



# Newsletter



News & Views from  
The Phoenix Residence, Inc.



SPRING/SUMMER 2019

## Letter from the President

Welcome to our first edition of the *Close the Gap* Newsletter!

Since our very beginning in 1977, The Phoenix Residence, Inc. has enjoyed a reputation as a provider of high-quality services. Our entire staff works diligently to support individuals with disabilities realize their dreams and live a life of choice!

Our Board of Directors is launching a **Close the Gap** fundraising initiative in response to several factors that are putting our services in a vulnerable position. First, the disabilities sector in Minnesota is experiencing a severe workforce shortage (**a gap**) which means we are competing with other organizations for a shrinking pool of skilled Direct Support Professionals—the people who are critical to carrying out our mission to serve individuals living with disabilities. Second, there is a 17 percent wage disparity (**another gap**) between the starting pay Direct Support Professionals receive as compared to other jobs. In addition, ongoing changes to the Medicaid funding system (**creating yet another gap!**) that reimburses Phoenix to fund Direct Support Professional wages greatly harms our ability to recruit, retain, and compensate

skilled and caring Direct Support Professionals for the long term.

Our **Close the Gap** initiative is about recognizing the enormous contributions and value that Direct Support Professionals bring to the lives of people with disabilities and raising awareness about the challenges we are facing in providing those we serve with dedicated, skilled, and caring support they and their loved ones can count on.

You'll be hearing from us periodically to let you know how the **Close the Gap** campaign is progressing and how it's enabling us to continue providing support to those we serve so that they may *Soar Beyond Possibility!*

We are hopeful that YOU will be inspired to join us in this effort to provide needed supports and services for people with disabilities by helping us **Close the Gap**.

Sincerely,

Darlene M. Scott  
President & CEO



Darlene M. Scott

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***"The disabilities sector in Minnesota is experiencing a severe workforce shortage (a gap) which means we are competing with other organizations for a shrinking pool of skilled Direct Support Professionals."***

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## A “GAP” Analysis

The Phoenix Residence provides a wide array of important and essential services to individuals living with disabilities that enable them to thrive in their own homes or in group home settings.

Currently, with the help of 230 Direct Support Professionals, Phoenix serves 300 adults in Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, and Washington counties. However, disability care providers like The Phoenix Residence are facing several growing threats to their ability to provide these services.

### A critical workforce shortage

Did you know there is a critical workforce shortage (8,700 job openings!) of skilled Direct Support Professionals across Minnesota? This means there are individuals with disabilities who are not receiving the care they desperately need. Further, the competition is extremely high for recruiting and retaining skilled Direct Support Professionals. In addition, there are high turnover rates in this sector, averaging up to 45 percent!

### Changes to Medicaid funding

The Medicaid reimbursement system is no longer adequate and greatly hampers our ability to provide our Direct Support Professionals the pay rate and benefits they deserve.

Phoenix is actively engaged in working with sector advocates to call for public policy changes to fund livable wages for Direct Support Professionals while highlighting the important role they play and the value they bring to our community. While we hope ongoing advocacy will convince the State Legislature to implement policy changes in the years ahead, the Medicaid funding system remains too low and will not sustain future growth.

### More people need services

The number of people who need the assistance of Direct Support Professionals has grown (fueled in part by the aging Baby Boomer population) while the supply of people to provide those services is shrinking. The Bureau of Labor & Statistics estimated the number of people needing support will grow by up to 30 percent between 2016 -2026.

### These are a lot of gaps!

Despite these very serious challenges, Phoenix remains committed to providing the individuals we serve with skilled and quality care that enables them to Soar Beyond Possibility. Our Change the Gap campaign will indeed help Close the Gaps we face!

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***“It was so much fun to see the love and support for Wendy as well as everyone who is lucky enough to be a part of this group. As a family, it was so emotional and rewarding to see how the staff was so incredibly attentive and ‘there’ for all [the] residents.”***

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—Gail Severson,

sister-in-law to a resident at Eric House



Celebrating 81 years!



Walk, Run & Roll for Fun!



Supporting our winning Twins!



## The Heart & Soul of Our Mission

### The Role of Direct Support Professionals in Our Community



#### HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CULTURE AT PHOENIX HOMES?

**Kaylee:** The environment is different at each of our 20 houses because we serve the needs of the individuals and adapt to their personalities. They tell us what they want their homes to be like; after all it's their space. We are person-centered, which means we take the time to learn what they like to do and make sure they are empowered to narrate their own life.

#### DESCRIBE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CAREGIVERS AND THOSE THEY SUPPORT.

**Kaylee:** We work with people who are extremely vulnerable. They need help getting a shower, using the bathroom, eating, and dressing. These are very intimate tasks. I wouldn't want a different person giving me a shower each time. But if you have a revolving door of staff, then our individuals are constantly giving up their privacy to someone new.

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*"I go home feeling good about the work I've done that day—it's hard to put into words how much you love something."*

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Kaylee Larson, program manager at our Douglas House, shares some insight on the importance of Director Support Professionals and as a manager, some of the issues they are facing.

#### PLEASE DESCRIBE THE IMPACT OF STAFFING CHALLENGES.

**Kaylee:** We have phenomenal Direct Support Professionals but staffing is a major challenge. Managers are on call 24/7 and get called in to cover open shifts—which takes away from our family time. But if there's a gap in staffing you need to cover it. The folks we care for experience such high turnover rates because people leave for jobs where they can make more money—that makes it hard for those we serve to have consistency in their lives.

#### WHAT DO YOU WANT OTHERS TO KNOW ABOUT THE CLOSE THE GAP CAMPAIGN?

**Kaylee:** A lot of our staff work multiple jobs. As a manager, it's hard when you want to provide someone a raise they've earned, but the funds just aren't there. We can't give our individuals stability if we can't keep staff around and we can't keep them around if we can't pay them a competitive salary. We need to adequately compensate people for putting their heart and soul into their job.



Celebrating our first responders at Drexel House!

*"It is very important that you hear from me on how incredible Marcus, Angie, and the rest of Lydia staff are. John has so benefitted from the knowledge, responsiveness, availability, and kindness of staff. As have I. I have full trust in this staff. I am thankful every day for the help and support from Phoenix, Lydia House, Marcus, and staff. The move to Lydia was a very good choice."*

—Polly Young, sister to a resident at Lydia House

## We Need YOUR Help to Keep Our Services Strong

The Phoenix Residence is facing an urgent and critical need to invest in sustaining the services and supports required to enable the individuals we serve to live a life of choice.

**We need to rely on other revenue sources to keep our services strong.**

The **Close the Gap** fundraising campaign will help ensure that the vulnerable adults with disabilities we care for continue to receive the skilled and dedicated care they are accustomed to and deserve. The goal of our **Close the Gap** campaign is to raise \$150,000 to fund our long-term workforce compensation plan to provide our Direct Support Professionals with competitive wages, but to fund it we need YOUR support.

To make a gift please call us or visit the "Giving" page on our website:  
<https://www.phoenixresidence.org/>

**On behalf of the individuals we serve and the Direct Support Professionals who care for them, thank you for helping us Close the Gap!**



### KEEP OUR SERVICES STRONG AND MAKE A GIFT TODAY

**The Phoenix Residence, Inc.**  
330 Marie Ave. E | West Saint Paul, MN 55118  
Phone: 651-227-7655 | Fax: 651-227-6847  
<https://www.phoenixresidence.org/>