

Happy Spring Friends!

We are looking forward to many exciting changes in the coming days and weeks! Within our Spring Newsletter we not only share what we have been up to in the last quarter, we also invite you to join us for upcoming events.

One very big change that is happening soon is our move to our new office space! We plan to be in our new location on July 1st. Our space offers increased accessible space which will allow us to expand, a central location in Duluth, and ample off street parking! We are so excited for our future and can't wait to invite you into our new office for an Open House once we are settled in.

An event that is fast approaching this Saturday is the final performance of our very own BOLD-choice Theatre's *Sundown of the Jasper County Jewel*! This final performance will be the 4th time I've seen the play and each time I watch it I am incredibly impressed by the actors, original music, and the inspired storyline.

I invite you to join me this Saturday night, April 26th, at Denfeld Auditorium. For more information about this performance turn to page two.

~Kristie Buchman, Executive Director



Save the Date - Hike For Health

Please Mark Your Calendar and Join Us!

Our Hike for Health Fundraising event will take place on Wednesday, September 17th at Hartley Nature Center. We decided to move our event from June to September due to our upcoming move. Registration for our event will be available soon.

Spring Quarterly Newsletter

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Issue 1



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**Upcoming Event!
Please mark your calendars!**



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Scenes from Sundown on the Jasper County Jewel



THANK YOU TO OUR MASQUERADE BALL SPONSORS!

Meet Our Intern!

Greetings! My name is Jill Goulding and I have been an intern at CHOICE, unlimited since September of 2024. Currently, I'm a full-time student at St. Scholastica and am pursuing the Masters in Social Work program to eventually become a licensed independent clinical social worker. My background includes 15 years in funeral care, hospice, home health, short-term rehabilitation, and disabilities services. I love finding resources and solutions for individuals that need help being their best selves. Connecting with others is a necessity and a gift we all have to share. Currently, I work at CHOICE, unlimited with an individual who is incredibly enthusiastic about our agency and everything it has to offer. She inspires me to remain consistent, cheery, and kind, and her resiliency shines through. I plan to remain at CHOICE, unlimited through early summer when my internship is finalized. I'm grateful to be a part of the team!



“Spring”

by Kevin Ressie

Water

by Henry Batjes

Water is free-flowing, powerful,
nourishing, kind, cruel.
It all depends on Mother Nature to
decide. Water hydrates and keeps
us moving. Water is everywhere, we
just have to look hard enough. Be
good to water and water will be good
to you.

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The Depot Foundation celebrated the remarkable achievements of the community's most dedicated artists and contributors at the Circle of Friends Arts and Culture Awards Celebration on April 3rd. Held annually at the historic St. Louis County Depot in Duluth, this event shines a spotlight on those who have enriched our community through arts, culture, and history.



This year's Circle of Friends Award Recipients

entire cast attended the celebration; Lloyd Goodman and Annie Roseen spoke and accepted the beautiful award-truly an honor.

This year's recipient of the 2025 Community Enrichment Award was our own **BOLD-choice Theatre!** Actors had a lovely evening getting to know the incredible work other change makers are doing in our community. The



The BOLD-choice Cast -Looking Good



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Quarterly Highlights

Employee of the Quarter

Pat Robinson has been working at Slumberland in Hermantown since December of 2013. His job responsibilities include vacuuming and dusting the vast showroom. This successful long-term employment is in-part attributed to Patrick's attention to detail, friendliness and willing to help others, making this an excellent job match. When asked about his job Pat commented; "I like my job, and I like my coworkers. They are very friendly." His co-workers have the same sentiment about Patrick. This is what Pat's supervisor, Tim Ahlgren, had to say: "Patrick is a real joy to have around the store. He is always so friendly to co-workers and customers alike! He always has a nice big smile anytime I see him. He will always ask everyone how their day is going, and comment that he hopes that we sell a lot. I truly enjoy having him part of the Slumberland family."



Pat enjoying his work at Slumberland

slumberland FURNITURE

Employer of the Quarter

More than four decades before you could get a king-size mattress delivered to your door in a compact box, Ken Larson disrupted the business of sleep. It was the late 1960s, and the options to buy a mattress were extremely limited. According to Larson "The idea was to create sleep shops—small stores in strip centers. If the customer was treated well, given good information, and you made a good attempt at helping them understand that sleep could make a difference, I thought we'd have a shot." The first Slumberland store opened in Richfield, Minnesota in 1967. Larson was just 25 years old but had an instinct for connecting with customers, both on the sales floor and through marketing. "Newspaper color inserts were the thing that set us apart," he says. "Our opening price point was just above cost. Then we'd upsell customers on a better mattress." Today, Slumberland is a full-service furniture retailer, which is still owned by the Larson family, boasting 122 stores in 12 states as well as e-commerce options. Slumberland Furniture has been a part of our community for over 35 years and in its current location in Hermantown for the past 15 years. Their dedication to an inclusive workforce is greatly appreciated!

Volunteer of the Quarter

The Humane Society of Douglas County (HSDC) is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1975 in Superior Wisconsin. They moved to their beautiful new building located at 138 Moccasin Mike Road in September of 2015, where they provide loving care and treatment of all animals big and small, furry to feathered. Many animals that come into the shelter no longer have homes or owners. This is where the importance of volunteers comes in. Sean has a dog at home and decided that he could offer some of that experience by volunteering at the Humane Society and has done so for the past 7 months. His main responsibility while volunteering is walking the dogs, but on those frigid winter days when the temperature is well below zero, Sean helps by showering the cats with love and attention. His love of the outdoors and exercise benefit the many dogs that need attention and physical activity while they await adoption. The HSDC's location adjacent to Osagie and Bear Creek Trails makes it easy for Sean to walk dogs in a safe and beautiful environment. Thanks Sean for giving of your time and talent!



Sean and an appreciative dog on the Bear Creek Trail.

ARTS Program Update



Wired Whisker Cat Café Art Show

The ARTS Program managed to stay busy and buzzing even in the cold winter weather and participants are looking forward to the burst of energy that spring ushers in. The longevity and continuation of our important and exciting creative offerings are greatly supported by grant funding and we are so proud to have received the **Minnesota State Arts Board Arts Experiences Grant** for the 2025 year!

Visual art classes were very busy over the end of winter! Some of the excitement came through the capstones of the "Service Learning" session. Their "Fabulous Felines" cat-themed art show in January at Wired Whisker, helped raise over \$350 for animals in need with Carlton County Animal Rescue. Later in January their collaborative artwork of a Common Redpoll was submitted to the Tiny Bird Art show auction with Friends of the Sax-Zim Bog generated some great bidding and raised \$55 for the program. Students were pleased to connect and give back to the community they love!

The next session was "Unusual and Unexpected"! One of the favorite projects is when students designed their own 2-D, posable alien creatures out of recycled cardboard and paint pens and created a stop motion movie masterpiece. It was wonderful to see the aliens come to life and do a cosmic dance! The completed movie was showcased in March at the "Out of this World Masquerade Ball".

Creative Writing has seen a big change. Our longstanding instructor, Tina Higgins Wussow, made a life dream of hers come true and bought a bookstore-Chester Creek Books! We are so very happy for her and the store is amazing-but it also has meant saying goodbye. We are thrilled that Jess Morgan, local author, poet and performance artist and safe space creator, has taken the reigns. Jess brings a knowledgeable but open and curious energy to the class and the students are enjoying their style immensely- welcome to the creative team!

Monday and Thursday Music Class started the new year with performances in January at Peace Church- original songs that made their audiences giggle, smile and even gasp! Both in person classes are currently meeting weekly and creating new pieces to perform this Spring.

Acting Class is finalizing their new, original one-act script. This group of students knew that their performance would land in late Spring and wanted to have a "new beginnings theme": A Wedding. Of course, the class didn't want your average happy wedding with a fairytale ending- they want drama! The class will perform their latest work at the end of May or early June. There's a bride and a groom, a budding romance between the maid of honor and the groomsmen, but there are also unexpected and uninvited guests and some magical twists that leave everyone shook!

BOLD-choice had a great winter season with presentations to Leadership Duluth, wonderful radio and television interviews and a fantastic adventure to perform in beautiful Grand Marais! BOLD partnered with the Grand Marias Playhouse and the Cook County Unified Club with funding from the **Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation** to bring BOLD-choice up north. The cast put on another fabulous performance and the Grand Marais crowd was wonderful, sending heartfelt reviews after the show. One new-to-BOLD audience member wrote "here was love, fun, bravery, heart, wit, inclusivity". The cast loves hearing the feedback.

BOLD-choice's final performance of their original musical Sundown on the Jasper County Jewel is just days away. They will be wrapping the show after the **April 26th performance at Denfeld Auditorium at 7pm**. If you haven't had a chance to see this production, this is your last chance, and it is fantastic!

THE CHOICE, UNLIMITED ARTS PROGRAM+ BOLD-CHOICE THEATRE

OUT OF THIS WORLD MASQUERADE BALL



On March 7th, Earthlings and Aliens alike descended upon the Greysolon Plaza Ballroom to raise money for the CHOICE, unlimited ARTS Program! All came in peace to have a galactic good time! Everyone came dressed in stellar style and ate great food, drank sparkly drinks, perused a curated silent auction and danced the night away with our DJ from Diamond MC Entertainment! There were performances from CHOICE, unlimited Dancers, North Shore Ballroom and Spin Collective. Lots of fun was to be had in the photo booth provided by Alan Johnson Photography and Tye Ostrom Photography snapped pix throughout the night on the dancefloor and beyond (as seen below)! There was a Wookie Wail (call-out like Chewbacca) Contest and an Alien Animation stop-motion movie created by the Visual Arts Class played by the bar. Such a wonderful night and proof that fun is universal and in a galaxy not so far away—our very own!

Health and Wellness Update

Throughout the last quarter, participants enjoyed ample exercise opportunities to help them stay warm over those chilly winter months. Tai Chi classes introduced some new Qi Gong and balance exercises to help keep everyone growing in strength and stability. Our chair exercise class at North Pointe Center grew from a monthly into a weekly offering and it's been fun to have a fully inclusive class.

During the month of February, a number of people learned social dancing skills leading up to the Masquerade Ball. The class members

learned two partner dances (swing and rumba) and also learned social dance etiquette, such as how to politely ask someone to dance.

Winter cooking class at Whole Foods Co-op featured a delicious stir-fry dish with chicken, veggies and quinoa. The class learned that quinoa is a grain that can be as delicious as rice, but also high in protein! The stir-fry was a big hit and class participants enjoyed a meal together at the end of the class.

On March 10th, Jessa Swift, Health and Wellness Coordinator, and one of the Tai Chi students presented three sessions of Stress Busting Strategies at Mentoring Day. This event for area high schoolers with disabilities took place at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College in Cloquet. Sharing this information with the High School students was fun and rewarding.



Stir-fry cooking at Whole Foods Co-op



Social Dancing is for everyone

Allen discovered his interest in wood working during the Pandemic. He has used tools to fix things for many years. However, when the pandemic came he was stuck inside and isolated, looking for new interests. He decided to work with wood as a way to be



Allen organizing his Gondola

productive. He spent quiet hours honing his skills while creating functional pieces out of wood. He started out by building a work bench then decided to make rolling carts that he calls gondolas. The gondolas make it easy to store, move or relocate items, such as books, tools and boxes. He also created squirrel proof birdfeeders that swing the squirrels off. These not only allow the birds to eat, but also make it entertaining to watch. Allen is interested in building more birdfeeders and birdhouses and possibly selling some of his pieces down the road. He likes to work with his hands and it makes him feel good when he finishes a project. Great job Allen! We look forward to seeing upcoming projects and appreciate you sharing your hobby!



Allen in his workshop

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The Frugal Fashionista with April

She has transitioned to iced mochas to encourage warmer weather. Our fashionista works retail and she said that the racks at JCPenney are already filled with shorts and summery dresses—which is good for her because she has begun packing for a family destination wedding in the South of France this summer— Oui oui! She is creating her packing list and wants to look fancy but knows walking shoes along with her pretty sandals are a must for sightseeing! This will be her first over the ocean flight and she is eager to see how people in France show off their style. She will have a full style report for us when she returns stateside.

Ms. Frugal Fashionista met me for coffee sporting some oxblood colored moto boots, kitten portrait dangly earrings, multitudes of necklaces and rich lady looking rings—unique and glam! She mentioned how this is a hard time of year—you want to put away your winter jacket, but there is almost a fear of jinxing it and the next day there will be snow on the ground!



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Spring Remote Class Schedule

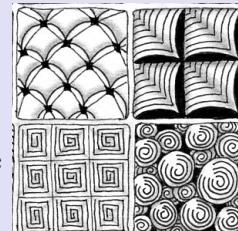


Book Club - Wednesdays 8:30am - Listen to famous literary works. Discussion about the books' happenings included before and after the listening session. After May 28th our Book Club will meet in Person.



Coffee Club - Thursdays 10am - In coffee club, we get together with our morning beverage of choice to visit and enjoy each others company.

Dance - Wednesdays 11am - Weekly dance instruction, exercise and social connection that allows students an opportunity to move their body, get exercise, and see fellow students.



Mindfulness Through Zentangle - Thursdays 9am - A class designed to teach participants to tune into their thoughts and use the Zentangle method tools to increase focus, happiness, and peace.



Music - Wednesdays 10am - Weekly music exploration and instruction. Drawing out and honing natural strengths-instrumentation, voice, rhythm and lyric work.

Something to Smile About - Tuesdays 10:30 am - This class showcases heartwarming and inspiring stories from around the world, guaranteed to lift your spirits and bring a smile to your face. Each session highlights acts of kindness, courage, and triumph, and a little laughter reminding us of the incredible good in the world.



Art Club – Fridays at 1:00 pm—An opportunity for artists to gather and work on art, share their latest project, and talk about art and art happenings scheduled throughout the community.



Sweatin' to the Oldies- Tuesdays 9am - Exercise class set to fun music.

If you are interested in participating in remote classes, call
218-724-5869 and ask for Karen D.

We would like to recognize and extend our appreciation to the Community Employers with whom we partner!

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St. Mary's Catholic Church-Silver Bay
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Super One Foods-Miller Hill
TJ Maxx
Twin Ports Dog Training Club
Walmart-Hermantown
Wild State Cider

** Denotes a new Employer Partner this quarter.



CHOICE
unlimited

Vision

CHOICE, unlimited envisions a vibrant community that empowers individuals with disabilities and fosters a culture of inclusiveness.

Mission

CHOICE, unlimited creates and enhances opportunities for individuals with disabilities within local communities.