

THE BUZZ!

FOR ALL THINGS NEWSWORTHY AT WACOSA

WELCOME TO

WACOSA'S NEW DIGITAL CREATIVITY LAB

Walking into WACOSA's new computer lab you might see someone using a computer with text-to-speech and word prediction to research locally grown foods in preparation for a video shoot at the farmer's market. Across the room, an individual practices interview questions with a partner. Nearby, someone else is at a computer editing the video's opening sequence by tilting their head and raising their eyebrows. A small group is working on final edits and reviewing the previous week's video on a large television before posting it to YouTube. The group cheers when the video is done playing.

Welcome to WACOSA's new Digital Creativity Lab!

One of the biggest issues many people with disabilities face when it comes to technology is access, and thanks to a generous grant from the Shavlik Family Foundation, WACOSA has been able to build out a fully adaptive digital creativity lab for collaborative team projects. Access to technology is important because it helps to increase independence, improves access to employment and education, and enhances social and civic engagement.

"Using computers is pretty new for me. I've been learning to use the Internet for research."

— Michael Vanderwerf



FUNDED BY

Shavlik
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60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

THANK YOU | SPONSORS | BASH PHOTOS | WACOSA'S OPEN HOUSE

THANK YOU

A huge thank you to everyone who came to celebrate WACOSA's 60th Anniversary Bash!

We had about 400 people attend the event and we raised over \$60,000 for WACOSA! We have so SO many people to thank for making this possible:

- Thank you to our amazing sponsors for believing in the work we do at WACOSA.
- Thank you to the staff and volunteers for your hard work.
- Thank you to all the folks who sold tickets on our behalf.
- Thank you to those who donated to our silent auction and Grab-N-Go gift certificates. (It was a huge success!)
- Thank you to our Board of Directors for your time, dollars, and dedication to this event.
- Thank you to the band Retro for rocking the house, Back Shed Brewing for being such wonderful hosts, Jimmy Z's food truck for great eats, and APH for tasty treats!



EVENT SPONORS



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60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

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BASH PHOTOS



60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

THANK YOU | SPONSORS | BASH PHOTOS | WACOSA'S OPEN HOUSE

WACOSA'S OPEN HOUSE

60 YEARS OF CREATING POSSIBILITIES FOR ALL ABILITIES

On Tuesday, March 28th, WACOSA celebrated the actual date of our 60th Anniversary by hosting an open house at all of our program locations including Waite Park, Sauk Centre and St. Cloud, MN. Thank you to everyone who took part in coming out to see us and sharing in the celebration. We had a great time giving tours, visiting, and enjoying some refreshments!



COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

STEARNS HISTORY MUSEUM | PROCLAMATION | PARTNER SPOTLIGHT | 'IN THEIR OWN WORDS' | ART MURAL

WACOSA PRESENTS AT



STEARNS HISTORY MUSEUM

In August WACOSA was honored to be able to present "WACOSA at 60: A Historical Perspective of Disability Equity in the Community" at the Stearns History Museum's Breakfast Club. Becky Stanearth, Mike Nichols, and Ann Kennedy presented on behalf of WACOSA. We shared the history of not only 60 years of growth and change at WACOSA but also the change and growth over the decades in Minnesota and nationally. We did learn that it takes a lot of dedication and advocacy to advance the rights of people with disabilities. Thank you to all of you who work so diligently to help us educate, move forward, and grow.

WE'RE KIND OF A BIG DEAL

Did you know that March 28th is now WACOSA Day in both Waite Park and St. Cloud, MN? Mayor Rick Miller and the Waite Park City Council and Dave Kleis and the St. Cloud City Council both passed resolutions that announce March 28th as WACOSA Day! Additionally, Senator Aric Putnam passed a Senate Resolution honoring and celebrating WACOSA's 60th Anniversary. We thank Mayor Miller, Mayor Kleis, and Senator Putnam for honoring WACOSA and for understanding the value WACOSA, WACOSA staff, and people of all abilities, bring to our communities.

WACOSA PROCLAMATION



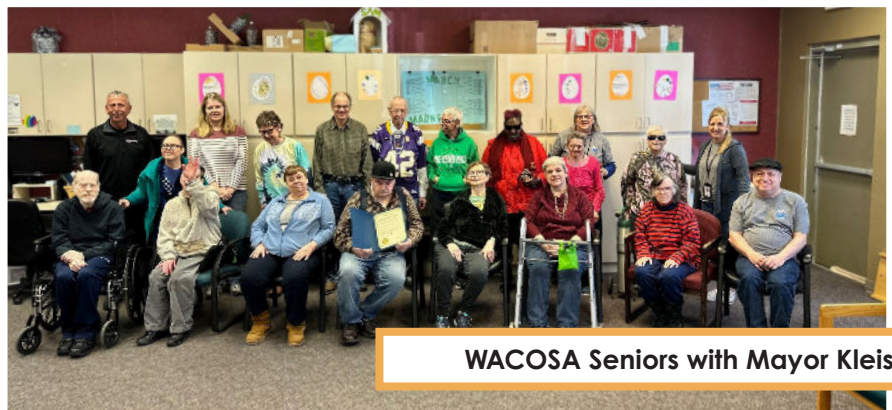
Presentation by Mayor Miller



Brenda and Mayor Kleis



Presentation by Senator Putnam



WACOSA Seniors with Mayor Kleis

GREAT RIVER REGIONAL LIBRARY

The library is a quintessential community hub where people of all types go to access and explore fantastical worlds, history, art, and the local community. It is a place of learning and gathering that is intentionally available to all. We love the library. That is why in this issue, we highlight and celebrate our partnership with the Great River Regional Library.

In October 2021, Ariel, Connie, and Jade, librarians from Great River Regional Library joined our Connect Academy "Virtual Job Explorers" class. With a live video feed on Zoom, WACOSA participants across all our sites were treated to a virtual tour of the St. Cloud Public Library and a behind-the-scenes look at the

"It's really great for the community at large to see that people with intellectual disabilities are capable and part of the community overall."

— Jade Lauber, Patron Services Librarian

"Can I use the library if I have a rough time reading?" - Yes, in fact, we have classes to help people learn to read if that's something you're interested in. It was clear after the class that there was a strong interest in partnering more with the library.

Jade Lauber expressed that the interest was mutual. "We loved presenting in the Connect Academy class. We got to work with a group of people we do not always get to work with. It was fun and fulfilling. People were interested in learning about and coming to the library."



After the in-class virtual tour, we collaborated on a video tour for the whole community, highlighting accessibility at the library, filmed by and starring individuals served by WACOSA. In the video, WACOSA program participant Brian Tulki interviewed librarians on how to sign up for a library card and use it to access the library's many accessible features.

WACOSA and GRRL have also collaborated on a library card drive, a theatre workshop for kids with disabilities called WACOSA Kids, and multiple Cow Tipping Press writing classes and book readings (see page 7).



"I learned how to check out books, music, and movies. All the people at the library were nice. Jade made me feel comfortable working on the video."

— Brian, WACOSA Client

"Across the board, people that we talk to are surprised at the level of access that we do have. After seeing the video, people from across the state have reached out to me to say how impressed they are by our accessibility features."

— Jade Lauber, Patron Services Librarian

"The video turned out phenomenal, going through different types of accessibility needs and how they can be met within the community."

— Neil Vig, GRRL Patron Services Coordinator



WACOSA, Great River Regional Library, and Cow Tipping Press collaborated on educational and inclusive writing classes for adults with disabilities in St. Cloud. The experience culminates with a published book composed of a compilation of their writings, in their exact words.

In speaking with Bryan Boyce, Executive Director of Cow Tipping Press, he shares that his passion began with the love of writing and a younger brother with disabilities. "At Cow Tipping Press, we try to honor the unique ways that people tell their stories. The people we teach are often spoken for versus given the chance to express themselves. We genuinely try to embrace and celebrate their art and their underrepresented voices."

Thing in Your Pocket

I found this in your pocket.

I fud a big ugly hairy little monster in your pocket and it scard you to feel that in your pocked and did not know what to do with the hairy little monster in your pock that you wanted me to have it so you would not yell about it know so I took it and you had it know more.

-Katrina Minks from the book Ruf Times

"It's perhaps a cliché to say that my students have radically changed the way I think, but it's true nonetheless. I find myself overjoyed, spirited, and heartbroken, often all at once, when I go home and read what they've written."

*– Amelia Kahlhamer,
Cow Tipping Press Educator*



**Cow Tipping
PRESS**



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

To date, WACOSA, the Great River Regional Library and Cow Tipping Press have had two rounds of classes, book readings and releases, and two published books; Not All 90s Kids Can Be Admitted, and Ruf Times. Both books can be purchased online at Amazon. Future classes are in the works at both our Waite Park and Sauk Centre locations. Congratulations to the published authors! We are excited to see the results of the next rounds of classes and will share release information on WACOSA's Facebook page.

A big thank you to the Great River Regional Library for funding this project through grant dollars they received from the Arts & Cultural Heritage Funds from Minnesota's Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment.

Disabilities

Different Abilities

No one is exactly the Same

Sometimes we are born with it

Sometimes it is inherited

*– Julie Hanf, from the book
Not All 90s Kids Can Be Admitted*



"Serving all of our community in equitable ways is a component of what we attempt to do. It's important to try to reach more people with cultural arts and heritage programming. This is a great way to serve an underserved population. "

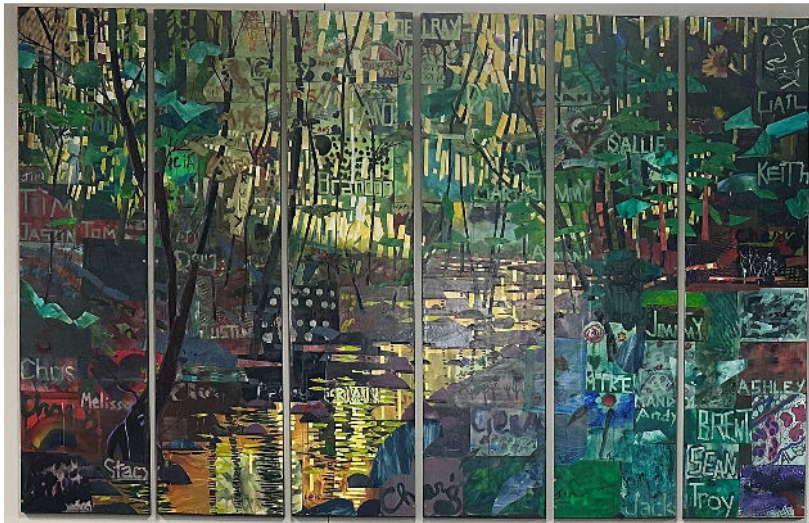
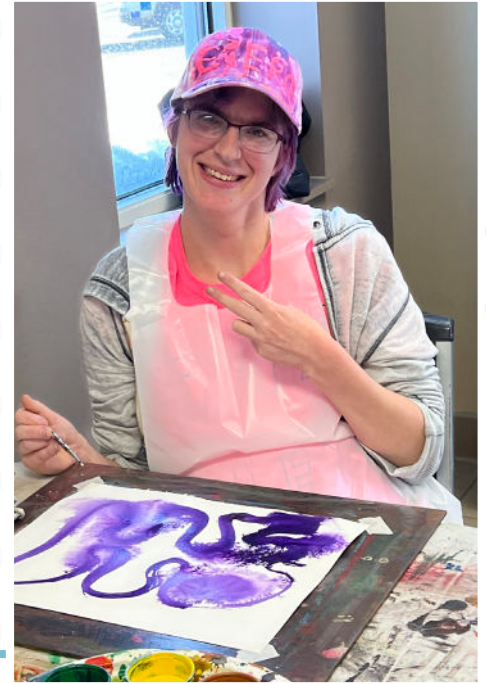
– Beth Ringsmuth Stolpman

SOUTH PROGRAM MURAL PROJECT

With the help of a Central Minnesota Arts Board grant, generous donors, and award-winning artist Dan Mondloch, WACOSA South Program clients had the opportunity to create two stunning new art murals that are featured at WACOSA's 320 Waite Park South Program location. Mondloch worked with 65 WACOSA artists, teaching different techniques using adaptive tools and equipment in the medium of acrylic paints. The paintings were installed this summer, and upon completion, a huge round of applause erupted as all of us at WACOSA got

our first opportunity to enjoy the final mural and the beauty of hours of effort, learning, laughter, and joy in creating our own masterpiece.

This activity is made possible, in part, by a grant from the Central MN Arts Board with funds appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature from its general fund.

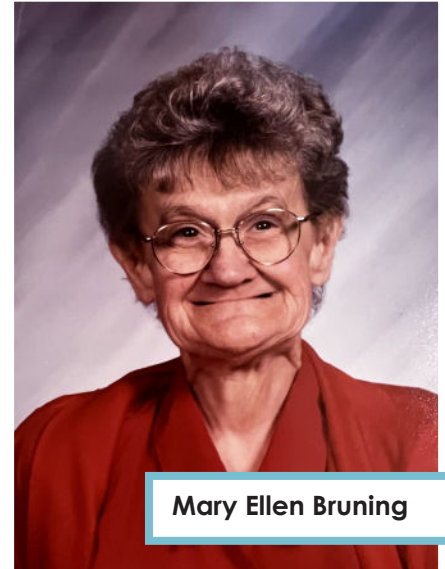


DONOR SPOTLIGHT

TERESINA SCHELLINGER

"WACOSA has a special place in my heart. I choose to donate in memory and honor of my dear aunt, Mary Ellen Bruning. For years she was provided a variety of activities and jobs, all while building valuable friendships. The many ways WACOSA works with people having a variety of abilities, allowing their strengths and talents to shine, is vital in our community. I donate to be a part of assuring this into the future. "

– Teresina Schellinger



Mary Ellen Bruning

WELCOME TO THE BOARD

THAD OLSEN

I grew up in Centerville, SD, a small town southwest of Sioux Falls. How small you ask? My graduating class was 28. I attended South Dakota State University and received a BS in Electrical Engineering. I continued my post-secondary education at the University of South Dakota receiving a Master's in Business Administration. I then began my path toward a finance career by working for the Governor's Office of Economic Development in Pierre, SD; Green Tree Financial in Rapid City, SD; and the South Dakota Department of Agriculture in Pierre, SD. My first step into banking was with CorTrust Bank, Sioux Falls, SD. I joined Bremer Bank nearly 20 years ago as a business banker in Fergus Falls, MN. In March 2020, I moved to the St. Cloud area to lead the St. Cloud region for Bremer. Since making this transition, the region has expanded to include our branch in Princeton, MN and

the business banking segment from St. Cloud and the Twin Cities markets. I have been married twenty-five years to my beautiful bride, Vynetta, who is an OB RN at CentraCare. We live in Sartell, MN and have five children– Brett (deceased), Michael (26), Tejah (24), Caden (19) and Piper (17); two grandchildren – Noah (deceased) and Violet (6 months); a dog named Moose; and two cats, Salem and Friday, a.k.a. Fat Bastard (sorry but it fits). I'm an avid outdoorsman and love hunting upland birds and fishing.



Why I joined WACOSA:

Prior to joining WACOSA, I served for nine years on the board of a similar organization in Fergus Falls, MN. I loved being able to make an impact on the lives of some of the most caring people you can meet. To be able to continue this work at WACOSA is a pleasure.

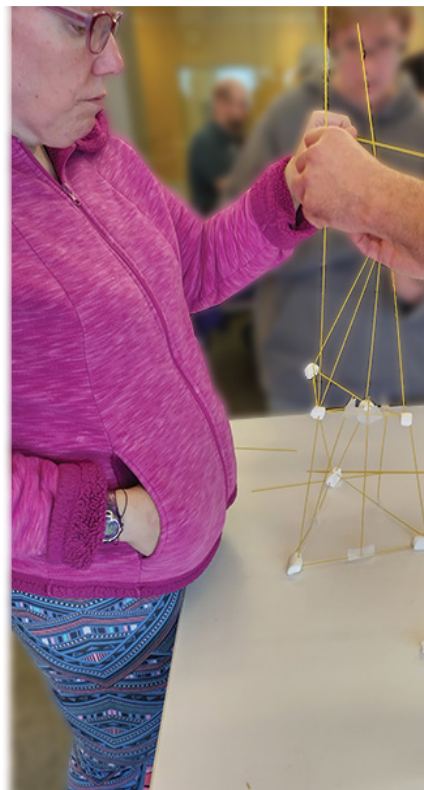
MDI'S UNIFIED WORK ACADEMY

In the past year, 45 individuals from WACOSA programs have improved their career preparedness through a partnership with Minneapolis based Minnesota Diversified Industry (MDI) and their Unified Work Academy.

The Unified Work Academy helps people with disabilities – and others – gain the soft skills needed for career success. We have partnered with MDI on Virtual Academy classes over Zoom and Mobile Academy classes during which a professional instructor comes to WACOSA for 3 consecutive days to work directly with the students.

WACOSA program participant Kate Fenda was all smiles about her experience in the class, "The class was really good for me. I learned what to do to get a job and how to keep it."

Participants learn about teamwork, professionalism, exploring job preferences, and public speaking. One of the highlights of the class is when each student prepares a personal elevator speech, summarizing their background, strengths, and what type of job they are looking for and presenting it to the class.



WACOSA PLANNED GIVING

LEGACY GIVING CAN BE SIMPLIFIED

One of the easiest and most efficient ways to support WACOSA through an estate gift is to name WACOSA as a charitable beneficiary of a retirement asset such as a traditional IRA, SEP (Simplified Employee Pension), 401(k) or 403(b).

As one of the least complicated estate planning strategies, it can be done without changing a will or trust and without the services of an attorney. It's as simple as completing a beneficiary form provided by your financial advisor or financial institution.

Why are deferred retirement funds one of the best assets to use for charitable estate giving?

Because it is one of the few assets that cannot be passed onto heirs tax-free (other than a spouse). The primary benefit of naming a charity like WACOSA as a full or partial beneficiary, is that 100% of the money will pass on tax-free.

**For more information, please
contact Pat Flicker at
pflicker@wacosa.org or call
320.257.5193 or text 320.760.9767**

**Would you like to receive the
newsletter and other WACOSA
communication via email?**

**Please send your full name and email
address to akennedy@wacosa.org
to get on our email list!**

WACOSA is an EEO/AA Employer
WACOSA provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment and prohibits discrimination and harassment of any type without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status, familial status, membership or activity in a local human rights commission, or status with regard to public assistance. We will take affirmative steps to ensure that all of our company's employment practices are free of discrimination.



NANCY BETT'S LETTER

The heart of WACOSA's work lies in the stories of the people and communities we serve. 2023 has been a year filled with growth, change, and so many bright spots worth celebrating. After all, 60

years of service is a big deal. In this issue, I invite you to get to know some of the wonderful people and projects that have made those 60 years so successful.

On our 60th anniversary, March 28, 2023, a group of people were honored to be present on the Minnesota Senate floor when Senator Aric Putnam proclaimed a Senate resolution celebrating the 60th Anniversary at the State Capitol. They were also taking part in MOHR's Day at the Capital self-advocacy project, meeting with their elected representatives and having their voices heard. I can attest it was a proud day for all who participated.

The city of Waite Park also proclaimed March 28, 2023, WACOSA Day and a group of 2nd shift individuals attended that ceremony on behalf of WACOSA and reaffirmed our valuable partnerships in this community. Mayor Dave Klies of St. Cloud came to our Open House at the Whitney Senior Center and presented his proclamation making March 28th WACOSA day in St. Cloud as well.

In April and June, WACOSA was proud to honor a bunch of new authors! Several participants took part in Cow Tipping Press's writing classes, in partnership with the Great River Regional Library, and produced enough original writing to publish a book per class cohort. Our authors invited our family and friends to a book reading and book signing celebration when their books were published. We are incredibly proud of everyone involved in this project and will pursue more opportunities like this in the future.

Once again, we had the great fortune of working with our teaching artist friend, Dan Mondloch. Dan's instruction techniques helped create magic for our budding artists—week after week of learning new painting techniques produced a gigantic wall mural that dozens of artists contributed to. Come visit us to see all the fine art pieces we have made together in the past few years.

Our 60th Anniversary Bash at Back Shed Brewery in Waite Park was a huge success with hundreds of our supporters enjoying an afternoon of live music and dance, fantastic food from Jimmy Z's food truck, sampling the brewery's delicious beverages, and a battle for some of the best silent auction items around. The joyfulness in the room was infectious and we thank all our guests for their generosity. Stay tuned for next year's plans!

These are but a few of the many things happening at our WACOSA programs, and I invite you to follow us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and www.wacosa.org to discover and meet more of the people we serve and find out how WACOSA helps them achieve their life goals.

All these wonderful things are not possible without the support of the people in our communities. I want to express our deepest gratitude to our dedicated staff, supporters, volunteers, donors, and everyone who has played a part in WACOSA's journey.

Looking ahead to 2024, we are filled with optimism and determination. WACOSA has always striven to communicate the change in service models to our clients and their support teams, always with our mission at the forefront of what we do. We will continue to evolve, adapt, and innovate to meet the ever-changing needs of our community. With your support, we are confident that we can make an even greater impact in the years to come, so bring on 2024!

With gratitude,

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Nancy Betts
Executive Director

Bill Brinker
Facilities & Fleet Manager

Maggie Dilks
Human Resource Director

Pat Flicker
Development Manager

Ann Kennedy
Sales & Marketing Director

Traci McKinnon
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310 Sundial Drive
P.O. Box 757
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Policy Revision Notice

For updated 245D Policies, please visit wacosa.org/client-services or contact us at 320-251-0087 to request a written copy.



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SAVE THE DATE!

Save the date for WACOSA's biggest event of the year!

On Saturday, September 14th, 2024, we will be at the newly renovated Moose Lodge in Waite Park, MN celebrating another great year of providing a circle of support for adults with disabilities in our community.

09 - 14 - 2024

WHEN

3pm — 6pm
Saturday, September 14th, 2024

WHERE

Moose Lodge in Waite Park
1300 3rd St N, Waite Park, MN 56387

Watch our website at
wacosa.org or your email
for more information as it
becomes available!