

JANUARY 2026

FP VOL. 2 ISSUE 1

Iowa Focus  
family options and community supports

# FOCAL POINT



• Council Bluffs CONNECT members celebrating at Dusted Charm

## 'Focal Point' on Engagement

 – Derek Laney

Hi everyone,

Welcome to this year's release of Iowa FOCUS 'Focal Point' !

In this first issue you'll read stories about Iowa FOCUS CONNECT activities in Council Bluffs and Creston, see pictures of individual creations and achievements, and find information about opportunities for daily community engagement that every one of our members can access.

You're encouraged to check out all this information so that you can encourage the people you support to get out, join in, and play a part in everything 2026!

As always, if there's something you'd like to see included in an upcoming issue of 'Focal Point', let us know by emailing your requests, suggestions, and submissions to [derek@iowafocus.com](mailto:derek@iowafocus.com).

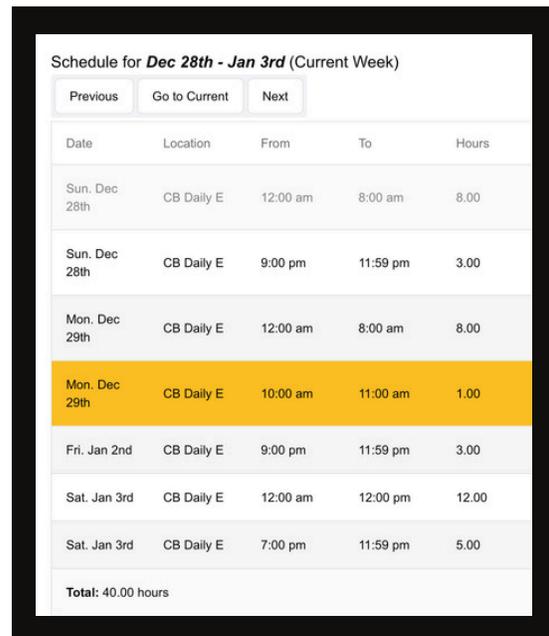
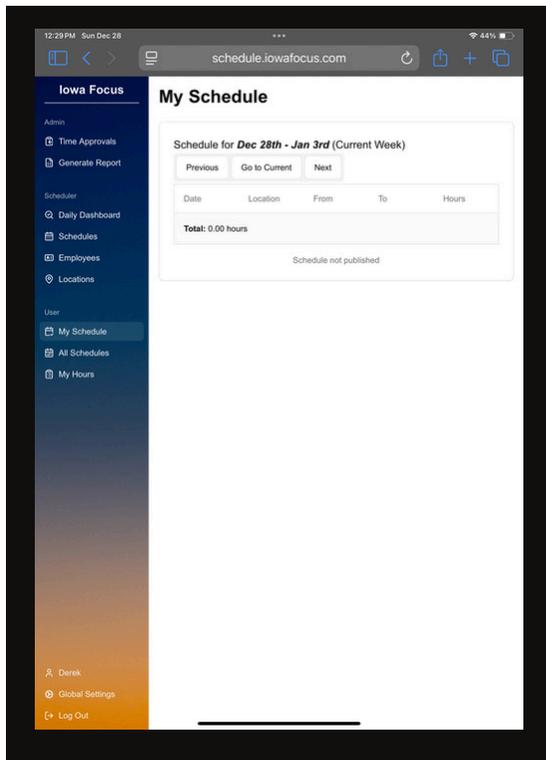
# Looking Back at 2025

 — Derek Laney

Iowa FOCUS has big plans for 2026. We're going to make Therap access easier, increase activity opportunities for our residential member, and add more training resources for the whole team. But before we get into the new year, let's look back on what was accomplished in 2025.

A major goal in '25 was to complete a transition to an online Scheduling platform. We held planning meetings in February. In March and April, we surveyed Iowa FOCUS employees to understand staff experience with existing platforms and seek advice on what works best. Based on your feedback, we decided the best option was an Iowa FOCUS platform tailored to our team's requests and needs. We contracted a regional developer in May, and throughout summer, a Scheduler was developed that was released for trial runs by fall. Company-wide trainings began in October and by the end of 2025, it went live! First reactions have been very positive, and improvements will continue so that the experience is easy, accurate, and convenient. A few images from the current system are shown below.

Other goals for 2025 included increasing our staffing capacity and varying the activities experienced in our CONNECT programs. Check!-and-Check! Both goals were met and exceeded thanks to the great work of our team leads. Finally, our goal to simplify Therap entries was also resolved when the scoring method was streamlined based on staff input and feedback. Thank you all for making it happen!



The screenshot shows a detailed view of the schedule for 'Dec 28th - Jan 3rd (Current Week)'. The schedule is displayed in a table format with columns for Date, Location, From, To, and Hours. The total hours for the week are 40.00 hours.

Schedule for Dec 28th - Jan 3rd (Current Week)				
Previous	Go to Current	Next		
Date	Location	From	To	Hours
Sun. Dec 28th	CB Daily E	12:00 am	8:00 am	8.00
Sun. Dec 28th	CB Daily E	9:00 pm	11:59 pm	3.00
Mon. Dec 29th	CB Daily E	12:00 am	8:00 am	8.00
Mon. Dec 29th	CB Daily E	10:00 am	11:00 am	1.00
Fri. Jan 2nd	CB Daily E	9:00 pm	11:59 pm	3.00
Sat. Jan 3rd	CB Daily E	12:00 am	12:00 pm	12.00
Sat. Jan 3rd	CB Daily E	7:00 pm	11:59 pm	5.00
<b>Total: 40.00 hours</b>				

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## In the Spotlight with Tony Hunt

Tony Hunt is a longtime member of the Iowa FOCUS family. As this edition's subject for our 'Employee Spotlight', we sat down and asked him some questions about his role at Iowa FOCUS and personal life.

**How long have you worked for Iowa FOCUS? What jobs?**

**What do you do now?** I have worked at Iowa FOCUS since the summer of 2012. I have been a Site Manager, and currently I am a DSP primarily for overnights.

**What are some of your favorite things about this work and company?**

Some of my favorite things about this job are the consistency and commitment to training, holiday parties, and schedule flexibility.

**Tell a little something about your Family!** My family is spread out mainly between Omaha, Nebraska and Kansas City, Missouri. I'm very proud of my nephews including an engineer, KC Police Department member, a musician, and a family man who sometimes helps with "The Family Business" which is real estate investing in Nebraska, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma and Kansas <https://NebraskalowaMissouriHomes.now.site>.

**What are your favorite hobbies?** My favorite hobbies are: reading, listening to audio-books, exercising, and business networking.

**What are your favorite types of music and favorite movies/TV shows?** Some of my music favorites are The Richard Smallwood Singers, The Winans, Commissioned, and TAKE6. My favorite TV shows are sports shows like *First Take* with Steve A. Smith, *The Herd* with Colin Cowherd.

**What are some of your personal goals?** Some of my personal goals are: to impact lives in a positive way, to continue leaving a legacy of commitment to serving the community, and buying as much real estate as I can.

**What is something you're most proud of accomplishing in your personal life?** I am most proud of being available to care for my mom until her last breath.

**And what is something you're proud of accomplishing at Iowa FOCUS?** I am proud to have been a committed employee of Iowa FOCUS for 13.5 years and counting!

**What advice would you give to people working at Iowa FOCUS?** My advice to first starters with Iowa FOCUS is: read your employee handbook, get involved with company activities and events, attend all trainings, and do not take "ups and downs" personally (That's life).

I would like to share that two BIG reasons I have stayed with Iowa FOCUS is that leadership – Derek Laney – listened to me when I had something to say. And secondly, the Director – Desiri Wilwerding – gave her condolences when my mom died. Those are reasons I will never quit nor give up on this company.

**Iowa FOCUS wants to thank Tony for being an amazing employee and asset to our community! We are able to do what we do thanks to great people like him.**



# Conversations with CONNECT!

## Creston CONNECT Highlight



- Kaitlin Rosenbeck

Creston CONNECT members had an eventful and engaging quarter!

In October, Creston CONNECT members traveled to Grampaw's Punkin Patch in Stanton, IA and met up with Council Bluffs CONNECT and their friends from Shenandoah. Everyone had the chance to taste test different kinds of apples they grew at the patch, and members each picked out a small pumpkin to take home. The group went to Viking Lake State Park and had a picnic together.

Later in the month, members voted on taking a trip to the Science Center of Iowa in Des Moines. Members Mike McNally, Kristen Miller, Alex Wilkins, and Jackie Zadina all said they enjoyed the activities that involved building!

In November, CONNECT celebrated Veterans Day by attending the community Veterans Day program held in the Creston High School gymnasium. Members Jackie Zadina and Tim Bathurst enjoyed listening to veterans speak about their personal experiences.

Creston CONNECT members also had the opportunity to attend an Iowa Wild hockey game at the Casey's Center in Des Moines, IA. The members cheered loudly for the Iowa Wild, and they won!

In December, CONNECT gave back to children in the Creston community. Members went to a local Dollar General to purchase new toys to donate to Santa's Silverado Sleigh at Stalker Chevrolet. Shane Stephens said that he enjoyed donating because he helped kids get toys for Christmas.

CONNECT members got in the Christmas spirit and decorated the Day Program window and tree as a group for the lighted Christmas parade. One of the many activities voted on was Secret Santa. Staff took members to Dollar Tree to browse and purchase a Secret Santa gift for their peers. Members were able to wrap the gifts and put it under the tree!

Members are excited for future activities and are ready for another great year!



## Council Bluffs CONNECT Highlight



- Hollie Parks

This quarter, members found ways to both squeeze in the last bit of nice weather they were promised and embrace the winter months.

In October, members got fully into the fall spirit. To kick off the month, members started with a trip to Grampaw's Punkin Patch. Members make this trip once a year to meet up with their Creston peers to enjoy lunch and fall activities. When asked what she most enjoyed about the trip, Denise said, "The apple tastings and maybe the lake. I liked them both!" Members also channeled Halloween spirit in decorating doormats for the season. Members chose their scariest ideas to paint – from spiders, to ghosts, to witches.

In November, members discovered their love for bookstores, especially locally owned ones, while shopping at Barnes & Noble, The Book Worm, and Discount Comics. Bookstores were found to be places where even the more reserved folks could explore novel interests.

A lot of members experienced SNAP losses for the month of November, and as that became a daily voiced frustration among the members, it created brainstorming and opened room for discussions on those without. Members shopped for those in need and saved items to be donated to a locally chosen food bank in time for Thanksgiving. Cathy was very proud of the community's work, inviting anyone who stopped by to see the stockpile.

The quarter ended no different for members. Members continued to do their Meals on Wheels delivery routes and picked up their seasonal Salvation Army Bell Ringing volunteer efforts. Members gave 2 hours of their time each week to gather donations and spread holiday cheer. Members also decorated their environments after voting for the red truck theme this year.

Members ended the 2025 season with their annual Christmas caroling. In past seasons, members voted to invite our Creston peers to join at a Shenandoah retirement facility. This season, members chose to invite those within the local community who had a positive influence on their year including Dusted Charm, CB Cares, and Iowa FOCUS offices. Together, they gave their all, dancing and singing away in each performance.

Members closed out our 2025 quarter on a high note and are excited for the New Year!



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## 2026 Wellness Initiative



- Marlena Laney

Getting out in the community and connecting with others is a key part of mental health.

Members' home chores and daily routines might suggest "there's no time", but we must help them to make time. Connecting with others and engaging with the community improves mental health, reduces stress, and creates a stronger sense of purpose for the people we support.

Participating in local events is a fun and easy way to improve our members' daily lives. Movies, sporting events, community concerts and plays, holiday events, and social gatherings are all available to our consumers, as well. Helping them access these activities as part of their regular weekly home schedule can be one of the best ways to improve quality of life.

**Several community websites offer monthly activity calendars including:**

[Creston Public Library](#)

[Creston Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Council Bluffs Official Website](#)

[Council Bluffs Public Library](#)

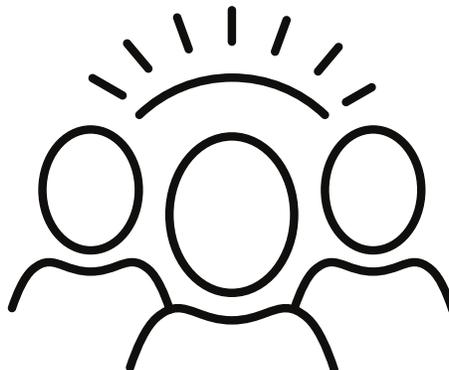
[Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Calendar of Events Shenandoah Chamber and Industry](#)

These are just some of the many resources available to you. Sharing ideas and options among one another is also great. If you know of an upcoming activity in your community, speak up! Mention it to the consumers you support. Tell your coworkers about it. Not only could you help your immediate members engage in something fun and meaningful, but maybe you can organize an Iowa FOCUS-led activity!

Finally, don't forget there is also the Iowa FOCUS Monthly Calendar of events, which includes company-sponsored activities for members and their peers.

Wellness thrives when people feel engaged. Being part of something improves attitude and physical health, and having activities to look forward to elevates mood and stimulates feelings of accomplishment.



## Therap<sup>®</sup> Corner Updates



— Erin Spencer

Taking members on the go is one of our most common supports we provide at Iowa FOCUS – from involvement with the CONNECT Day Program, to visiting the local grocery store or the office, to going out to eat, but how exactly do we document these crucial services we provide in our ISP Data entries?

### There are two location boxes on Therap:

- One is a smaller box with a limited character count. For this, we simplify the explanation by saying the Member's Name Home and/or Community. For example, Renae's Home. If services were provided solely in the community, for instance from the CONNECT Day Program to a doctor's appointment, we might say "Renae's Community", since we didn't go to her home.
- The second location box gives staff plenty of room to elaborate exactly where services and transportation were provided. This is where narration comes in handy. If we took Renae to the CONNECT Day Program and the doctor's office, we need to know the addresses for these locations. For example "Services and transportation provided from CONNECT Program at 105 S Adams to CHI Health Care on 3135 W Broadway." That way anyone who reads your entry will know where you were when out and about.

If you have any more questions about documenting locations in Therap, please feel free to reach out to Erin Spencer via email at [erin@iowafocus.com](mailto:erin@iowafocus.com) or via SComm.

## Iowa FOCUS Winter Store



— Derek Laney

Despite the unpredictably warm start to our winter season, temperatures are starting to drop! Just in time for the cold, the Iowa FOCUS Winter Store opened on December 22nd. The storefront will be open until January 31st (extended from January 22nd).

Head over to the store today to grab hoodies, quarter-zips, shells, t-shirts, backpacks, and much more! To check out the store, visit our Facebook page or follow this link:

<https://www.rusticgraphiccreations.com/iowa-focus-winter-store>

Current members and staff get 25% off all merchandise using the coupon code: **Winter25**

Prices start as low as \$12, pre-discount and applicable taxes/fees.



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## Looking Forward to 2026



— Derek Laney

The Iowa FOCUS community support program has a long history of accomplishments, milestones, challenges and successes. We want build on that for 2026.

This year's operating plan includes goals from every part of our team -- members, staff, community, and advisory members.

First, we plan to make Therap a more accessible platform for you to use. We began that process last year when the scoring system was simplified. This year we want to take organizational steps making the system more convenient. If you haven't yet taken our survey on the issue, please take time to do so. A link was sent to your email. If you didn't receive one, contact me at [derek@iowafocus.com](mailto:derek@iowafocus.com), and I'll get it to you. Tell us what you need. We need your input to make our documentation platform work better for you!

Second, we want to increase activity opportunities for our residential members. Our Day Program – Iowa FOCUS CONNECT – already provides the best activity options in southwest Iowa. We are very proud of what the CONNECT team accomplishes every day! You saw some of that highlighted in this issue of 'Focal Point'. In 2026, we want to carry this success over to our residential program so that community activity and inclusion are part of everything we do.

Third, in 2026 we will move much in-house training online for ease of access and consistency.

Finally, our fourth big goal for 2026 is to expand the new Iowa FOCUS online Scheduler functionality to include timecard reporting. We know you've been requesting this for a long time, and we intend to deliver early this year.

These and other goals will guide us through the new year. We can't predict what challenges may come our way, but we will face them with confidence in our program and team.

If there's a goal you'd like to see addressed, let me know at [derek@iowafocus.com](mailto:derek@iowafocus.com).

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Thank you to our community and amazing staff for all of your support and hard work!

For more updates until our April issue of '**Focal Point**', connect with us via Facebook, Instagram, or by visiting our website.

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