

June 2026

# Winona ORC Connection



Winona ORC

Industries

Established 1973

1053 East Mark St.

507.452.1855

[www.winonaorc.org](http://www.winonaorc.org)

Facebook [WinonaorcIndustries](https://www.facebook.com/WinonaorcIndustries)

**“Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists: it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.”**  
~George Dei

Educate ★ Empower ★ Employ

**Pease join us July 23<sup>rd</sup> for our annual golf tournament at The Bridges!**



Where great times meet a great cause. Join us with a team in 2026!



**Join us for the Annual Winona ORC Golf Tournament on July 23rd at The Bridges with a noon shotgun start.**

Enjoy a day of golf, fun pin events, dinner, and prizes all while supporting meaningful employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Gather your team or become a sponsor. This is a great way to reward employees, promote your business, and give back to the community. Call us 507.452.1855 or email Shella at [sschneider@winonaorc.org](mailto:sschneider@winonaorc.org) for details.

# Banquet 2026 Recap

Many thanks to all that attended our 2026 banquet. Special thanks to the sponsors that celebrated with us: Altra Federal Credit Union, WNB Financial and Merchants Bank. Kwik Trip Kellogg accepted the 2025 Employee of the Year award. Extra special celebration for Joan Moor-45 years, Troy Fegre 35 years and Laura Beck 30 years.



## Many thanks to our in-kind banquet donators

- Hy-Vee Bakery
- John Kennedy - Many Hands Many Lands
- Kerry Pye- Visions Event Center
- Helen, Ernie and Anna for taking pictures
- Bergeman Family Journey Keynote
- Julie Pendleton- LaBoutique

## 2025 Employees of the Year



## Milton Topness, 45+ years with Winona ORC

10-18-56- 2-26-26



Winona ORC was proud to be part of Milton's journey, just as Milton was a part of ours. His legacy lives on in the friendships he built, the voices he encouraged, and the advocacy he championed for so many years.

Those who wish to honor Milton's memory may consider a memorial gift to Winona ORC, helping support opportunities for individuals to build meaningful work, connection, and independence, just as Milton did throughout his life.

Milton Topness left a lasting mark on Winona ORC and on the people who had the privilege of knowing him. He was more than a longtime employee and participant in our community. He was a friend, an advocate, a hard worker, and someone who truly believed in the importance of helping others find their own voice.

For Milton, work was never just a job. As Marcus Tyler, who knew Milton through both Winona ORC and HCO, shared, "Work was Milton's life because that is what he took pride in." Milton loved coming to work not only because he enjoyed the tasks he did, but because of the relationships and sense of belonging he found here. The workplace gave him opportunities to connect, laugh, share ideas, and build friendships that became an important part of his life.

Milton worked in a variety of roles, spending much of his time in production where he created buttons for WinCraft. He was known as a hard worker, someone who took pride in doing his job well, and someone who brought positivity wherever he went. Marcus remembered Milton as, "always a positive and upbeat person who loved to work." Milton also served on Workers Council, using his voice to advocate for himself and for others, always encouraging his coworkers and friends to speak up and be heard. Those conversations did not stop when the workday began or ended. Milton often used his work break times to sit with friends and coworkers, talking, laughing, and discussing ideas for advocacy work and upcoming meetings with organizations he cared deeply about. He had a way of bringing people together and inspiring others to work toward something bigger than themselves.

Milton's advocacy reached far beyond the workplace. He was deeply involved with The Arc Minnesota, Self Advocates of MN (SAM), and People First where he worked tirelessly to promote and protect the rights of people with intellectual and physical disabilities. He was proud to help pass legislation at the state level and to be part of meaningful change that improved the lives of others. In 2018, Milton was recognized as Self Advocate of the Year through HCO's First Friends, receiving the Jeremy Miller Award for his dedication and leadership.

Outside of work, Milton lived a full and joyful life. He loved cheering for the Minnesota Twins, cooking, crafts, games, church activities, COMPASS events, and spending time with friends, his brother, staff and at the Adult Day Center after retirement. He was known for his humor, his competitive spirit, and his ability to light up a room simply by walking into it.

What made Milton special was the way he wove all of these parts of his life together. Work gave him purpose, friendship, and connection. Advocacy gave him a platform to lift others. Community gave him a place to belong. Milton showed everyone around him that people with disabilities lead meaningful, impactful, and fulfilling lives, and that when people are given opportunities, support, and community, they can leave an extraordinary mark on the world.

# SPARK- formerly SET



Winona ORC's day services program has a new name, logo, and renewed focus! In March, SPARK (Skills, Participation, Access, Relationships, Knowledge) was introduced to better reflect the program's mission of empowering participants through communication, cultural awareness, independent living skills, and healthy lifestyles. Led by Kelsey Yuman, SPARK will collaborate with local businesses and organizations to encourage meaningful community involvement and integration. Interested in connecting with the program or sponsoring a future field trip? Contact Kelsey at [kyuman@winonaorc.org](mailto:kyuman@winonaorc.org).



Trip to Eagle Center in May



Computer Says No

## Step Forward

**New program starting at Winona ORC- this summer!**

The Step Forward Program will be starting this summer. The participants will focus on training that will prepare them for community employment by providing instructional material and career exploration.



Building Skills. Creating Opportunities.

We look forward to showing you the transformation of this space for the STEP FORWARD program in our next newsletter.

# Rachel Overing Staff Employee of the Month

Rachel was selected by the Worker's Council as Staff Employee of the Month for April. Clients shared that "Rachel models hard work, is helpful, and well liked." Rachel has worked at Winona ORC since April 2024. She said, "I love working with clients and seeing growth in their abilities." Rachel enjoys being hands-on and has worked in several areas at Winona ORC, with laundry being her favorite. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her son and 5-month-old grandson.



Computer Says No

After graduating from high school, Brittany began working at Winona ORC in 2012. Last fall, she achieved a longtime goal by purchasing a fully paid-off 2016 Chevy Equinox. Brittany carefully planned and saved to find the right vehicle with the features she wanted.

She credits the encouragement and support from Winona ORC for helping her stay motivated and on track. Brittany is grateful for the independence that comes with car ownership and for the opportunity to grow through community employment.

She currently works at Watlow preparing parts for electric boards and other components and fills in when needed in our industrial laundry facility.

## Brittany



**Brittany shared, "Winona ORC has been there for me since day one to help me stay on track with making empowering goals."**

## Many thanks to Hiawatha Education Foundation for grant funds to enhance the work environment for Winona ORC employees!

Winona ORC was granted funding to make enhancements to our industrial laundry and production work areas. So far, we have purchased a Third Arm Sheet Folder, which allows employees to fold sheets independently without assistance from another colleague. The device uses a foot pedal to secure the sheet under a clip, allowing the user to complete the folding process on their own.

The new equipment has been a big hit, and it has been wonderful to see the smiles as employees learn new skills and gain greater independence in completing tasks by themselves.

In addition, we purchased stress-relief mats for employees who stand on cement floors. These mats help reduce muscle and joint strain while improving circulation and comfort throughout the workday.

We will also be ordering new tables for the production and laundry areas, along with standing tables for the laundry department. We look forward to highlighting those additions in a future newsletter.



**Marie demonstrating using the Third Arm Sheet Folder**



**Testing out the new mats!**

# Starlight Stroll 2026

November 6, 2026

Families\* Runners\* Walkers\*  
All Abilities

A growing community tradition  
supporting Winona ORC



Winner 2025- Jordan & Jeffery Bergeman

"Jeffrey's love of endurance events has inspired me"-Jordan B.



Youth 2025 Winner Samuel Bergeman



Light up the night and join us for one of our most anticipated events of the year, the Starlight Stroll this November! Starting at Lake Park Lodge at 6:05 PM, this unique twilight event is the only regional 5K of its kind, offering both a 5K and a 1 mile option for all ages and abilities. Whether you are running, walking, or strolling, it is a fun and meaningful way to get active while supporting a great cause.

Participants are encouraged to wear glow gear and get creative. This event is known for its vibrant, high energy atmosphere and family friendly fun. Businesses can join in too by forming teams, sporting company gear, or rewarding employees with a healthy, community focused outing. Consider offering a coupon code or incentive to encourage participation.

As one of our annual fundraisers, the Starlight Stroll helps support the mission of Winona ORC and the individuals we serve. Gather your friends, family, or coworkers and be part of a glowing tradition that brings our community together.

**We cannot wait to see you shine!**

## Looking Ahead:

### Starlight Stroll 2026

Mark your calendar for Friday, November 6, 2026, when the Starlight Stroll returns for another memorable evening supporting Winona ORC. We are excited to grow participation by welcoming corporate teams, school groups, regional running clubs, and families seeking a unique fall tradition.

Businesses are encouraged to consider offering employee registration incentives, forming team challenges, or sponsoring group participation as a fun and healthy workplace perk that also strengthens community impact. Get Involved

Interested in bringing a group, exploring business partnerships, or learning more about sponsorship opportunities? **Contact [sschneider@winonaorc.org](mailto:sschneider@winonaorc.org) to get started and help make this year's Starlight Stroll even brighter.**



Proud Sponsor  
**FASTENAL**

Top Female Winner Brooke Hemann



**Businesses & organizations can make a meaningful impact while promoting employee wellness by joining the Starlight Stroll.**

Form a team, offer a registration perk, or create a glow-themed employee challenge and turn a fun evening into a shared experience that supports the mission of Winona ORC.

**Contact**

**[sschneider@winonaorc.org](mailto:sschneider@winonaorc.org)  
to explore partnership opportunities.**



**Work and Fun Around  
Winona ORC!**



# Contributions July- December 2025

## Thank you for the support of our mission!

Gerald Cichanowski  
Greg & Rebecca Lossen  
Butch & Lynne Beier  
Suzanne Hoodcheck  
Ellyn English  
Brad Turner  
Don & Sandra Curtin  
James Frankard  
Foundation  
Erber't & Gerbert's  
Nathan Hillesheim  
Hoff Celebraton of Life  
Ashely Caaplewski  
Kent & Cathy Espe  
David & Kathleen  
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Jerry & Sue Miller  
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Debra Norton  
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Frank Wohletz  
Dale & Linda Kukowski  
Mike & Linda  
Cichanowski  
Winona Eagles Club  
#1243

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Steph Simmons  
Doug Troke- Farmers  
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Ernie Gorman  
Merchants Bank  
Jerry & Pat Papenfuss  
Ann Nelson  
Peerless Chain  
Jan Degallier -  
Degallier Leadership  
Solutions  
Boomer's Quality  
Plumbing  
Steve Zolondek  
Home & Community  
Options  
Bill Leaf  
Bub's Brewing  
Itechra  
Winona Health  
Foundaiton  
Custom Alarm  
Bob & Deb Leaf  
Mary Schneider  
Fred Naas

# Make a Difference



Jerry & Pat Papenfuss



Mike & Joette Gostomski



# Champion the Cause



# Be the Change





**Friday,  
November 6,  
2026**

Start Time: 6:05  
p.m.

**5K (3.1 mile)  
Run/Walk/Roll**

**1 Mile  
Run/Walk/Roll**

Lake Park Lodge, Winona, MN  
Wheelchair entries start 5 minutes prior to the runners/walkers 5k  
and 1 mile event



Register with the QR code, mail, or email this form to:  
[sschneider@winonaorc.org](mailto:sschneider@winonaorc.org)

Groups must register using paper form.

**Proceeds support: Winona ORC Programs & Services**

**Participants that register by October 19th receive a T-shirt.  
Early packet pickup: Thursday, November 5<sup>th</sup> @ WORC (1053 E.  
Mark St.) from the hours of 8am-5:30pm  
Race day registration and packet pickup: 4:30pm at Lake Park  
Lodge – foot of Main St. and Lake St. Winona, MN**

**Course: East Lake Winona , out and back, flat and fast  
5K Awards: Top male & female racer, Top 14 year-olds &  
under. No awards for 1 Mile distance**

**Entry Costs**

**5K Registration: \$30 per person by October 19th to guarantee a T-  
shirt on race day \$25 per person for groups of five or more– register  
with this form– NOT QR code \$35 per person race day or after  
October 19th (not guaranteed a T-shirt) Mile registration: \$25 per  
person by Oct. 17th to guarantee a T-shirt on race day \$30 per  
person race day or after October 17th (not guaranteed a T-shirt)  
Children 12 and under may race with a parent for free– no T-shirt**

Registration Form Check one:

- 5K
- 1 Mile
- Competitive
- Walking
- Youth/ no shirt

Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_/\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Age on day of race: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Name (min 5  
people): \_\_\_\_\_

**Groups may only register via this form– not QR Code**

**Adult T-shirt Size: S M L XL**

**2XL 3XL None**

With my signature signed below, I acknowledge my understanding that participating in the Winona ORC Starlight Stroll 5k and 1 Mile event, involves a strenuous activity which I am physically capable of undertaking and I represent that I have received no restrictions on such activity from any physician. I further understand that my participation in the Run/Walk/Roll involves inherent risks of personal injury and loss of property. I hereby absolve myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, forever, any and all rights and claims or damages I may accrue against Winona ORC Industries and its employees, the City of Winona and its employees, volunteers and any other advertised sponsor as well as individuals having connection to this event for any and all illness or injuries, accidents, property losses or hazardous health conditions suffered by me while participating in the race on Friday, November 7, 2025. I also grant to the Released Parties the right and permission to copyright and/or publish, reproduce or otherwise use my name, voice and likeness and/or written material, photographs, motion pictures and audio-visual, magnetic recording about me as a result of or in connection with my participation in the Starlight Stroll 5k/1 Mile Road Race. I agree to relinquish all rights, title and interest I may have in the finished product or the advertising copy that may be used in connection there with and waive all rights to payment or compensation therefore.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian (if under 18): \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Winona ORC  
Attn: Starlight Stroll  
1053 East Mark Street  
Winona, MN 55987

Make checks payable to:  
**Winona ORC MEMO:  
Starlight Stroll**

Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

For additional information, please  
contact Shella Schneider at  
[sschneider@winonaorc.org](mailto:sschneider@winonaorc.org)

### Mission

Provide services for people with disabilities in our community, including vocational counseling, comprehensive job-related skill training and meaningful employment.

### Vision

Every person with disabilities – physical, mental, or learning – is living their full potential through meaningful work, community interactions, family and friendships.

### Contact and Hours

Open Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

(Except holidays)

Receiving Hours 7:00 am – 2:30 pm

1053 East Mark Street

Winona, MN 55987

Phone 507-452-1855

Fax 507-452-1857

