

Visions

FALL 2016

A LOOK

AT THE PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS OF OPPORTUNITY MATTERS INC.

Dear Reader,

You will find this edition of our Vision's newsletter to be full of information, testimonials and fun facts. Since 1980, when Opportunity Matters began operations, we are grateful to have continued growth and the ability to help more individuals throughout central Minnesota. Our 18th residential home has recently finished being built, went through licensing and has had one individual move in so far. In addition, we continue to make progress on our goal of starting a Supported Apartment living program for individuals to have support within their own apartment in the community. Growth within an organization is always exciting. With our continued growth and the holiday season fast approaching, the Vision's committee thought our fall edition would be a great time to remind our community of what Opportunity Matters has to offer, the services we provide and the dedication our employees have in the lives of individuals and their families to reach their full potential. As your family starts to gather to celebrate the numerous holidays that happen this time of year, please keep in mind this newsletter. It may be a family member that needs extra support or a relative who is looking for a job or to volunteer. It is through our community that Opportunity Matters is able to continue to grow and serve more individuals each year. Enjoy the information, testimonials and fun facts. We promise there won't be a quiz.

Sincerely,

Opportunity Matters Visions Newsletter Committee

A Successful Eagle Scout Project

Mike Schmitz, Maintenance Manager

Opportunity Matters was the lucky recipient to work with Matthew Muehlbauer on his Eagle Scout project. To complete his project, Matthew met with OMI leadership to discuss the need for a small shed at one of our residential sites. The cement slab was already poured and in place but Matthew took the lead on planning, securing funding for supplies and finding volunteers to assist in building the shed. On the last day of the project, staff and individuals from the site surprised everyone by showing their appreciation with treats. This is the third Eagle Scout project Opportunity Matters has had the pleasure in being a part of. In the past, Eagle Scout projects have included building of an accessible gazebo for the day program at the main office and landscaping at a residential site. Opportunity Matters would like to thank Matthew for his exemplary leadership, and all of those who donated and volunteered for the project. The shed will be used at the site to hold extra wheelchairs and medical equipment.

If you or someone you know is interested in completing a special project like Matthew or want to volunteer for just a few hours, contact Brenda Eggerth at the main office for more information on current volunteer opportunities.

Testimonial:

"I started volunteering under the assumption that my clients would learn a lot from me. It turns out, I've learned a lot from them, instead!"

■ Ellen, Residential Site Volunteer

Fact:

There is no minimum age to volunteer with OMI. Families are encouraged to volunteer together for various opportunities and events.



Matthew, volunteers, OMI staff and individuals pose for a photo while celebrating the successful completion of Matthew's Eagle Scout project.

Opportunity Matters would like to thank Matthew for his exemplary

Save the Date!

Mark your calendar to join us for these great upcoming events!

Celebration of Abilities

Tuesday, October 18

Twisted Twilight 2016 "Remember the Gh'oul Times"

Friday, October 28

Consulting Services

Opportunity Matters restructured our Behavioral Consulting services in August of 2014 and have been excited to see the service grow ever since. We provide consultation to help reduce or eliminate behaviors that inhibit an individual's access to independent living through use of Applied Behavior Analysis. Consulting takes place in many types of settings such as private homes, schools, vocational placements, foster homes and waived sites. Our Behavior Specialist also provides workshops and seminars to assist others in the industry.

Fact:

- The average number of hours spent on a single consulting case is anywhere from 60 – 80 hours.

Staff Testimonials

"I hopped on the OMI bus a little over a year ago and it is the greatest working experience I've ever had. Everyone welcomed me openly, my opinions are valued and I get to do what I love! Having had worked at other facilities in the area, I believe OMI's core values set them apart from the rest. It's awesome that members of management are so involved with the population we serve. The example set by the management team sets the tone for the company as a whole and it makes me proud to say that I am part of the Opportunity Matters team!"

■ Bri Sullivan, Program Coordinator, Foster 4

"What does my job mean to me? To me, it means everything. It's an amazing feeling knowing you were able to change a person's day or help them have a better day. Walking in the door and being greeted by everyone is such a warm feeling. I love the fact that I get asked everyday if I am coming back. I wake up everyday excited to go to work. I didn't understand it when people said, "It's not work, if you love it." Now, I understand completely. This is not a job that I need, but rather a place that I choose to be. Nothing can compare to how happy this job makes me! Just knowing that these wonderful people are counting on me to be here, makes me push through any bad day, or any bad mood that might try to hold me back. I feel so blessed to have this opportunity!"

■ Raven Appert, Direct Care Support Staff, Foster 8

A Summer of Fun

Brenda Eggerth, Volunteer and Communications Manager



The summer of 2016 proved to be a summer of fun, sun and the opportunity to make some great memories for individuals served by Opportunity Matters. Throughout the warm weather season, the individuals participated in two brat sale fundraisers through Coborn's to raise money



to hold Guys and Gal's club activities throughout the year. Over \$500 was raised to offset expenses for fun get-togethers and enjoyable activities. In June we had a chance to visit with everyone at OMI's annual Great Get Together, attend the Sauk Rapids Food Fest and check out area splash pads. July had us attending both a Minnesota Twins game and a St Cloud Rox game. Thank you to Viking Coke and Sentry Bank for donating the St Cloud Rox tickets. Everyone had a blast and the weather was perfect for a day at the ballpark! In July, some individuals also scheduled time to visit a local favorite,

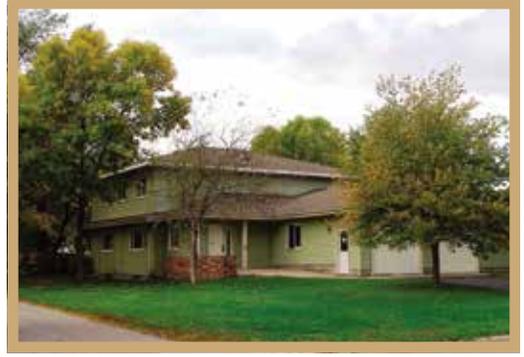


Granite City Raceway. August had us heading out to the Benton County Fair, the State Fair, camp and Valley Fair. Throughout the entire summer, you could usually find staff members and individuals at their favorite weekly summer gathering, Summertime by George. Thank you to everyone for helping us create great memories by donating money or tickets to Opportunity Matters' Guys and Gal's clubs for activities for our individuals. ■



Residential Homes

Opportunity Matters opened our first residential homes (Manor 1 and Manor 2) in the spring of 1982 and 1984. Over the years, Opportunity Matters' residential program has grown to include 18 homes located throughout the St Cloud metro area. Our residential homes serve over 68 individuals, each with their own unique life situations. Some individuals hold jobs, some are retired senior citizens and some are in school. Each individual is also different in terms of their abilities and their needs. Programs are written based on their personal goals for independence and leisure. Our residential homes provide 24 hour assistance with daily living and excel at providing the extras, such as; going to their favorite restaurant, participating in community activities, attending camp or shopping at their favorite stores. Some of our individuals served today have lived with OMI since our start in 1980. Visit any of our residential homes and you will see firsthand the family spirit that encompasses Opportunity Matters.



Manor 1 is one of OMI's original residential homes

Testimonials:

Bill has lived at OMI's Foster 4 for nine months. It would not be an exaggeration to say they were the nine most important months of his life.

Bill is 61. I'm his brother and legal guardian. Just 10 months ago, – before OMI – Bill was in pretty rough shape. He was in an understaffed environment, one that labeled him “non-ambulatory,” and confined him to a wheelchair. He sat alone in his room a lot with nobody to talk to. He rarely participated in community activities. His health deteriorated. The worst thing was that he was sad. “Nobody likes me here,” he told me.



Oakland Heights is OMI's newest residential home

He doesn't say that any more. He is too busy joking with staff and his housemates, Carol, Ken and John. OMI's programming, its commitment to helping clients lead the best life possible, has profoundly changed Bill's outlook. His answer is always the same when someone asks how he is doing in his new home: “I love it here!”

It didn't take me long to figure out why and how OMI made such a dramatic difference in my brother's life. A 10 minute conversation with Foster 4 Program Coordinator Bri Sullivan told me everything I needed to know.

Bri passionately, almost breathlessly, went through one Bill story after another, each focusing on an amusing quirk or conversational habit. It was so much more than simply listening to a professional caretaker. Bri had really gotten to know Bill The Person. Not only that, the affection and care she held for him – and for Carol, Ken and John – was easily accessible.

Under her direction, the other Foster 4 staff have the same touch. Bill is happy there because they really know who he is. And that knowledge – and their ability to develop an authentic connection with him – is the key to everything. They know just the words and tone to use, and when to use them, as prompts for getting Bill to move through the various paces of his day, usually with a wide smile on his face.

My brother is totally ambulatory now. Staff walk with him every day, helping Bill regain his strength and sense of mobility. They also have found endless community activities for him to engage in and make sure he gets to each one of them on time. His health is coming back. He looks so good and happy.

In a nutshell, Bill is thriving now because OMI is more than a name, more than a company. Opportunity really does Matter in this place, and that makes all the difference in the world!

■ Bruce R. Nelson

“My family is very happy with OMI. My parents were scared to put my brother into a group home but when their health declined, they didn't have a choice. Moving my brother to OMI has changed his life. The home where he lives is awesome and the guys who all live there keep an eye out for each other. The staff is wonderful and everyone is like a big family. The parties that Opportunity Matters puts on throughout the year are great. The annual holiday party is the one time a year our entire family gets together.”

■ The family of Rick Stewart (Foster 3 residential home)

I have lived with Opportunity Matters for 12 years and have really enjoyed my housemates, most who I have lived with the entire time. We have had a lot of good times; eating, watching some of our favorite TV. shows (WWE Monday Night

Raw, Dukes of Hazard, Walker Texas Ranger), and playing games on the PlayStation. A few of us also participate in Special Olympics Bowling. Last year I even won the gold medal! There are always activities for us to participate in if we want. Going to camp, attending the movies, going to the library and going out to eat are some of my favorites. OMI will take me to big events (Twins games, etc) which I really enjoy. OMI throws great parties where we can celebrate the holidays with all of our friends and family. We also celebrate special events like birthday parties.

■ Eric (Individual served Foster 2 residential home)

"I have the unique distinction of being able to see OMI operate on two different levels.

The first is that of a care giver for my son Christopher. Chris has lived at Manor 1 for around 10 years. Currently the lead person at Manor 1 is Cassie and she and her team does a wonderful job caring for Chris and the other 3 residences at Manor 1. As a matter of fact, I can say that for all the years that Chris has lived there the care has been exceptional. The real test of this care is when there are issues and there have been some, but the care and how the issues get resolved have always been handled in a professional and caring way.

The second is that of a board member. Through this lens I get to see OMI operate as a business and get to know and understand their business model. OMI has a great board of directors that have a sincere interest in seeing OMI be successful. Regan, CEO and her management team are dedicated professionals who are committed to the mission of "creating opportunities that empower individuals and their families to reach their full potential."

Because of the two different perspectives I think I know OMI pretty well and I would highly recommend them without any reservation any individual and/or family that finds themselves in the position of needing these kinds of services."

■ John Herges, Parent and Board Member of OMI

Facts:

- OMI opened its 18th residential home, Oakland Heights, in late summer 2016
- Some of the 1st individuals OMI served still live with us today.

Adult Day Services

Operating at Opportunity Matters' main building in Sartell, our adult day services provide opportunities for individuals such as skill building, community and social opportunities, activities, health and exercise education. Services are provided to those with cognitive and physical challenges (i.e. developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury) who currently range in age from 18 to 90. Opportunity Matters is proud to work closely with the local Veterans Administration to provide specific services for those with memory loss or dementia. Our adult day services are offered Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and has optional transportation services to assist caregivers with juggling busy schedules.



Testimonials:

"Pathways is an awesome program for my brother because the helpful, caring, compassionate staff always does an excellent job at taking care of him. They make his day's fun, keep him entertained, and assist him whenever he needs help. Since my brother started attending Pathways, he has been expressing himself much better. He communicates very well with staff using his communication board because he knows staff will listen to him. Staff always take extra special care of my brother when he has a seizure, and someone is always by his side to ensure he stays safe. Staff went out of their way by taking my brother up to second floor countless times so he could have a better view of the construction workers outside; he loves watching construction. My brother has a best friend at Pathways that he enjoys spending time with daily. Staff allows my brother to be close to his best friend even when my brother wants to be next to his best friend all day. My brother loves all the outings and activities at Pathways. When my brother comes home, staff goes out of their way to tell us how his day was, and what he did that day. Every day my brother comes home very happy, and he is always excited to go to Pathways every morning. He always has a big smile when he sees the van turning the corner to pick him up.

■ Family of individual served (Adult Day Services)

"The program is great and my son has transitioned very well. They are clearly keeping him busy as his bedtime is now 9:00 and he is sleeping through the night..... WOOOHOO. He is much more tolerant of different activities and our trip back to SD for the 4th was super fun... We usually need to spread out activities and/or not participate in all of them as he becomes



A Mad Hatter Party complete with croquet in the backyard

different things. Everyone has been delightful to work with and I am very thankful to know he is in good hands so I can focus on my work.

■ Jennifer Lage, Family Member of Individual served (Adult Day Services)

overwhelmed and crabby...not this year. We swam, hit the parade, went boating, and watched fireworks...1st time ever! All of the staff know him very well, his behaviors/likes/dislikes and seem to be well versed in his daily routine. I can talk to any of the staff and they either know what his activities were that day or know who was working with him to answer any questions I have. The support staff is changed up so that he doesn't become dependent on just a handful of peeps. They have all embraced the toileting routine and his independence has improved greatly I do think a lot of it has to be because the staff is engaging him and encouraging him to do

Fact:

- The individuals' in the adult day program are always looking for a reason to celebrate a unique event or schedule an outing in the community.

In-Home Supportive Services

Developed for individuals living in the community, Opportunity Matters provides In-Home Supportive services. We serve individuals with a broad range of abilities and needs and help individuals exercise meaningful choices and control in their daily lives. Services may include; supervision for their daily living routines, assistance with accessing community resources, managing finances, grocery shopping, community education classes, assistance with seeking employment, social events and becoming an active member of their community. In-Home Supportive services can be provided to those living throughout the St Cloud metro area and Central MN.

Fact:

- OMI has traveled as far as 40 miles to provide in-home support services.

Short-Term Crisis Services

Opportunity Matters' crisis services provide immediate intervention for individuals experiencing either a medical, family, or behavioral crisis. In addition to defusing crisis situations, programs such as behavior management or medical plans may be provided that can be tailored to the individual's immediate needs, along with an assessment of needs, recommendations and referrals to appropriate agencies. Placement in our crisis services is essentially short-term, though extended stay services (longer than 90 days) are frequent. These services are offered at three of our residential sites.

Testimonial:

"As a county case manager, I have worked with Opportunity Matters for many years. I have used both their crisis and residential services. I have been very pleased with the services provided. What stands out, is how caring the staff are. They truly appear to like the clients, enjoy working with and wanting the best for them."

■ Nancy Grabowski, LSW, QDDP

Fact:

There is a large demand for crisis services in our community. OMI receives, on average, 2 phone calls per week from those seeking services.

Donations/Grants

We are grateful to the many individuals, families, businesses and foundations whose contributions are vital to the success of Opportunity Matters Inc. The following list reflects gifts received from July 1, 2016 to September 30, 2016.

\$500

Kurt & Sarah Erickson

\$250+

Boy Scout Troop #106

\$100+

Mike's Trim Carpentry

Mark Case

Donations

Nicholas Collette

Rick & Marlene

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John & Yvonne Maske

Lynn Jacques

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Remember the Gh'oul Times

Everyone is invited to help “Remember the Gh’oul Times” at our annual Twisted Twilight event being held on Friday, October 28th at the Regency Plaza in downtown St. Cloud. This annual Halloween themed event is a hit with adults who love to embrace the holiday by attending in their quirkiest costumes and those who prefer not to dress up but enjoy supporting Opportunity Matters and a fun night out.

This year, the event will run from 6:30 p.m. through 10:00 p.m. Dinner will be provided by Short Stop Catering and entertainment will be comedian/illusionist, Jared Sherlock. There will also be a wine pull and games to win some great prizes. Tickets are \$50.00 each and can be purchased at Opportunity Matters main office or online at www.opportunitymatters.org. Proceeds from the event will benefit Opportunity Matters’ Endowment fund. ■

Reminder!

Help us save on postage! If you are leaving for the winter, let us know and we will suspend delivering your Visions newsletters until spring.

Opportunity Matters' Twisted Twilight Presents

REMEMBER THE GH'OUL TIMES

Costume Party
Friday, October 28, 2016
6:30 p.m.–10:00 p.m. | Regency Plaza
Entertainment by Jared Sherlock, Comic Magician & Illusionist

Tickets: \$50 call (320) 240-1900 or visit opportunitymatters.org

PROCEEDS SUPPORT THE GOALS OF OPPORTUNITY MATTERS