

70 years of friendship and inclusion

Opportunity Partners celebrates 70 years of success

In 1953, a group of visionary parents wanted a better life for their teenage children with disabilities. Together, they started Opportunity Partners (then Opportunity Workshop) in a small house in Richfield. At a time when many people with disabilities were institutionalized in state hospitals, OP provided an avenue for people to meet friends, learn job skills and take part in leisure activities.

Now celebrating 70 years, Opportunity Partners continues to serve people with disabilities throughout the Twin Cities in employment, enrichment and residential services that help people earn income, live as independently as possible and participate as active members of the community.

"We cannot celebrate our 70th year without recognizing the families who had a revolutionary idea at the time – that people with disabilities bring richness and value to our families and communities," said Lori Schluttenhofer, CEO of Services.

"They demanded inclusion, not separation."

In 1959, OP became the first service provider in the Twin Cities to place people with developmental disabilities with community employers. OP began offering residential services in the 1970s, assisting people as they transitioned from institutions into community-based housing.

For Bob Gregersen, OP has been home since 1975. He moved into then Opportunity Workshop's residential facilities, Clara Doerr Residence & Lindley Hall in Minneapolis, when he was just 23 years old. Through OP, he made lifelong friends and achieved work success in the community. His favorite job was rolling silverware for Northwest airlines.

"I was a kid in a candy store at that job," he said.

Today, he lives in a caring OP group home, works at



Bob and Bethany love taking trips to the Norske Nook.



Bob (left) and Guy (right) enjoyed celebrating 70 years of OP at our annual Gala in April.

OP-Koch Campus in Minnetonka and enjoys playing the piano in his free time. He's played since he was a teenager, learning new songs by ear or with the help of a friend. Some of his favorites include "The Gambler" and "My Heart Will Go On." He is working on learning the theme song for "The Dukes of Hazzard."

Just like OP, Bob turned 70 this year! He celebrated with dinner and a party with friends, complete with chocolate cake and balloons. Some of his friends he's known for more than 30 years. They've stayed connected through adventures with OP, including trips to the Norske Nook in Osseo, Wisconsin and Kansas City, Missouri.

This summer, OP Leisure Coordinator Guy Johnson took Bob and a group from OP to Kansas City – a trip they haven't been able to enjoy since before the pandemic. Bob couldn't wait to experience a Royals baseball game again with Guy and friends!

After 70 years, Opportunity Partners is proud to continue to foster friendship, inclusion and success for the people we serve, including Bob.

"We help give people with disabilities a voice and support them in all areas of their life..."

"...in working, learning, growing and advocating for themselves – helping them live fulfilling lives in the community," said Bill Schultz, CEO of Operations & Strategy.

To learn more about OP's 70 years of success, visit opportunities.org/about-us

A Message from the CEOs

You helped us raise \$450,000!

Our hearts are filled with gratitude for our amazing OP supporters who helped us raise more than \$450,000 at our Gala. We are so thankful for everyone who gave generously to support the OP mission. Watch for ways you can get involved with OP events in the future!

Legislative session ends with some wins

The 2023 Minnesota Legislative session ended with some **positive news involving disability services**. The Legislature plans to invest an additional \$87 million in 2024-25 and an additional \$225 million in 2026-27 in new spending within the Disability Waiver Rate System. The data used for inflationary adjustments has changed, which will result in expected wage increases for direct care workers. Dollars have also been set aside for workforce recruitment and retention bonuses.

Legislation that would have ended the payment of subminimum wages to persons with disabilities by 2028, **was not included in the final bill**. We view this as a positive outcome that will result in continued employment choices for people we serve. Thank you to everyone who contacted lawmakers, rallied with us at the Capitol or asked for more information - together, we made a difference! Questions? Contact Lori Schluttenhofer, CEO of Services, at lschluttenhofer@opportunities.org

Housing for All

OP has been awarded a **\$100,000 grant** from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to develop two of our vacant group homes into residences for members of the LGBTQ+ community. The plan includes hiring of staff, recruiting residents and developing a training module for persons served, families and teams. Learn more by contacting Aimee Barbeau, Vice President of Residential & Community Living, at abarbeau@opportunities.org



Bill Schultz
CEO of Operations & Strategy



Lori Schluttenhofer
CEO of Services

New Board members

OP welcomes two new members to the Board of Directors



John Church provides consulting and advertising services through John Church Advisory Services, LLC after retiring as Chief Transformation & Enterprise Services Officer at General Mills. He brings over 30 years of business and leadership experience in addition to community involvement at Courage Center and the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management. Welcome, John!



Richard Bauer serves as the Director of Direct Marketing Intake Service at ActivStyle, an AdaptHealth Company and brings many years of experience in marketing and sales. His nonprofit and community involvement includes service at Every Meal (formerly The Sheridan Story), Make-A-Wish Minnesota and the American Red Cross. Welcome, Richard!

We're grateful for all who dedicate their time and talent to our mission! Meet our 2023 Board of Directors at opportunities.org/board

Mark your calendar for Sept. 13!

OP will present "That '70s Celebration," our annual Success Celebration, from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 13 at OP-Koch Campus in Minnetonka. This free, festive event will include an awards program for persons served, lunch, lawn games and music.

The theme will celebrate OP's 70 years of service with retro decor and music from the '70s. Stay tuned for more information!

With any questions or accommodations, please email psrcommittee@opportunities.org.



Q & A with Allan Benson

Catch up with Allan and discuss all things "art!"

Meet Allan, 62, who has been served by Opportunity Partners for 38 years! Allan is a talented artist and currently works in OP Production, after years of successful community employment.

How did OP help you gain work experience?

OP helped me go out and experience jobs in the community and showed me that I had talent. I had a few community jobs like at Aveda, JUUT, Transtech and others. I've also made a lot of friends at OP.

How did you get started in art?

Years ago, an instructor at OP gave me a pencil, paper and ruler and encouraged me to draw. I didn't know how to draw. But you can do a lot when you put your mind to it.

What is your favorite medium?

My favorite are acrylics. I like the brush strokes and all the shades. It's interesting to work with.

How else has OP helped you?

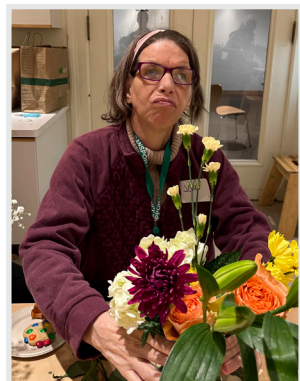
OP showed me how to use my talents and ability to help others, like to help people learn how to express themselves.

Tell us about an exciting event you have coming up!

I am getting married this summer to my fiancé Lenore. I'm pretty happy about getting married. I made her a ring out of jewelry wire.



Allan with his favorite painting, "Flower at Home."



Joan shows off her floral bouquet creation!

Art program blooms with Mia

A group of persons served by Opportunity Partners has started off their summer with a new artistic adventure! Through the Minneapolis Institute of Art's (Mia) new Vitality Arts program, the group is learning how to create their own botanical paintings.

The program is funded by a grant from E.A. Michelson Philanthropy, which was awarded to only nine museums across the country. Through Vitality Arts, Mia is providing artistic workshops to different groups of adults ages 55+, including a group from OP.

Mia works with the groups to create the curriculum for each workshop and follows a sequential skill building model each week, culminating in a final project. OP's group began with a preview of Mia's Art in Bloom exhibition before its opening, where they were able to watch the artists craft their floral creations.

Led by MCAD art teacher Michael Gaughan, the group was taught an introduction to drawing, color mixing and floral assemblage. They will conclude with a final botanical gouache painting. "They're a wonderful group, their willingness to try something new is really great to see," said Julie Bourman, Mia's Vitality Arts Coordinator.

The group will celebrate their final projects with a small exhibition in June, and will be able to see their works alongside the other Vitality Arts projects in a larger exhibition in the fall.



Greg studies a colorful painting at Mia.

Annual Report available online

We're excited to share our 2022 Report to the Community! See our successes and progress toward advancing the quality of life for people with disabilities at opportunities.org/annualreport



5500 Opportunity Court • Minnetonka, MN 55343
info@opportunities.org • opportunities.org
952-938-5511

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Twin Cities, MN
Permit No. 90100

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!



Get your OP swag at our new online store!

We have launched a new online store with a colorful and exciting array of OP apparel, caps, water bottles and more! All items are shipped directly to you, and a portion of all sales supports Opportunity Partners!



**Scan the QR code
to start shopping!**

