say, so DHS is discounting our fees for living out west. When the new rate system takes full effect in July of 2019, our local DAC is projected to lose 10% of our funding, which coincidentally is about \$100,000.00. Hopefully the legislature will tinker with the formulas between now and then or we will

have very difficult decisions to make. If nothing changes, we will have to lay off staff. Some other programs will have to close. That is why it's important that we keep in touch with our elected officials. We need the support of county, state, and federal leaders more now than any time in my career. Our clients need real choices and they also need friends and financial support. The next 3 years are going to be about trying to balance those issues.

Thanks for your help,

Charlie Oakes, Executive Director

Stevens County DAC, Inc. in Morris MN