

### Steps toward independence

*Learning and growing, with your support*

For Sandy and Allan Goldstein, watching their adult son move into his own place at age 28 was a milestone they didn't know if they would ever see.

"We never thought Ben could get his own apartment," Sandy said. "He's really come a long way."

Parents of children with disabilities often grow so accustomed to everyday challenges that typical milestones – like getting a first apartment – seem far out of reach.

But with support of Opportunity Partners' hoMEbase apartment program, Sandy and Allan's son Ben is thriving living semi-independently.

At hoMEbase Westside in Hopkins, Ben has his own one-bedroom unit in a regular apartment complex and Opportunity Partners staff have an apartment on-site that is used as an office. Families feel good that staff are on site to promote socialization and aid in supervision, and Ben can participate in group meals and other activities if he would like. Staff on the premises overnight add a level of security that families appreciate.

Currently, 10 individuals from Opportunity Partners take part in the Hopkins hoMEbase program, with another 10 at a similar program in Coon Rapids.



*Ben Goldstein enjoys living in his own apartment with support from Opportunity Partners.*

**"I get to be independent and have my own space"**

*-Ben*

"Ben's been doing really amazing," said Stacy Ramseth, who manages hoMEbase Westside. "He's happy, he loves having his own place and his freedom."

Ben moved into hoMEbase last August. His family had helped him prepare for greater independence by working with him at home to learn laundry, cleaning, shopping and cooking skills. Since moving into his own place, Ben has continued to gain confidence in living alone and has expanded his network of friends.

Ben said he is happy living in his own apartment. "I get to be independent and have



my own space," he said. "I'm learning how to cook, and I would like to learn how to bake."

During the day, Ben attends Opportunity Partners in Minnetonka, where he works on the production floor and as part of a Supported Employment Team (SET) in the community at Waymouth Farms. His

Service Coordinator Leah Schmitz said Ben is doing a good job advocating for himself, including asking for more community work opportunities. "He likes to work and does a great job."

When he's not working, Ben participates in many sports including ice hockey for the Minnesota Wild Special Hockey, where he plays goalie, unified basketball and flag football, and bowling under Minnesota Special Olympics. "He always has something going on," Sandy said. "He benefits from a routine."

And while she still sees Ben several times a week, she feels a sense of relief knowing he is capable of living semi-independently and is doing so happily. "I know I won't always be available to assist him," she said. "This is a very important step for him."

# A Promise of We

## Together, we are better

### *Message from the CEO*

A popular quote from the late U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone is “We all do better when we all do better.”

Yes, yes, yes!

At Opportunity Partners, we’re kicking off 2019 with the phrase “A Promise of We.” What is “A Promise of We”? To us, a Promise of We means that together, we can make a difference.

Together, we are better.

After all, Opportunity Partners has been around since 1953 and we’ve always collaborated with people with disabilities, families, staff, donors, businesses, volunteers, and our entire community to meet our mission of advancing the quality of life for people with disabilities. We must continue to work together to keep moving forward.

We cannot progress with an “us versus them” mentality. We are in this together. We all do better when we all do better.

That is the Promise of We.



### **Looking ahead to a strong 2019**

2018 was a year of transformation for Opportunity Partners. Budget cuts and regulatory changes meant we needed to make some difficult decisions around some of our programs that were no longer financially sustainable. Sunsetting programs affects real people and is never easy. However, I’m pleased that although we closed some of our smaller



programs, a number of the impacted individuals were able to transfer into other Opportunity Partners programs. We vow to keep working hard to make our programs the very best they can be, and I thank you for your support during these changes.

### **Legislative session now underway**

The 2019 Minnesota Legislative session began on January 8. Our primary goal this year in working with the nonpartisan disability advocacy group Best Life Alliance is to enact reforms that will help address the severe workforce shortage and stabilize rates for disability services. You can help by contacting your legislators to urge them to prioritize services for people with disabilities. Learn more by emailing [info@opportunities.org](mailto:info@opportunities.org). We’ll be at the Capitol on March 12 for a rally and meetings with lawmakers. Join us if you can!

### **Mark your calendar – April 27**

Our annual Opportunity Partners Gala is Saturday, April 27. This is the fifth year that we’ve held our largest fundraiser at our Koch Campus in Minnetonka, and I urge you to attend this very special event. It is amazing to see the transformation of our production floor to a stunning event venue and to hear some incredibly inspiring success stories. I hope you can attend and support us at this very important event. Learn more at [opportunities.org/gala](http://opportunities.org/gala).

**Do you have a success story illustrating “A Promise of We” at Opportunity Partners? Let us know at [info@opportunities.org](mailto:info@opportunities.org).**

## Rally with us on March 12

Join us on Tuesday, March 12 for the annual Disability Services Day at the Capitol, when more than 1,000 direct care staff, self-advocates, families and community members converge on the Minnesota State Capitol to urge lawmakers to prioritize disability services. Attendees from across the state will attend a 10 a.m. rally, followed by meetings with legislators.

This year's legislative agenda being introduced by the disability advocacy group Best Life Alliance seeks to stabilize rates for disability services and take steps to address the severe workforce shortage in our industry.



**Learn more about the issues on the Advocacy tab at [arm.org](http://arm.org). Join our advocacy efforts by contacting [info@opportunities.org](mailto:info@opportunities.org) or 952-930-4208.**

## Here comes the spaghetti!

*Successful event since 2005, thanks to you!*

Join us for a delicious dinner with proceeds benefiting Opportunity Partners! The Hopkins Noontime Lions will be here cooking up a wonderful spread of spaghetti with meatballs or meatless sauce, salad, bread, dessert and a beverage.

**When:** Thursday, March 7 | 4:30-7:30 pm

**Where:** Opportunity Partners-Koch Campus, 5500 Opportunity Court, Minnetonka

**Tickets:** Adults - \$8 | Children under 12 - \$5 | Families of 5 or more - \$35

Thank you to the Hopkins Noontime Lions for their years of support!



## Together, we are better

*Community activities expand horizons*

We value the many community partnerships we have built over our 65 years of existence. Class outings to places like an Eden Prairie Fire Station, The Landing – Minnesota River Heritage Park in Shakopee, a llama farm in Waconia and Best Buy world headquarters in Richfield are just a few of our recent trips.

These tours build bridges by introducing people we serve to new friends, neighbors and experiences in our communities. If you know of an organization or business that we can tour, let us know at [info@opportunities.org](mailto:info@opportunities.org).

# A family's legacy

## *Asplin bequest gift touches hearts*

When Eleanor "Elly" Asplin died on August 29, 2018, at the age of 94, Opportunity Partners received a generous bequest gift in recognition of the many ways the organization touched the Asplin family and so many others.

Elly and her husband Edward "Ed" were long-time supporters and volunteers of Opportunity Partners. Ed, who died in 2009, and son William "Bill" both served on Opportunity Partners Board of Directors over the years, and Elly volunteered for countless committees and events. In 1991, Opportunity Partners' Asplin Center in Plymouth was named for the family in recognition of their years of service and support.

Ed and Elly's interest as volunteers and philanthropists stemmed from their daughter Sarah, now 65, who has been an important part of Opportunity Partners for more than 30 years. Born in 1953, Sarah was blessed to have a family who vowed to care for her as best they could and to provide opportunities for her to learn greater self-sufficiency.

"Like a lot of other parents at that time, my mother said how fortunate it was that there was a movement beginning to mainstream children with disabilities," Bill said. "She felt it was a blessing that they could, through their efforts and the efforts of so many other people, provide independent living opportunities for individuals with special needs."

As Sarah grew up and learned to work independently at jobs at Perkins, Old Navy and other businesses, Bill saw how pleased his parents were with her progress. "Every time Sarah took a few steps forward, I could see the pride in my parents."

He said it was important to his father that organizations like Opportunity Partners helped people land jobs and become taxpayers themselves. "He saw the good work that

**"Every time Sarah took a few steps forward, I could see the pride in my parents."**

was happening for Sarah and so many other people."

Sarah lived at Opportunity Partners' former residence, Clara Doerr & Lindley Hall in Minneapolis,

and later moved into a duplex with several roommates. Today, Opportunity Partners continues to support Sarah through Semi-Independent Living Services, and Sarah attends Opportunity Partners' day program three days per week and volunteers at a nursing home.

Bill said the family appreciates how Opportunity Partners has provided flexible services as Sarah's needs have changed. "Each person is unique, and individual needs can't always be met in a cookie cutter model."

Bill hopes his parents' legacy to Opportunity Partners and other charitable organizations will inspire others. "My parents' primary goal in life was to do everything they could to make sure Sarah was OK and had everything she needed," he said. "I believe they felt that if along the way they could help other people too, then they would."



*Elly and Ed Asplin were long-time Opportunity Partners supporters.*

**Bequest gifts to Opportunity Partners help to ensure our critical work continues into the future.**

*For more information about making a planned gift or to discuss other giving opportunities, contact Brie Geurink, CFRE, Vice President of Advancement, 952-930-4253 or [bgeurink@opportunities.org](mailto:bgeurink@opportunities.org)*

## Faces of OP - Meet Jack

*Thriving in community work, thanks to you!*

Jack Campbell, 26, is shining in his job at Emagine Willow Creek movie theater in Plymouth, where he recently was named Employee of the Month. His Opportunity Partners staff Beth Kenya describes his passion for the job as amazing. Jack's manager says he can always be depended on to do his job with great enthusiasm.

Since joining Opportunity Partners in 2015, Jack has participated in a wide range of programs, including My Career Path, which focuses on success in competitive, integrated employment. He has also worked on a team at Nordic Ware, and enjoys activities like bowling, cooking and creating art. Jack is proud of his independence at work and at home, where he recently moved into his own apartment. Way to go, Jack!



## Teamwork celebration at Life Fitness

*One year of successful partnership*

Opportunity Partners recently celebrated a year of teamwork with Life Fitness in Ramsey, where a Supported Employment Team (SET) from our Anoka Service Center in Coon Rapids plays an essential role.

Life Fitness is a global leader in commercial fitness equipment. Its 333,000 square foot facility in Ramsey employs more than 400 people and produces more than 270 different commercial strength training units designed to outfit health clubs, fitness facilities, the military, professional and collegiate athletic team training centers, among others throughout the world.

Currently, a team of four people from Opportunity Partners and a SET supervisor work Monday through Friday at the facility. The team handles recycling and general housekeeping duties, keeping the operations flowing smoothly and freeing up Life Fitness employees for other production duties.

"The Opportunity Partners team has had a seamless transition into the Life Fitness operations," said Matt Knode, Life Fitness Production Manager. "The team is always ready to work with smiles on their faces," he added. "I have seen the two teams become one and highly recommend to other businesses to see if they can create a partnership as we have."



*Representatives from Life Fitness are joined by the Opportunity Partners team members in celebrating one year of working together.*

**Contact us for packaging, shrink-wrapping, kitting, collating and labeling at 952-930-4201 or [partner@opportunities.org](mailto:partner@opportunities.org)**



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Permit No. 90100

# Opportunities

Volume 46 • Issue 1 • Winter 2019

952-938-5511  
info@opportunities.org  
opportunities.org

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

Editor:  
Julie Peters

Designer:  
Heather Brooks

*The printing of this newsletter has been generously donated.  
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Save the Date  
OPPORTUNITY PARTNERS

*gala*

APRIL 27, 2019

For more information visit  
[opportunities.org/gala](http://opportunities.org/gala)