

**MARATHON YOUTH SERVICES
NEWSLETTER
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Here it is, the 1st of August already! It's hard to believe the summer is almost over. This week will begin another version of the Wisconsin Valley Fair at Marathon Park here in Wausau. Having grown up just two blocks from the Fair Grounds, I've share of fairs. that all county the same, lots of entertainment, food stands, taken by all the displays. And of animals! It's inspiring and that there is a our young committed to special interest requires of



attended my While I'm sure fairs are basically rides, beer gardens, etc., I'm always 4-H projects and course, the somehow reassuring to see large segment of people who are some hobby or that no one them. Interested

enough to show their wares at the county fair! They make pretty good baked potatoes with all the trimmings too; my annual "must have".

While the fair is always an exciting part of summer, unfortunately it somehow always marks the end of it too. It seems to me that it's not long after that the nights start getting pretty cool, and the start of school gets ever closer. I know the guys and staff at RGH are already gearing up for the new semester... and for some other changes as well.

It was only this past week that we learned that a prized member of our team is moving on. Rick Ferree, who has served as the Program Coordinator at Reynolds Group Home is leaving us to return to the South (But then what can you expect? He IS a Detroit Lions fan...). Rick has finally accepted a repeated offer of a management position from his former employer, Meijer Superstores. He will be moving to Kentucky where his family has many friends and fond memories. While we'll all miss Rick greatly, we wish him and his family the best in their new/old endeavor.

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1. In saying goodbye, **Rick leaves us with the following thoughts:**

It is often said that the only certainty in life is change. There are countless agents of change on this journey, the coming of adulthood, the discovery of a mate, a family, a career the coming of silver hair, its pigment borne of life's experiences.

Change has been a critical element in my life and the life of my family. Change brings challenge, change brings opportunity, change brings risk. These amongst many dynamics are my roller coaster ride, my sky dive, my racecar, my thrill. Once again, I have facilitated change, and will be moving with my family to the mid-south for a new career opportunity.

I have enjoyed my work here at MYS; the boys and families, the community resources, and most of all the friendships cultivated with others that have shared this passion to help and support others, and to love. My work began here more than four years ago, this being a tremendous change for one spending so many years in corporate life. I have learned much here...I have seen life through a different lens, I have come to know myself much better, I have a changed perspective on what are truly the grandest things. I leave a better man...

I thank you for the opportunity, the friendships, and special memories. I wish the greatest of success; happiness and health to you all...Remember always that you and I together are greater than the sum of both of us.

So Long...Rick

Another of our RGH staff has made a decision to leave the team, this time to return to school. Nick Simonis, who has been a mainstay of the program for many months, will be returning to school this fall and focusing on studying and his pending new family obligations. Good Luck Nick! We all wish you the best.

2. With the end of summer now upon us, **Reynolds Group Home** is experiencing several successful discharges and subsequent vacancies. We'd be happy to hear from you about your placement needs! Give Doug a call (715-842-3240) if you'd like to discuss how we might help out.

While the departure of two valued staff is big news this month at RGH, there have been many other continuing activities during the heart of summer. Summer school of course, continued to be a primary focus, but that came to an end on July 22. There was also plenty of time for fun with a fishing trip to the Stevens Point area and a camping trip on July 9th and 10th, something the guys always seem to enjoy. Another big effort this month has been fund-raising for a trip in August.

You might recall that we had planned for the guys to make a trip to the Bad Lands this summer. However, when it came time to make camping reservations we found that we were competing with one of the country's biggest motorcycle rallies; the Sturgis Bike Rally. Camping opportunities were at a premium! It was decided that an alternative trip plan was in order. After some discussion and much research, staff and residents have decided on a trip to the St. Louis, MO. area.

The St Louis itinerary will of course include the Gateway Arch. We will also take in the Lewis and Clark museum, Merrimac Caves, the Transportation Museum, a riverboat ride and a water park, as well as many other stops as well. Camping possibilities are much greater there as well.

Some of the fund-raising for this trip took the form of two successful Brat Frys. The first was held July 22nd at the Wausau Ave. Quality Foods IGA, with the help of store manager Thad Streeter. He and his staff provided everything we needed to make this a success. Many thanks go to Thad!



The second was another success, this time held at Sam's Club this past Saturday, July 30th. With the help of some contributions of businesses around town, we were able to again turn a profit and add to our trip fund. Many thanks to all...

Two of our guys are transitioning to foster this month also. Kris was discharged to a foster family on July 6th, and Robert is beginning transition as well. Good luck guys! We'll always be available to you.

Luke is continuing his involvement in his softball league and Dennis has joined a soccer team. Dennis also celebrated his 15th birthday on July 8th and also started a job at the new ice cream shop that just opened in downtown Wausau.

We'll have more to report next month about the St Louis trip, but in the meantime, check out our website for updates.

3. Our **Adult Programs** offered the guys some great activities this month, including a camping outing at Council Grounds State Park and a ballgame at Miller Park in Milwaukee on July 2nd. One of our summer staff, Eric S. has submitted some fine reporting on those two events:

"Eric, this was definitely an experience I'm gonna remember for my entire life", Shawn H. said to me with a sap on the back., his face upturned to a fire-filled sky. We all stood together, Shawn, Kevin, Kyle, John F, John P, Andy, Skyler, Jenny and myself, dumbfounded, mouth open, on a crowded little bridge between Miller Park and the parking lot, watching fireworks and wondering how in the world nine hours could pass in what seemed like nine minutes. An experience to remember it was.



We were told when we left it would take us a few hours to get there and to the excitement of John P, we'd make it for batting practice. HA! Four and a half hours, three pit stops, six rounds of the ABC game, 52 slug bugs and 67 PT Cruisers later we arrived at the park with not time to spare, hungry and excited for a great game. After a light tailgate dinner, the ten of us geared up for the tough trek to meet Mike and Joe P at the very top of Mount Miller Park; Section 417, rows 13 and 14. (John P asked about Kleenex in case of nose-bleeds)



It was a tough climb, but we met our companions and cheered until our faces went red, watching the Brewers steal a W from the Pirates with a close score of 5 to 3. We all agreed it was a lot more fun to yell at the Brewers from a couple hundred feet than from a couple hundred miles. John F, a huge Brewer fan, led the cheers with "Go Brewers!", "Hit That Ball!", "Win The Game, Right Now!". As we left all smiles and sore throats, we were serenaded by the pops, cracks and fizzles of a spectacular fireworks show, a perfect photo-op for the motley crew that we were.

The ride home, like the ride down, was all laugh, smiles and jokes. John P was our resident stand-up comedian, keeping heads rolling and staff sane for the four hours of driving through darkness; and I'm sure Sean's cackles could be heard from here to Minnesota. As we left Milwaukee we grabbed a small meal at McDonald's, then rode the laughter all the way home. (Somewhere in Milwaukee someone is eating Andy's apple pie. Whoever you are, you better hope he doesn't find you.)

At the ballpark residents thanked staff for one of the best times they can remember. I'm inclined to believe that it is staff that should be thanking residents; it was a truly memorable experience for everyone involved.

A great reporting job Eric! Followed by another:

Over the weekend of July 22-24th I was treated to an experience that has defined my time with the adult residents of Marathon Youth Services. Six of our rugged adventurers have safely returned from another expedition to the rustic North for camping at Council Grounds State Park in Merrill, WI. This three day adventure was a trial of wits, strength and spirits for all involved, and the test began almost immediately, as scheduling problems held us from making the overnight stays we had all desired. We were challenged with working around staff and resident schedules in order to make the most of our time at the already reserved campsites. This meant a good amount of adjustment for both staff and residents the entire weekend. Despite all issues, great spirits and great times were shared consistently over campfires and rolling waves. We were even graced with Mark's presence two of three days. He spent each of the nights over the weekend working overnight for REACT! All adversity considered, it became clear that the residents' excitement and the spirit of the great outdoors would overcome anything the world had to offer.



From then on I watched the guys make a great time out of all sorts of tough situations, from raging windstorms to sleepless nights. I've always believed that one really gets to know a person by the way they learn to weave love from the threads of hardship, and it was amazing to see the unique ways in which the residents found happiness amid the surrounding chaos, each putting himself in the right place to relax and enjoy himself.

Kyle was our local DJ, surrounding us with music at all times to keep us going. The one and only Shawn H became a celebrity among the entire park with his original country music styling. Mark was our firemaster, foraging and feeding the fire which kept us warm and

cooked our meals. Sean S was very helpful in his culinary counseling, and Sam and John kept us smiling with the usual antics we've all grown to love. These, for me, are the kinds of little things which rub away the strain of the everyday and bring out these guys' characters in all of their fun-loving intricacies' and staff was treated to a brilliant display of character the entire weekend. Separately, we may have fallen apart, but together we made a team that wasn't settling for less than greatness.



After cramming into a little tent to avoid storms, going sleepless to help with the upkeep of our little camp, struggling to create fire from small twigs, and waiting patiently for a real dose of sunshine, our efforts were redeemed in the light of a beautiful Sunday afternoon at the beach. Doug Adams treated us to some tube rides behind the Jet Ski, and we had a smorgasbord of a picnic to top off a great weekend. The feeling of happy exhaustion sank in on us all for the ride home, each of us knowing that we had beaten the odds and enjoyed not only a great vacation, but the realization of a sense of growth and progress that is often too slow and too subtle to truly experience. I think that many of us look around at times of frustration and ask ourselves, "What does all this mean?" This weekend I felt that we figured it out.

Submitted by Eric S

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Produced by Jim Prozinski

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