

CHOICE instructor earns award from MOHR



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Board member Gwen Bowler (right) presents a Direct Support Professional Award to DJ Preiner (left) on behalf of the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation.

Has large impact on fitness effort through partnerships

David “DJ” Preiner, a lead fitness instructor for CHOICE, Inc., and its SHAPE program, received a Direct Support Professional Award from the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and

Rehabilitation. The honor for “Enrichment Focus” recognizes individuals for exemplary work, skills, impact and the “creation and implementation of innovative and proactive services” for people with disabilities.

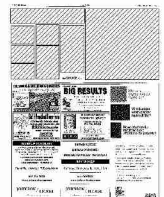
“DJ is a dynamic DSP who enthusiastically shares his passions and talents with our participants,” said Erin Sommer, program director

for CHOICE in Maple Grove.

Based in Eden Prairie, SHAPE offers fitness opportunities to people at three locations.

Preiner initiated a mentorship program through SHAPE to help participants to build leadership skills.

He also led health and fitness challenges, created an outreach effort with meal kits and



partnered with other organizations including Tassel Transition Program and the Young Men's Service League.

Sommer said Preiner's knowledge and expertise in health and wellness helped pave the way for the growing adaptive fitness program.

While working with others to help them establish a healthier lifestyle, Preiner also has a vision to connect participants with disabilities to their communities, she explains.

"What kind of makes CHOICE a special place is they allow the employees to use their strengths, hobbies and interests to build programs such as SHAPE," Preiner said.

People who are excited and passionate about something tend to spread that energy to others, he explains. This makes people more receptive and that's when successful things happen, he said.

Workouts help people to build confidence, said Preiner, and confidence is important as people seek to become more independent. The instructor wears "many hats" at CHOICE, driving bus routes, and job coaching. He previously worked as a case manager.

Preiner has a degree in community health education from the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and is a small-town native of northern Minnesota.

"I didn't know exactly how I was going to use it (his degree)," said Preiner. "I feel like I've found my niche in everything, through SHAPE."

Award selection com-

mittee member Jim Clapper said he was struck by how dedicated all of the candidates are in serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities." As a parent of an adult with disabilities, he saw lots of creativity, perseverance and loving care.

Direct support professionals, like Preiner, are at the core of community-based services for people with disabilities throughout Minnesota, according to Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation.

The organization has been advocating at the state level for direct support professional wage increases so providers can better compete for quality employees.

The award was presented at the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation Summer Conference in St. Cloud.

The organization represents more than 110 adult day, day training and habilitation, extended employment, and supported employment service providers across the state.

Its members serve more than 26,000 Minnesotans with disabilities. Members are committed to respect for each individual, a person-centered approach and expanding work opportunities.

More information is available at mohrmn.org, on Facebook and Twitter.