



# Ventures Adventure

**Mission Statement:** Providing innovative services for individuals with disabilities so they may lead meaningful lives.

JULY 2016

## Ventures Wins Better Business Bureau Award



Kristin and Denise accepting award in Milwaukee

The Better Business Bureau of Wisconsin Foundation, Inc. announced Ventures Unlimited as the winner of its prestigious Torch Awards for Business Ethics and Integrity.

The winners were selected by an independent, distinguished panel

of nine business ethics experts and announced at a ceremony in the Garage at the Harley-Davidson Museum® in Milwaukee on Tuesday, May 17th. The winners were chosen based on submissions that demonstrated excellence in ethical practices, customer service, reputation, honest advertising,

peer recognition, management practices, and employee training in ethical behavior within their industry and community. Ventures was nominated by Johnson Bank and won honorable mention in the not-for-profit category.

## Project SEARCH to Begin September 6th

If you recall from our last newsletter, Ventures Unlimited is beginning a Project SEARCH program which is a one year internship in a business site.

The Project SEARCH Steering Committee has been very busy coordinating the assessment day, hiring of an instructor and job coaches as well as identifying the interns for the first year of the program.

This year's program will be a blend of high school students and

young adults with both females and males being represented.

Our first family event took place June 29th with snacks and a tour of Rice Lake Weighing Systems where the internships will take place.

I would like to welcome to the Project SEARCH team, Mary Gruber who will be the instructor for the program. She comes to the project from Spooner Middle School and has experience with transition age students in her past teaching career. I would also like to welcome Colleen Stras-

burg, who also has many years of experience working in a school system, as one of two job coaches that will be working with the interns; Bryce, Dakota, Kaitlyn, Nick, Sawyer, Brent, Brianna and Ryan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of the members of our Steering Committee for taking time out of your schedules to make this happen.

We are all very excited for this program to get under way.

~Melissa Denotter~

### Upcoming Events:

Summer Picnic

**September 5th Off**  
Labor Day

**November 23rd & 24th Off**  
Thanksgiving Break

**December 26th -January 2nd Off**  
Christmas Break



Blue Gill Mike with his catch of the day!

# BLUE GILL MIKE

Who is Blue Gill Mike? Some of you might know the man who holds this self-proclaimed title is right away. Some of you may have never met him. He is one of the central figures in the woodshop at Hayward's Ventures Unlimited. Skillfully producing numerous Adirondack chairs as well as dutifully grinding out Vikings helmets even though he is a Packers fan. He also is creative and comes up with new and innovative ideas such as a child's rocking Adirondack chair and inspired staff to follow Tabby's lead from the Shell Lake Ventures and paint characters on the children's chairs including a turtle, a ladybug and a finding Dory theme.

Mike is more than this. He has sixty plus years of an interesting history which I am only beginning to learn about as we sit on the shores of \*\*\*\*\* Lake. (Sorry I'm not sure if I can reveal his favorite fishing holes.) Fishing is not only a hobby for Mike. It's a passion. The title is not just self-proclaimed but earned. He is really good at fishing for Blue Gills. He finds the spots and he pulls out the big ones. The little ones come too but they go back for another year. He has taken the time and used his patience to teach me how to fish for Blue Gill. I only pull out three to his fifteen to twenty fish but hey I'm still learning. Occasionally he calls me Blue Gill Sue.

We fish a couple hours most nights it's not raining out. When we get home, Mike shows more of his skills when he sharpens his fillet knife and masterfully teases the meat from the bone and skin of each fish in usually one minute's time. Then he packages them up to pass on to family and friends alike. I am Mike's mentor and I asked Mike what the mentoring program meant to him the other night as we were packing up our gear to go home. He replied, "I feel like I have a friend to go fishing with." That is who Blue Gill Mike is to me, a friend.

## Community Based Living

As we find ourselves midway through 2016 we realize that significant change is not too far down the road. The federal CMS and state DHS are mandating that by 2019 all support services need to be based primarily in the community. That is just 2 ½ years

away, which may seem like a long time if you were say, in prison. But in human service time 2 ½ years is barely long enough to make changes of this magnitude.

Over the years the Ventures' facilities have been a bit of a

safe haven for many of us. Shifting the support setting to the community may feel scary to many, but we can also view it as an opportunity—an opportunity to try new things, meet more of our neighbors, and enjoy many of the **(cont. next page)**

## Community Based Living continued

great things our small towns have to offer. Community Based Day Services will focus on building independent living skills, social skills, improving wellness/fitness, and create active citizens through trips, outings, and activities around town. Ventures staff will look at your goals as the destination and use our local resources to chart the road map—supporting you each step of the way. As you look ahead 3, 4, 5 years and beyond think of the things you could see yourself doing, groups you would like to join, sports you want to learn, the parks and waters and sites you would like to visit. Your interests and

ideas will drive this program, and in the process make us all well rounded members of the community.

Community Based Pre-Vocational programming will also use your ideas and goals as the key to the development of a range of services. The Ventures building will serve as a base and resource center, with groups ranging into the community to 1) Explore/ experience various job sites and settings, 2) Learn where to look for job leads, 3) Practice communication skills and etiquette that are essential to work environments, and 4) get comfortable and confident in the com-

munity. It is an ambitious program for ambitious people—fully customizable for each individual but built on the strengths of the group. If you are serious about working in the community this is the path to choose.

The bottom line is that change can be exciting and energizing, we all want to look for ways to own the future, not just let it happen to us. Make sure you make your voice heard, share your thoughts and dreams with those closest to you, and don't settle, especially with so much living yet to do.

## 4th Annual Ventures Palooza is on the Horizon

The 4th annual Ventures Palooza is just around the corner. Tom and Deb from Hayward have been very busy planning the activities for this year's program.

We will once again enjoy the animals and stories of Chris Cold as well as the wonderful musical talents

of Ian Okamoto.

New and exciting activities which include creating a bag out of t-shirts, mason jar lanterns and homemade jewelry, have been added to the list along with some of our past favorites such as tie dyed t-shirts, pontooning and fishing.

Ventures would like to thank Hunt Hill for having us and allowing us to spend our time at their Audubon society. We always have a wonderful time while there.



## Independent Living Skills Program



Dan and Woody at the Humane Society with their feline friends



Floyd right before he rolls a strike!

Venture's has a very active Independent Living Skills program in Hayward. We are fortunate to have a number of awesome mentors that have been working with the mentees for many of years. The goal of this program is to integrate the mentees into the community and teach some independent living skills so they can be more successful at living on their own or just to out in the community and learning social skills and doing activities that they want to do.

We have a mentor that teaches a cooking class and a Daily Living Skills class at Ventures. The class has been cooking some pretty yummy dishes: apple salad, raspberry

muffins, healthy snacks, chicken burritos, tortellini vegetable toss, skillet ravioli, grilled cheese sandwiches, baked potatoes, lasagna, macaroni and cheese, cookies, and breakfast burritos to name a few.

In the life skills class they are learning different skills such as: job interview skills, discussion of first aid skills, and they have made dream catchers, practiced some phone skills, had a guest speaker come in and explain the transit system and various other needed "life skills".

The mentors work hard to accommodate the interests of the mentees, some of the things they have done: Going to a basketball, football or baseball

game, a choir concert, a movie or bowling, playing bingo, taking in some local festivals: Musky Festival in Hayward and there some are planning to go the Spooner Rodeo in July. We have some mentees that enjoy going to the Humane Society to integrate with the cats and dogs and even taking for the dogs on a walk. Going golfing, mini-golfing, fishing, bowling or some doing gardening is how some like to spend their time.

Please see pictures as they tell the story better.

*Thank you to the best mentor team: Sue, Kerry, Denise, Deb G., Deb H., Mike, and Joan....*

## What Did You Do For Your Summer Vacation?

Remember that famous question asked of you when you returned to school in September? Well, I would be ecstatic to answer that question this year and summer has just begun because I am now a mentor at Ventures Unlimited. Being a

mentor to me means having lots of fun experiencing many things with a diverse group of people who have a real yearning to get involved in things. Well maybe that yearning comes after we lead the way for some of them but the enjoyment when they

get there compensates for their reluctance.

My experiences so far as a mentor and I just joined the Hayward team in late March this year have been many. I have watched, both at the

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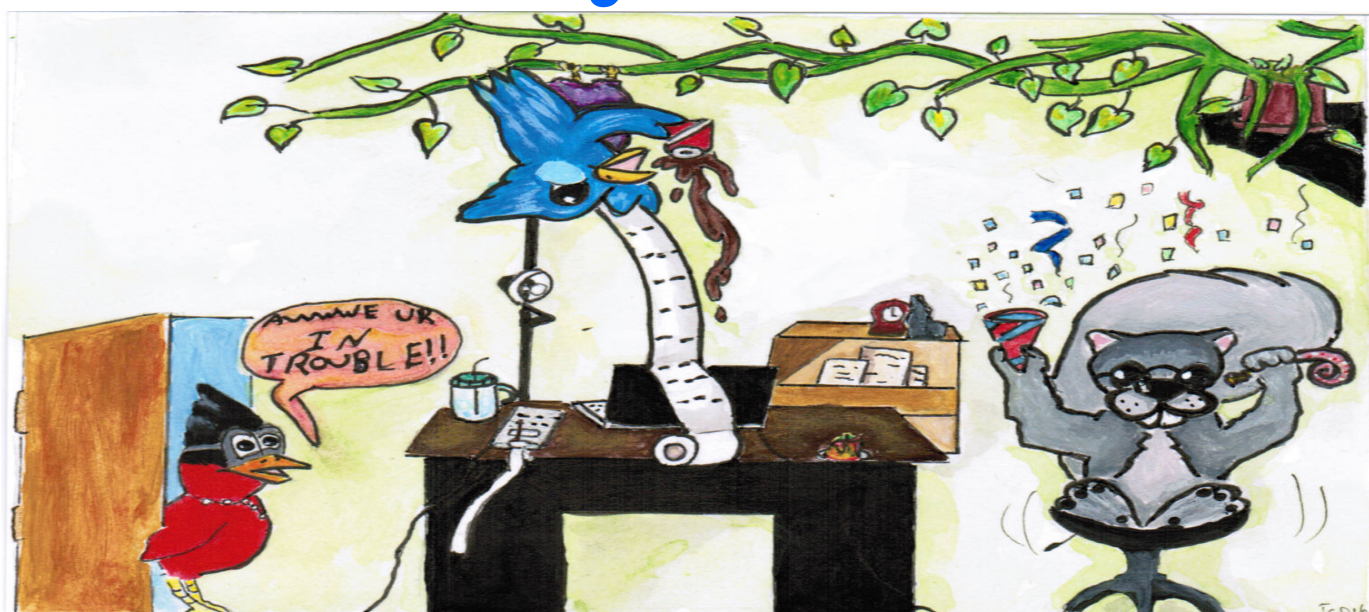
## What Did You Do For Your Summer Vacation? Cont.

senior center and at St Francis Mission, Charlie win at Bingo many times, even David won once. The Hayward Varsity Baseball team and the Hayward Hawks both batted in many runs to our coaxing cheers. David, Floyd, and Charlie have hit the strike zone both at Riverside Lanes and The Angler more times than I can count. They even allowed David T and Carol to join us a few times especially after we enjoyed pizza at Frankie's along with cupcakes in celebration for David's birthday. David and I helped determine who had the best pizza in Sawyer County by tasting and voting out at the LCO Community College. Terry and I have made a few trips to the Hayward beach with sodas or ice cream cones to enjoy

beautiful summer days. Oh but he isn't the only one who likes that park. Charlie and David and I successfully barbecued three different entrees there one night including the challenging baked potato. A slew of us at different times and together have already gone mini-golfing where Floyd showed us how to hit a hole in one on the 12<sup>th</sup> hole by hitting the ball into the stream and letting the water take the ball to the hole. So far I think Dan and Woody really enjoyed that outing but nothing beats a trip to the humane society for them. There is also those hot summer days sitting on the shores learning to fish for Blue Gills with Blue Gill Mike. Movies are another favorite. I am sure glad Floyd and I found

Dory. Let's not forget Backroads Coffee a place that finds many of us on Friday mornings where you might bump into Pam and Deb playing Skipbo. So far the experiences have been many and great. I have been introduced to things that I didn't even know existed until I became a mentor. Who knew about the Hawks? I've been visiting Hayward for years and never knew. I am looking forward to my mentees showing me more things in the future. I believe I heard something about a bike ride with Terry and a train ride in Trego with Blue Gill Mike. All aboard!!! I'm ready to go.

## Tabby's Toon





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