

Building a community at home

Thanks to you, OP helps people live more independently

For Kevin, 32, living in his own apartment finally became reality with help from Opportunity Partners.

"I am overwhelmed that he has settled in so quickly there; it has been such an easy transition," said Kevin's mom Mary. In his previous living situation, Mary says he was unhappy, always wanting to come home on the weekends.

Moving in to his new OP apartment has been the best solution for Kevin. "He's so much more at home, and that makes me happy," she said. "He's shown me that he can deal with the outside world really well."

She says that Kevin is keeping his apartment clean, caring for his cat, Lacey, and following through with medical appointments.

OP's hoMEbase apartments emphasize the "ME" as the services center around what is best for each individual. With apartments located in Coon Rapids, Hopkins and Minnetonka, hoMEbase encourages people to live as independently as possible with OP staff close by – one of the apartments in each of the complexes is rented as a 24-hour staff office.

Pre-COVID, residents participated in weekly group activities and often had meals together. Over the past year, group activities have been on hold, but OP staff continue to coordinate appointments and transportation, have regular check-ins with individuals, and are on site to support any issues that arise.

Moving into hoMEbase during COVID-19 last summer proved especially critical for Kevin because of the



With OP's support, Kevin moved into his own apartment last summer. Kevin is shown here with hoMEbase Manager Stacy Ramseth.

isolation he felt from the pandemic.

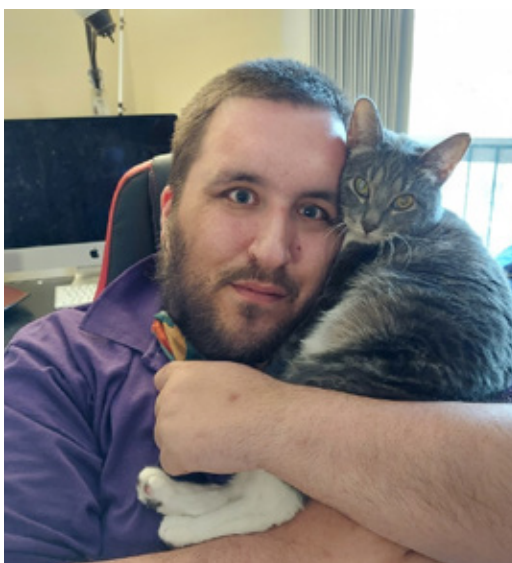
Program Manager Stacy Ramseth said Kevin gives living at hoMEbase at Hunter's Ridge in Minnetonka two thumbs up.

"I am glad to be a part of this program and cannot wait to do a lot of fun things together." – Kevin

Staff are eager to reengage residents, including Kevin, in the social activities that make this such a wonderful program.

Stacy said Kevin has made great strides since moving in. "It took some time for Kevin to trust staff, but he quickly began to open up and work with us. He is now truly successful in his own apartment, and he has been happy and joking with staff," she said. Kevin receives support with grocery shopping, appointments, and maintaining his apartment. Kevin also loves going for walks, working his job at OP where he does light packaging, and camping with his dad in the summer.

OP services help to build a more inclusive community by connecting people with natural support networks such as friends, neighbors and co-workers. Services like hoMEbase can be a turning point for people who might otherwise be very disconnected from the community.



Kevin with his cat, Lacey, who keeps him company at home.

Learn more about OP's community living options at info@opportunities.org or by calling 952-938-5511.

Join our team! Email jobs@opportunities.org or text 952-222-7509.

A Message from the CEO



Bill Schultz

Safety for the people we support and our team remains our top priority at Opportunity Partners. Our organization

continues to do an excellent job managing this throughout the pandemic.

I'm pleased that we are seeing very few positive COVID-19 cases, and people have been very responsible about testing and quarantining when needed. I'm also pleased we've been able to make the vaccine available to the people we serve and employees by hosting several vaccine clinics at our locations. This is so important in our goal of keeping everyone safe and restoring life as we knew it before. We continue to follow all of the face covering and social distancing guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and the Minnesota Department of Health.

Rebuilding our mission is our other top priority. This includes providing the desired services to each individual. There are two primary challenges that remain: transportation and staffing.

Currently, Metro Mobility can only transport four passengers and typical capacity is 15. This affects the number of people we are able to bring back into day services.

Staffing continues to be a challenge for disability service organizations. Direct support professionals are the heart of our mission; however, our sector has been facing a serious staff shortage for years. We are focusing on solutions, such as implementing wage increases for these positions. There is not one simple fix to this lingering challenge, but we are working hard to address it so we can support more individuals at our locations and throughout the community.

Stay well, and thank you for your support of Opportunity Partners!

Thanks to You, Doug's Place Opens in New Hope

Construction is now complete of the beautiful Doug's Place in New Hope, which replaced our Ensign Residence destroyed by fire.

Thank you to **Denali Custom Homes** and their team of amazing subcontractors for generously donating a portion of supplies and labor to rebuild the house.

And thanks to you! 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!

The spacious four-bedroom, more accessible residence is home to four women with disabilities. When touring the house recently, they were very excited as they checked out the new washer and dryer, wall-mounted TVs, and large pantry in a modern, white kitchen.



Julie and Ann check out the new, spacious kitchen in their new home.



Doug's Place was completed this spring, thanks to support from our community.

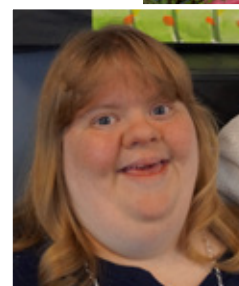
Denali Custom Homes Founder/President David Bieker was particularly interested in helping OP with the project. He has an adult son with special needs and sees the difficulties people can face in finding suitable housing to age in place.

Doug's Place is named for OP's long-time Residential staff member Doug Annett, who worked for OP for 23 years and

was instrumental in growing our Residential options for people with disabilities to include group homes, supported apartment programs and community living services.

Sunset Spring Season

Annie loves painting and making all kinds of crafts. To help her cope during the pandemic, Annie finds prayers on the internet and writes them into her journals. Annie, who is served by Opportunity Partners-Asplin Center, recently had her artwork featured on OP notecards.



*"Sunset Spring Season"
Painting by Annie Hetchler*

Tribute for 30 Years of Success

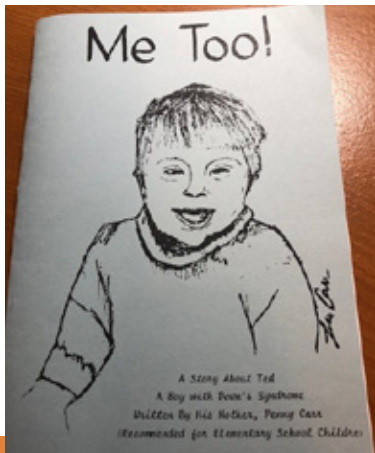
For the Carr family, Opportunity Partners became a place of pride and success for Ted, an athletic and kind music-lover. Ted passed away in 2015 at the age of 50, after being served by OP for nearly 30 years.

His family recently arranged to leave a generous estate gift to OP in Ted's memory.

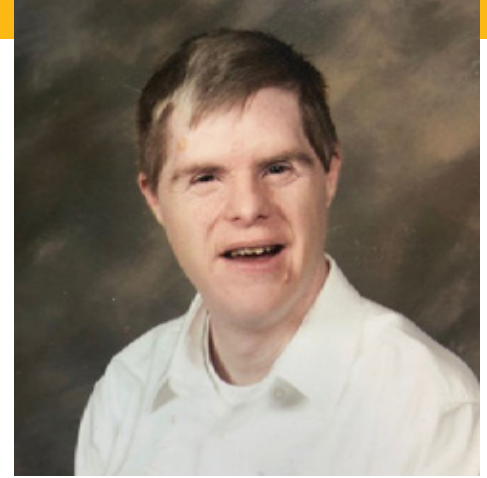
"My parents, Conrad and Penny, wanted to continue the legacy of Opportunity Partners, because we know how much it meant to Ted," said Ted's sister Colleen Zilley. "It was a huge part of his life. We want to share that with others with special needs."

Colleen said her brother was the youngest of six children in the family. He was very patient, loving and almost always had a smile on his face, she added.

Ted enjoyed his time working and attending classes at OP, Colleen said. "He was so proud to earn a paycheck, no matter the amount," she said. "Through OP, he took classes in speech, reading, writing, music, and he went swimming at the YMCA – which was his favorite activity."



Ted's mom Penny, a long-time OP volunteer, wrote two books about what it is like to be a person with special needs.



The family of Ted Carr, who passed away in 2015 at the age of 50, honored his memory with an estate gift to OP.

"Opportunity Partners was such a huge part of his life."

Colleen said her mom Penny was very involved with her son. "She was a volunteer at OP and taught a few art classes there. She also wrote two books about what it was like to be a person with special needs."

Ted was active throughout his life, playing many sports and taking part in track and field in Special Olympics. He also loved music, and playing the guitar, piano and organ.

Thank you to the Carr family for their generous estate gift. It was an honor to serve Ted!

For more information on leaving a legacy to Opportunity Partners, contact Kate Wilinski, Vice President of Advancement, at 952-930-4253 or email kwilinski@opportunities.org

OP Virtual Services Earn State-wide Accolades



A pivot to virtual services during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic earned Opportunity Partners a statewide award. Participants gathered on a virtual Zoom call April 19 to learn that OP was named for a 2021 Life Enrichment Award from the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR). Opportunity Partners President and CEO Bill Schultz thanked MOHR President Julie Johnson, who presented.

Like other nonprofit disability service providers, OP had to halt its day services during the pandemic to keep everyone safe. While services have reopened, not everyone has been able to come back. "We had some really smart people come up with virtual services so we could reconnect and engage people, and have all kinds of opportunities," Bill said.

Julie said the pandemic was especially hard on people with disabilities. "Providers like Opportunity Partners were innovative and are driven to create opportunities for people, and develop this great virtual solution to keep everybody connected," she said. "And, the results have been absolutely spectacular."

Through virtual services, more than 100 people served by OP rejoined with friends, met new friends, shared hobbies and pets, took cooking classes, created art and took online field trips. In the process, participants gained new technology skills and increased their participation due to being in the comforts of their home.

MOHR advocates for and supports its nonprofit members which provide meaningful services to persons with disabilities and communities across Minnesota. Learn more at mohrmn.org.

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OP Gala 2021 – Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who attended and gave so generously during our May 13 Virtual Gala! Your support touched our hearts and will help advance the quality of life for people with disabilities!

Thank you to our sponsors!



Opportunity Partners has supported Michelle for 17 years and encouraged her when the pandemic brought job loss and isolation. Her story of resilience and triumph in returning to OP and the job she loves is shared in her video at opportunities.org.



To view our Gala video, please visit opportunities.org/gala