

## Client Volunteers Spotlights - VIP Volunteers Helping Walworth County Seniors

Tony Arneson, Brandon Blume and Nicole Fernandez are known for their great smiles and upbeat personalities. They share those smiles every week by volunteering at Walworth County's Senior Dining Center in Lake Geneva. The volunteers receive services through VIP Services Pre-Vocational program. Their job responsibilities include welcoming customers, bussing tables and serving food as well as talking with seniors who come in for affordable nutritious home-style meals.

Walworth County operates six senior dining centers located throughout the county. The centers provide lunch time meals to persons who are aged 60 and older and are an opportunity for older adults to socialize with other members of their community. Several of the senior dining centers also offer bingo, educational, and recreational activities. The VIP volunteers have worked out so well that Patty Firkus, Work Skills Trainer at VIP Services recently added Sean Gribben the volunteer crew.

The nutrition site partnership began when the County was in need of volunteers for the dining centers. Patty knew the opportunity would be "a great experience" because clients could take the skills they would learn - like working in a kitchen, doing dishes or bussing tables - and transpose those skills into a job in the community. The first client to volunteer at the nutrition site was Tony Arneson.

Jane Jaeger, Health and Human Services staff who supervises the volunteers at the Lake Geneva Dining Center Site saw Tony jump right into his new job. Tony often eats with a group of men who appreciate his sense of humor as well as his stylish sense of fashion. He likes to do the little things for the seniors; if he sees someone struggling to open a milk carton, he simply goes over and opens it. Jane sums up the experience, "All four of my volunteers have found their way into the hearts of my seniors. In many cases they are 'grand-mothered' by the people they help."

The Walworth County Volunteer Services department has a long and successful partnership with VIP Services. Colleen Lesniak, Volunteer Coordinator for Walworth County says "the VIP staff is terrific to work with and is diligent in getting the right person for the job. They will be on hand to job coach until the volunteer is independent in the job. We can rely on the volunteers to be dependable, be on time and do their best."

Brandon is proud of his volunteer work at the dining site and he also volunteers at Lakeland Health Care Center (LHCC) where he escorts people to the in-house beauty shop. When asked why he volunteers, his face lights up with a big smile, "I like to help people. It's fun!" Lynn Kasper, Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator at LHCC shares,

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### VIP Volunteers

*Clockwise from left: Nicole Hernandez, Sean Gribben, Tony Arneson and Brandon Blume*



## Spring is in the Air: Time to Shake Off the Winter Blues and Move

Keeping active all year is the key to good health, especially for seniors. Exercise has proven benefits - lower blood pressure and blood glucose; improved sleep and mood; less fatigue, joint pain and constipation; and better weight control.

What can you do to spring into shape?

- ✓ Take the stairs. Stair climbing exercises the same muscles necessary for keeping your balance while rising from a chair. Keep those muscles strong!
- ✓ Drink water to stay hydrated.
- ✓ Warm up before and cool down and stretch after any exercise activity to lower risk of injury.
- ✓ Try gardening. Use a raised bed if you can.
- ✓ Do chair exercises during TV commercials or during your favorite program.
- ✓ Eat whole grains, lean protein, low-fat or non-fat dairy, healthy fats and lots of fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Prevent overeating by keeping hunger in check. Eat well-balanced meals or snacks every four hours. Eat slowly to avoid overeating.
- ✓ Rethink your drink. High calorie beverages like juice, gourmet coffee and soft drinks add many unnecessary calories. Choose water, diet or low calorie beverages instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.



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“VIP volunteers are great, they are always friendly and willing to help the residents.”

The county volunteer experiences have been a win-win for everyone. Nicole has recently added Fridays to her volunteer schedule at the Lake Geneva Dining Center. Patty puts it best when she says, “I’ve watched our volunteers’ blossom as they learn new skills and I feel great pride. They are excited to go to work and work hard. They enjoy spending time with the seniors and the seniors enjoy their company too. It is such a welcoming experience and I’m thrilled each time there is another volunteer opportunity to make a difference in the community.”

The VIP volunteers are great examples of giving back to their communities; their generosity of conversation and positive energy, create lots of smiles everywhere they go.



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