

The Owens Interlink

Volume 6, Issue 10, April/May 2010

April showers, May flowers and all that jazz!

CHANGE and PROGRESS

By Diana Owens

The month of April has not only been packed with the first signs of spring (thank goodness), it has also marked multiple changes for our organizations.

In less than two weeks, our world, as well as that of many others, was turned upside down with the demise of two major contractors for NDHSS.

The news is not all bad, however, as Owens has both grown in the number of associates we have hired as well as a huge influx in our service capacity. This just goes to support our business; change is inevitable in the social work field. And even though we would like to tell you that the changes will “stop” – more likely than not, there will be more.

For all those who've transferred to our agency, we are very glad you are here and part of our team. For those of you who are both new to this field and to our company, we extend a warm welcome! You and our present staff magnify, many times over, what our motto states, “working

together for the betterment of children and families.”

We also wish to recognize the outstanding job each and every Owens Companies supervisor has done over the past two weeks. Even though they jokingly claim they are “ready to pull [their] hair out,” or they “just need to have a few seconds to come up for air,” the manner in which they have handled the huge surge of cases as well as the addition of new staff just goes to show why they are the reason Owens is at the top in providing family and youth services.

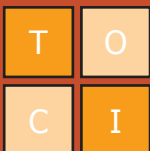
I'd like to extend *Kudos* and a very big *thank you* to each of our fantastic team of leaders.

With all of the talent that is now part of the Owens Companies - both old and new - the children and families will continue being served with top notch staff. Again, all of your dedication to those we serve is greatly appreciated! We will keep you posted with changes as they develop. ■

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President & CEO

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TIP for EVERYONE: LISTENING WELL

Edited by Joe Owens

These days, people's cell phones seem to never stop ringing and people right next to you are engaged in multiple conversations. With all of that—is anybody really listening? The bottom line is that listening well gets the job done better, faster and more efficiently.

Listening well can also aid in the creative process. Great listeners get good and better ideas by listening to their customers and coworkers.

Experts suggest that for many people, it is more important to feel heard than to actually get to say what they want.

They want to know their ideas and opinions are fully considered before a decision is made. Feeling ignored or misunderstood is stressful – no matter what circumstances we are in. Really listening isn't always easy to do, otherwise there would be more of it. Many people assume it is automatic, like breathing. It's no surprise if you know less than a handful of great listeners.

You can start today to learn to listen well. Follow these basic steps:

Prepare: If you have a chance to prepare ahead of time, take a few minutes to focus. Review

what you already know and go in with an open mind and find a way to get interested..

Engage: Face the person speaking; establish and maintain eye contact. Give them your full attention. Screen out distractions by turning off your cell phone, getting away from computers, TV, etc. Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is trying to convey. Notice non-verbal communication such as expressions, posture, pace, pitch, etc. Listen more than you speak. Let the speaker's words, ideas and feelings in – whatever they are – before you react or respond.

Respond: Ask clarifying questions, but wait for the speaker to end speaking before you do. Then wait a second longer. Avoid artificial questions – those you don't really care about. Ask questions to clarify or deepen understanding. Reflect and encourage the speaker's thoughts and feelings, using his or her words.

The discussion should be a flow, not a series of jerky stop and starts. Share your thoughts if appropriate - but remember the purpose of the conversation. It may be more important for

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LISTENING WELL contd.

you to let the conversation be mostly one-sided – with you as the listener.

Using a few of these ideas, or better ones of your own, may your next conversation be a

great one and may your next “listening” go well. The greatest gift you can give another is the purity of your attention. Good listening equals good customer service! ■

GOOD JOB STAFF

Edited by Joe Owens

Here are just a couple comments regarding the outstanding work from our staff:

“Just wanted to say real quick, ‘THANK YOU’ to your awesome staff. I’ve gotten two Ansell Casey’s back this week. All of your staff have been really great about staying in contact with me and letting me know what is going on with our kiddos...even though they can be very frustrating at times.

Thank you so much for all they do with the kiddos. It really helps me to know what’s going on so we can work towards the goals the kids set for themselves. Thanks again!” (From Omaha Service Coordinator)

“Joaquin: Jenni O. was talking with a Service Coordinator this afternoon and she said many wonderful things about you. She said that your work is ‘awesome’ and your documentation and detail is ‘awesome’. Jenni stated that she used the ‘awesome’

word about three times and she is really liking your work with families. Great Job!” (From Eva Abrams, Omaha Supervisor)/

“Emily, I really appreciate the communication we have. I always want to resolve problems together and have been so very happy with all of my interactions with your Company, you and your staff. Keep up the good work! Let me know anytime there is anything you need. GO TEAM!” (From KVC Lincoln Service Coordinator for Emily Diehl’s team). ■



ASSISTANCE IN HR and BENEFITS

Edited by Joe Owens

On any given day, you will find Gennifer Amato doing about 90 things at the same time – combining HR, payroll, billing, group insurance, Board matters, assisting staff and all the other things that go with.

Not once has she complained, but in the essence of good business practices, we have decided to bring help in for her. Andrea Edie has been hired as our Human Resource Manager.

She will take over all functions relating to employee relations matters: prescreening, offer letters, paperwork, annual up-

dates on employees, employee insurance issues both corporate and employee sponsored, policies and procedures and perhaps helping with payroll.

Her position is not yet completely defined as it is a “work in progress” at this point. Andrea comes to Owens with years of experience in HR and benefits, and we are very glad she has chosen to be part of our team.

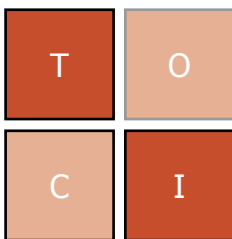
Andrea’s new email address is: andrea.edie@theowenscompanies.com, and her phone extension is 110.



WELCOME NEW STAFF

Sturgeon, Candace - Lincoln
Boetel, Darra - Omaha
Cunningham, Elizabeth - Omaha
Edie, Andrea - Omaha
Jal, David - Omaha
Jensen, Sadie - Lincoln
Lavelle, Patrick - Omaha
Murphy, David - Lincoln
Olson, Ellen - Omaha
Seipel, Jeremaih - Lincoln

Barker, Russell - Omaha
Buettner, Tamra - Omaha
Dupont, Leah - Lincoln
Hamlin, Thoams - Omaha
Jensen, Emily - Lincoln
Kohles, Cameron - Omaha
Martin, Tiffany - Omaha
Newson, Tamara - Omaha
Perkins, Janee - Omaha
Slaughter, Ryan - Lincoln



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