

Visions

SUMMER 2016

A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS OF OPPORTUNITY MATTERS INC.

Celebrate Throughout the Year

Brenda Eggerth, Volunteer and Communications Manager

Often to celebrate the 4th of July holiday, we take a day to celebrate America's independence while attending parades and barbecuing with friends and families. This year try to build on those celebratory activities. Though the 4th of July holiday is now past us for 2016 there are other ways to celebrate America's independence throughout the entire year, such as getting involved with our Veterans. Throughout St. Cloud and the neighboring towns, you will find a wide selection of activities, fundraisers and volunteer opportunities that help support our Veterans.

Opportunity Matters' is grateful to have Adult Day Services that, through partnership with our local VA Hospital, serves Veterans. On any given day, you can step into the adult day services program and the Veterans will gladly chat about their military experience. Some stories they share instantly bring a smile to your face as they tell of the mischief they got into with other members of their unit. Other stories are more serious and make you realize the discipline and sacrifice that these individuals gave to ensure we get to continue celebrating our independence.

This year, in addition to celebrating with parades and barbecues, consider getting involved with the local Veterans. Opportunity Matters' welcomes volunteers in our adult day services program to come in and share a talent such as playing music, share a skill such as constructing bird houses and share an ear to sit and visit for a while. If you find yourself short on time but still want to give back, consider making a donation to the program. For more information on volunteering with or donating to our adult day services program, please contact Brenda Eggerth, Volunteer and Communications Manager or Regan Stommes, CEO at (320) 240-1900. ■



Staff and a few of the Veterans OMI has the pleasure to serve.

Oakland Heights

Traci Ruhoff, Program Director

As many of you know, OMI is in the process of building a new site. This is very exciting for us because we haven't opened a new site since 2007 due to a moratorium on opening group homes. Our new home, Oakland Heights, is located in Sauk Rapids, nestled between Highway 10 and the Mississippi River. The location is outside of the city limits so we have the luxury of country living with the perks of the city just a few minutes away.



and kitchen which can be accessed from both sides of the home.

The home is scheduled to open in July and admit our first person by the end of the month. This is generally determined by the builders, inspectors, fire marshal and finally our licenser. In the meantime, we have been busy interviewing and training staff for the home. ■

Initially, OMI will be providing services to just one person; however the home is designed to accommodate up to four people. The layout of the home is unique, offering almost a duplex like set up with 2 bedrooms, a bathroom and living/dining room on each side and separating the home is the staff office

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

Great Get Together 2016: OMI All Stars



Spring Fling 2016: OMI's Got Talent



Guys & Gals Club Events 2016



Ideas and Insight Further OMI Committees

OMI Event Committees

This year, Opportunity Matters made it a priority to have any individuals we serve who were interested, be a part of our annual events committees. So far, this has included our annual Spring Fling dance (held in April) and our Guy's and Gal's club events (held throughout the year).

Marleen served on the Spring Fling committee along side three staff members to help plan all the details that go into this annual event. Marleen brought a variety of ideas to the committee and was well prepared on specifics that she hoped to see. The committee, including Marleen, hashed over all the suggestions and ideas and decided on repeating the talent show theme from last year. Marleen was the major decision maker on decorations and food.

Bernice and Connie have played a large role in planning what activities Gal's Club will do in 2016. They came with their list of suggestions, along with likes and dislikes from previous years. It was Connie's idea that in addition to holding the yearly "Gal's Club flower planting" each Spring, that they also paint the flower pots and give everyone the opportunity to express their individuality through paint and fun.

Committee members are having a great time planning the 2016 events with the help of the individuals we serve. The individuals bring many great ideas and wonderful insight into the events that committee members frequently do not think of. Planning for the Halloween party and Christmas party will soon be underway. Stay tuned for the great things our individuals have in store! ■

Start With Selling Bratwurst

Guys and Gals Club Committees

Opportunity Matters' is honored to participate in Coborn's brat sale stands each summer to raise money for the OMI Gal's and Guy's clubs. In 2016 Opportunity Matters was fortunate enough to secure two different brat sale events. The money raised at these events goes towards funding activities throughout the year for members of both clubs. While both clubs are separate and unique in how they plan their activities, they do love to come together and share the work load. This year the OMI brat sale at Coborn's on Pine Cone Road was held on June 3rd and 4th and July 15th and 16th. Members from both clubs, along with staff, worked different time slots to make the sales a success. The brat sales



Staff take their turn to work the brat stand.

are also a great way for the individuals we serve to gain valuable life experience in a work setting. Some get the experience of cashiering while others simply enjoy expediting food and socializing with customers. Gal's and Guy's club would like to reach out and thank everybody who came to our stands this year. Check out OMI's Facebook page, website and future Visions newsletters to see pictures of all the fun that can start with selling bratwurst. ■

Supportive Apartment Services Update

Sam Pierskalla, Program Services Director

As mentioned in an article in the spring 2016 Visions Newsletter, Opportunity Matters was in the process of researching and developing a Supported Apartment Program. We are currently still in the process of ironing out the details of how the program will be implemented to assure that those who utilize the service will have their needs met while continuing to increase independence.

Opportunity Matters has toured and spoke with several apartment management companies to find an apartment complex that is in a good location, secure, close to a bus line and has amenities that will be beneficial to the persons being served. Though this task has been challenging due to apartment unit availability, we have narrowed down our potential options to a few apartment complexes on the SW or NW side of St. Cloud.

At the same time, Opportunity Matters has been starting to meet with individuals who are interested in moving into their own apartment. The meetings are to help figure out what supports a person would require, how Opportunity Matters would provide those supports, and if a person is interested in a roommate. For most individuals they would need to have a roommate to share the cost of rent and utilities. That being the case, OMI has been having individuals get together with others who are interested in the Supported Apartment Program to help them determine if they would be good roommates.

Opportunity Matters continues to look forward to offering this new service. The projected time line is late summer or early fall of 2016. If you know of someone who would like to learn more about Opportunity Matters supported apartment services please contact Sam, Program Services Director, at (320) 240-1900 x 206. ■

Katie Helps Educate Others

Jaimie Jarnot, Program Coordinator

With the numerous rules and regulations surrounding the healthcare industry, employees of Opportunity Matters and other similar organizations often attend trainings offered by the MN Department of Human Services. This past Spring, OMI supervisors attended trainings on developing person centered care plans. A person centered care plan is a written document that must be established for each individual served to establish clear and concise details on how to deliver care; specifically regarding what that person wants in his or her life.

To give the attendees a real life perspective, the University of Minnesota in conjunction with the Department of Human Services ask individuals to present to the group and share their stories to give the attendees a better real-life perspective versus learning from a hypothetical case study.

One of the individuals that Opportunity Matters serves, Katie Yurczyk, was asked to present her story at a recent spring training on Person Centered care planning. Asked by a previous social worker, Cindy, Katie was excited to share her personal life, dreams, medical issues and vulnerabilities. Katie was able to choose her own panel of people to come with her to the training. She chose the program coordinator and the lead support staff from the house where she lives in addition to her mom and sister. They were there to support her while she shared her story of having had two brain aneurysms at the age of 22 that left her with Traumatic Brain Injury and minimal use of the left side of her body. Katie did a fantastic job sharing her story at the two day training in front of the 25-30 attendees. We are proud of Katie for her willingness to share her story and help organizations in the human services industry gain insight and education to better serve others. ■



Katie, middle, shared her story during a training for those working in the human services industry.

Opportunity Matters Adapts to Changes in Background Studies

Regan Stommes, Chief Executive Officer

Opportunity Matters Inc (OMI) is one of many of the agencies transitioning to the newly required NetStudy 2.0 fingerprinting process. Previously, OMI required a background check and clearance prior to hiring employees to work with the individuals served. A new requirement is now in place by the State of MN to also include a fingerprint check. This change will include:

- Scanned electronic fingerprint images to match subjects with state criminal records instead of using name and date of birth
- Photographs to verify the identity of the subject when the person's background study results are submitted
- Data from the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) to automatically notify DHS of new state criminal information on a person who was previously studied
- A new portal - NETStudy 2.0 - to submit background study requests and receive determinations
- NETStudy 2.0 for study subjects to initiate their own background study request
- NETStudy 2.0 to link to professional health and human service licensing information in Minnesota and other states.

These changes are proposed to improve the process of background studies which will: improve the accuracy of background studies, increase the efficiencies and provide faster results for entities and background study subjects, add data privacy protections and address these issues in the current background study system.

This new step in the process offers all of these benefits and will hopefully ensure that we have qualified and cleared employees to work with the individuals served by OMI. This process does add more administrative costs however to the Organization. There's an initial cost of \$9.10 for each person to have their fingerprints completed. There's the extra administrative cost for the processing and coordinating of getting the potential employee information in the system and getting that employee to the designated fingerprinting location to have this step completed. OMI is supportive of the new step and the extra security it provides. OMI is hopeful that with the continued extra regulation requirements there's a continued look at rates for providers to be able to cover all the additional administrative costs as well as wages for the employees working in this field who provide great care to individuals with disabilities. ■

Collaborative Partners Share Knowledge

Becka Kurtz, Business Technology Manager

Opportunity Matters is fortunate to have several collaborative partnerships with local businesses that assist us in providing many needed services to make our organization run smoothly and effectively.

In February of this year, we purchased a new color copier from Minnesota Computer Systems, Inc. We have worked with MCSI for over 17 years when we purchased our first copier and fax machine from them. Mike Houghton, Owner of MCSI has provided us with printing solutions and ideas as our business has grown over the years, and continues to be an annual contributor and sponsor of our Fall Fundraiser, "Twisted Twilight". We appreciate the insight Mike provides in solving any printing and copying questions we may have.

The new color copier we purchased has not only saved our organization money in both color and black and white copies, but along with the great equipment, Angela Sieben, Document Management Specialist, provided many hours of free training to our employees to instruct them on the most effective ways to use all the wonderful functions of our new copier. Jake Trepatau, IT Director, worked with Netgain to assure the networking of the copier was set up correctly and ready to go when the time came to launch. Dan Winkleman, Senior Technician, has been working with us since 1999! When any issues arise with the copiers, he quickly comes to the rescue when we need him to get a tough jam cleaned! We thank the entire MCSI team for assisting us with this big project and for their on-going support, training, and maintenance.

Another one of our collaborative partners is Netgain Technologies, who has hosted our server for more than 11 years! Founder and President Scott Warzecha first offered OMI their services in 2005, and we have been with them ever since. Over the years Netgain has also been an annual contributor and sponsor to our Twisted Twilight Fall Fundraiser. Our Account Manager, Chris Johnson, keeps us up to date on changes in the industry of technology with the help of the Netgain Team.

We are grateful for the continued support of the Netgain help desk, which assists in troubleshooting and fixing many of the technology problems that can arise during any given day. They are professional, patient, and work their hardest to find a solution to whatever issue is brought to them.

This June, Charles Killmer, Security Officer, provided OMI with a free training regarding potential security risks such as phishing with email examples, how to avoid malvertisements, and a host of other potential security threats and how to prevent them.

Thank you to our collaborative partners for continuing to support OMI with trainings, knowledge and sponsorships. ■



Charles Killmer, Security Officer for Netgain Technologies presents to OMI staff on June 8.

• Thank You •

We would like to thank the following businesses who attended our annual employee benefit fair or provided training to a our staff.

Infinite Eye Care	Flagship
Profile by Sanford	Lincoln Financial
360 Chiropractic	Colonial
Christensen Group	Ashley Kibutha, Coborns
Vital Work life	Netgain Technology
Health EZ	

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 April 1, 2016 to June 30, 2016.

Donations

Mike's Trim Carpentry
Bernick's
MN Twins Baseball Club
Beverly Eggerth
Tanya Peterson

Regan Stommes
Viking Coke
Sentry Bank

In-Kind

Carlson Cleaners



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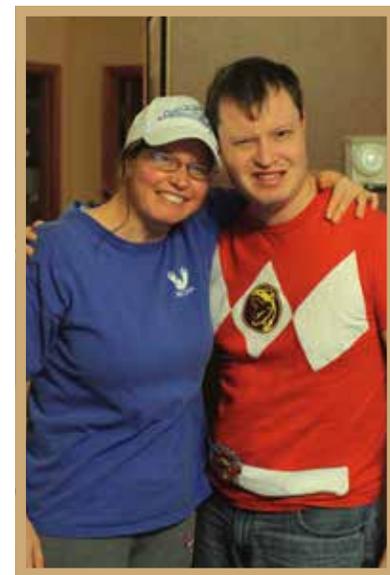
John Herges, *Falcon National Bank*

Roberts Family Gives Back

Sandy Babcock, Program Director

Volunteering has been an important part of the Roberts family life. Deb (mother), Connie (daughter), Colline (daughter), Jerymie (son) have always had a passion for volunteering and giving back to their community. Deb said that she raised her children to help people and help out in the community. No matter what is it, there is always something that needs to be done. When her children were young, she got them involved in the Special Olympics. They all participated in sports as well as fund raising for the Special Olympics to keep these sporting events going. Deb and her daughter Connie both volunteer at the local Humane Society by making sure the animals have fresh water, clean blankets to lie on and giving them lots of hugs and cuddles so they feel loved. Their hope is to find the animals a good home to go to, but in the mean time, they help to give them a safe and loving place to live. Connie volunteers weekly at her neighborhood church as a greeter, lights candles for the services and helps out in the vacation bible school and serves in anyway she can. Connie also volunteers at Arlington Place when they need an extra hand with craft activities. Connie has a huge heart and has great compassion for people. She said, "If everyone treated others with kindness and did things to put a smile on someone's face this world would be a great place to be." Colline also does her part by volunteering at

the St. Cloud Hospital. She helps with getting mail ready to be sent out as well as delivering mail to patient's rooms which is a nice surprise for them since most are going through a difficult time in their lives. Jerymie enjoys each day with a big smile, positive attitude and compassion towards others. He has a caring nature and is always checking in on the wellbeing of others. Jerymie enjoys children and ensures they have plenty of toys to open for Christmas by giving to Toys for Tots. When the Minnesota winter brings its flurries, Jerymie enjoys helping the neighbors with shoveling and expects nothing in return. He shows his kindness throughout his community by holding doors for people, saying hello or giving someone one of his big smiles. Even though these things may seem small; they make a big impact in the community and bring joy to others. ■



Connie and Jerymie Roberts enjoy giving back to their communities.