

Message from the Executive Director...



I think I can safely say it is finally here.....Welcome home spring! We are so pleased you have arrived. Spring often brings warmer temperatures, fresh air, and new growth. Spring is celebrated by people around the world with festivals and fairs. The spring season is often thought of the season that LEADS us into an exciting time full of new growth and just a great feeling of optimism! This idea that spring is the “leader of seasons” got us thinking - what a great theme for our Spring Newsletter, the idea of being a **leader** and the theme of **leadership!**

So, within this year’s *Spring Connections Newsletter* we are pleased to share some thoughts with you. Such as, being a positive leader, exploring how ICOF, as a model, is a true leader especially when it comes to a person centered approach; as well as, how LIFE, as an organization, breaks new ground and is leading the way in some innovative thinking (Options for Service being just one innovative program).



One of my favorite quotes regarding leadership is Mark Yarnell’s idea that
“A leader is someone who demonstrates what is possible.”

Let’s change the “someone” to our “organization - Innovative LIFE Options” LIFE is an organization that most certainly demonstrates what is possible!

When we read about what makes a strong leader, some literature says that one needs to instill confidence, integrity, and inspiration; and that it is important to be passionate, innovative, flexible and fun. As an organization I certainly believe we strive each day to demonstrate these values. Our Board of Directors, our amazing staff, the ICOF employers and the support network members are all part of the team that keeps us on this positive journey of providing the best opportunities to create a good life for all! Certainly persistence beats resistance. All great things take time, and you must persist no matter what. That’s what it takes to be a leader: willingness to go beyond where others will stop. We know as a team that in order to achieve greatness, we must create a culture of optimism. There will be many ups and downs, but the prevalence of positivity will keep us going. But be warned: This requires fearlessness, so you have to truly believe in making the impossible possible.

Take Care Everyone!
 Hope to see you on June 3rd
 at our AGM!

Kindest regards,




An Interview with an ICOF Employer

Submitted by:
Betina (Resource Coordinator)

On a bright sunny Manitoba winter day, I joined Chris Austin in his home in Brandon, the sound track of Canadian 80's rock plays in the background and we settle into the kitchen to talk about leadership and what that looks like to him. Chris has been an ICOF employer for 15 years and recently began his journey into a leadership role.

In the years that you have been a part of ICOF have you always been a leader?

No, I was a follower when I first started.

When do you think you realized that you could become leader? Probably about a year ago.

Do remember what made you decide it was time to try to lead your group and what did being a leader mean to you? I just woke up one day and just decided to change. Being a leader means being somebody who leads by example.

In ICOF, employers work with a support network, how did your network feel about you taking a leadership role? At first there were huge challenges, because they didn't think I was ready to be a leader when I first started out. **So it took some time?** Yep, then I learned to listen to them more and more and then I started taking their advice and went about it that way. I started working with them instead of fighting against them like I did when I was younger.

So the next question ...How does your network help you to be a better leader?

They help me by...their lifestyle is basically rubbing off on me, so I look at them and try to live my life in comparison to their lives. **So they are a model for you?** Yeah, and then I take that model try to implement as much of it as I can on to my life.



How do you think your staff see you as a leader? I think they see me as a good leader with some challenges. **Do your staff help you to work through some of those challenges?** Yep, every day. Then I learn from those and take their advice too and put it with my own knowledge and work through it the best I can.

You made a comment earlier that a good leader leads by example. Right. Can you tell me a bit about that and what you mean? I hope they see what I can do and hopefully that rubs off on them. Like, when I go to the store and buy milk for the first time and getting out the cash and making sure it's the right change and I show them that I am able to do things every day.

Do you think that someone can ever be a leader and that's it, they are as good as they are going to get? No I think there is always progress that a person can make all the time. I might be an ok leader, but there is something I do that I can fix every day.

How has taking a role with more control in your life and working in a positive way with your network made your life different?

It's put things in a brighter light I guess, I have a purpose to what I am doing. I like doing what I am doing. I have no idea how to explain it.



I like how you said you feel like you had a purpose. I may not have been able to see that before I took part in my life, but I see it now.

Would you say it takes some maturity and life experience to become a leader? Yep. Some people can do it when they are younger, but most people it takes time to do it. I was very hard on myself at the start, but I learned to ease up on myself and let stuff flow and I got better at it.

Do you think it's a possibility for everyone to take a bit of a leadership role in their life? Sure it is, everyone can do something, you just got to pick what that something is.

You said at the beginning when you took on this role you were more of a boss than a leader, what's that? I might have been more direct on what I wanted.

Is that not a good thing, being direct? Well, it is for some people, it just wasn't for me. I would give frustrated direction, because I wasn't getting the answers that I wanted. They (staff and network) were frustrated, I was frustrated, it wasn't positive.

When you tried a different approach from that "boss" way, how did that look? Like I said before, I am better at it, I am able to converse better now with people, so I am getting more of the responses that I want, plus I am able to mix responses from them (staff and network) and come up with solutions for whatever it is.

Do the answers you're looking for always come right away? No they don't always come right away, so you have to be able to step back and analyze and still be able to go in your own direction if you have to. I think I have developed incredible patience, because I have to be patient with people all the time. **Do you think with patience come results?** It comes with better results. Maybe not the results you initially started out with, but better analyzed results, maybe it fixes a problem for the time being, while you come up with something better.

Thanks Chris, you have some really great thoughts and advice on leadership and I am so glad you shared with me today. Anytime.

Please remember Innovative LIFE Options when considering your donation choices in 2017.

We continue to accept donations for our 20th Anniversary Fund—big or small—All donations over \$10 will provide you with an income tax receipt



<https://twitter.com/LIFEisGOODICOF>

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Join Us for Our Upcoming Annual General Meeting Saturday, June 3rd, 2017 in Winnipeg from 1—4 pm

Invitation Coming Early May! Mark your calendars!



Options for Services would like to welcome two new contractors to our database. Welcome Becky in the Winnipeg region and Donna in the Westman region. We currently have 17 Contractors on our database across the province.

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| ◇ 9 in Winnipeg region | ◇ 1 in Interlake region |
| ◇ 3 in Westman region | ◇ 1 in Parklands region |
| ◇ 2 in Central region | |

On November 18 & 19, 2016 Options for Services ran a group training session *Supervisory Skills for Team Leaders* facilitated by OFS contractor Chris. We received very positive feedback from the attendees and hope to run this session again in another region.

We have enclosed our new *Options for Services* Brochure!
Please let us know how we can continue to serve you!

Submitted by Liz Allen, Acting OFS Coordinator



In the Company of Friends LEADS the way...

First let's look at a few things along the "then and now spectrum as it relates to the intent". The original mission statement set out by the Project Management Committee stated:

"In the Company of Friends is a project which aims to enhance the self-determination and dignity of Manitoban's with developmental disabilities through two distinct methods of support: funding the individual as opposed to the service; and the establishment of personal support networks to support, sustain and enhance the autonomy of the person."

What continues to keep ICOF innovative is that, at all levels, it reflects "real life". Our foundation is built on relationships. For the person, their staff and their support networks; relationships are what it all boils down to. It is about building trusted relationships with friends, family, community members, support network members and staff. In doing so, we support and enhance the Five Core Outcomes; **Presence, Competence, Respect, Choice and Participation**; not just for the person, but for all involved. When our focus is on achieving qualitative results such as the Five Outcomes, and less on quantitated outcomes such as; finding more support network members or increased budgets; we are able to stay true to what counts; the people. Those we support and those who support us are what is important. They are important not because they are recipients of support, but because they are people. Another commonality to "real life" is our ability to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. Because ICOF embraces self-determination, we must also embrace making mistakes. This means at times we fall prey to all the known weaknesses known to man and therefore wrestle with; overprotectiveness, patronization, and directive or judgmental decisions. Although, because the focus is on people not systems, it finds balance through constant communication and discussion; it evolves to create meaningful lives for all involved. There is no one size fits all solution that will work in this model. That is and has always been the struggle over the years. It is also the very thing that allows people to have their own lives, which have been self-determined, and lives which possess much dignity.

Submitted by Clarice Leader (Board Member)