



## ***WCS Connection***

**March 2022**



*From the desk of the Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. CEO:*

### **The Public Epidemic of Substance Use and Fatal Overdoses**

According to the Center for Prisoner Health and Human Rights, about half of the people in prison or jail meet the criteria for substance use or substance dependence. Many believe that number is probably lower than the actual incidence. Our country, state, and local communities are in the middle of a major war or public health crisis with opioid and substance use issues. This is made clear by the increase in the number of fatal drug overdoses during the past several years, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to an official with the National Center for Health statistics, 2020 was the deadliest year for fatal drug overdoses since the United States began tracking this information in 1968. In 2020, more than 90,000 people died in the U.S. from fatal drug overdoses. They also report that over a 12-month period ending in April of 2021, there were an estimated 100,306 drug overdose deaths in the United States. This is an increase of 30% from the previous period.

The state of Wisconsin is also seeing a rise in fatal drug overdoses. In 2020 the state reported 1,500 fatal drug overdoses, an increase of 25% from 2019 when the state reported 1,200 fatal drug overdoses. In Milwaukee County, the state's largest county, the same trend is taking place. In 2021, Milwaukee County reported 640 fatal drug overdoses which is about a 16% increase from the previous year when there were 540 fatal drug overdoses. There is no doubt that other large counties in southeast Wisconsin including Waukesha, Racine, and Kenosha are experiencing similar trends.

Substance use issues and drug overdoses do not just affect a single person; it is something that has a ripple effect. It impacts loved ones, friends, communities, justice systems, and our economy. Just imagine, if most or all the people in jails and prisons with substance use issues could receive treatment and recovery support services versus extended periods of incarceration. What if moms and dads with substance use issues could access treatment and recovery services that would put them in a better position to

care for and nurture their children? The list of possibilities goes on and on. In the end, our communities would be healthier. Yes, I know that at some level it seems aspirational. However, when it comes to this issue, we need to set goals that are ambitious and fight vigorously to achieve them. It is encouraging to see so many public officials taking up this issue and acknowledging that a problem which has always plagued our society is getting worse. Because this is a problem that is not endemic to one demographic group or one segment of our society, we all must agree that efforts to ameliorate this problem should be our highest priority. We also know that there are certain communities and institutions (like the justice system) with disproportionately higher rates and that must be a consideration when looking at strategies to address this issue.

*Clarence Johnson*



## Working with the City of Milwaukee DPW

Over the past several years, WCS has developed a strong collaboration with the City of Milwaukee Department of Public Works (DPW). Since 2012, the DPW has relied on WCS to help fill its spring and autumn seasonal work positions for sanitation and other miscellaneous work crews. Both the City of Milwaukee and the DPW have continued to invest in the community and support local programming like that of WCS which puts community residents to work and provides second chance employment opportunities to citizens returning from incarceration. So far, WCS has placed over 660 individuals with the City of Milwaukee and over 90% of the individuals have retained their job for at least 45 days. From July of 2016 through March of 2022, WCS placed over 275 persons into long-term seasonal employment opportunities with the City of Milwaukee. These jobs pay more than \$18.00 an hour and are in the neighborhoods where most of the participants live. Over 90% of the persons referred by WCS remained working through the entire length of their assignment. This initiative demonstrates the effectiveness and responsiveness with which WCS works with the City of Milwaukee, the DPW, and area employers.



## A Great Success for WCS Participant

When Larry was released from prison in late 2019 he knew he would have to “start from scratch” to build himself up so he could live the life that he always wanted! Larry teamed up with WCS and hit the ground running to have services established and to begin checking off the goals on his list. Larry worked with his WCS Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) Care Coordinator, Brittney, to secure housing, get his Social Security Income (SSI) approved, and begin working with a peer support specialist. He also needed a job, so a referral was made for Individual Placement and Support Services (IPS) through Goodwill, which is the agency for employment assistance assigned to WCS CCS participants. His Goodwill Employment Specialist, Julie, provided Larry with support to obtain and maintain competitive employment. Julie began meeting with Larry in July of 2020 to find out more about his strengths, skills, and interests; he was eager to find part-time work that allowed him to maintain his SSI benefits.

Julie helped Larry draft a resume and begin applying for custodial positions. When he had interviews scheduled, Julie helped Larry plan what his responses would be to potential questions on work style, communication, and problem solving; he applied for a part-time cleaning position with Charis/ABC Cleaning in October of 2020 and was hired! Julie

supported Larry as he began his job and dealt with scheduling issues. They talked about how his income would affect his benefits and what would be the best for him to cover his daily and monthly expenses. By having a benefits analysis completed, Larry was able to see how his benefits would decrease due to his work income, but overall, he would be bringing in more money than if he was only receiving benefits. Julie assisted Larry in becoming independent in reporting his wages to the government through an app on his phone. Larry has been working for almost a year, building his work history, supporting himself, and contributing to the safety and health of the students at the school where he cleans.

Larry's work ethic and resilience has enabled him to persevere through adversity, including his apartment being burned down, being turned away by landlords due to his criminal background and changes in service provision. Larry converted each adversity into a motivator. He voiced that he wanted to work full time to find a better place to live in, get his license and purchase a vehicle, and put himself in position to live comfortably. He found an affordable, larger place to live, and has a car to get to and from work. He is now able to enjoy connecting with family, nature, and the arts. Larry knew what he wanted, knew the journey would be difficult and take a lot of work, but he didn't give up and he thanks WCS for the continuous support and commitment to his success.



## WCS 110th Anniversary Fun Facts

This year, 2022, marks the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. In celebration we will include this special section of the newsletter which will feature unique and interesting details from our 110 years of history. Enjoy these fun facts as we all continue to learn more about Wisconsin Community Services, Inc.

During its 110 year history WCS has had 10 different individuals that have held the

top executive leadership position. In the beginning that person was referred to as "Supervisor" and later the position title changed to "Executive Director." In 2022, the WCS Board of Directors updated that position name to "Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/President."

- Ruth Baker – 1928 to 1941
- Walter Bottsford – 1941 (*was superintendent for a short time because he was accepted into the US Naval Service and went to serve in WWII*)
- Ruth Baker – 1941 to 1951
- Allen C. Hubanks – 1951 to 1957
- Robin Lamson – 1957 to 1962
- Jane Wells – 1962 (*served as acting director until Melvin Sherman from Maryland Prisoners' Aid Association could take over*)
- Melvin Sherman – 1962 to 1965
- Erwin J. Heinzelmann – 1965 to 1998
- Steve Swigart – 1998 to 2007
- Holly Patzer – 2007 to 2017
- Clarence Johnson – 2017 to Currently

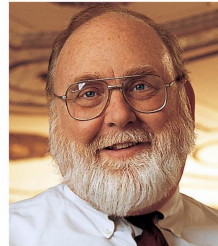
During its 110 year history, WCS has had 10 individuals lead the agency in the top executive position. Below are photos of just a few of these individuals.



Ruth Baker  
1928 to 1951



Erwin Heinzelmann  
1965 to 1998



Steve Swigart  
1998 to 2007



Holly Patzer  
2007 to 2017



## Career Opportunities at WCS

WCS is seeking hard-working, friendly, and caring people to fill the following positions:

### Care Coordinator – Comprehensive Community Services (CCS)

We are looking for a team player for this full-time position. As a Care Coordinator, you will work with participants in CCS, a psychosocial rehabilitative program, to help them understand, navigate, and progress in their recovery. Qualified candidates must have at least a bachelor's degree in social work or a related field (master's degree is preferred). At least two years of experience working in the mental health and substance use field is ideal.

### Case Manager – Community Support Program

WCS is searching for an organized, independent, compassionate individual who has experience working with individuals who have mental health needs to take on the role of a Case Manager in the Community Support Program. The Case Manager will provide treatment planning, symptom management, medication monitoring, and crisis intervention to participants in the program who have serious and persistent mental health needs and co-occurring substance use. Qualified applicants must have a bachelor's or master's degree in a behavioral science; sensitivity toward cultural, ethnic, and disability concerns; and knowledge of DSM V and psychotropic medications and their side effects.

## Did You Know?

WCS is in good company as it celebrates its 110th anniversary this year! Also celebrating this milestone are the following companies:

[Girl Scouts of America](#)

[Liberty Mutual](#)

[Insurance](#)

[LL Bean](#)

[Oreo Cookies](#)

[Sun-Maid](#)

[Universal Studios](#)

Case Worker - Intoxicated Driver Intervention Program-  
Waukesha

In this important position as a Case Worker, you will provide vital pretrial management for repeat intoxicated drivers for the Circuit Courts of Waukesha County. Your essential functions will include conducting intakes, monitoring bail conditions, providing accurate and complete reports, and maintaining ongoing communication with treatment providers. We are looking for candidates with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, social work, or other related fields. Strong candidates will have knowledge of the criminal justice system, good communication and organizational skills, and the ability to respond appropriately in crisis situations.

Youth Care Workers (Part and Full-Time)- Youth  
Shelter Care

Are you passionate about working with youth and want to serve as a mentor? Then this position is for you! The Youth Care Worker provides supervision of the young people placed in the WCS Youth Shelter Care Program. This includes implementing the daily schedule of activities, providing group educational activities, recreational activities, following up individually with youth, and serving as a mentor and role model for youth. Applicants need to have at least three years of experience with youth. Weekends are required.



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*Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. (WCS) advocates for justice and community safety, providing innovative opportunities for individuals to overcome adversity.*

WCS is a 501(c) 3 non-profit agency that provides services in southeastern Wisconsin.

WCS has been serving the community successfully for over 110 years.

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& Waukesha County

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