

Four decades of opportunity

Linda Hartigan finds her family at Opportunity Partners

For Linda Hartigan, 58, Opportunity Partners has been almost like family for more than 40 years. And although most of her real family live out of state, they've been comforted knowing that OP helped expand Linda's world in so many ways.

Saying no to an institution

When Linda was born with Down syndrome in 1964, Linda's parents, Butch and Anita Hartigan, "didn't want to put her in an institution, which was what most people recommended at the time," recalled Linda's sister Georgia Harris. They vowed to care for Linda at home and even relocated to Minnesota from Illinois in part because of the disability services offered. Linda had a wonderful childhood, attending school and traveling with her family.

Finding Opportunity Partners

As Linda grew older, the question of what would happen after high school remained. Fortunately, Linda's parents found her a coveted spot at Opportunity Partners' (then Opportunity Workshop's) residential facilities, Clara Doerr Residence & Lindley Hall in Minneapolis, where adults with disabilities lived in dorm-like settings and learned independent living skills. She moved in just before her 18th birthday. The family also toured the organization's workshop, where Linda could learn to do light packaging. Linda wanted to give it a try, Georgia said.

When Linda's parents had the opportunity to move out of Minnesota, they had faced a dilemma: take Linda from her friends and routine, or have her stay in Minnesota with OP. In the end, they let Linda decide.

"Linda chose to stay," Georgia said.

Linda's mom Anita, who has kept journals over many years, wrote at the time: "For Linda to learn to live independently, we had to let her go," she said, adding that OP offered Linda what they as protective parents could not, including job and bus training. Linda learned to ride the city bus all over town and not get lost, Anita recalled.



(Left) Linda Hartigan as a toddler. (Top) The Hartigan family in the early years. (Bottom) Linda and her sister Georgia Harris share some laughs during Georgia's recent visit to Minnesota.



Opportunities to live a full life

Linda blossomed through the years, meeting countless friends, taking part in social activities and experiencing the pride of working. In the year 2000, Linda moved to OP's 12th Residence in Richfield, where she lived for more than 20 years.

From singing "Rhinestone Cowboy" at OP's residential talent show, to participating in trips and attending sporting events, to working community jobs at hotels and the airport, Linda's life has been filled with opportunities to thrive, Georgia added.

Linda especially enjoyed the benefits of working. "She'd say, 'What day is pay day?'" She also values her rights to vote. "She takes great pride in regularly voting," Georgia said. "You can see that theme of independence through everything."

And OP was by Linda's side through her next transition, when Linda relocated in January to OP's newly renovated and modern Chicago Residence in Bloomington. The house has greater accessibility and more comfortable spaces for everyone.

Georgia said her family does not know what they would have done without OP.

"Her whole life has been much more independent as a result of OP," Georgia said.

A Message from the CEO

In 1953, parents of young adults with disabilities in the Twin Cities knew their children could thrive if only given the chance. At the time, institutionalization was common. These parents vowed for a better way, founding our organization to help people with disabilities be productive, learn skills for greater independence and benefit from community inclusion.



Bill Schultz

As we celebrate 70 years as an organization this year, I am optimistic that 2023 will be a year of growth and opportunity. We'll be celebrating with a '70s theme at our Gala on Friday, April 14. I hope you can join us!

Moving forward post-pandemic

In 2022, we welcomed about 100 more people into our day services who had been waiting since the pandemic. Our waitlist is still high – about 300 – but we're encouraged by this progress. Thank you for your patience as we focus on hiring more staff and bringing more folks into services as we are able. We'll continue our popular virtual services and have immediate openings in that program. For services questions, please email services@opportunities.org

Better homes and facilities

We made excellent progress in 2022 in better utilizing our facilities by moving out of some leased spaces, purchasing a new Karlins Center facility and a new Bloomington group home, and remodeling homes to benefit the people we serve. We'll be selling a large group home in Uptown that no longer meets our needs. All of these changes will help us serve people better in the future.

Important advocacy

Minnesota's 2023 Legislative session is underway. After inaction last year among lawmakers to pass important legislation that would help organizations like OP, we'll be at the Capitol with our trade association partners. Mark your calendar for **Tuesday, March 28** for Disability Services Day at the Capitol. Join us in talking to legislators about the value of our services and the urgent need for relief for the staffing shortage in our industry. Contact us at info@opportunities.org to join our advocacy efforts!

Thank you, Board members!

OP recognizes years of service



In recognition of exceptional service to the OP Board of Directors, we sincerely thank **Ed Spencer** and **Nancy Wagner**, who rotated off the Board at the end of 2022. They both joined the Board in 2011. As parents of children with disabilities, they shared their strong mission focus as well as business and advocacy skills with OP.



Ed has served as Chair, Vice Chair, Nominating & Board Development Chair and Business Services Chair.

Nancy has served as Advancement Committee Secretary and Executive Committee Secretary.

Thank you, Ed and Nancy!

Gaining independence on the job

Congratulations to **Meghan**, 28, who started a new job at JCPenney in late October. Meghan folds clothing in various departments and enjoys talking to the customers and meeting new people. This is Meghan's first independent, community job, and she supplements her schedule by also working at Opportunity Partners.

She was thrilled to learn she'd gotten the job after the interview. Staff and peers at OP held a celebration to wish her well in her new opportunity.

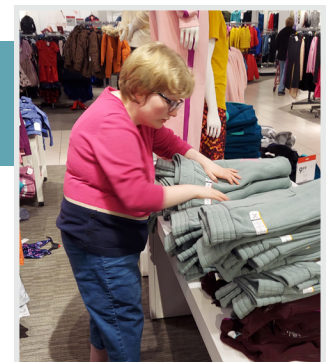


Meghan loves her new job at JCPenney!

"I felt fantastic," she said, adding that she enjoys the job very much.

"We stock the kids' area and make sure clothes are in order of size," she said. "We fold clothes if the tables look messy."

Meghan is among the 340 people who OP helped to support in independent community jobs in 2022!



Meghan folds clothing items for the displays.

Independent living success

With your support, Shannon is thriving at OP

Shannon has been thriving while living in her own apartment for over three years. After living in a group home, Shannon was ready to try living on her own. Staff helped her get enrolled in OP's In-Home Services program so that she could continue to progress in a more independent setting, while still having the support of OP.

OP staff Donna meets with Shannon twice a week to work on skills such as cooking meals, cleaning and using appliances safely. Shannon now does her own dishes, sweeps and takes out her garbage. The pair also enjoys going out to eat at Perkins, exploring the community and dancing to some of their favorite music.

Shannon has really grown since living on her own.

"She'll let me know what she's finished by herself before I arrive," Donna said. She can now find everything she needs in the grocery store, plan recipes to make, order her own medication and clean up her bathroom by herself.

"I love making tater tot hot dish," Shannon said.

Independent living has been a great transition for Shannon. "I live across the street from my mom now and I like having more alone time," she said. She also enjoys singing in the Merry Music Makers choir, listening to country and gospel music and visiting with her boyfriend. "She wants to keep progressing," Donna said. Living in an apartment has been a big step for Shannon. She and her team are so proud of her accomplishments!



Shannon has become a master at cooking and flipping pancakes!

Creative Corner: *Winter wonderland*

Jack Campbell

Jack, who is served by Opportunity Partners, enjoys photography in his free time. He shared some winter photos he captured recently. When he's not taking pictures, Jack works at Emagine Willow Creek movie theater in Plymouth.



Peter Krozser

Peter's painting, "Snow Falls The Trees are Bare," was chosen for Opportunity Partners' 2022 holiday greeting card. He is served in OP's Day and Residential services. In his free time, Peter likes spending time with his family, gardening, going to the cabin and working with his hands.

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Come boogie at our annual Gala!

2023 Gala – Friday, April 14

Join us for our grooviest fundraising event of the year! We're excited to be celebrating 70 years as an organization and want to celebrate with YOU!

The evening will include rockin' live and silent auctions, delicious food and beverages and a mission-packed program you won't want to miss.

There will be a livestream of the program for those not able to join in person. Proceeds from the event will support our mission of advancing the quality of life for people with disabilities.

Help us celebrate 70 years of opportunity together!

PRESENTED BY:
UNITEDHEALTH GROUP®

John and Paula Kelly

Count me in!

To get involved or learn more, scan the QR code below or visit:

opportunities.org/gala



“As parents of a son served by Opportunity Partners, Paula and I are pleased to support an organization with a long history of enriching the lives of people with disabilities. I am proud that OP also has the support of my employer, UnitedHealth Group, in sponsoring the OP Gala. For 70 years, Opportunity Partners has served families and our entire community in the important mission of advancing the quality of life for people with disabilities.”

- John Kelly
Senior VP-Tax, UnitedHealth Group
Opportunity Partners Board Member