



CHOICE unlimited

Work · Create · Connect

Happy Holidays Friends!

Thank you to Kevin Ressie for creating this year’s holiday card! Kevin’s design, pictured here, is delightfully charming! The message in the card “There is Gnome Place Like Home for the Holidays” is endearing and heartfelt!

It is hard to believe that we are near the end of 2024 and will soon welcome a new year. This last quarter flew by as we stayed busy supporting people at their jobs, volunteer work, and a plethora of our regularly scheduled classes and activities along with several new “pop-up” classes and experiences.



Many of these classes, activities, and experiences are shared within this edition. On the last page of our newsletter we feature and thank our Employer Partners for their inclusive hiring practices. I am pleased to share that we have two new employers to welcome to our list of wonderful partners this quarter: Ravin Crossbows and Hydrosolutions.

This past quarter we participated in the St. Louis County Conference and enjoyed connecting with people at our booth in the exhibit hall. During the same week as the conference, we were honored to participate in an Artist Reception at the Federal Courthouse in Duluth. This Reception highlighted the historical role of the US District Court with a banner display summarizing their work improving the civil rights for people with intellectual disabilities - check out page nine for more details. Looking forward, we have a number of events planned in the coming months so please check out page three and four for more details. It truly was a busy final quarter of the year, in fact our entire year was very busy. I included a link to our annual report [here](#), so please check it out when you have some time.

Wishing you Peace and Joy this Holiday Season

-Kristie Buchman, Executive Director

Winter Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 29
Issue 4

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In Memory of Our Dear Friend

Our hearts are heavy due to the loss of our wonderful friend and colleague Linda Meagher who passed away in November.

We are thankful for the times we had together and will treasure our memories!



This Storm will Pass

By Kevin Ressie

The storm will pass.
The rain will stop, The thunder will quiet down,
The lightening will cease flashing,
This storm will pass,
The twister will calm,
The hurricane will stop,
This storm will pass,
The Flurries will calm,
This too shall pass.



Stars

By Jade



Whenever I think of stars, I think of family and friends I've lost over the years,
Think of it like little pockets of memories exploding in the atmosphere,
Slowly dying while that memory fades away,
Stars aren't made to last forever like memories are,
But it's what you do with them that counts.

Upcoming Events!
Please mark your calendars!

Speed Friending!

Join us for our second event where you can meet new friends and continue conversations in a relaxed atmosphere.

When: Tuesday, January 7th, 2025

Time: 3:00 PM-5:00 PM

Location: Duluth Depot

Event Facilitator: Hadrian DeMaioribus

Coffee and cookies will be served.

Don't miss out on the fun!

Stay tuned for more information and details!



FABULOUS FELINES!

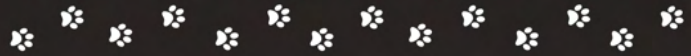
Original cat themed paintings on sale by the
CHOICE, unlimited Visual Art Classes
to benefit

Carlton County Animal Rescue

Thursday, January 16th

3-4:30pm

at Wired Whisker Cat Cafe 1823 E Superior St. Duluth, MN



BOLD-choice Theatre

There are two more opportunities to see BOLD's original musical before they wrap the show!



Join us on Saturday **February 22, 2025** in Grand Marias at the Grand Marias Playhouse.

The final Public Performance will be held right here in Duluth at the beautiful historic Denfeld High School Theater on **Saturday, April 26, 2025.**



Upcoming Party Fundraiser:



FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

GREYSOLON PLAZA

LIVE PERFORMANCES * DJ AND DANCING

***HORS D'OEUVRES *DRINKS * SPIRIT WALL**

***SILENT AUCTION* PHOTO BOOTHS**

TICKETS ON SALE IN MID-JANUARY

\$35 PRESALE /\$40 AT THE DOOR

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE

CHOICE, UNLIMITED ARTS PROGRAM AND

BOLD-CHOICE THEATRE COMPANY

*Thank you to all who donated to our
Give to the Max Campaign!*

Ryann Signorelli
Susan Rickert
DeeAnn Trotta
Karen Hennis
Amy Johnson
Kelly & Jody Faughnan
Pam & Brad Reitan

Jackie Nelson
Lynn Wilcox
Dave & Ginger Wheat
Brian E. Bluhm
Holly Holmquist
Jennifer Trevathan
Georgette Wondolkowski



Adele Hartwick
Wanda Grew-Jasken
Danny Klotz
Lizette Roebke
Kim Reed
Barb Ahlberg
Debbie Freedman

Susan & Glenn Solin
Rebecca Matson
Mary K. Tennis
Karen Schmidt
Deana Grant
Robin Brown
Dan & Kristie Buchman

And all our generous anonymous givers!

Pop-Up Café

On Halloween, we held our third Pop-Up Café with an Italian theme. Utilizing the kitchen and Fellowship Hall at First Covenant Church we cooked up a storm in preparation for our guests. The menu consisted of Homemade Cheese and Sausage Manicotti, Caesar Salad, Garlic Cheesy Bread, and Homemade Pumpkin Bars for dessert.

This was our largest gathering to date, as close to 50 guests dined with us that day! We plan to host future cafés in 2025 as the Chefs look forward to sharing their culinary talents with friends and family.



Holiday Cookie Baking

On December 19th the kitchen at First Covenant Church was full of activity and a lovely aroma as Jackie Nelson, Karen Schmidt and Kristie Buchman baked over 30 dozen cookies in preparation for our Holiday Party the following day!

The cookies were perfected when more people joined in the festivities by frosting and decorating the scrumptious Sugar Cookies! Fun was had by all and we indulged in the delightful cookies at our agency wide Holiday Party!





Quarterly Highlights

Employee of the Quarter

Phil Jiacomini is our employee of the quarter. Phil has been a part of CHOICE, unlimited since 1993. Within this 31 year span he has had long term jobs with a number of employers including the Edgewater Hotel, Field Logic, Feradyne, and most recently Hydrosolutions of Duluth.

He started working at Hydrosolutions in October of this year as a custodian. Dan Larson, the owner of Hydrosolutions, explained that every person in the company is important to their success in producing high quality products for their customers. It is vital that the equipment is dust free and clean so it can run at optimal performance. Dan stated "Phil is doing really good and he is a joy to have here". Phil shared that he enjoys his job and gets along very well with his co-workers. Congratulations on your job at Hydrosolutions, Phil!



*Keeping Hydrosolutions
Spic and Span!*

Employer of the Quarter

Hydrosolutions of Duluth was founded in 2002. They specialize in products for aerospace, medical, architectural industries and a wide range of other applications. Services include high quality waterjet cutting, metal forming, CNC machining and assembly of products. They have a reputation for high quality products at a fair price with fast turn-around times.

Hydrosolutions is a new employer partner with CHOICE, unlimited as Phil Jiacomini recently joined their team in October. Thank you Hydrosolutions for being an inclusive employer dedicated to creating a diverse workforce!



Volunteer of the Quarter

Everett has been volunteering at the Hope Center since July 2024. The Hope Center runs the Neighborhood Family Center Food Shelf in Lincoln Park. Everett volunteers at the Hope Center on Tuesdays where he organizes the pickup area for folks coming to get food, clothes, and other necessities.

He breaks down boxes and cleans as needed throughout the building. He fills shampoo, conditioner, and body wash containers, stocks shelves, sorts clothes, packs diapers and socks, and many other helpful tasks as needed. There is never a shortage of work to be done, and Everett is up for the challenge.

Thank you Everett for volunteering your time and talent in filling a much needed role in our community!



*Everett contributing to the
Hope Center Community*

ARTS Program Update

Winter can be a dreary time once the holidays wrap up. But don't fret - our Masquerade Ball to benefit the ARTS Program is coming, on March 7, 2025! Us earthlings will once again descend upon the Greysolon Plaza for a party that will be "Out of This World"- the theme this year! Aliens, space invaders and travelers, solar system creatures, stars and planets will collide in a galactic gala! Tickets and more information will be available in January.

Autumn classes were chock full of fun, color, humor and creativity! Creative Writing wrapped up their fall session with a cozy Poetry Reading at Wussow's Concert Café on Friday, Dec. 13th. Writers shared work that made listeners laugh, reflect, connect, and feel the warm fuzzies that a chilly December needed.

Acting Class used their extended summer/fall session to create another original one-act play that they performed on Thursday, Dec. 19th. The play entitled "Happy Happy Coffee Shop" percolated with mystery, a sprinkle of romance and a double shot of humor. The class was a mix of veterans and newbies - the cast ranged from ages 18-70! It brought a lot of wonderful variety to the dynamic on and off stage.



Cast of "Happy Happy Coffee Shop"

Monday and Thursday Music Class students each created an original song this session- with such a unique group of personalities no two songs are alike! Both classes will be showing off their most recent ditties at short performances in January at **Peace Church- Monday, January 6th at 11:00am and Thursday, January 9th at 1:00pm**. All are welcome to attend and get a serotonin boost!

Visual art class was busy creating figures in a variety of mediums this fall session! First, they worked on creepy creature designs in batik on fabric for some spooky flag garland that went on to be displayed at the Depot for the annual NorthShorror Halloween art exhibit in October. Then, they began purrfecting their drawing skills by learning how to draw the feline form, which they first practiced with Halloween black cats, and then started on some very exciting cat themed acrylic paintings. These will be displayed in a one day only art show in January at the Wired Whisker Cat Cafe to be sold to fundraise for animal charity: **Thursday, January 16th 3-4:30pm**. And finally, students practiced mono-printing some delightful little birds and created collages. They hope to submit an artwork to the annual Tiny Bird Art auction for the Sax-Zim Bog. It was a wonderful session filled with community connections where everyone felt very proud of and excited to share!



Looking sharp Robbie and Chasadie!

BOLD-choice kept busy as always; participating in parades, attending plays together, rehearsals and a trip to Grand Rapids for a performance at the Reif Center on September 28th. The cast drove up and unpacked, did run-throughs for the first time on that stage, ate meals, got dressed, performed a stellar show, packed up and drove home all in one day! Exhausted but proud actors did a fabulous job being the professional and talented artists that they've worked so hard to become.

The new year will bring two final chances to see BOLD's original musical before they wrap the show! A performance in Grand Marais on **February 22nd** and a final Public Performance will be held at the beautiful historic Denfeld High School Theater on **Saturday, April 26th**. Keep eyes and ears open for more details, and as always, following CHOICE, unlimited and BOLD-choice [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages are a great way to keep up to date on all the great things the ARTS Program has going on.

Happy New Year and cheers to new creative ventures!

An Unfinished Journey: Civil Rights for People with Developmental Disabilities and the Role of the Federal Courts

On October 9th CHOICE, unlimited was honored to be part of a public reception titled *An Unfinished Journey: Civil Rights for People with Developmental Disabilities and the Role of the Federal Courts*. This public reception held at the Federal Courthouse in Duluth included an educational banner exhibit, a juried art show, music, poetry and remarks by dignitaries. The program featured US District Court Chief Judge Patrick J. Schiltz, Magistrate Judge Leo I. Bribois, Senior US District Court Judge Donovan W. Frank, and retired Magistrate Judge Becky R. Thorson.

The banner exhibit illustrated Minnesota's history of services for people with disabilities. The display was a shocking reminder of our past, but a hopeful and optimistic reality of how far we have come. A wide array of art was displayed and available for purchase by Minnesota artists with disabilities from Grand Rapids, Duluth, Northome, and Aitkin.

Performances rounded out the evening with local talent from BOLD-choice Theater, Zach Slocum, Alicia Carranza, Nathan Alberg and poets Chris Wark and Roxanne Nelson. Meredith Kujala, disability advocate, was a featured speaker. The educational banner exhibit and Art Show is available for public viewing through February of 2025 on the 4th floor of the Federal Court House in Duluth.



Judge Donovan W. Frank, Judge Patrick J. Schiltz, Zach Slocum, Nathan Alberg, Alicia Carranza, Chris Wark, Roxanne Nelson, Meredith Kujala

Mexican Wedding Cakes

Ingredients:

- 2 sticks butter-softened at room temperature
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 2¼ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ¾ cup finely chopped pecans or walnuts -use food processor if you have one
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Extra powdered sugar for rolling

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees
1. With a mixer combine butter and powdered sugar.
 2. Add vanilla and mix well
 3. Add flour and salt and mix until well blended and then stir in nuts
 4. Roll into balls the size of quarters and place on baking sheet close together
 5. Bake 10-12 minutes or until bottoms are lightly browned
 6. Roll in powdered sugar while warm and then again before you store them in a container. Enjoy!

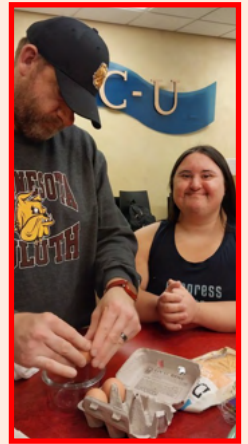


Health and Wellness Program Update

Fall was an action-packed season for our Health and Wellness Program. We offered several pop-up classes along with our regularly scheduled activities. A pop-up class in October focused on breathing and movement for relieving stress and anxiety. On November 11th we started a Monday upbeat dance/aerobics class to get the week started with some energy. There was a great turnout for both classes! On October 22nd and November 19th, CHOICE, unlimited joined folks at the North Pointe Center for a seated exercise class. Participants enjoyed a good workout to some fun music and met new friends at the Center.

Our regularly scheduled exercise classes have been growing and staying busy. The Healthy Lunch Bunch learned about the negative impact of ultra-processed food, discussed healthy holiday eating strategies, enjoyed healthy treats, and held a cooking class at Whole Foods Co-op where they prepared a delicious egg frittata.

We would like to express our appreciation to the Whole Foods Co-op for donating time and ingredients to our healthy cooking classes. Thank you for being a great community partner!



Shawn and Stephanie make a frittata



Relieving stress and anxiety with movement and stretching



Focusing on healthy alternatives

Hobby Hub - A Hobby That Rocks!



Vicki Gustafson has been collecting rocks and gemstones her entire life. Since she was a little girl, she loved to collect rocks. As a child she remembers her family stopping along the shores of Lake Superior, back roads, and other places that were great spots to find Lake Superior Agates. At age 18 she had a large collection given to her and she hasn't stopped collecting since!

As she has gotten older her interest in collecting expanded into all kinds of rocks and gemstones. "I'm fascinated with the stones!" Vicki says. One of the most interesting things is the many properties attributed to different rocks. Some are purported to have healing and protecting qualities, which Vicki admires. "I like touching them. They're really unique and very pretty" she said of the rocks in her collection. She enjoys making displays and arrangements with her collection around her house.



Vicki has tried rock tumbling at home and enjoys visiting exhibitions and shows where people come together to admire and show their rocks and gemstones. At the end of the day, with all the beautiful stones out there, her favorite is still the Lake Superior Agate. As the Minnesota State Gemstone, it's hard to disagree!



Employment Specialist/Job Coach

Full-time entry-level openings starting at \$17.50 per hour.

Benefits Available Include

- Health, Dental, and additional voluntary benefits
- PTO-ESST, HSA, 403(b) Retirement Plan
- Mileage is reimbursed
- Wage differentials for evening and weekend shifts



Interested in learning more about our open positions?



**Call or email Terrie Whitesel, Human Resource Manager at
218-724-5869
twhitesel@choiceunlimited.org
or apply at www.choiceunlimited.org**



Holiday season is a time to SLEIGH! Catching up with Ms. Fashionista was all about how the season informs her outward expression through clothing and accessories. When I asked what she'd wear to a holiday party, "A dress, a red dress-that's Christmas!" She said if she wanted to add a little more flash to the look she recommends green tights and sparkly green tree earrings. As far as what might take her everyday look up a notch for a celebration - eye shadow with sparkles (but of course).

But every winter day isn't a soiree so April talked about how she likes to balance looking cute and staying warm; **layers!** And she reminded me you can pin a flower to any hat- she is loving poppies right now! Also, if she could design her own snow pants, they would have little cute drawings of people doing winter activities all over- a playful print. As much as she loves color, Lady Frugal said she sticks with classic black winter boots "pink would be cute but they would get dirty too easy".



Wishing you a season of feeling good about yourself and to a new year of embracing expression!

Our Holiday Party - Friday December 20, 2024!

Our holiday party was a wonderful gathering! Not only did we feast on traditional holiday food, and homemade cookies, but we enjoyed a pop-up holiday sale, sang karaoke, crafted a one of a kind ornament, and enjoyed each other's company. Here are a few pics from our celebration!



The Artists selling their handmade crafts at our Holiday Art Fair





Winter Remote Class Schedule

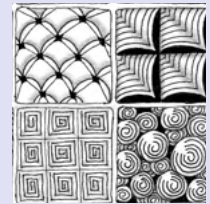


Book Club - Wednesdays 8:30am - Listen to famous literary works. Discussion about the books' happenings included before and after the listening session.



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.

Studio Art - Tuesdays, Wednesdays at 2:00 pm, A creative social hour to spend time working on personal creative projects such as drawing, painting, knitting, or other projects.



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 Karen Wright at 218-724-5869 for more information.**

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

**310 Pub
Animal Allies
Barkers Island Inn
Bayshore Health Center
Bent Paddle Brewing Company
Dicks Sporting Goods
Duluth Art Institute
Duluth Parks and Recreation
Duluth Running Co.
Ecuman Lakeshore
Enger Park Golf Course
First Lutheran Church
First United Methodist Church
Five Below
Gordy's Gift and Garden
Grandma's Marathon
Hampton Inn Duluth
Hampton Inn Superior
Holiday Inn Express-Superior
Home Depot
**Hydrosolutions
ISD 709
JCPenney
Johnson's Bakery
Keyport Liquor**

**Kohl's
McDonald's Hermantown
Men as Peacemakers
Mexico Lindo
Michaels
Mount Royal Fine Foods
New Horizon Foods
Northwest Wisconsin Community
Services Agency
Northwood Children's Services Main
Northwood Children's Services West
Old Chicago
Old World Meats
Perkins West
**Ravin Crossbows
REM Arrowhead-Sevita
Salem Lutheran Church
Slumberland
St. Mary's Catholic Church-Silver Bay
Super One Foods Kenwood
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.