



# Udac, Inc.

## HIGHLIGHTS

JUNE 2023



Dear Friend of Udac,

We are excited to share with you an update on some of the many accomplishments and recognitions that have been a part of the Udac team's commitment to excellence in program development for inclusive community living.



We are absolutely thrilled to share with our friends that Udac has been nominated for the **2023 Organizational Best Practice Award**. This is a national award from **National APSE** and was established “to recognize an organization that has successfully implemented strategies to support those with disabilities to work and further their career path in an inclusive workforce.” The award will be announced on June 15th in Columbus, Ohio. Congratulations to the Udac team and the people we are privileged to serve for this nomination. It is your commitment and dedication to creating the future of inclusive community building and employment that is being recognized! It is an honor for the work we are doing to be acknowledged by this national award nomination.



The **Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation** continues to support Udac with a grant designed to address disasters and business continuity in the event of future disasters. Preparing our organization to be resilient and able to meet our obligations to our community during a disaster is an important part of our work. Udac played a key role in making sure people with disabilities were a priority consideration for the COVID-19 vaccination by serving on the Minnesota Vaccine Allocation Taskforce, providing vehicles for transporting the vaccine to rural areas and through the creation of lists with local disability providers to support the public health effort to locate high-risk people with disabilities needing vaccination. Thank you to the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation for their support of Udac and our community through disaster preparedness planning. Our work and community are stronger through your work with us!

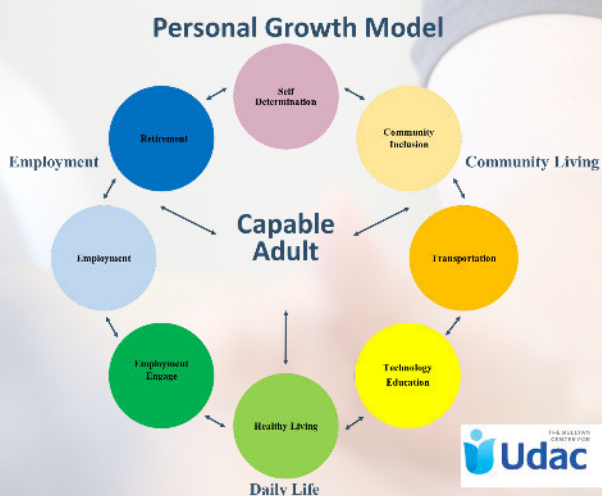




OTTO  
BREMER

The **Otto Bremer Trust** awarded Udac a grant to support inclusive community building and support the expansion of an employment model using internships for creating opportunity and building skills for successful employment. This internship model is designed with business partners in the Duluth community and addresses their employment needs while carving out unique experiences at the business. It is a comprehensive program that addresses systemic barriers to employment, independence, and community living. Internships develop skills and open doors to opportunities that would not be possible without this pathway to success. Congratulations to Jasmine and Amber who recently completed an internship at **Essentia Health**. Thank you to the Essentia team for their support and to Chris McCord, Jo Bittner, Paige Wanek and Chole Tralle who led the Udac team in coordinating this effort. The internship was very successful!! The model is available and will be replicated with other business partners. See the KBJR news coverage here:

[Ambers story](#)



The **Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)** Grant is beginning its second year. This significant grant is focused on creating the future of disability programs and services. Udac is working with local businesses to expand jobs and create career paths for successful advancement and growth in employment. The Udac team is working with individuals served, local businesses and the **Institute on Community Integration (ICI) University of Minnesota** and the **Institute on Community Inclusion University of Massachusetts-Boston** to design and implement a **Personal Growth Model** that empowers individuals to directly achieve in self-reliance for successful community involvement and personal empowerment. This model and the recently developed Independent Assessment Tool provides a guide for progressive skill adaptation and integration into inclusive community activities. The model “provides support while fostering independence not dependency.” Development of the Personal Growth Model is led by Chris McCord and development of the **Independent Assessment Tool** is led by Angela Welch.





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**The Udac Garden Club** is entering its 6th year of supporting health, wellness, and nutritious food by donating the produce they raise to CHUM. In 2022 they donated 200 pounds of produce while working in the **Duluth Community Garden Program** gardens at Denfeld and 4th Street. The group, led by John Skiba, Dana Mattila-Swor and Kayla Stenstrup recently met with Teresa Bertossi and her team at **Equilibrium3** to discuss partnering with their effort to create accessible gardens at “The Farm.” Equilibrium3 and the Udac Garden Club are collaborating together to ensure healthy food access for our community and building accessible gardens to support all of Duluth’s citizens. This dedicated group of garden volunteers give back to the community in many ways. Stay tuned for more on the garden collaboration!

**Transportation** is a cornerstone of everything we do at Udac. Nova Senarighi is the “key” to keeping our transportation efficient and effective. Coordinating the assignment of vehicles to meet multiple community demands is a huge task. In addition, Nova makes sure all the maintenance and the vehicle records are accurate and complete. In her spare time she also works as the Udac Administrative Assistant AND supports people we serve in the community. Nova make the wheels turn at Udac! A huge thank you!!

Udac was a featured presenter at the **MOHR Spring Conference** for their work in disability program transformation. Organizations from across the state gathered in St. Cloud to learn from colleagues. The **University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration – Minnesota Transformation Initiative (MTI)** participated in sessions on community inclusion and competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people with disabilities. Their presentations included Udac’s work in the community and with employment success. The Udac team, led by Ann Dahl, Casey Lozon, Lola Aune and Karen Herman, was pleased to be able to share our experience and success stories with programs across the state.



## Programs that Empower!

# *MDI Career Skills & Unified Work Mobile Academy - Self Advocacy Academy*



Programs that empower! **MDI Career 101, Career 102 & Unified Work Mobile Academy and Self-Advocacy Academy** are offered at Udac routinely. These programs are available to all interested community members without charge. Please check our Website [www.udac.org](http://www.udac.org) page or contact Udac at [info@udac.org](mailto:info@udac.org) for more information. Career 101 and Career 102 is a curriculum that provides job skills training to help learn and improve productivity, job satisfaction, and job retention. Topics ranging from self-confidence and goal setting to leadership and problem-solving. This opportunity is for individuals Udac serves as well as others across the community. Unified Work Mobile Academy is a state-wide education program that prepares individuals for successful employment. This program includes in-person and video participation with members from across the state with Udac serving as host and as a facilitator. Jenna Peterson is leading this program.

Udac is partnering with the **ACT CENTER for DISABILITY LEADERSHIP** – to provide the **Self-Advocacy Academy**. Minnesota's only stand-alone self-advocacy organization - ACT Center creates leaders through proven methods that lead to self-determination and community inclusion. The Self-Advocacy Academy and other projects of the ACT Center for Disability Leadership are sponsored, in part, by contracts with the Minnesota Department of Human Services. The Self-Advocacy Academy is a yearlong weekly program of sessions and activities to support each individual discovering what you want in life and through what you can do to get it. "It's a community of people who build friendships as we support each other and work together to make the world a better place for everyone." The Udac Self-Advocacy group participated in the March **Disability Day at the Capital**. The Self-Advocacy program is led by Nicole Opland.





# Udac EXPLORING COMMUNITY AND CAREERS PROGRAM

Udac is working with **Duluth Schools - ISD709** to strengthen the transition from school-age programming to adult responsibilities and roles. Parents, guardians, and support networks join young adults in their desire for more comprehensive community participation and career options as they complete their education. The very successful **Udac Exploring Community and Careers Program** expanded individuals' knowledge of opportunities in the community. Udac will be working to expand the job experiences and opportunities school-age individuals will experience to help prepare them for and to consider roles in the community they were not aware were available in Duluth.



**The Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota (ICI)** has invited Udac's Casey Lozon to help produce a video explaining community inclusion and the benefits of community integrated employment. Casey, along with her colleagues, have charted a new course for helping people break down their personal barriers to successful community inclusion while addressing structural community barriers that keep people with disabilities from achieving all that they are capable of and want to achieve. Udac is designing cutting edge programs that "provide support while fostering independence not dependency." Casey Lozon, Chris McCord and Nicole Opland lead this team effort to build bridges to the community to ensure that people are active participants and not just observers in the community. Art, exercise, retirement, theater, recreational programs, etc. that are designed only for people with disabilities are dated and create significant barriers to community living. The Udac team is expanding these boundaries through community inclusive programming. We look forward to sharing the video in late fall.



**The Institute on Community Inclusion at the University Massachusetts – Boston (ICI-UMass Boston)** and the **University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability (IOD)** have invited the Udac team to be a part of a grant proposal to study Community Life Engagement Tools. These tools were designed to help service providers develop and improve high quality support for community life engagement (CLE). Udac would serve on an advisory panel. Translational research is critical to advancing programs of excellence for successful community inclusion.



Through innovative and interdisciplinary research, academic, service, and dissemination initiatives, the IOD builds local, state, and national capacities to respond to the needs of individuals with disabilities and their families.





Congratulations to Nicole Opland who recently completed the **Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Duluth Program**. Leadership Duluth is a comprehensive 10-month leadership development program offered by the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce that aims to unite, engage, and empower leaders to foster change within their workplace and community. Nicole championed the advancement of an inclusive community for all citizens during her tenure at Leadership Duluth. Nicole joins her colleagues Chris McCord and Casey Lozon as graduates of Leadership Duluth. Congratulations!!!!

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#### **Olga B Johnson Foundation:**

A huge thank you to the **Olga B Johnson Foundation** for their continued support of Udac education programs. This amazing woman had the vision and belief that education creates change. The foundation supports the credentialing of members of the Udac team in Customized Employment, Benefits Counselors and helps sponsor programs like Exploring Community and Careers for the people we serve. Her legacy is thriving at Udac! A shout out to Bob as our champion!

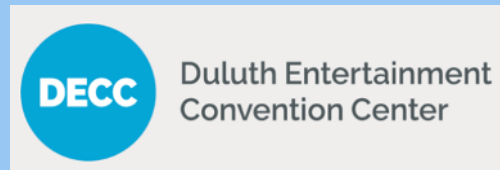
#### **The Nordling Family Trust:**

The Nordling Family Trust is a generous friend to Udac. It is with deep gratitude that we say thank you to the **Nordling Family Trust** for their ongoing support of Udac programs. These funds make a significant impact on the ability to create excellence in programming for people of all abilities. A huge thank you to the Nordling Family Trust.





# Udac thanks and acknowledges our terrific community business partners for their support

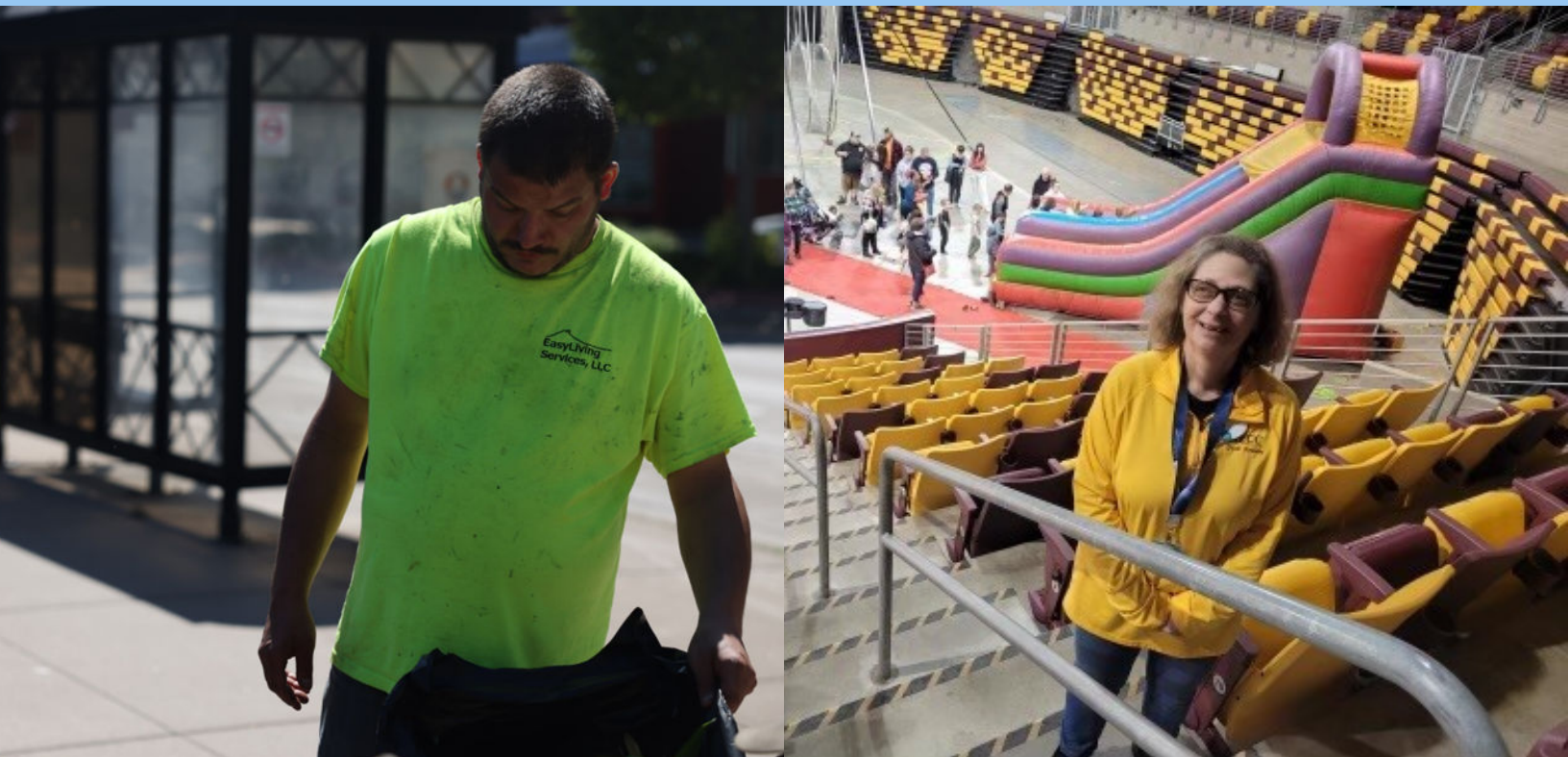


# Udactually.....

A huge shout to a talented and dedicated team! Udac is honored to have exceptional individuals that are committed to the organization's mission, vision and values. Thank you to each person for the difference you make in the lives of the people we are privileged to serve. Thank you - Alia Bruckelmyer, Angela Welch, Casey Lozon, Chris McCord, Nicole Opland, Dana Mattila- Swor Jenna Peterson, Jo Bittner, Joe Burch, John Skiba, Joyce Teah, Kayla Stenstrup, Mike Granley, Nova Senarighi, Paige Wanek, Savannah Swanson, William McGivern. Your work to support competitive integrated employment and meaningful community engagement makes a difference everyday

Thank you to the people we are privileged to serve. You continue to tell us that you love being "of the community" and that the Udac team's work to strengthen community inclusion is important to you and for you. Your success is our success and everyday you exceed expectations when you are given the opportunity. Thank you for being the most important team member!

If you are interested in joining the progressive, creative and dynamic Udac team, please contact Lola Aune at [laune@udac.org](mailto:laune@udac.org) **Udactually, love what we do!** [www.udac.org](http://www.udac.org)



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