



Birchwood
Cottages

COMMUNITY UPDATES

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Happy Fall!

This issue is a longer one as there has been a lot going on in all communities the last couple months. We are also featuring our culinary teams! They work hard everyday to ensure nutritious and healthy meals are being served to our residents, families and employees.

All Birchwood communities have exciting announcements to share. We welcome Grace Hubly to Owatonna as our new Community Outreach and Sales Manager. We also welcome Melissa Warner as the new Clinical Nurse Supervisor for the north building. Our North Mankato campus is excited to announce full occupancy!

We are also ready to reveal our new Birchwood video! It features both towns and what we are about. You can [click here](#) or the link below to view.

Birchwood has also received the [Steps to Excellence Quality Award from LeadingAge](#). This is a very big accomplishment for our teams, and a way for us to show (and continue to show) our dedication and commitment to provide quality care to all residents.



I hope you enjoy this issue and have a wonderful fall season!

- Andrea Rupe, LALD
Vice President of Business Operations



MEET OUR CULINARY TEAMS!

OWATONNA

Susan Polasek | Culinary Services Coordinator



HELLO! My name is Susan and I am the Culinary Director at Birchwood. I joined the Birchwood family in March of 2022 as a cook and only most recently took on the role of Culinary Director.

I am a Minnesota native, however I have been fortunate to have spent part of my life traveling and lived in a few different states such as Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania and Oregon, but always found my way back home!

I am Blessed with 2 amazing Stepsons and 2 beautiful Granddaughters, all of whom live in different states so I always have a reason to travel!

I spent about 25 years in the Hospitality Industry as a Hotel GM in Rochester MN. After deciding to leave that industry I was able to take a very extended vacation and traveled to spend time mostly with family and friends but squeezed in some Me time to think about what it was I'd like to do in my final working years before I retire.

I was introduced to Birchwood Cottages by a family member (whom works here!) and they needed someone to join their culinary team at the time. As soon as I walked into the door I knew this was somewhere I wanted to be. The atmosphere was so welcoming and caring! I've always had a passion for cooking and believe it truly has to come from the heart and the love then shines through your food.

Why Birchwood? For too many reasons to mention, however, the biggest reason for me is I feel truly privileged and blessed to be a part of the residents life, knowing I can put a smile on their faces through what I enjoy doing most, and that is creating "food memories" for them.

The added bonus working here is I get to be a part of one big family of such kind, caring & compassionate people. It takes a big heart to do the type of work we all do here and all of us to work together to create such a positive atmosphere. We have amazing hands on owners and leadership to help guide us in our journey here and are completely supportive of allowing us to be our best selves.



Dakota | Culinary Assistant



My role at Birchwood Cottages is a cook. I'm a funny person, love meeting and talking to people, and putting smiles on everyone's face.

I have 3 kids and 1 dog. I like to work outdoors, play with my kids, take my kids to parks, and working on racecars with my buddy.

MEET OUR CULINARY TEAMS!

OWATONNA



Genesis | Culinary Assistant

Hello my name is Genesis Zetino! I am a cook at Birchwood cottage, I like baking and cooking, I like being outdoors, love my dogs, love my family, creative, funny, nice, and like to make new friends! The reason why I picked Birchwood cottage was because I wanted to do something new and wanted to show my skills of hard work, plus I love to make everyone smile!



Jena | Culinary Assistant

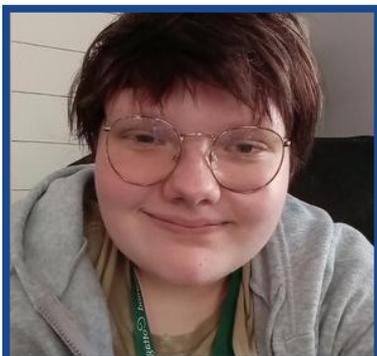
Hi, my name is Jena Hanson. I am a Culinary Assistant at Birchwood Cottages. I am active in many different activities including FFA, National Honor Society, and tennis. I came to Birchwood Cottages because I enjoy working with people and helping others.



Dacey | Culinary Assistant

My names Dacey, but some people call me Dace! I've been a Culinary Assistance for a couple weeks. I've been learning a lot and enjoying it! Outside of work, I go to high-school at CHOICE Technical Academy, and spend time with my mom and siblings. In my free time, I enjoy drawing, crafting, and you might catch me in a community theater production!

I'm really passionate about helping people in need, and I believe everyone deserves high quality meals. I chose Birchwood because I love the welcoming atmosphere, and the kindness of all my co-workers. I admire the work everyone does to make sure we are providing the best care possible.



MEET OUR CULINARY TEAMS!

NORTH MANKATO

James Brezina | Culinary Services Coordinator



James has made his passion for playing with food his purpose throughout his life. It started on his Grandad's farm, learning to perfect his Grandad's Peach Cobbler. He's worked in Quick Service Restaurants to the 5 Star Hotels of Ritz Carlton, he has enjoyed nourishing the bodies of entertainers Elton John and Christina Aguilera, the players and families of the St Louis Cardinals, Rams and Blues, students of private schools and gamblers at Mystic Lake.

Food is his love language and serving the residents, employees and families of Birchwood brings him gratitude daily.

FUN FACT: He still is working to PERFECT his Grandad's peach cobbler, although along the way he became a Master French Pastry Chef!

His greatest influence in the kitchen was his grandad, and he is driven to serve meals that are enjoyed and provoke a moment to pause and reflect on life's richness.

When he is not working, you may find him paddleboarding, running, traveling to small towns in Minnesota, running numbers in the grocery aisles, but you will definitely find him with his sweetie, Kristi.

He was eager to join the team at Birchwood after hearing great things about the facility and learning the mission of serving residents with compassion and purpose, feeding people is the heart of his passion and he is grateful for his team of Abby, Bonnie and Mai that he gets to do this with every day.

Abby | Culinary Assistant

Hello! My name is Abby Mullin and I am currently in graduate school to earn my master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with friends and family!

Bonnie | Culinary Assistant

My name is Bonnie, I have 2 kids and 2 dogs. I grew up around the area and have a great passion for food as I feel its a great way to connect with people and family.



BIRCHWOOD COTTAGES RECOGNIZED FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN QUALITY



In the fall of 2023, Birchwood Cottages was honored for achieving all three levels of the Steps to Excellence program through LeadingAge Minnesota. Birchwood Cottages has always taken great pride in the quality care, services and support we provide to our residents.

When it comes to helping our residents age well and live fully, we strive to better our best. We proactively seek out ways to innovate and improve what we do. We are committed to moving forward on a path to continuous quality improvement. And our efforts have not gone unnoticed.

On Sept. 9, we were honored to be a recipient of the first annual Steps to Excellence Awards at the LeadingAge Minnesota Annual Meeting & Leadership Forum held at Grandview Lodge, Nisswa. The award was given by LeadingAge Minnesota, the state's largest association of organizations that serve older adults in independent senior housing, assisted living, adult day, and skilled nursing settings. Birchwood Cottages was honored for achieving all three levels of the program focused on organizational excellence.



We are incredibly proud of this accomplishment and know that it would not have been possible without our dedicated staff who are united in our shared mission to provide quality care to those living with memory loss.

Quality never ends. It's a continuous journey, and one we are better prepared to take because of our participation in the Steps to Excellence program.

We will use what we are learning to further engage all our staff in performance excellence and to help them better understand our mission and embrace our values as they carry out their work. That, combined with our continued commitment to help our residents live their best lives, will greatly improve the experience of all who live and work at Birchwood Cottages.

Our staff and residents are integral to our commitment to Performance Excellence in Aging Services. **We invite you to join us on our path to continuous quality and to share your ideas on how we can do better.** We look forward to the work that we will do together at Birchwood Cottages.

Read Online: [Owatonna Press Release](#) | [North Mankato Press Release](#)

2023 STAFF APPRECIATION PICNIC EVENT!

Birchwood Cottages held their 2nd Annual Staff Appreciation Picnic in August.

We cannot thank our employees enough for the hard work they do each and every day. They are committed, passionate, and dedicated to caring for those in our communities. The picnic gives all of us a chance to meet others across our communities, laugh, play games, eat amazing food, and win fabulous prizes!

[View All Photos & Videos Here](#)



SPEAKING OF AMAZING STAFF...

Birchwood Cottages' Difference

Has someone gone above and beyond for you or your loved one at Birchwood?
Nominate them today!

The **Birchwood Cottages' Difference** is a recognition program to recognize an employee at Birchwood Cottages who exemplifies and demonstrates the mission and values of Birchwood Cottages. This individual is one who goes above and beyond in providing care and services to our residents, resident families, co-workers, and others.

[Submit nominations here](#) or complete a nomination card at any building.
Our next recipients will be chosen at the end of October!

2023 WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S EVENTS



Birchwood Cottages staff took part in the [Walk to End Alzheimer's](#) events in both Mankato and Owatonna this past month.

This year Birchwood had the honor of sponsoring the Pet Station. Not only did we spend the day supporting and raising money for such an important cause that is dear to our hearts, we also got to meet new furry friends!



We are so grateful for everyone that participated in such an important event to raise money for research and to increase awareness. If you are interested in being a part of our team next year reach out to [Jen in North Mankato](#) or [Karen in Owatonna](#). We would love to have you walk with us!

[View the Walk Photo Gallery Online](#)

[About the Walk & Alzheimer's Association](#)



CONTACT US

Owatonna Community

1845 & 1905 Austin Road
Owatonna, MN 55060
507.413.6800 Main
507.413.6737 North Fax
507.413.6452 South Fax

North Mankato Community

1630 Lor Ray Drive
North Mankato, MN 56003
507.613.0006 Main
507.387.2320 Fax



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@[birchwoodcottagesnorthmankato](#)

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BirchwoodCottagesMN.com

Experience the Birchwood Difference Stop by for a Tour!



Community Highlights

State-of-the-art camera and alarm technologies

Homestyle living areas with community kitchens

Private and companion room options

24/7 on-site dementia trained caregivers

Life enrichment programming

Chef prepared gourmet meals

Beautiful gardens and courtyards with walking paths

Come Home to



People. Purpose. Passion

Our Values

People. The heart of Birchwood Cottages.

Purpose. To provide a higher quality of life for those with memory loss.

Passion. For striving for excellence.

