

Growing Times



Winter 2024

Promoting the maximum development of the whole child and adult through innovative, individualized, and comprehensive brain-centered programs and services.

Incredible Support for Special Education in Minnesota

Meet Barb Ewald, whose impressive expertise has helped charter schools across Minnesota generate over \$3,700,000 in federal funding for Special Education. This funding is in addition to the general funding schools receive to support students with special needs.

Barb has been at the center of A Chance To Grow's Third Party Billing initiative since it began in 2011. Barb says, "when I first began this work, A Chance To Grow served only a handful of charter schools. Now, I support more than 50," which is nearly one-third of all charter schools in Minnesota. From Grand Portage to Duluth, Bemidji to Rochester, Barb has a tremendous impact on schools' ability to provide Special Education throughout the entire state.



When Barb first joined A Chance To Grow in 2000, her finance work focused upon ACTG's "New Visions Charter School." New Visions was one of the very first Charter Schools in Minnesota. It operated from 1994 to 2014, to ensure that all students with special needs have quality educational services by applying our brain-based approach to the classroom. After acquiring extensive knowledge of funding for special education services for New Visions, Barb became uniquely equipped to help other Minnesota charter schools.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is a federal law which states that all students who receive special education services must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). An IEP outlines the unique needs of a student and the specific objectives that will bolster the educational progress of the student. Barb trains school staff members on IEP Third Party Billing and assists staff through every step of the Third Party Billing process. This includes helping schools collect and report documentation proving the eligibility of its students who require services, and ensuring that schools are properly enrolled in the various avenues necessary to receive additional special education funding. Barb shares that she often works with up to 10 individuals per school, such as school directors, financial staff, special education staff, and all providers giving services to students with special needs in the school.

Proper billing is essential because if done incorrectly, the school will not receive the funding for which they are eligible, leaving them unable to provide the programs and services their students with special needs require. These programs and services may include Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Hearing Services, Nursing Services, Mental Health Services, Transportation, Assistive Technology Devices, and additional aides (PCA's) and accommodations. Ensuring access to these services in school is critical for students with diverse needs. It fosters an inclusive learning environment where each student can thrive academically, develop essential skills, and build confidence, ultimately laying the foundation for success in school and beyond.

Barb's dedication to helping Minnesota students with special needs is truly remarkable. Her expertise has single-handedly ensured that charter schools receive millions of additional dollars to provide students in Special Education with the support they need and deserve. Says Barb, "this work is extremely rewarding. I enjoy witnessing the positive impact that this initiative has on students." We are extremely proud of Barb and her accomplishments!

Holiday Cheer For Our Families of Turnquist

As the holiday season approached, our staff at A Chance To Grow, with the incredible support of donors, hosted Turnquist's annual festivities for the Turnquist Child Care Center's children and families.



The festivities were made possible by an extraordinary donation of \$10,000 from Jerry and Jim Myers of Sheet Metal Connectors, longstanding and beloved supporters of A Chance To Grow. With this substantial gift, Turnquist stocked their food pantry with an impressive 2,773 pounds of fresh produce and non-perishable items. Second Harvest Heartland, Minnesota's premier food bank, provides the food to us at a discounted rate and delivers the food to our building. Turnquist families were given the chance to select items they need, as well as receive supplies for holiday meals! In addition, families were welcomed to a wide array of essential care items and home goods, also funded by the Myers' donation.



The holiday meal packages were supplied by our Friends at the Northeast Lions Club who also provided a present for each child and parent. One special Lions Club member, Marty Zaworski, has a tradition of attending the festivities, as our Santa Claus! Smiles lit up the room as families took holiday photos with Santa, and kids received their presents. The kids' toys were lovingly gift-wrapped by A Chance To Grow administrative staff and made possible by the generosity of Toys For Tots and individual donors.

Liz Ruzek, Director and Educational Coordinator of Turnquist, expressed her gratitude, saying, "We were able to take a load off of our families' hearts and minds, even if it was just for a moment. At this busy, sometimes chaotic, time of year it is so great to be able to provide a little bit of relief to our families."

We extend our sincere thanks to all who contributed to making this event so successful. You not only brightened the holiday season for our families, you also reminded us of the importance of community in supporting our neighbors.



Neurofeedback Intensives are Available Now!

Do you or a family member struggle with focus or calming your thoughts? Brain Training Intensives are a holistic and easy way to improve mental acuity. Sessions can be done in-clinic or at home with an individual or the entire family.

Call [612-706-5551](tel:612-706-5551) for a free consultation to see what works best for your needs.

A Successful Launch for S.M.A.R.T. Steps 4th Year!

We are excited to share that last month, A Chance To Grow's S.M.A.R.T. (Stimulating Maturity through Accelerated Readiness Training) Steps program launched its fourth year! The program saw impressive growth from the prior year, proudly enrolling over 100 Family Child Care Providers. Partnerships with the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, the Northland Foundation, the Initiative Foundation, and the West Central Initiative were key in expanding the program's reach. Their support helped us to offer S.M.A.R.T. Steps training in 49 counties and tribal regions throughout Minnesota.



S.M.A.R.T. Steps trains Family Child Care Providers to help improve the quality of child care available in rural communities. Family Child Care Providers supply the bulk of child care in greater Minnesota, making it critical to have the training necessary to recognize and deliver high-quality care to the children they serve. The overarching goal of S.M.A.R.T. Steps is twofold. First, the training gives Providers the tools and skills to understand how movement and learning share a critical connection. Second, the program provides children with fun, play-like activities that promote natural, healthy brain development, preparing them to succeed in school. Speaking to the program, one enthusiastic Family Child Care Provider shared, "Learning how the brain and body work hand in hand and how this can affect (a child's) ability to perform in school has been eye opening!"



The Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, the Northland Foundation, and the Initiative Foundation each generously contributed \$20,000 for the continuation of the program and outreach efforts to Family Child Care Providers in their regions. The Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation and the Otto Bremer Trust have granted additional support for the project. We are incredibly grateful to these partners and foundations and look forward to expanding the program in years to come!

Hallways, Classrooms, Renovations, Oh My!

December was an exciting month at 1800 NE 2nd St, as some big renovations took form. Led by A Chance To Grow's building manager, Ann Wilner, A Chance To Grow provided Banaadir Elementary with new, durable flooring in its hallways and classrooms. Banaadir Elementary is a charter school, designed by educators, parents, and leaders in the Minnesota Somali community. A Chance To Grow has rented the building with Minnesota Transition Schools for more than a decade, hosting Banaadir since 2020. A Chance To Grow's New Visions Charter School, founded in 1994, previously utilized this school space. This operation would not have been possible if not for our facilities team, Ann and Umbra Wilner, and Hauglie's Flooring. Take a look at the beautiful new flooring in the hallways and classrooms of Banaadir, pictured below.



New Visions School, 2002



The Garden Of Hope's First Business Sponsor!

A Chance To Grow is overjoyed to welcome its very first business sponsor, Turbo Tim's Anything Automotive, to ACTG's Garden Of Hope program, which provides essential support for our activities! Turbo Tim's is a much loved automotive shop with stores in North East Minneapolis and St. Paul, known for their friendly team, top-notch service, and adorable crew of cats. They are also long-time, committed supporters of local business, giving awards, making donations, and other outreach. We are proud to be one of the agencies that Turbo Tim's supports.



A special thank you to all of our Garden Of Hope Superstars!

- Turbo Tim's, Hero
- Erica Dickerson, Champion
- Jana and Scott Moore, Champion
- Katherine Norcross, Change-Maker
- Vicky Stein, Change-Maker
- Nancy Farnham, Advocate

By joining the Garden of Hope, YOU can help foster resilience and change the lives of the children and adults we serve! We can't do it without you!

Change a life today by joining our Garden Of Hope at ACTG.org/gardenofhope

ACTG Hosts Archetype Movement Class

From March 1-3, A Chance To Grow is hosting an MNRI Archetype Movement Integration course in our Northeast Office, taught by Instructor Summer Shepstone of the Svetlana Masgutova Educational Institute (SMEI). SMEI provides professionals in the areas of health, wellness, and education, as well as parents and caregivers, with non-invasive techniques to address maturational, developmental, and life challenges.



Archetype Movement Program techniques work to activate and engage archetype movements that, for various reasons, have remained dormant in the body. Archetype movements, less complex in nature than motor reflex patterns or schemes, are among the first reflexive movements to develop and emerge. This course welcomes Speech Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Rehabilitation Professionals, Medical Professionals, Mental Health Professionals, Educators, Parents, and other Health Care Providers to join and learn more about the fundamental role the MNRI Method plays in overall development!

LeAnn Taylor, MA, CCC-SLP, and Adrienne Ero-Phillips MA, OTR/L of A Chance To Grow's Clinical Services department are eager to participate in the class to increase their knowledge and practice of the MNRI Model and Archetype Movement Integration.

Employment Openings

A Chance To Grow is hiring! We are seeking a Part Time Infant Assistant Teacher or Aide, and Personal Care Assistants (PCA).

To learn more about each position, or to apply, please visit ACTG.org/employment

Equal Employment Opportunity
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A Chance To Grow provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants. Employment is based upon capabilities and qualifications without discrimination because of race, color, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, age, national origin, disability, gender identity, genetic information, service in the military or any other protected characteristic as established by law. This Equal Employment Opportunity policy applies to all policies & procedures relating to recruitment & hiring, promotion, compensation, benefits, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, training and all other conditions of employment.