

THE HISTORY OF THE CHALLENGE CENTER

The following provides a chronological description of the events forming the Challenge Center tradition from 1969 to present.

1969

A group of concerned parents from the Association of Retarded Children requested that Catholic Charities establish a day services program for mentally retarded adults and children.

1971

A new program known as the Douglas County Center for the Developmentally Disabled was opened in the former Nazareth on the Lake convent building. Initially, there was a birth to three program for severely developmentally disabled children and an adult program for young men and women who had graduated from the educable and trainable classes in the public school system. During the first year of operation there were approximately 25 children and adults in the program.

1972

Catholic Charities opened its first residential group home located behind the Nazareth on the Lake building for eight adult developmentally disabled persons. The facility was known as Alpha House.

1973

A new program opened in Douglas county that was known as the Douglas County Citizens for the Retarded. This provided an opportunity for parents and their adult developmentally disabled family members to choose between the Catholic Charities sponsored program and the new one operating on Tower Avenue downtown in Superior. The Douglas County Citizens for the Retarded organization operated until 1981, when the programs were once again combined and enriched under one sponsor, namely Catholic Charities Bureau.

1974

Douglas County Center for Developmentally Disabled, including both the adult and infant program, moved to the former St. Joseph's Children Home site. At that time, it was renamed the Achievement Center of Douglas County and provided a number of new expanded program activities.

1975

Two new group homes were opened for developmentally disabled residents in Superior, each housing 11 residents. They were known as Alpha House I and Alpha House II located on Hill Avenue in Superior.

1976

The administration and staff of the Achievement Center of Douglas County worked together to compile a curriculum for independent living. It was designed to aid the developmentally disabled residents of Douglas County. The curriculum was published in 1978, and initially was implemented at the Center.

1978

It was determined during this year that it would be important to integrate, (for part of the day), children who had a developmentally disability involvement with other preschool aged children that did not. The new program which included both groups of preschool children, was known as the, "Little Learner's Workshop". This integrated approach was highly successful.

1980

The Achievement Center of Douglas County formed a new work program called Marathon Industries to provide meaningful remunerative work for the adults attending the center. Marathon Industries originally manufactured pens, but later expanded to include other products providing clients additional training opportunities.

1981

The Challenge Center was incorporated as a nonprofit corporation.

A community development block grant was prepared by representatives from Catholic Charities in cooperation with the Douglas County Board of Supervisors which resulted in an award of \$720,000 being made available to Catholic Charities to build the new Koudelka Center building. The Koudelka Center houses both the Challenge Center program and the HRC Mental Health Center, it is located at 39 North 25th. Street East in Superior.

1984

The Challenge Center and the HRC Mental Health Center moved into the new facility. The facility provides approximately 20,000 square feet of programming space for the Challenge Center and 5,000 square feet for the HRC Mental Health Center.

1986

The Douglas County Association for Retarded Citizens and Challenge Center entered into a cooperative agreement, in which the Challenge Center would provide the contents, and operate the program services for eight developmentally disabled residents and the ARC would own the facility at 3105 Cumming Avenue.

In January of this year, the Challenge Center experienced a fire in the building. Consequently for approximately four months the programs were operated under a lease agreement with the owners of the former Burlington Northern building on Tower Avenue in Superior.

In the fall of this year a major expansion of the Challenge Center's work services program occurred with the establishment of the new Bay Produce Company. The new program provided a number of different job options for the clients at the Challenge Center as they grew hydroponically produced tomatoes.

1987

The Challenge Center planted their first crop of tomatoes in their new hydroponic greenhouse. In March of that year, vandals destroyed the first crop, so a new crop was replanted. The agency received a lot of donations and support because of the unfortunate vandalism. In some ways the vandalism drew special attention to the Bay Produce tomato products, enhancing a "sympathetic" demand for the tomatoes.

The first group home, funded by Community Integration Program, was opened. Housing for four clients was provided at the new facility called, "Woodview". It is located at 6001 East 3rd. Street in Superior.

1988

A new group home, (Cypress), was built for five residents with severe developmental and physical disabilities. This new community integration program funded facility was in part made possible through the generous donation of \$50,000 by Mr. & Mrs. Fred Bauknecht from Butternut, Wisconsin. Their son and daughter, John and Barbara, were among the first residents to move into Cypress.

Harborview group home, located at 910 East 5th. Street in Superior, was established housing six developmentally disabled adults.

During the course of 1988, a new subcontract work program assembling pneumatic couplers was developed between Challenge Center and another CCB program, namely Diversified Services Center in Siren, Wisconsin. This arrangement provided additional work activities for the clients at Challenge Center, also allowing them to earn wages in exchange for their efforts.

1992

During the course of this year, two supported apartments were established in Superior, allowing residents who had been living in our group homes and in their family homes to move into a more independent setting.

1995

The Alpha I and Alpha II facilities were downsized to six residents each and the other ten residents of the two facilities moved into new supported apartments located at 2221 and 2223 Oaks Avenue in Superior.

1996

Construction was initiated on the Missouri Garden group living facility located at 2347 Missouri Avenue in Superior. The facility provides a home like living environment for four developmentally disabled adults.

Construction was completed on a new 16 bay greenhouse that provides additional work opportunities for the clients at the Challenge Center. The new facility essentially accomplishes putting approximately a one acre greenhouse under one roof. During 1996, the first crop was planted and the first pick took place later that same year. The facility is known as the Bay Produce Company.

1997

Missouri Gardens group living facility was opened and admitted four new residents. The new living quarters allows for a more flexible schedule for the residents and provides 24 hour care.

The Alpha I and Alpha II facilities were closed, and later sold by CCB.

The East End and Billings Park apartments were opened, with twelve residents from the Alpha homes enjoying their new apartments.

The Little Learners Workshop was closed because of under funding by the Douglas County Human Services Board. Extensive efforts were made to find alternative programs for the children before the program finally closed its doors.

A new Sensory Stimulation program was opened at the Challenge Center to assist physically challenged adults in reaching their highest potential in activities of daily living.

1998

The Koudelka Center facility was acquired by Challenge Center Inc., from Catholic Charities Bureau.

A new independent living support program was initiated at the Challenge Center.

Marathon Confidential Paper Shredding began with the purchase of an industrial shredding machine.

State approval was attained for our CBRF Training Module, the only approved course in our region.

1999

The Management team, consisting of Gene Chuzles, Mary McKenzie, Debbie Gergen, Diane Arnold, Terri Franson, and Alan Rock, was recognized for their teamwork and initiative in bringing stability and many new advantages to the clients of the Challenge Center. The award was presented by the Catholic Charities Bureau.

The Challenge Center celebrated its 30th. year of services to the citizens of Superior/Douglas County, hosting the United Way Campaign kickoff ceremony.

The nationally syndicated PBS program, "Visionaries", included a segment on Bay Produce.

Ownership of the HUD financed ARC Group Home was transferred to the Challenge Center, which also took on ARC's Leisure Time Activities Program. A subsidiary corporation, "Challenge Center A., Inc.", was formed.

McKenzie Manor was purchased, modified and opened as an adult family home with 4 residents from St.

Francis South's Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) Unit.

Residential staff began offering personal care services under contracts with Dove, and later with Indianhead Home Health.

A Program Evaluation System was implemented with semiannual reporting.

2000

A WHEDA loan allowed the Challenge Center to purchase Cypress and Woodview group homes from Catholic Charities Bureau. Previously, Challenge Center, Inc. had leased them. Two other homes were refinanced.

Challenge Center's Bay Produce project was awarded HUD's, "Best Practices Award".
A propane mixing station was donated for Bay Produce, with Y2K no longer a threat.

Midwest Industries Cooperative (MIC) was formed, linking the Challenge Center, Headwaters, Black River Industries and Diversified Services' efforts in subcontract development for the work centers.

2001

McKenzie Manor underwent significant changes in building structure and State licensure as it was converted from a 4 bed Adult Family Home into a 7 bed Community Based Residential Facility (CBRF). This was an initial response to the closing of another Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) in our community.

A facility-wide Computer Network was installed and software secured.

An international greenhouse consultant was hired, structural and process changes were made in the East greenhouse, and the West greenhouse was taken out of production and leased to another business.

The 1st "Challenge Center Annual Report" was published and distributed to the community.

2002

Mountainview Group Home, a 6 bed CBRF, was constructed and licensed for a February opening. This was again in response to the ICF closing. It was "stick built", and ground had not been broken until December.

A compressed air system with distribution lines was installed in Marathon Industries. This allowed the addition of several machines, such as punch presses and a chop saw, expanding subcontract options and client work stations.

The WI Division of Vocational Rehabilitation presented the agency with its Opportunities for Success Award.

A Client Advisory Group was formed, holding bimonthly meetings that promote client driven policies and positive communication.

A Mentoring Program for new staff began, linking them with experienced and exceptional staff to improve retention and encourage positive growth.

2003

Superior's first Geothermal System was installed, with miles of piping buried on the North side of the Challenge Center. The field is linked to 19 new heat pumps and an air exchange system to extract heat and cold during the Summer and Winter months. Annual energy savings of 1/3 are projected for the facility.

Over \$1 million in debt was refinanced at a lower interest rate and shorter term.

Bay Produce began testing grape tomatoes as a complimentary product to the beefsteak tomatoes.

Midwest Industries Collaborative, as part of strategic planning, formed a Production Managers Group.

2004

Challenge Center's 35th Anniversary was celebrated. It included the rededication of the Koudelka Center, named after Joseph Koudelka, the 2nd Bishop of the Superior Diocese and considered the father of Catholic Charities Bureau. The Koudelka Center is 20 years old this year.

24 Hour Respite Care was introduced as a new service.

A Behavior Management Committee was formed as a resource for agency programs.

The Challenge Center and Special Olympics cosponsored the 1st annual Regional Downhill Ski Invitational at Spirit Mountain. Athletes competed from Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Grape Tomatoes were planted on a large scale in the West greenhouse, which was also modified.

2005

Confidential Paper Shredding in Marathon Industries was significantly expanded with modifications of space, electrical, and the addition of larger equipment including shredding machines, a paper grinder and baler. Funding and in-kind donations were provided by the Duluth-Superior Community Foundation, Enbridge Pipelines and Peltz Group-Recycle America.

WHEDA Foundation provided a \$30,000 grant for accessibility upgrades at the group homes.

Staff were trained and participated in a Peer Review of Headwaters, Inc., a Midwest Industries Collaborative (MIC) partner.

2006

A Consumer Orientation Handbook was created and distributed.

Our sister agencies of the MIC performed a Peer Review of the Challenge Center.

A new soccer team, the Crazy Bees, was added to CCI's Special Olympics offerings. This is the first team sport the program has offered.

Bay Produce celebrated its 20th Anniversary, including 10 years with the larger year-round greenhouse.

2007

An engineering firm designed concrete and steel reinforcements that were added to the '86 greenhouse and other reinforcements for the '96 greenhouse.

The Wisconsin DOT provided \$96,288 under the 5310 Program for vehicles purchased in '07 and for '08.

2008

Bay Produce added red, yellow and orange bell peppers to their product lines.

The first Challenge Center Young Adult Prom was held at Glensheen Mansion.

HRC Mental Health Center, the other original tenants of the Koudelka Center, moved to a new location after 25 years at this location.