

**JULY 2025**

**FP VOL. 1 ISSUE 3**

**Iowa Focus**  
family options and community supports

# FOCAL POINT



\* CONNECT members gathered for an afternoon outing

## 'Focal Point' on Positive Change



— Derek Laney

Hi everyone,

It's a busy time of year for everyone at Iowa Focus. You can look inside this edition of Focal Point to see many of the special events in which members have participated across the state. These are only a few of the activities our members have enjoyed and will continue to this summer. We're always glad to learn of our members' engagements and achievements. We're proud to share them here.

You'll also find reports on two major upgrades we've been working on. As promised, Iowa Focus is moving quickly toward an online schedule and timecard platform to improve the employment experience. We also have a Therap Documentation change coming that will simplify shift entries. Read on to learn more details about both.

Thank you for taking time to browse this newsletter, and as always, thank you for all your time and attention paid to the needs of our members.

If there's a story of inclusion you'd like to share, let us know. Email the editor at [derek@iowafocus.com](mailto:derek@iowafocus.com).

# Conversations with CONNECT!

## Creston CONNECT Highlight



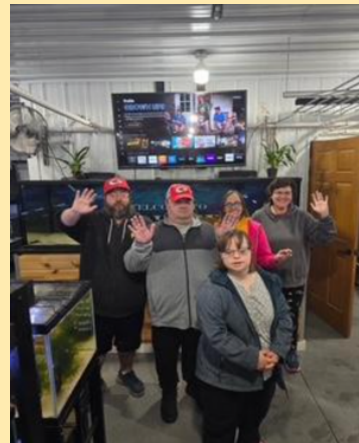
- Kaitlin Rosenbeck

Warmer months mean 3 things for members at CONNECT. sunshine, activities outside, and lots of fun! The members have been busy planting flowers in the Chamber of Commerce flowerpots, crafting at Karen's Crafty Corner, watching movies at the Grand Theater in Greenfield, bowling at the Family Fun Center, volunteer cleaning and picking up donations for our local food pantry, attending a Pancake Jamboree at the United Methodist Church, donating cans to the Boy Scout bin, feeding the koi fish at Graceland Cemetery, going out to eat at Old Fashioned Bar and Grill and Jade Garden, making pinecone bird feeders, and painting rocks for the community snake "Ziggy."

In April, Creston CONNECT traveled to Council Bluffs to tour the Dodge House with members from Council Bluffs CONNECT. Shane said, "The house was neat, and I enjoy being able to connect with members in the Council Bluffs area." Members at Creston CONNECT also wanted to tour Fish Fix in Thayer, Iowa! They enjoyed learning about the variety of fish in the store and seeing them in their tanks. Staff asked member Monica how she liked the tour. She said, "It was awesome getting to see the fish!"

In May, CONNECT took a road trip to Principal Park in Des Moines to see an Iowa Cubs Baseball Game! Members got to watch the Iowa Cubs win and browse the gift store to purchase merchandise. With May being John Wayne's birth month, members wanted to tour the John Wayne Museum in Winterset and had a picnic at Winterset City Park!

In June, CONNECT was active in the community! Throughout the whole month, we collected old shoes for a shoe drive that Dog Gone Rescue was having. At the end of the month, CONNECT took the shoes to Dog Gone Rescue to donate what we collected for them! We ended up with 3 bags full of shoes! Members voted on touring the Historical Village and Museum at McKinley Lake in Creston! Member Kristen said, "I haven't been through two buildings there, so it was cool to be able to walk through them." On the last Friday of June, some members of CONNECT were able to visit the animals at the Blank Park Zoo. Everyone enjoyed the tigers! It was a beautiful day to be outside!



## Council Bluffs CONNECT Highlight



- Hollie Parks

The nice weather has arrived, and Focus CONNECT has found many ways to enjoy it!

In April, members from the Council Bluffs and Creston locations came together for lunch in the park followed by a tour of the Dodge House. Many remarked positively on the experience, saying they enjoyed reconnecting with the Creston group, which reminded them of past trips to the pumpkin patch over the last few Octobers. Members also took advantage of the beautiful weather by designing and planting their own flowers and vegetables. Once her plants had bloomed, Gerrie proudly shared how happy she was with her plants' progress.

In May, members focused on giving back to their community. At CONNECT, they assembled baskets filled with items for which they had previously shopped in order to show appreciation to local businesses for May Day. Lisa shared that this was one of her favorite activities because she enjoyed shopping for so many different items. Members who volunteer with Meals on Wheels had another opportunity to give back during "National Give Flowers Day" by delivering handmade bouquets to each house on their route. Reflecting on the experience, many said it felt good to receive so many heartfelt thank yous and compliments on their arrangements.

The month of June brought sunshine, warm weather, and plenty of celebrations. Members kicked off the fun by celebrating "National Donut Day" the best way possible... with a donut of their choosing! They also embraced the healthier side of things for "National Cucumber Day" by trying out cucumbers-in-a-jar recipes. Denise shared that this has become her favorite way to enjoy cucumbers. CONNECT members also found that cardio isn't so bad when it's tied to a national theme. They fully embraced "National Hike with a Geek Day" by showing out in their geeky glasses and getting in some quality cardio in the great outdoors.





# 2025 Wellness Initiative



- Marlena Laney

Happy Summer!

I hope each of you is having a wonderful season. This is a great time of year to get outside, exercise in nicer weather, and visit friends and family. However, one bad habit that can get in the way is 'practicing negative thinking'.

One of the negative outcomes of thinking and talking negatively is how it makes you feel. Messages of "I can't change anything" or "This isn't good enough" erode our self esteem and makes us feel helpless. These feelings can emerge as blaming others, expecting a worst case outcome, and even snowballing into believing the world is chaos.

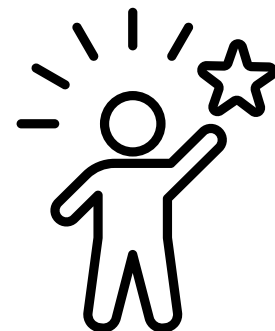
People tend to feel anxious over events, interactions, and possible situations. When we continue to focus on negatives while minimizing the effect of our actions, we can become depressed. Rumination in "should haves, could haves, and I wish things were different" gives our brain the message that things are hopeless. It can also lead to unresolved anger, frustration, or violent thoughts, which can lead to unproductive or destructive behaviors.

Our negative thinking can affect our consumers too! People who focus on negatives are less likely to make positive decisions at work and perform worse than positive thinkers and doers. Research shows that negative thinking causes more health issues, more days off work, and poorer communication with co-workers. If you are feeling negative, it may be time to try something different.

**Wellness begins with habits that increase your ability to live well. If you have found yourself practicing negative thinking, there are ways to combat these habits:**

- 1) Challenge negative thoughts and replace them with more balanced, realistic ones.
- 2) Resist grousing/gossiping or put-down behaviors. (If you are doing this to yourself, reflect instead on past successes!)
- 3) Spend time with people who encourage you to be the best version of yourself. Being with positive people gives you an opportunity to see the world in a better light.
- 4) Get involved! Consider volunteering, joining a group or team, or even a FaceBook page that shares interests.
- 5) Get creative. Make things. You don't need a lot of money to be creative. YouTube is full of creative and inexpensive "how to" videos. Step out of your comfort zone and try something new.

These are just a few suggestions. The most important thing is to notice when negativity is bringing you down or creating an environment where your value is diminished. You matter and your wellness is valuable!



## Smart Purchasing Habits



— Derek Laney

We are often tasked with helping our consumers shop. Assisting an individual to use money efficiently and effectively means balancing cost and quality. The cheapest items are not usually the highest quality items. However, higher quality goods can be so expensive that other needs go unmet. Our role is to help the individual balance priorities and make the best choice possible.

Here we will consider clothes shopping. When helping a member purchase new clothing, the first step might be to see what most urgently needs replacement. Shirts, pants, dresses, shorts, coats, jackets, and underclothes should all be in good condition, be clean and well kept, and fit correctly. Anything torn, frayed, stained, faded, or poorly fitting should be replaced. The next step is to contact the finance specialist to set a budget and get funds. Then comes shopping. Choose stores that fit the budget. Walmart and Target offer a good selection for many items. Kohl's and JCPenney also offer quality options still at a good price. Higher priced items can be found at Bass Pro Shops and Dick's Sporting Goods. When a member has a larger budget – for example, when needing to Spenddown resources rapidly – perhaps smaller boutique shops might be best.

The important thing is to help the individual get the BEST QUALITY items for the BEST PRICE. Remember that quantity is not as important as quality. A few sharp shirts that look good and fit well are better than a dozen t-shirts.

Balancing member needs and wants with available resources isn't always easy, but it makes an important, positive difference in everyone's life.

## Shifting the Shift: Going Digital

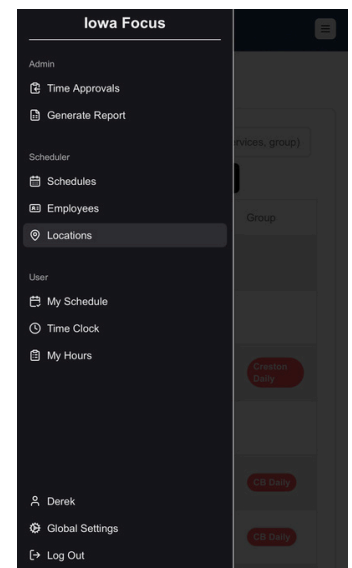


— Derek Laney

As you may know, one of our big goals for 2025 is to introduce online scheduling and timecard reporting. We're happy to report the system is now complete and in a stage tech-savvy folk would call 'Beta Testing'.

A number of Iowa Focus staff are practicing with the online system to seek out needed corrections or improvements. We need the system to be as easy and accessible as possible, as well as secure and accurate, when it's rolled out later this year. We'll keep you posted on continued progress.

Included are a few images from our testing phase:



### My Schedule

This Week (All)		This Week (Upcoming)	
Next Week			
Date	Location	From	
Schedule not published			



### Time Clock

**Daily C**  
110 Broadway  
Scheduled for:  
Monday, June 23rd  
8:00 am to 5:30 pm  
Clocked in since 12:13 pm  
Working for 9 hours 1 minute

⌚ Clock Out



### My Hours

**Viewing Unsubmitted Hours**  
View Submitted Hours  
Add Shift/PTO

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Date	Location	Hours
Total Hours:			0.00

# Therap® Scoring Updates



— Erin Spencer

Every shift ends – or for hosting, every day – with a login at the 'Iowa Focus Therap' platform to make a Service Entry. Your Entry includes the basics of DATE, TIME, SERVICE TYPE, NAME, TITLE, and LOCATION. Then follows a short report on goals and objectives, ongoing supports, medical matters, and any behavioral or special events that occurred. For each of these, you must 'Score' and briefly 'Narrate'. In this way, we record what supports were offered to the member and track the member's reaction and progress to our interventions.

But sometimes we see a disconnect between Score and Narration. For example, a Score of 'Physical Assistance' might be followed by a Narrative detailing no physical assistance. This creates problems for data collection and accurate Medicaid reporting.

There is an easy solution to this problem: Simplify Scores. Remove description and measurement from Scores so that description and measurement is **ONLY IN THE NARRATIVE**. Beginning August 1, you'll find members' scoring measurements have been replaced with a simple YES / NO.

**YES** = addressed / attempted / worked on / relevant / etc.

**NO** = not addressed / not attempted / not worked on / not relevant / not applicable

1. 'Ongoing Supports' will always be YES. (Oversight is always provided.)
2. 'Location' will always be YES. (Service is always at a location needing identification.)
3. 'Goal/obj' will be default YES, but can be clicked to NO if the objective wasn't addressed that shift. (Note: a failed attempt or member refusal is still a YES because it was addressed.)
4. 'Medical' will be default YES, but can be clicked to NO if no med pass attempted, no appointments attended or scheduled, no injuries or illnesses to discuss, etc. (Note: a refused med is still a YES because attempted.)
5. 'Behavioral' will be default YES, but can be clicked to NO if no interventions or supports were offered to positively manage member behavior and mood. (Note: proactive supports that may have helped avoid a problem are still a YES because staff service was intentionally offered to support positive behavior and mood.)

Narration is required for either YES or NO. Narration is now the only place your supports are described.

**YES** narration describes the support interventions verbal or physical you provided.

**NO** narration states why it wasn't addressed.

For example – NO on medical can be narrated, "Member was asleep, overnight shift so no meds passed." NO on Obj 1 'shopping' can be narrated "member already shopped this week"

Removing descriptive Scoring will make Entry recording easier and faster. It will also make Reporting more accurate.

If you have questions, speak to your Coordinator, Director, or the Therap specialist.

## This summer... in a Theme Park Far, Far Away



— Brenda McIntosh

Wally Palmer was one of the first members to join our FOCUS Host Program. Recently he achieved a few more 'firsts'! First airplane ride, first time to Disney, and first time to meet the Star Wars crew!

Host Mark Voyles tells us, "Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge at Hollywood Studios was incredible! It honestly felt like stepping into a real Star Wars movie. Flying the Millennium Falcon, drinking blue milk, and seeing Stormtroopers walking around—it was all immersive and fun. Wally's favorite part was meeting Darth Vader and Chewbacca. He also enjoyed the fireworks at Magic Kingdom and seeing all of the characters like Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Goofy! He has already asked when we are going back."

We are grateful to be able to share positive stories like Wally's and are excited to see what our community members do next. Thank you to Wally and his Host Family for relating their story!



Thank you to our community and amazing staff for all of your support and hard work!

For more updates until our October issue of '**Focal Point**', connect with us via Facebook, Instagram, or by visiting our website.

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