

Progressive *Thinking*

Winter
2018
Issue

UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Bowl-a-Thon
June 8th, 2018
Starts at 5:00pm
All Star Lanes
Location TBA

Annual Garage Sale
May 23,24,25th 2018
29455 High Meadows
Farmington Hills, MI 48334

Annual Company Picnic
September 7th, 2018
More Info to Come

Promotions

Congratulations to the following employees, who were recently promoted:

Marcelle Hemingway is now the Manager at Eston.

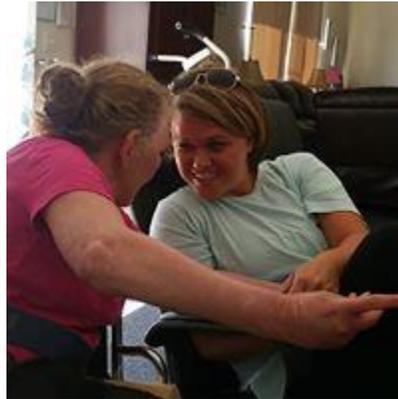
Loretta Gage is now the Manager at Laurelton.

Anthony Williams has been promoted to Assistant Manager at Ortonville.

Wes Durmon was promoted to Assistant Manager at Eston.

Amber Gallo is now the Assistant Manager at Gallo.

Elizabeth Parks has been promoted to Assistant Manager at Timber Ridge.



A Message from John Williams

Progressive and JARC had considered a merger, as we told you through letters, e-mails, meeting and phone conversations. I would have been the CEO of the new organization. Both organizations decided not to proceed with the merger. The two years that I would have been the CEO might not have been enough to allow an effective merger in which both companies would have benefitted. Also, it might not have been enough time for the “new” JARC to develop the level of expertise in the Culture of Gentleness that we have in Progressive. We plan to continue cooperating with JARC to improve both organizations through using our joint resources. Thank you to everyone who attended our meetings about the merger.

Fortunately, we have other options which I am continuing to review. One of the reasons why we were considering the merger with JARC was to increase our long-term financial stability.

I am pleased that our financial situation improved in 2017, thanks in part to your support and contributions. It is important that we continue to increase our fundraising efforts in 2018; our 2017 year-end fundraiser brought in more than \$35,000, which was a nice increase from the \$22,000 that we brought in the previous year. We will be looking at other possible merger options, and will continue discussions with regard to determining my successor as Progressive’s Executive Director when I retire at the end of 2019. In the meantime, we have a lot of work to do. We are fortunate to have wonderful employees and feel positive about the direction and future of our organization. We need more volunteers, on our Board and in our office; please call 248-666-1388 and schedule a time to speak with me about volunteering.

I wish a Happy and Healthy 2018 to everyone in the Progressive family, and look forward to a great year for our company.

PROGRESSIVE LIFESTYLES
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NEWSLETTER STAFF

KEILA ADKINS

ASHLEY JENNINGS

Please visit our website at:

www.progressivelifestylesinc.org

Focus On: ASHLEY JENNINGS

Ashley Jennings loves her job at Progressive.

When you come into Progressive office, one of the first people you may see is Ashley, the friendly face behind the window. She is a member of the Human Resources team and is also the Manager at Tamarack House. She is the mother of two girls.

Ashley is a hometown girl who went to high school with Justine Bishop's sister, who used to work for Progressive. Besides assisting at the Progressive office, Ashley has been a Direct Care staff and Weekend Supervisor at Michael Court in Milford. She began working for Progressive as a Direct Care staff at this home in May of 2007. She was transferred to Potter House in Wixom where she was the Assistant Manager and Weekend Supervisor, before transferring back to Michael Court as an Assistant Manager.

Having worked at different homes, Ashley has really enjoyed her jobs, especially being a Direct Care staff at a "medical" home. She once noticed a problem with a resident's eye that needed immediate treatment; her prompt attention saved the resident's vision in that eye.

As a long-time employee of Progressive, Ashley is happy to be helping people, and would like to see an increase in wages for the entire staff.

Ashley's "words to the wise" are "Don't be afraid of change."

If you would like to be interviewed for the Progressive newsletter, please contact Sandy Loeffler (248-417-1468; 248-930-4939; e-mail: loefflers@att.net).

Annual Company Garage Sale

The company annual garage sale proceeds go towards our annual company picnic. We are looking for donations of Clothing, furniture, glassware, decorative items, antiques etc. The sale will be at 29455 High Meadow, Farmington Hills, MI 48344. We are also seeking donations for the Bowl-a-thon silent auction. Please call Ruth McCormick at 248-636-0572 before dropping items off. If you need help with pickup call Ruth and arrangements will be made. Thank you in advance. The garage sale is May 23rd, 24th and 25th from 9am-3pm rain or shine!

We're on Facebook

For up to date news, please visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ProgressiveLifestylesInc/>

In The News...

(Thank you to Tom Kendziorski, Esq., Executive Director of The Arc of Oakland County, for providing the information below. The Arc provides advocacy services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout Oakland County. Contact information: 1641 W. Big Beaver Rd., Troy, MI 48084; 248-816-1900; <http://www.thearcoakland.org>)

Advocacy Night II. “Advocacy Night Part II” was held on Thursday February 22 at Faith Apostolic Church, located at 6710 Crooks in Troy. The previous Advocacy Night was on September 18th of last year. Advocacy Nights offer an opportunity for interested individuals to discuss issues of concern with legislators from Lansing. Critical concerns that were raised included Home and Community Based Services waivers (also known as “privatization,” which could result in essential services to individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities to be farmed out to for-profit insurance companies), possible mandatory licensing of all residential settings as advocated by the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, and the potential negative effects of “block granting” of federal Medicaid dollars.

Workshop Closings. Jewish Vocational Services (JVS)-Southfield (130 clients), Nichols Bunch Staffing (30 clients), and Freedom Work Opportunities (12 clients) no longer provide facility-based vocational and skill-building services; they decided to stop providing these services because of the recent rate cuts they received from Oakland Community Health Network. Some of the JVS clients were directed into community-based work programs, others were shifted to JVS’s seniors’ day program, some were moved to other programs, and some may not have any program for awhile. Nichols Bunch Staffing will only provide respite and community living supports services.

Oakland Community Health Network News. In January the Oakland Community Health Network (OCHN) moved to its new building in Troy. Its intake services will remain at OCHN’s Resource and Crisis Center at the Oakland County Courthouse complex on Telegraph Road. Willie Brooks, currently the CEO of OCHN, will be the new CEO of the Detroit Wayne Community Mental Health Authority beginning March 1st. (See related story below.)

Social Security Benefits Increased. The Social Security Administration increased benefits for 2018 (including retirement, survivorship, disability, and SSI) by 2% beginning January 1st. In 2017 the cost-of-living increase was only 0.3%.

ABLE Act annual maximum amount raised. A person with a disability may now place up to \$15,000 annually into an ABLE Act account; the amount had been \$14,000. The ABLE Act (formally known as the “Stephen Beck, Jr., Achieving a Better Life Experience Act of 2014”) amended the IRS Code of 1986 to create tax-advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities. These are tax-deferred savings accounts which families can use to cover qualified disability expenses such as, but not limited to, education, housing and transportation. Having an ABLE Account does not affect Medicaid eligibility, and it does not affect SSI benefits unless the ABLE account exceeds \$100,000, in which case SSI benefits would be suspended but not terminated. (More information is available at the Autism Speaks Website, <https://www.autismspeaks.org/site-wide/able>.)

Additional information about the ABLE Act, from the recently passed federal legislation: “Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2018 at sections 11024 and 11025:”

- o An ABLE Act beneficiary who earns income from a job may save up to the Federal Poverty Level, which is pegged at \$12,060 for 2018, in addition to their annual contribution limit of \$15,000 (new amount for 2018). Be aware that although such earnings may enhance annual ABLE Act account contributions, it may negatively affect receipt of SSI due to higher monthly earned income.

- o An ABLE Act beneficiary may now receive a rollover from a traditional §529 (“Qualified Tuition Plan”) into a §529A account, but still must adhere to the annual contribution limit of \$15,000 (for 2018). This allows individuals who may have been saving for their child’s college tuition, which is now no longer needed, to roll-over up to the maximum contribution each year until the §529 account has been depleted.

Oakland Community Health Network CEO moves to Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority.

An article published January 17th on the Crain's Detroit Business website revealed that Willie Brooks, the CEO of the Oakland Community Health Network (OCHN, formerly Oakland Community Mental Health Authority), will be leaving to become the CEO for the Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority (DWMHA). The DWMHA Board approved an offer to Mr. Brooks on January 17th. Mr. Brooks had agreed to take the position in October of last year, but then changed his mind because of a dispute relating to details of his proposed contract. The DWMHA CEO position had been vacant since Tom Watkins left the position in August.

Mr. Brooks' leaving the OCHN may have major ramifications for Progressive and other provider agencies whose Medicaid budget originates in Lansing and goes through OCHN, to the Macomb Oakland Regional Center (MORC), and finally to the provider agencies. State funding for the Medicaid behavioral system, which covers individuals with developmental disabilities, mental illnesses, and substance abuse disorders, is distributed among ten prepaid inpatient health plans, or PIHPs, which include OCHN and DWMHA. Traditionally DWMHA and OCHN, which serve larger numbers of consumers than the other PIHPs, received higher budgets than the other PIHPs. However, several years ago Governor Snyder initiated a "rebasement" plan which mandated equal distribution of funds to each of the PIHPs. This resulted in a significant budget cut to MORC, which was passed on to Progressive and the other provider agencies in Oakland County. Efforts by consumers, their families, and provider agencies to convince OCHN to use its reserve funds to cover the providers' budget shortfalls were only partially successful. Similar issues will confront the next OCHN CEO because further budget cuts from Lansing are expected in the next few years. The OCHN board is now starting the hiring process to find a replacement for Mr. Brooks. The individual they choose to be OCHN's next CEO, and the relationship that he or she develops with Oakland County's provider agencies, are likely to have a major impact on the future of Progressive. In future newsletters we will keep you updated on new developments in this story.

Progressive *Thinking*

Progressive Lifestyles, Inc. is a non-profit organization which provides support for individuals with disabilities in a residential setting for over 20 years. We are pleased to be having our annual picnic on September 7th, 2018. This event allows us to celebrate each other and also recognizes some very hard working staff. Thanks to those who made generous donations and the hard work of our volunteers last year's picnic was an overwhelming success.

Please consider giving a gift to Progressive Lifestyles, Inc. to contribute towards our Annual Picnic fund or a general contribution so that we may continue to provide quality care and services for our residents. Any donation you provide is a tax exemption. Thank you for all your support and dedication to Progressive Lifestyles Inc.

_____ I would like to contribute to the Annual Picnic Fund

_____ I would like to donate a prize for the staff drawing (e.g. restaurant or department store gift cards, electronics, DVD's, movie passes, sports tickets, themed basket items, etc.)

Item(s) Donated _____

_____ I would like to make a general contribution

Total Amount Enclosed _____

Checks should be payable to: Progressive Lifestyles Inc.
Mail Donations to: Attn: Kathryn Simpson
 6600 Highland Rd., Ste. 11A
 Waterford, MI 48327

Name _____ Phone# _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____