

FALL 2023

MILKWEED NEWS

Official Newsletter of Milkweed Connections, LLC

Planting Seeds

During the spring and summer months, Milkweed Connections laid groundwork for the future. Our biggest project was moving to a larger office with new amenities. We now have even more to offer, from a well-stocked art room to a full kitchen. Some of our individual providers have also been planting seeds as leaders and trainers of other peer support specialists, while others attended training to help grow their support skills.

As the days get shorter and cooler, Milkweed is excited to harvest the fruits of our labor by sharing our space, knowledge, and skills.



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Welcome to Our Office

When you enter our new space on Wilson street, you are greeted by a large room full of comfy couches. This area is great for lounging, training, or even meeting at the large table near the windows. Help yourself to a drink from the beverage cooler before you sit down and relax! Feel free to put your feet up. Or perhaps, you want to wander into one of the adjacent rooms for art, cooking, yoga, games, or music.



Once you walk through the main room, you arrive at the kitchen. Participants can often be found making food to share; sometimes there is a cooking group whipping up something delicious. The kitchen is stocked with utensils, tools, and dishes - there is even a grill to wheel outside to the porch so you can cook outdoors.

As you continue to wander, you find the art space, a double-wide room filled with art supplies from paint to yarn to pens and paper. Grab a rock painting kit and paint a rock from outside. Choose some colored paper to make origami. With the fully-stocked shelves, your creation is only limited by your imagination.





Once you find the yoga room, feel free to unroll a mat and grab a block or other prop to help make poses easier. You can use a singing bowl or hand drum to help you relax. If yoga isn't your thing but you want a cozy space, visit the room next door to sit on a comfy chair or bean bag, and perhaps play a board or card game. If you would rather immerse yourself in another world, visit the gaming room, where you can choose a video game and curl up on the couch while you play.



Perhaps you are looking to make some music? You can visit our music room to play or record. Drumming is encouraged; there is a drum set available, or you could choose from a variety of hand drums. If enough people are at the office, you can even hold a drum circle! Other instruments, including a keyboard, are also available. If you feel so inclined, you can even record a podcast using the recording equipment. Ask a knowledgeable team member how to use the recording software and microphone - they are happy to help.

Our landscaping will continue to grow and change. Keep an eye out for more beautiful flowers encircling the building.

Milkweed is excited to host participants, providers, and other friends at our new location; please get in touch with us at info@milkweedconnections.com if you are interested in getting a tour.



Milkweed Leads

Two Milkweed team members presented at the WRRWC's Celebration, Recognition, and Unity event in June. Together at Last!, presented by Milkweed member Rachel Hayden and WRRWC lead clinician Rachel Kilde, discussed collaboration and conflict in a wraparound team approach. The emphasis was on how a diversity of styles was fundamental to a healthy team approach.

Milkweed's Dominique Stewart presented on leading a Drum Circle. She shared how circles have numerous benefits and can be structured in ways that support participants to engage socially with others or focus on their own participation. Drum circles open the possibility of enjoying music as is or challenging oneself to create specific rhythms or patterns to be enjoyed; however one chooses to engage, everyone can agree to maintain a space that is safe for people to exist in or explore music.



Two Milkweed team members, Brett Paulson (second from left, below) and Hope Kissinger (second from right) joined a panel on Piloting Coordinated Specialty Care Services in Nine Western WI Counties at the Now Is the Time Conference hosted by UW-Whitewater in August. The panel shared their experiences of piloting a multidisciplinary team-based service for youth and young adults with first experiences of possible psychosis. The panelists gave insights into what keeps them passionate about this type of service and dedicated to the individuals in this program, as well as their individual roles in the program.





Provider Spotlight: Hope Kissinger

What is your favorite thing about doing this work? I have the best job ever & I can't list just one. I love having the ability to build a connection and relationship with the participant; I get to walk alongside them on their path, planting seeds and watching them grow. Watching someone who was paralyzed by anxiety begin to feel confident to leave the house on their own is a celebration! Going to a treatment court graduation and seeing how proud they are of themselves is such an honorable place to be. I am forever grateful for this opportunity.

How do you know when you're making a difference? This is tough because it's hard to know sometimes - as a team we all make a difference in our participants' lives in one way or another. It's so magical when my participant shares how much they appreciate working with me and how important I have become in their lives. Sometimes we don't know the impact we have on people until the last day of services when they are graduating from the program! I usually know I make a difference when I get feedback from the person or someone on the team who notices and points it out.

"I love building connections with participants, walking alongside them on their path, planting seeds and watching them grow."



What does success look like for your participants? Everyone is so different, but general success is when the person has more joy and contentment in their life today vs yesterday vs the day we met. It's so awesome seeing the person gain awareness of previous patterns they want to change and then doing it. They are breaking negative cycles that caused harm in their life, and now are happy and finding gratitude in the little and big things.

If I had a magic wand... People could see themselves through the eyes of a loved one to really feel and notice just how amazing and unique they are just the way they are, no need to change in the moment and truly just live in this moment of bliss and love.

Favorite thing to do on a day off? My week is so full of traveling and holding space for others, on a day off I really enjoy doing nothing and letting the day guide me. For sure there's some yoga and spending time with my family! I recharge by being alone so there's a little of that as well. I like to just be.

Learn more about Hope: <https://www.milkweedconnections.com/hope-kissinger>



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Members of Milkweed's Choices Team travelled to Massachusetts to learn about new advances in trauma treatment with Bessel van der Kolk, author of *The Body Keeps the Score*.

Above, attendees watch a presentation. To the right, Milkweed member Kate Laird with Bessel van der Kolk.

