



# THE BRANCH



Access | Compassion | Excellence

## Employee Spotlight

Courtney Baden, LDA (by Cathy Spencer)

Courtney began dental assisting in 1995. She remembers working with Dr. Cernohous at Southside Community Dental Clinic for three years before Courtney took a position here at Apple Tree Dental Coon Rapids. She worked at Apple Tree for about a year with Dr. Lu and she recalls working in clinic and out mobile. At that time, the dental assistants would drive white vans with the mobile equipment and unload the equipment upon arrival at the nursing homes.

Courtney always missed ATD no matter where she was working. She kept her eye out for openings and eventually she was hired back in 2015 to work at our Mounds View location. About 3-4 months after she started, she came over to Coon Rapids one day to work with Dr. Foulkes. Dr. Lu saw her that day and requested to have her back as her assistant. She has been working here ever since and we are grateful for her.



## Meet Coon Rapids - Center Profiles

### *The People Pillar*

Cathy Spencer, Center Director for Coon Rapids

Apple Tree Dental Center for Dental Health in Coon Rapids, Minnesota, is located in the northwest corner of the Twin Cities suburbs. We serve patients from throughout the metro area and have some patients from as far north as the Iron Range. The Coon Rapids Center is home to multiple departments, including those supporting all our Centers. We have the support staff, our clinical and mobile teams, lab techs and our drivers — but we all work together to form one large devoted and cohesive team.

During the “Great Roof Leak of 2019,” (more about that on page 3) the clinic staff and part of the support staff worked out of the Mounds View Center. The remaining staff at Coon Rapids noticed how quiet and empty it felt in the building, and it was a bit disconcerting not to hear the bustling noise coming from the clinic. The group that moved to



The staff bulletin board at the Coon Rapids Center

She is a hardworking, talented, and congenial dental assistant. She is always on the go and on days that we are short on assistants she is able to keep up with Dr. Lu’s double-chair schedule.

Courtney has been married to her husband, Brett, for 21 years; she has a 16-year-old daughter named Ava, and a standard poodle named Friday, whom she walks every day (even at -30 degrees).

Mounds View was appreciative for the hospitality they were shown, and were eager to move back to Coon Rapids when the work was done. Coon Rapids is sort of like home, where we are comfortable and familiar not only with our surroundings but with the people that work here. We get along like family too; we celebrate the joys, cry during losses, and roll our eyes at the craziness.

## The Leaf

### Human Resources Corner

Chad Engstrom, HR Director

In the last few years, **sexual harassment** in the workplace has rightfully gained more attention. Everyone deserves to feel safe and valued at their job. At Apple Tree, we go over our sexual harassment policy during orientation. Read the information below for a refresher.

- There two types of sexual harassment: **quid pro quo** and **hostile work environment**. Quid pro quo is when someone with power (such as a boss) expresses or implies they will take action that may affect an employee's job status in exchange for sexual favors. Hostile work environment can come from deliberate or careless jokes, inappropriate touching, unwelcome social invitations, offensive language, etc. (See your handbook for more examples.)

#### How to report sexual harassment:

The majority of cases can be resolved by having a respectful conversation with the other person(s) involved. However, you may also promptly report the conduct to your manager or the human resources department.

If you feel that reporting offensive behavior to your manager or human resources is not effective or possible, then you may report it to the Board Chair of Apple Tree, whose telephone number is at the front desk, or you may contact the MN Dept. of Human Rights or the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

No retaliation of any kind will occur because you have reported an incident of suspected sexual harassment or offensive behavior.

## Chief's Message

Karen Engstrom, COO

In the world of nonprofit work, there are always ups and downs. This winter was certainly challenging for all of our Centers; sometimes it seemed like the snow and cold would never let up. Unfortunately, this resulted in many canceled appointments, clinic closures, and of course, the "Great Roof Leak of 2019," as it's being called in Coon Rapids. We had a staggering number of lost production hours for January, February, and March at all of the Centers. And yet, the sky is clearing (never mind that it's been a rainy spring), and we're providing dental services to the people that need them, regardless of what the winter is like.

In fact, I can say almost for certain that we have many "ups" coming.

One of these ups has been recent recognition for our hard work in improving dental access across the state and the country. Dr. Helgeson was honored to have received the John P. Rossetti Community Oral Health Impact Award from the American Association for Community Dental Programs (AACDP), which was presented to him at the National Oral Health Conference in Memphis, Tennessee on April 14th. He was also given the opportunity to co-present on Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) with national experts at the conference. These moments shed light on the efforts of Apple Tree's entire team to make dental care available to all people, regardless of age, ability, or income. It can be easy to feel like any one of us doesn't make a difference, but the reality is that each person plays a vital role in this organization to make it work. We'd like that to be reflected in our Branch issues, with highlights on more individuals.

With that being said, we're thrilled to be adding many talented dentists to a number of our Centers, including Dr. DuPlessis, who has decided to stay with Apple Tree after the completion of her AEGD residency at Mounds View. No amount of terrible weather could put a damper on our excitement as we look to the future — but it has certainly given us a new appreciation for the "ups" on the way!

## Connect with Apple Tree

### Social Media



[www.facebook.com/  
appletreedentalcenters/](https://www.facebook.com/appletreedentalcenters/)



[@appletreedental](https://twitter.com/appletreedental)

What do we do on social media? We regularly:

- Post dental-related news
- Share exciting information about our organization
- Participate in social media activism and campaigns to promote legislation that benefits our patients and staff

## What a Winter!

Emma E. Larson

Minnesota is known for having difficult winters, but early 2019 was about as rough as they come. From devastatingly cold temperatures that froze pipes and caused car batteries to die, to the howling wind that took out the power at Mounds View, to the heavy, wet snow that split the roof at Coon Rapids — this winter was a challenge for everyone. In true Apple Tree form, we got through the difficult days and came out on the other side with some great photos and a much better appreciation for spring.



Above: Road conditions north of Rochester in February.



Above: Amie-Jo digs out at Hawley.

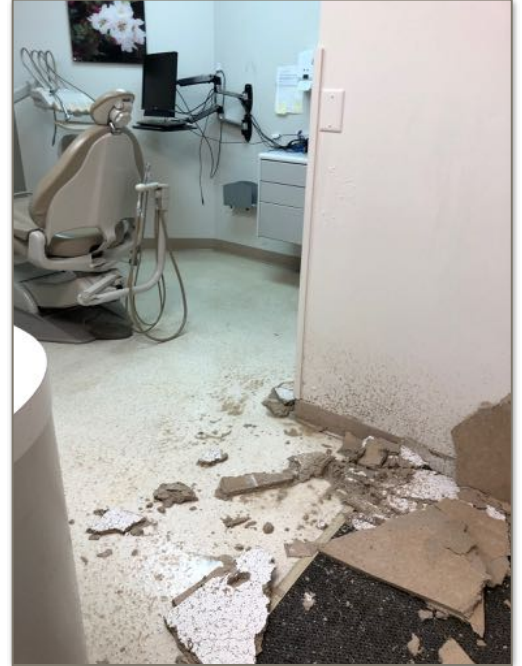
## The Great Roof Leak of 2019

*Yes, that's what we're calling it.*

Emma E. Larson; Photos by Dr. Michael Helgeson, CEO

Our Coon Rapids Center for Dental Health is Apple Tree's oldest and largest clinic (in terms of patients and staff). The day of the Super Bowl, however, Coon Rapids faced its biggest challenge yet — water. Water everywhere.

One of Coon Rapids' mobile program drivers, Jeremy Rickey, came in early on Sunday to pick up some equipment before the big game. His discovery of the problem saved staff and patients from a very unpleasant Monday morning surprise. By the time the Super Bowl started, Coon Rapids staff were already hurriedly calling patients, and Brenda Prosa, Apple Tree's Information Systems Director, was trying to save what was left of the server room. Water dripped from the ceiling in the hallways,



the operatories, and part of the lab, damaging thousands of dollars worth of equipment and effectively putting a large number of clinicians on standby.



Luckily, the nearby Mounds View Center made for a perfect temporary location for the displaced providers. Patients were squeezed into Mounds View's schedule, and the parking lot filled up day after day with patients and staff. Everyone did their part to make sure that the transitions were as smooth as possible, and, within two weeks, things were back up and running at Coon Rapids.

Thank you to all of our incredible providers and staff that worked so hard to make sure that our services continued on, even in less-than-ideal circumstances!



## Mobile Spotlight

Mark Lambert, Driver

Apple Tree relies on teams of incredible clinicians and staff to bring care to people all over the state. However, some of our unsung heroes are our drivers — those who battle the elements, equipment breakdowns, and traffic to help keep our clinicians busy.

Mark Lambert has been working for Apple Tree for almost five and a half years. His official title is “driver,” but that doesn’t really cover everything he does. So what does his average day look like? “Busy,” he said in an interview. “I’m continually looking at equipment; Ken [Njos] does the major repairs, but if there’s a loose bolt or low tires, I try to do that.” The mornings are crucial for planning what he’s going to do that day. “I come in and look at my schedule, what I have to deliver, where it’s going, versus where I have to pick up for the day...then I formulate a route.”

The Apple Tree trucks can haul up to three sets of equipment, but sometimes Mark needs to make eight, nine, or ten stops in a day. There’s a lot of logistical planning involved. And, of course, things sometimes go wrong. “I’ll get a call or a text that something’s broken. I’m learning from Ken how to repair [equipment].”

The weather can go wrong, too. Mark said that the most challenging part of the job is dealing with traffic, road conditions, and the elements — making sure the equipment gets where it needs to go. “If I don’t do my job, then I have 15-20 other people who don’t have a job to come to. I haven’t really taken a sick day in five years.”

The good news is that Mark and other drivers do get to experience some of the gratitude from our patients. “The most rewarding thing is that you’re helping people... We’re bring dental care and health care to the people. I know I’m doing a good thing.”

## Apple Tree Dental’s Mobile Program

### *The Service Pillar*

Emma E. Larson, Dr. Ashley Johnson

When people outside of Apple Tree hear “mobile dentistry,” they often envision a truck out in a parking lot, and somebody ushering patients in one by one to have their teeth given a once-over.

That’s not Apple Tree’s style. Our mobile program is the oldest and one of the most iconic parts of the organization. Over the years, we’ve expanded to serve almost 145 partner facilities, including group homes, assisted living, nursing homes, schools, and Head Start centers. Our Coon Rapids Center alone serves 98 of those facilities. And, our equipment pulls its weight — it can be loaded and unloaded multiple times per day, and sometimes even functions as semi-permanent operatory equipment for outreach, like at the Little Falls Center.



Some of our clinicians almost exclusively do mobile dentistry. Many of them appreciate the versatility of the mobile equipment.

The most important part of our mobile

dentistry program, however, is certainly the patients we serve. Many of them would not have access to quality dental care if it weren’t for Apple Tree Dental’s efforts to provide care on-site.

One patient from a nursing home in Rochester was completely bed-bound, and not able to be transferred from bed to come to the appointment within the nursing home. The entire team brought an Aseptico unit and NOMAD to the patient’s room, set up their operation around her, and were able to complete an extraction without the patient having to leave her bed. If Apple Tree’s mobile team hadn’t gone to the nursing home, and been adaptable to the situation, this elderly patient may not have been able to get her tooth extracted at all. Certainly, this patient wouldn’t have been able to make the trek to the nearby Rochester Center. The case is the same with countless other patients that Apple Tree’s mobile teams see. This vital service can help patients who might otherwise suffer pain from untreated infections and harm to their overall health.

Pictured above: Driver Mark Lambert in one of the trucks.

## EHR Completion

### *Proclamation*

Emma Larson, Brenda Prosa, Karen Engstrom

**Whereas**, the Apple Tree Dental staff have successfully completed the Medicaid EHR Incentive Program; and

**Whereas**, EHR creates a workplace in which proper record-keeping is practiced and followed in ways that positively affect patient care; and

**Whereas**, Apple Tree Dental recognizes the value in celebrating such accomplishments; therefore be it

**Resolved**, that Apple Tree Dental declares Thursday, March 21st to be “EHR Incentive Program Celebration Day,” to be honored with a lunch and dessert party, in appreciation for our staff and providers who have made this accomplishment possible.

## Events

### Star of the North Meeting 2019

Apple Tree Dental joined the many businesses and organizations in the exhibitor hall of this year’s MDA Star of the North Meeting. Chad Engstrom, Emma Larson, Cathy Spencer, Bridgette Jaquith, and Karen Engstrom all helped to man the table and engage with conference attendees. Karen Engstrom also gave a short CE presentation on mobile dentistry.



Pictured: Apple Tree’s exhibitor table at the Star of the North meeting.

## We Did It!

### *Incentive Program Completion Celebrations*

Photos Submitted by Center Directors



Cookies at Coon Rapids



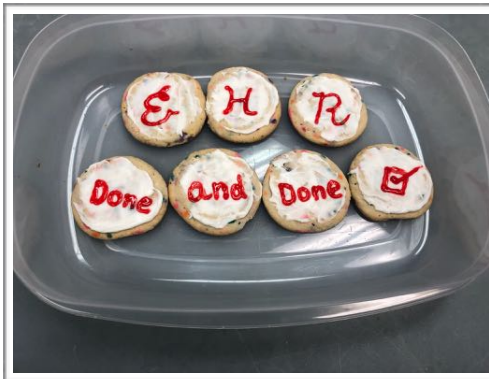
Hawley marble cake



Madelia’s Panera lunch and cookies



Half-sheet cake at Mounds View



Homemade cookies at Fergus Falls



Rochester cookies

Not shown: pizza party at Little Falls



## Professional Announcements

### *The People Pillar*

#### **Dr. Helgeson Receives the John P. Rossetti Impact Award**

Each year, this award goes to an individual who has “demonstrated outstanding service, commitment, and leadership to improve oral health, especially to the underserved.” To see more of this story, go to the “News & Resources” page at [www.appletreedental.org](http://www.appletreedental.org).



Shown from left: Dr. Larry Hill, Dr. Michael Helgeson, Dr. Jay Kumar, Dr. Myron Allukian, Jr.

#### **Building Our Culture of Excellence:**

**People-** Apple Tree’s commitment to increasing employee engagement to provide a supportive, encouraging work environment to provide career opportunities at all levels.

**Quality-** Apple Tree’s commitment to providing continuous quality improvement for optimal clinical outcomes.

**Service-** Apple Tree’s commitment to provide quality care and an excellent patient and caregiver experience that gains trust and loyalty to grow our practice.

**Financial-** Apple Tree’s commitment to stewardship and strengthening the financial operations and overall performance of the organization.

**Growth-** Apple Tree’s commitment to meeting the changing needs of the community through continued assessment, organizational growth, advocacy, and collaboration with other local, regional and national organizations.

## In the News

### *The Quality Pillar*

Emma E. Larson

In early January, Apple Tree’s Little Falls Center was honored to be the featured organization in the **Bridges Connections Dental Careers** video (<https://youtu.be/VrWcbDC2xBU>).

Bridges Connections is an affiliate of the Brainerd Area Chamber of Commerce. They produce videos in different career fields to encourage students to attend local colleges and stay or return to Central Minnesota to build their careers.



Not only will Bridges be showing the video to high schoolers across Central Minnesota, but it is live and posted on the Bridges website, and also on Apple Tree’s website under the News & Resources tab.

We want to say a big “thank you” to the whole Little Falls team (pictured) for their help in creating the video.

Apple Tree is also honored to be featured in a recent video produced by West Central Initiative (WCI) and the Early Childhood Dental Network (ECDN) about the disparities for oral health care for people on Minnesota Health Care Programs (Medical Assistance). It features Apple Tree’s Dr. Ashok Gorrepati, of our Fergus Falls Center, speaking about how critical access dental clinics like Apple Tree are working to provide dental care to those who otherwise go without.

The video has been uploaded to the Apple Tree Facebook page, and can also be watched at our website under the News & Resources tab.



As always, we welcome your input for future issues of the Branch. **Please send your ideas for topics, a powerful patient story, or the above-and-beyond efforts of a colleague which should be highlighted.** These shared experiences help us grow together.

With appreciation,

Emma E. Larson, Marketing / Communications Specialist, Chad Engstrom, Human Resources Director, Deborah Jacobi, Policy Director, and Mary Larkin, Development & Marketing Director