

TODAY'S NEWS

President's Letter

As you are aware, Roger Carter and I spent a great deal of time in the Jaycees. A speaker at a state conference, Ricky Rotramel, had said something that has been with me for some time: ***Volunteerism is the price we pay for our space on earth.***

You have elected to the IRA Board of Directors a group of individuals who are committed to the Iowa Rehabilitation Association and have established priorities in the area of recruitment, marketing the organization, increasing membership and strengthening divisions.....and having ***FUN.***

You will be hearing more about the latter as following Board meetings there will be IRA socials for individuals to stop by meet with Board members, learn about the organization and just have fun.....*The first get together is scheduled for April 13th in Des Moines. The Board hopes to schedule others across the state. There will be more information about where and the time as it develops.*

Special Interest Articles:

- ◆ President's Letter
- ◆ Legislative Report
- ◆ CEU opportunities
- ◆ Remembrance

Iowa Rehabilitation Association

Membership:

319 Marie Avenue
Elk Run Heights, IA 50707

We're on the Web! See us at:
www.iraiaowa.org

Jenny Erdman, President-Elect is in the process of developing the conference for 2018. I can tell you that we are looking to schedule the conference in the fall. If there are topics or speakers that you would like to have considered, you can contact either myself, Ellen Sokolowski at ellen.sokolowski@iowa.gov or Jenny Erdman at jennye@passageways.org

Your Board of Directors and I look forward to a great year and hope to see you and friend at either the conference or one of the socials.

Ellen Sokolowski

Legislative Report

A challenge of writing about the Iowa Legislature while it's in session is that things change so quickly. So, here's what we know now.

BUDGET: The state is short about \$90 million for this current fiscal year. Although, The Iowa Department of Revenue said state tax collections increased by over \$133.1 million last January. However, a major part of this early revenue growth is from a surge in state tax estimate payments, coming in \$109.4 million higher for the months of December and January over the same months last year. New revenue estimates released on December 11 show a budget that is spending more money than collected. Legislators are still discussing cuts to current-year budgets by that shortfall amount and prepare a new budget for the next fiscal year that is equally bare bones. There have been proposed cuts to the Department of Education, DHS and the Department of Corrections. The Senate passed a 1.2 billion tax cut bill that now goes to the Senate. With Iowa's revenue problems, it's puzzling why now is the right time for a tax cut. The proposal reduces personal income tax rates, eliminates the ability to deduct federal taxes paid from your state taxes, increases the standard deduction, increases small business exemptions, and collects taxes for things bought online. A study of the bill states that it would cut a little more than \$200 million out of next year's budget, which is problematic as lawmakers still have to approve cuts needed for this year's budget as well as next years.

EDUCATION FUNDING/SCHOOL CHOICE: The Iowa Senate approved a bill that increases state K-12 education funding by 1%. While this gives about \$32 million in additional state aid for next school year, most school superintendents said they need a 3 or 4 percent increase to avoid cuts. The Senate also passed a bill that would provide millions of dollars for school busing. Right now, districts don't get any extra money if they cover a large geographical area. This bill could benefit rural districts. It now goes to Governor Reynolds who will likely sign it into law. Meanwhile, community colleges and the state's three public universities face questions regarding their funding levels, despite Reynolds' pledge to develop more skilled and educated workforce. University and college administrators say they are considering raising tuition and that decision could come as late as next June. That could make it harder for many Iowans to obtain post-secondary educations and training to qualify for better-paying jobs. Supporters of school choice say they will push for several key issues and programs in the upcoming session: These include establishing Education Savings Accounts for parents to pay for their children's private educations; expanding the state's tuition tax credit program that funds nonpublic school scholarships; and altering Iowa law to allow charter schools to be run by private organizations.

MEDICAID/MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: Iowa's privatization of Iowa's \$4 billion health insurance program has resulted in vulnerable Iowans losing in-home services. Health

providers have closed their doors because private insurers did not pay them. A recent article states that state officials overestimated expected cost savings of privatization by 80%. Gov. Kim Reynolds admits "mistakes have been made", but still stands behind the privatized system. Under Reynolds' leadership, these companies have received more public money. In the past month, AmeriHealth Caritas has left the state and all of its members were moved to United. About 10,000 former AmeriHealth members had asked to change to Amerigroup, but they didn't have capacity. Instead, the state is temporarily managing their care until Amerigroup has capacity or another MCO is added. However, no one knows what "temporary" means. Though many legislators talked about changes to the MCOs or more oversight, no bills dealing with MCOs made it out of the "funnel" for future consideration. United began telling providers that they would be ending the successful Integrated Health Home (IHH) program for AmeriHealth transfers that are not receiving habilitation or children's mental health waiver services. This impacts approximately 5,000 Iowans with disabilities. If you are unfamiliar with the IHH program, it was created in 2013 to help Iowans with serious emotional disorders and serious mental illnesses receive the support they need in the community through intensive care coordination. Ironically, the IHH program was created by a MCO (Magellan) to improve outcomes, allow individuals to experience recovery while living safely in their communities, and ultimately save Medicaid dollars. Iowa's Medicaid Director (Mike Randol) has "paused" all action on health homes and will bring MCOs and providers together to discuss the future of the program, look at data collected, discuss improvements, identify corrective courses of action if needed, and outline alternative paths if needed. He has said this review should take about six months but added MCOs have the right and ability in their contracts to change the health home program. Not all legislators were satisfied with this "pause" and fear changes will occur when the session is adjourned when they won't have the ability to stop any further action. Sen. Mark Chelgren of Ottumwa is leading debate on a bill that requires DHS submit a report on the health home review to legislators by October 1, 2018 and allows changes only through rule (which takes an average of 6-9 months and must go through the Legislature's Administrative Rules Review Committee). The bill also prohibits MCOs from doing the care coordination in-house, and requires they run the program as required in the state plan amendment. Providers say this may all be a little too late - they are losing IHH staff and at least one integrated health home in NW Iowa has closed their doors. According to a Des Moines Register poll, nearly two-thirds of Iowans surveyed disapprove of how state leaders are handling mental health issues. Critics contend Iowa has far too few resources, including hospital beds and crisis centers for people suffering problems as such as psychoses or deep depression. Iowa's mental health system has been in flux for several years and lawmakers seem to be taking this seriously this session. After years of bipartisan work, the Iowa House has passed a bill to begin reforming the mental health system in Iowa. One of the most important provisions of the bill is the addition of more services to the list of core services that the Mental Health and Disability Services (MHDS) regions must provide for. These services include Access Centers that provide immediate short-term assessments to people who

do not need inpatient psychiatric treatment, Intensive Residential Service Homes that are comprehensive, 24 hour facilities that coordinate community living services for persons with serious mental illnesses, and Assertive Community Treatment Teams that provide flexible treatment for individuals that have transferred out of an inpatient program. The MHDS regions will now be able to contract with transportation service companies to transport patients under this bill. Mental health professionals will also be able to disclose mental health information to law enforcement agents to prevent a serious threat to the patient or to others. While the bill is a great first step in improving the system, many Iowans and lawmakers are concerned it does not include any additional investment from the state, causing a bigger strain on existing services and resources. For this bill to work, it needs to be fully funded. Governor Kim Reynolds said she would be open to work requirements for people receiving Medicaid. So that set the stage for House Study Bill 666. It was introduced, had a subcommittee hearing and was voted out of committee all in three days. The bill requires anyone getting public assistance (such as Medicaid or food stamps) to have a job, be looking for a job, volunteer, or go to school at least 20 hours per week. There are a few exceptions - for those who are pregnant, deemed "unfit for employment," those under 19 or over 64, people caring for an infant (under one year), parents caring for a dependent child with a disability or serious medical condition, those receiving unemployment compensation and meeting the requirements of that program, and those participating in a drug or alcohol treatment program. Early reports state that it would also include people with documented disabilities but who knows what changes may occur. As of right now, 86% of Iowans receiving Medicaid are working or in a family with at least one parent working (Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, July 2017). This is obviously a very controversial issue - it does not address access to transportation, resource limitations, access to appropriate adaptive technology or personal assistance, job opportunities in rural areas, and employer attitudes and biases in hiring. If you have opinions about this or any other issue, now is the time to share them with your State representatives.

-Taken from InfoNet and the Des Moines Register

Jeffrey Morgan

Remembrance 1954-2018

Our friend and colleague, Roger Carter, passed away on Saturday, February 3rd.

I might have first met Roger when I was in the U of I Rehabilitation Counseling program and the IRA conference was in Iowa City. I really got to know him at the 2007 conference in Marshalltown. It was my first conference in a while and Roger came up to me right away, introduced himself and, as was his habit, struck up a conversation. I felt welcomed. We talked about work and more importantly what we liked to do when we

weren't working. We found we had many common interests. As a Counselor, Roger must have been a great encourager; supporting his clients to strive to reach their goals and helping them to do so. He displayed that same talent to his colleagues. In Marshalltown, he encouraged me to join the IRCEA Division. When there was an annual meeting two years later in Cedar Rapids, he nominated me for an IRA Board position. When there was another nomination for someone else I knew to be more qualified, I felt like backing out. Roger consoled me. Speaking of the other person, he said, "He doesn't really want to be on the board anymore. It would be good for you to be a part". He was right. It was. All through my various positions with IRA, Roger mentored me, giving me great advice borne of experience. I have seen him be that type of mentor to many others.

I saw what a huge role Roger had in IRA. He was the ultimate Parliamentarian; helping us navigate by laws and the ever-elusive Robert's Rules of Order. An incoming Board was lucky to have Roger to do an orientation to help them understand how the Board worked and what their roles were. Being a champion of his clients, he would always have a nomination for the IRA Achievement Award. His speeches were impassioned descriptions of the person, the barriers they overcame and how now they had a job and/or lived on their own. Roger's nomination speeches were legendary, especially in their length. When the National IRA Conference was in Des Moines in 2014, Roger had nominated Dave Mitchell for the Gerry Byers Award. Because of a miscommunication in trying to keep the award a surprise, Dave didn't attend the awards ceremony. Undeterred, Roger launched into his nomination speech while I frantically dialed every phone number I could think of trying to get ahold of Dave. When I finally did, Dave was humbled by the honor and apologized, saying he wouldn't be able to get back in time. I told him that Roger had just started his speech and Dave would have plenty of time to get back before he finished. Dave politely declined. He was officially recognized that next day with Roger giving the same heartfelt speech.

IRA and NRA both recognized Roger for his dedication and service to both organizations. Roger was a recipient of IRA's Gerry Byers Award, the Bill Donahue Memorial Award and NRA's Margret Fairbairn Award. There may be other awards that I don't know about or have forgotten. He served as President of IRA, JPD and was the NRA's Award Chairperson.

In his home life, Roger played a huge role in the Jaycees and he chaired the Andrew Express, which involved the collection of more than twenty semi loads of water, clothing, etc., to deliver to Floridians affected by Hurricane Andrew.

He also was an avid collector and, when we'd meet, I could always count on him letting me know about his most recent treasured acquisition. I loved if I could tell him about a musical find that he hadn't heard about or was looking for,

I'm sure everyone who knew him through Voc Rehab, IRA, NRA or other settings has their own memory of Roger. We professionals became a little more caring and a little

more professional because we knew him. We owe him a great debt. He will be sorely missed by all.

Free CRCC CEUs

- Wright State University's SARDI (Substance Abuse Resources and Disability Issues) program is offering a **free CRCC CEUs** series of 7 webcasts titled, *Providing Online VR Services via Telecounseling* made possible through a National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) grant to evaluate the effectiveness of online, portal-based vocational rehabilitation services.
 - One-hour of continuing education credit will be available to counselors and social workers who view the webcasts and complete the post-test. **The Ethics webcast is worth 3 ETHICS CEUS. The others are worth 1 hour of general education credit.**
- Free online courses are offered through the National Technical Assistance Center on Blindness and Visual Impairment (NTAC-BVI) to provide professionals the opportunity to expand their knowledge and understanding of a variety of topics and earn continuing education credits.
 - Topics for these online short courses range from basic health and vision information to improving employment and independent living outcomes for persons with visual disabilities, and new courses are added regularly.
 - These online short courses are from 60-90 minutes in length. Students earn a certificate of completion by finishing the course, passing the quiz with a score of at least 80%, and completing a course evaluation. For more information on courses and credits available, visit the continuing education page of our website at www.ntac.blind.msstate.edu/courses/. The following credits are available:
 - **ACVREP, CRC, and NBPCB** - All online short courses are available for free.
 - **CEU** - Continuing Education Units are available for online courses and some workshops for teachers to maintain certification and/or licensure. Costs and course load requirements for CEU credits are determined through the Mississippi State University Center for Continuing Education.

*Information obtained from CRCC Engage Forum.
Websites or links may no longer be active.

Caylin Lundberg

2018 IRA Board Members

Board Members

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- April Stotz
- Marcia Gracey

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JPD President – None

DU-IRA President – Jenna Batten