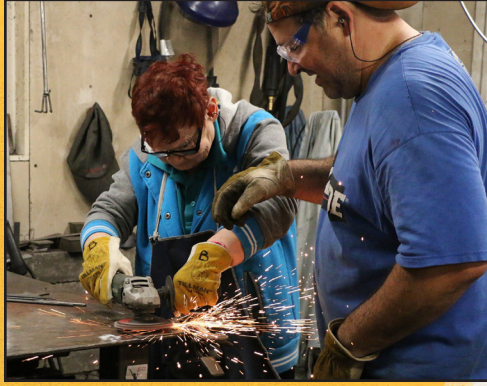


# It's happening at MSS!

## Community-building block party August 16th

MSS is hosting a free block party at our St. Paul center (900 Ocean St., St. Paul) on **Thursday, August 16 from 2-6 p.m.** The event is being hosted by Giselle Ugarte, local radio personality of KQGO - 96.3FM.

A highlight of the afternoon will be the public unveiling of our new sculpture garden. The garden was made possible through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, with MSS artists working with local sculptors to brainstorm, design, and help create the 10 sculptural pieces for the garden. During the workshops they learned about a variety of methods used in sculpture: how to bend metal, hammer textures, bronze casting, enameling, blacksmithing, and some even learned how to weld!



There will be live demonstrations of woodworking, screen printing and fiber arts, along food trucks, prize giveaways and DJ Insomniac. Please mark it on your calendar and enjoy a great afternoon with MSS!

If you have questions about the block party, or would like to help, please contact St. Paul Program Director Joshua Kohlhepp at 651-793-4193, or [jkohlhepp@mwsservices.org](mailto:jkohlhepp@mwsservices.org).

## 4th Annual Celebrate! gala September 29th

Please join us for our 4th Annual Celebrate! on **Saturday, September 29** at the Anderson Student Center on the campus of St. Thomas University in St. Paul. The event runs from **6-11 p.m.** and we will be celebrating another year of nurturing confidence, vitality, and creativity in people with disabilities.



The evening includes an hors d'oeuvres reception, live & silent auctions, art created by MSS artists, dinner, an inspiring program, and after-dinner party with live music by Empire Night.

For information on tickets, host tables or sponsorship opportunities, contact Shannon Brumbaugh at 651-793-4126 or [sbrumbaugh@mwsservices.org](mailto:sbrumbaugh@mwsservices.org).

The MSS newsletter is published two times a year.

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## Celebrating service milestones!

In May, we had an incredible day honoring some of the people we support for hitting Years of Service milestones, while remembering those who have passed in the last year. During a ceremony at the Mounds View Event Center, we recognized 43 amazing individuals who combined, have been with MSS more than 700 years! Together with their families and friends who attended the event, the day was truly memorable.

## 7% Cut..continued from front

contributing members of the community.

We are in the middle of a severe staffing shortage, and a cut to rates will exacerbate this crisis. A funding cut makes any hope of raising the starting wage for a Direct Support Professional (DSP) impossible. Higher wages are crucial to compete with industries that do not rely primarily on government funding.

Without adequate staffing, it becomes very difficult to help the individuals at MSS access the larger community or achieve their dreams and goals through well-planned and individualized activities and programs.

Additionally, our buildings and vehicles have many adaptations to truly be accessible to the individuals who need our services. Ceiling lifts in the restrooms, extensive assistive technology, and wheelchair lifts on our vehicles are all necessary - and expensive to maintain. Adequate funding is needed to continue to provide facilities that match the needs of the people at MSS.

MSS goes to great lengths to provide services in an innovative and creative way. A revenue reduction of this magnitude significantly dampens our ability to continue to evolve based on the desires of the people we support, as well as our efforts to continually improve our services.



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Minimum Wage Hike  
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CELEBRATE! 2018  
Years of Service

**From Our President**

At MSS, we are driven by a core value that everyone deserves the opportunities to choose and live their best lives. We strive to ensure



access to high-quality services and well-trained direct support professionals so we can empower the people we support to maximize their abilities.

Our industry is facing issues that could reshape the way we do business: new services, cuts in funding and a proposed hike in the minimum wage for St. Paul.

These issues bring up a conversation that all of us should be having with our elected officials. Every family, every individual with a disability and every person who provides support should be telling their story to legislators, neighbors, family and friends.

Know that together we can change the minds of elected leaders and to help build something that is lasting and valued. We all must tell our stories so these critical issues cannot be brushed aside.

Especially now, we need the support from our friends and families for us to thrive into the future.

**There are many ways you can support us:**

- Support our Celebrate! 2018 gala on September 29. This is our biggest fundraising event and it promises to be another fun time this year.
- Provide introductions or leads to area businesses who might be a good fit for our Community Hub in St. Paul, which is designed to provide employment and community

**FROM THE PRESIDENT to next**

**7% cut in services goes into effect**

After a legal effort was rejected by a federal judge, a 7 percent cut to the rates paid through the state’s Medicaid waiver program went into effect on July 1. This means that, over the course of the next 2-3 years, funding for services and programs like MSS will be cut for more than 30,000 people throughout the state of Minnesota, unless we receive legislative relief.

Earlier this year, a bi-partisan proposal was put together at the Minnesota legislature to prevent the cuts. That proposal, which was included in a nearly 1,000-page budget bill, was vetoed by Gov. Mark Dayton in the final days of the legislative session. “This is a real tragedy,” said Julie Johnson, MSS Vice President, Administration and President-elect of Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR). “This cut is devastating to the people we support and for the incredible staff members who provide daily care.”

After Gov. Dayton’s veto, MOHR and the Association of Residential Resources in Minnesota (ARRM) filed a lawsuit seeking an injunction to stop the 7 percent cut. That lawsuit was rejected in federal court June 28, paving the way for the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) to begin adjusting some rates for disability services on July 1, and all rates when a protection known as “banding” expires in 2019. We continue to work toward finding a solution for this cut in funding.

**What it means for MSS**

A cut in rates will have a significant effect on our ability to serve people with disabilities, by supporting them in the achievement of their full potential and as vital,

**7 PERCENT CUT to next**



A 7 percent cut in funding would have a dramatic impact on how MSS provides services and programs for the people we support.

# Bees providing a *sweet* opportunity



Creating opportunities for the people we support is a core value at MSS. For our Shoreview and St. Paul facilities, with your help, we're able to provide one that is just a little sweeter than most.

Our beekeeping program is in its sixth year, and has blossomed from a handful of participants and two hives, into dozens of participants, seven hives and two locations. "Everyone that has suited up and been hands on with the bees has come back with very positive responses," says Kim Alexander-Susens, Shoreview Program Director.

For Kong Moua, who has been at MSS St. Paul for 13 years, getting a chance to work with bees was an opportunity he was not going to pass up. "I was already interested in bees because I like honey and I wanted to learn about them, but I never had the chance to work with them before," Kong said.

MSS provided him with more than a little knowledge. "We had a beekeeper teach us about bees and we learned about the tools we would need to work with them," Kong said. "I was excited to get to work with the bees."

Participants can paint hives, handle the smoker to keep the bees calm, and process and bottle honey, with some "sampling" along the way. "The honey tastes a little sweet, but I like it," Kong said. To make bees completely accessible for wheelchairs, a paved path was installed at the Shoreview facility.



## Please join us to learn about bees

You, too, can now learn about beekeeping. Through a grant from the Shoreview Community Fund, Pollinate-Minnesota will be at our Shoreview location (1045 Tomlyn Ave., Shoreview) to provide introductory beekeeping classes. The classes are on August 28 and September 11 and will run from 10am-12pm. The classes are free and open to the public but we ask that you RSVP to Kim Alexander-Susens at 651-483-3000 or [kalexander@mwsservices.org](mailto:kalexander@mwsservices.org).

## From the President..continued from front

building opportunities for the people we support. We are looking for small businesses and non-profits.

- Please consider volunteering your time and talents. We always need help from our friends and families. Whether it is one time or ongoing, your help is welcome.

Your support remains a vital component to our success, and we are grateful for all you do.

I cannot thank you enough for the support you continue to provide which allows us to offer our programs and services and make a difference in the lives of so many people.

Warm regards,

Lyth J. Hartz, President

## Volunteer opportunities

There are many opportunities for you to volunteer your time and skills to help MSS provide services to the people we support. Whether you teach a computer class, share your expertise in the arts, or go along during a trip into the community, we need you. To learn more about these opportunities, please contact MSS Development Associate, Jodi Meerovich at 651-793-4199, or send an email to [jmeerovich@mwsservices.org](mailto:jmeerovich@mwsservices.org).



## CoLab exhibition features MSS artists

MSS artists are again partnering with professional artists for the 4th Annual CoLab exhibition on Saturday, September 8 from 4-7 p.m. at The Show Gallery Lowertown in St. Paul.

MSS is proud to be a founding partner of The Show Gallery Lowertown. The mission of the gallery is to create accessibility in the arts, and unite artists of all abilities. Our artists submit their work for exhibitions, display their work in the gift shop, take classes, and are a part of the Lowertown arts community.

CoLab is home to the Bill Murray's Choice Award, with the famous actor judging a digital catalogue of each piece of artwork and choosing the winning recipient each year. The award will be announced during the CoLab reception on September 8! The exhibition runs through September 30.

CoLab includes a program at 6 p.m. featuring a live performance by Carnage the Executioner and Michael Dangerous, a spoken word performance by Suzy Q Kangaroo, and a film introduction by William Franklin and MSS filmmaker Mazin Hasabelrasoul. To learn more about CoLab or other events and classes at The Show Gallery Lowertown, visit the website at [www.theshowgallerylowertown.org](http://www.theshowgallerylowertown.org).

346 N. Sibley Street, St. Paul, MN 55101  
651-419-8022 [info@theshowgallerylowertown.org](mailto:info@theshowgallerylowertown.org)  
[www.theshowgallerylowertown.org](http://www.theshowgallerylowertown.org)

# Hartz caps career with *Tip of the Spear* award

For four decades, MSS President Lyth Hartz has been at the front lines of providing disability services in Minnesota. His vision, advocacy, passion and determination were recognized by the Minnesota Organization of Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR) when it made him their 2018 Tip of the Spear award winner during a May ceremony in St. Cloud. The award is given to an individual who inspires others to act, benefiting people with disabilities.

“I’m truly overwhelmed,” Hartz said. “I’ve been blessed to have had the opportunity to work with so many incredible people.”

Hartz, who will be retiring later this year, started with MSS in 1979. He began as the Developmental Achievement Center Director, and worked his way up to being named President on December 1, 1999, overseeing and guiding the services and mission for six DT&H facilities, serving more than 600 individuals every year, with a staff of more than 150.

One of Hartz’ biggest innovations was to support and grow an agency-wide creative arts initiative. His unwavering support for arts programming has helped create opportunities for more than 100 MSS artists selling their art. The commitment to arts at MSS led to the partnership with The Show Non-profit to develop an art gallery, The Show Gallery Lowertown in St. Paul, which supports artists from all walks of life and of all abilities.

“Growing arts opportunities for the people we support has been one of the best decisions we’ve made at MSS,” Hartz said. “The community engagement with the arts has been incredible and it’s given the people we support another way to express themselves, reach their individual goals and even sell some art.”

While his time with MSS in an official capacity is coming to a close, Hartz is confident in the agency’s future. “We have just incredible, dedicated people working at MSS,” he said. “Helping the people we support lead productive lives will always remain our number one goal.”



MSS President Lyth Hartz with MOHR Chair of the Membership and Marketing Committee, Lynne Megan.

## New employment services now offered at MSS

At MSS, we have a long history of providing employment opportunities to people who want to work. Examples like our Community Hub in St. Paul show that we are always looking for innovative ways to connect individuals and employers.

Recently, the MN Department of Human Services (DHS) has developed three new employment services that will offer additional education, experiences, and support centering around employment. These services will reach a wider population than in past years, ensuring that more people will have the opportunity to pursue their dream job.

**The new employment services are:**

**Employment Exploration** - Community based services that introduce and explore employment, such as work experiences. This service assists in making informed employment choices.

**Employment Development** - Individualized services that help people find

competitive, integrated employment or attain self-employment.

**Employment Support** - Individualized services and supports that help people with maintaining community employment in an individual or group arrangement.

We will continue to support these new employment service offerings with employment counseling, training and assistance during the job search, based on our unique online eTrac® curriculum.

These changes will not affect how our professional specialists see the individual and work to help every person achieve their goals.

Our best days at MSS are when we see success in the faces of the people we helped find a job -- when they're known and welcomed by coworkers, when they provide a useful service, and when they collect that paycheck with pride!

## Minimum wage hike would impact MSS

It appears likely the city of St. Paul will follow others, like Minneapolis, in instituting a minimum wage increase to \$15 per hour. During a recent listening session, St. Paul Mayor, Melvin Carter, stated the “specifics need to be figured out.”

If, and most likely when, the minimum wage is increased, MSS could be negatively impacted. Unlike most business, which can raise prices that come from a hike in the minimum wage, MSS rates are regulated by the State of Minnesota. Unless the increase in the minimum wage would require the State of Minnesota to increase our

service rates, MSS will be left with inadequate income to pay for increased prices.

Additionally, we would not be able to reduce staff to pay the remaining staff the higher wage. MSS is required to provide state-regulated staff-to-client ratios to be compliant with our licensing.

We're working diligently to find solutions for challenges we face, so we can continue to provide the high-quality programs and services the people we support deserve

## You help make what we do every day at MSS possible

Support from people like you make all the great things happening at MSS possible. We truly would not be able to provide the services people we support need and want without the tax-deductible gifts from supporters. We

hope you attend an upcoming event, stop by the gallery, or drop in at one of our centers to see the impact you make with your generosity. Your donation makes a difference. Thank you!