

## What OP Means to Me

*Making an impact throughout a pandemic*

With services at Opportunity Partners ramping up after extended closures in 2020 due to the pandemic, we recently asked “What Does OP Mean to You?” The responses received showed that people are happy to have OP by their side, especially during a pandemic!

### Encouraging independence

Amber was devastated when days at home stretched into weeks and then months when OP’s day locations temporarily closed. She missed working at OP and having a routine she enjoyed. Even her job bagging groceries at Hy-Vee was on hold. “I missed seeing all my friends and OP staff,” she said. “OP means a lot to me because I love working there.”

Fortunately, OP was able to reconnect with Amber, first through virtual classes and then when it was safe, back in person. She’s now working five mornings per week at Koch Campus. Her worries about the pandemic begin to calm as she adjusted to the new safety protocols. “It feels safe for me to be here,” she said, adding that she’s also returned to her job at Hy-Vee.

“I like to keep busy!”

### Promoting inclusion

Tom was working at a senior housing facility when his hours were cut with COVID-19. He soon became bored at home, and longed to get back to a



*Amber, shown pre-COVID, is thrilled to be back working at OP.*



*OP helped Tom land a new job at Driskill's after the pandemic resulted in the loss of his position at a senior center.*

meaningful routine. That’s where OP stepped in, arranging a job try-out at Driskill’s Downtown Market in Hopkins. He did so well carrying out bags for customers that the manager soon offered him a permanent job.

“It’s great,” Tom said. “It’s a positive change.” And he offers these appreciative words for his OP staff: “Thanks for being the best job coach!”

### Building community

For individuals who attend OP’s on-site enrichment classes, being back in person has been a welcome change. For Barbara, enrichment classes at OP means she gets

to see her

friends again and work on different art projects. She also likes helping staff with different tasks like putting together the exercise board which she helped to cut and glue.

Mark is also happy to be back at OP after

nine months at home. “Mark loves OP,” said his mom Patty.

“Returning to OP in December was long-awaited” she said, adding that he struggled to understand why he had to remain home. “Returning brought back his contagious smile. He is now able to participate safely in community activities with his classmates. He loves watching sports, and is excited to wear his favorite sports shirts to OP”

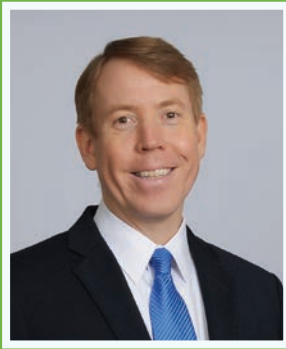
**Update:** As of mid-January, OP’s day locations were operating just under 50 percent capacity with more than 200 people back in person. Our virtual services have also continued for nearly 100 individuals. Additionally, we are currently supporting 265 people in community jobs.



*Mark is all smiles after being back at OP after nine months at home.*

# A Message from the CEO

## Bill Schultz



This past year we've confronted a pandemic that has been devastating. We saw unacceptable racial injustices, with riots overshadowing peaceful protests and calls for justice. These events were an emotional drain for many of us. Yet despite a year of challenges, I am left with a sense of pride for OP, and for the resilience shown by our staff and the people we support.

Our dedicated team members have been creative in fulfilling our mission and supporting people in new ways. From developing virtual services, finding engaging ways to bring happiness while stuck in the house, to working long hours, and enduring continuous change, we have learned to live and work in this new world. The OP team did it all, while following strict safety protocols to keep each other and the people we serve safe.

Through it all, we've kept our mission at the forefront. We still expanded our apartment services to Minnetonka, integrated people into our services from a provider that closed, and launched the rebuild of our New Hope residence that burned down in 2019.

Thanks to everyone working together, generous contributions from our community, and financial assistance from state and federal governments, OP was able to end the year stronger than we ever imagined in the spring of 2020. This will give us stable footing for rebuilding our services in 2021.

We are making key investments in several areas, including further expansion of the apartment programs, new case management software, and making needed investments in our most valuable resource – our staff.

Thank you for your support and encouragement in 2020, and I look forward to building a successful future in 2021. We are stronger together!

# OP Welcomes New Board Members!



## GINNY KREMER – BREMER BANK

Ginny is Executive Vice President and Chief Risk Officer, responsible for risk management activities at Bremer. Prior to joining Bremer in 2014, Ginny led enterprise risk and audit functions at MoneyGram International and U.S. Bancorp. She is a certified public accountant and certified risk professional.



## DAN HOKE – U.S. BANK

Dan is Senior Vice President of retail distribution and ATMs. He has more than 20 years of service in leadership roles with U.S. Bank and its predecessor, First Bank System. He is a charter member and senior management advisor to the Disability Business Resource Group, and board member for U.S. Bank's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs.

## OFFICER TRANSITIONS

Ben Knoll, Partners in Food Solutions, was named Chair. Patty Sagert, Rasmussen College, was named Vice Chair. John Kelly, UnitedHealth Group, is Treasurer. Saanii Hernandez remains Secretary. Thank you to outgoing Chairman Greg Keane who will continue to serve as a Board member.

# You Stepped Up and We Are Grateful

We are incredibly grateful to our caring community for giving so generously to OP throughout 2020. Thanks to you, we finished a challenging year in solid financial standing.

Like many organizations, we faced decreased revenues due to extended service shut-downs, as well as increased costs for protective supplies and other needs. But when we reached out for support to help get us through, you were there!

Special thanks to our friends John and Paula Kelly for providing a \$15,000 matching gift that boosted our year-end fundraising efforts. John and Paula's son Jack loves his job at OP.



*Jack working prior to the pandemic at a job he loves at OP.*

*"When the pandemic closed OP down, Jack really missed going to work, and was very excited when he could finally return. We are beyond grateful to OP for giving Jack a sense of accomplishment, something we've found crucial to his dignity and happiness." - John Kelly*

Your support inspired us in 2020 and will continue to help us to thrive in 2021! Didn't get a chance to make a gift? Learn how at [opportunities.org/donate](https://opportunities.org/donate) or call 952-912-7442.

# Doing Good Together

## A New Friendship

When the pandemic forced more people to stay home for their sports and recreation, the sale of foam pool noodles surged. Local business woman Susan Otten was soon overwhelmed with orders and needed help to manage the packaging and shipping of thousands of pool noodles every week. She turned to Opportunity Partners as her labor solution – a partnership that is now going quite...swimmingly.

## Missions Aligned

Indie Do Good, based in Chanhassen, helps companies with back-end logistics such as warehousing and shipping, and front-end services like website design and branding strategy. Indie Do Good's mission is to champion entrepreneurial companies that do good for the community. Some of its clients include Giften Market, Sun Leaf Naturals and Odele Beauty.

Otten, Indie Do Good's owner and co-founder, learned of Opportunity Partners' labor solutions, and saw how OP aligned with Indie Do Good. "OP is very consistent with our mission," she said. "Nothing but good can come from this relationship."

Three individuals served by OP and their Team Supervisor Andrea tackle the packaging and shipping of more than 5,000 pool noodles each week. The process is complex, but the OP team manages it with accuracy and speed.



Andrea, John and Desi make up part of the team.



Paul prepares pool noodles for shipment.

## Noodling Up

The teams' tasks include packaging pool noodles by color, length and quantity, five per bag. They also measure, cut and seal the bags, and do all the labeling for shipping. "They are a great team and have an awesome system," said Niki, OP's Supported Employment Team Manager. "When they finish their orders for the day, they make back-up stock for any new orders." They call it, 'noodling up' at Indie Do Good.

Otten is grateful to have connected with OP last summer, when pool noodles were in high demand nationwide. She also sees added value in having the OP team on site. "They contribute to our culture," she said. "They are really part of the team. Everyone appreciates them."

Looking for high quality labor solutions at your location or ours? Contact us today at [partner@opportunities.org](mailto:partner@opportunities.org) or 952-930-4201. <https://www.opportunities.org/businesses>.

# Rebuilding Together

Construction is underway of our Doug's Place residence in New Hope, which was destroyed by fire in 2019. Denali Custom Homes and their team of subcontractors are generously donating a portion of supplies and labor to rebuild the house.

Denali Custom Homes Founder/President David Bieker was particularly interested in helping OP with the project. He has an adult son with special needs so understands the difficulties people with disabilities and their families can face in finding suitable housing, especially as they age.

After the fire, many friends of OP donated more than \$49,000, and that seed funding led us to today. We are so grateful for our caring community for continuing to show us generous support. The four-bedroom, fully accessible home will be completed this spring.



Denali Custom Homes is making great progress on the rebuild.

Published in the interest of families, friends and supporters of Opportunity Partners, Inc. This newsletter is available in alternative formats by request.

The printing of this newsletter has been generously donated.

*Opportunity Partners is an EEO/AA employer.*

#### Address or name changes.

Do we have your name and address incorrect? Would you prefer to be removed from this mailing list? Kindly contact us at info@opportunities.org or 952-912-7442. Thank you!



## OP Gala 2021 – Going Virtual!

May 13 – 7:00-7:30 pm

Sponsorships are going fast and are a wonderful way for your business to support OP!

**Presented by:**

# UNITEDHEALTH GROUP®

**Thank you to our sponsors!**



“Stairway Partners is proud to support Opportunity Partners for the third year. This organization does an amazing job to advance the quality of life for people with disabilities, and we are pleased to be a part of their mission in our community.”



- Jamie Jackson, Managing Principal, Stairway Partners, LLC, and OP Board Member

To learn about sponsorship opportunities visit [opportunities.org/gala](https://opportunities.org/gala), contact us at [events@opportunities.org](mailto:events@opportunities.org) or call us at 952-912-7442.