

We are stronger together!

The many ways we care about our community helps us be included, enhances learning and fosters understanding. When people truly feel part of the community, we all win!

Thanking our veterans

An enrichment class from Opportunity Partners-Koch Campus visited the Minnesota Veterans Home in Minneapolis to deliver handmade thank you cards. "Handing out the cards made the class feel good and made the veterans feel appreciated," said instructor Elizabeth Clark.

"I liked the people," said class member Beth. "They were very nice when we gave them the cards. I think they felt happy." Leo added, "I had a good time, and hopefully we can do it again."

Another class visited a Minnetonka fire station to meet firefighters and thank them for their service. A group also volunteered with the Minnesota Literacy Council, sorting books for children's reading programs throughout the Twin Cities.



Delivering cards to veterans, above, while Dana meets a Minnetonka fire fighter.



Sorting clothing for charity

Individuals served at OP-Asplin Center in Plymouth volunteer at Resale Select, a thrift store operated by Interfaith Outreach. "We sort clothes, match up shoes, and do many projects," said OP staff Dianna Hamilton-Yess. "We work independently and as a team to get the job done before we leave."



Photo courtesy of Westwood Hills Nature Center

Sprucing up our environment

Westwood Hills Nature Center in St. Louis Park recognized OP-Asplin Center for their ongoing commitment to keeping the center ready for visitors. A volunteer class (pictured above) fills the birdfeeders, clears snow from trails, and removes leaves and sticks from the front deck.

Additionally, OP-Karlins Center was recognized by Plymouth Mayor Jeffrey Wosje for its volunteerism at The Reserve Park, where a class and staff Jennie Davis tidy the park grounds in warmer weather. "The City is so very fortunate to have organizations who come forward to help," Mayor Wosje said in a thank you letter.

Showing kindness to our community

At OP's Engage with My Community class in Anoka, participants decorate grocery bags for Open Arms of Minnesota, which provides food for people with life-threatening illnesses. They've also started making "Random Acts of Kindness Bags," which began as a desire to improve sorting, counting and small muscle skills. They've shared the bags with Anoka police officers and store clerks, bringing smiles and even tears of thanks.

"Everywhere we go, our group makes connections with people," said OP staff member Michelle Howe. "The response has been amazing; the doors to new opportunities is breathtaking at times."

**Would you like us to visit your workplace or community organization to promote inclusion and understanding?
Let us know at info@opportunities.org**

Camacho's Corner

President & CEO

Armando Camacho



New decade, new design for our Opportunity Partners newsletter! We hope you enjoy the new look, and please reach out any time to share success stories with us.

This year promises to be one of changes, challenges and opportunities!

Board transitions



David Dorn



Patty Sagert

We are happy to welcome two new members to our Board of Directors, David Dorn and Patty Sagert. David is President & CEO of Special Olympics-Minnesota, and Patty is Campus Director of Rasmussen College. Board members stepping off include Leslie Neugent and Julia Sorenson. We thank them for their service!

Welcome, Kate Wilinski

I'm delighted to introduce you to our new Vice President of Advancement, Kate Wilinski. Kate joined Opportunity Partners in November and brings us more than 12 years of nonprofit development experience, including serving the last five years at Advancement Director at ICA Food Shelf in Minnetonka. Welcome, Kate!



Greg and his parents thank you

For Greg, age 40, friends and staff at Opportunity Partners enrich his already full life. That means the world to his parents, Jewel and Dave Butts, who want the best for him.

"OP has proven to be a great fit for Greg and his particular needs," Jewel said. "The staff who support him are amazing. He has also made wonderful friendships with other folks who are served by OP."

According to Jewel, having a disability does not keep Greg from living a rich and happy life. He enjoys all types of music, is a devoted Vikings and Twins fan, goes fishing with his dad, and gives his mom rides around their Ramsey neighborhood in the family's side-by-side All-Terrain Vehicle.

Opportunity Partners plays a big role in Greg's life too, providing a welcoming space with the right mix of friends and job training. Served by the organization since 2002, Greg built his skills in small steps by gaining experience in on-site production jobs before advancing to a community site. OP also taught him important "soft" skills, like having regular attendance and being respectful of others.

Today, he's thriving as part of a Supported Employment Team (SET) at Medtronic in Mounds View, where he "loves his job," working in the dish room four days per week. "OP is the best thing to ever happen to my son," Jewel said.

OP staff member Julie Magel, who has worked with Greg for 10 years, said she's seen Greg blossom in areas of flexibility, advocacy, independence and communication. "I feel honored that Greg and his family put their trust in me to support Greg with his employment needs," she said. "I am proud of Greg for overcoming obstacles and reaching for the stars."



OP staff Julie Magel and Greg Butts go over paperwork in the morning before he heads to his community job. Julie has supported Greg at OP for 10 years.

"OP is the best thing to ever happen to my son."

Farewell, Doug Annett

In December, we said farewell to our long-time Residential & Community Living leader Doug Annett. Doug has joined the Minnesota Department of Human Services as Deputy Assistant Commissioner, a role where he will continue to have an impact on the disability services sector.

Co-workers, friends and family members celebrated Doug's 23 years of service to Opportunity Partners at a going-away party at Koch Campus. At the party, it was announced that OP's Ensign Residence, which burned in June, will be rebuilt and named "Doug's Place."

Doug described his work at Opportunity Partners as a symphony. "If I'm seen as successful, it's because of all of you," he said. "We are all in this together as one beautiful orchestra."



Doug Annett, center, was joined by his father Jack, wife Jennifer, son Julian, niece Jacey Carlisle and sister Julie Koroll.

Tackling environmental safety

Opportunity Partners is doing its part to help the environment. Working with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), our hard-working teams assembled 10,000 lead-free fishing tackle kits in late 2019.

The MPCA "Get the Lead Out!" Campaign is being paid for with funds provided by BP as part of a settlement agreement. Federal and State governments worked with BP to compensate the public for harm to natural resources caused by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Non-lead fishing tackle can help protect loons, eagles and other wildlife that may ingest the tackle from the water or from eating fish.

OP workers completed several steps in the assembly process, including placing the tackle components into small plastic containers, positioning each container into a header card, and stapling them shut.

"It was a colorful and exciting project, and it means



Cheryl shows off a completed tackle package.



even more knowing we played a role in keeping wildlife safe," said Bonnie Hagen, Senior Director of Business Development. "We encourage other businesses to consider contacting us for jobs completed on time and on budget."

Contact Bonnie at bhagen@opportunities.org or learn more at opportunities.org/businesses/hire-us/

Opportunity Partners

gala

May 2, 2020

Purchase tickets at
opportunities.org/gala



In a 20-year career with Opportunity Partners, Hope Donald says OP has changed her life.

As our Assistant Manager of Transportation, every day brings new challenges as Hope helps manage 72 company vans and the details of safely shuttling individuals around the Twin Cities to their jobs and activities.

"I still feel excitement in watching people – and Opportunity Partners – grow," Hope said. "I'm very, very humbled to have helped people move from being 'clients' to just being people."

Hope said working at OP has changed her. "There's no greater joy than helping someone become themselves as you become yourself," she said. "There's a part where you can find who you are in the people we serve."

When she's not working, Hope enjoys singing karaoke, spending time with family and knitting.

Thank you, Hope, for all you do!

Join our team!

We are looking for compassionate, caring and kind individuals who want to make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities. All training provided!

Text to apply: 952-222-7509

