

# Visions

WINTER 2018

A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS OF OPPORTUNITY MATTERS INC.

## Farewell to 2017

*Regan Stommes, CEO*

I always find it to be rather bittersweet when another year draws to an end. Though it's hard to believe that 2017 has already come and gone, it's rewarding to look back at all the things that were implemented and finalized throughout 2017 and all the exciting new changes and initiatives scheduled for 2018.

In 2017, OMI, like so many other businesses, saw new challenges in keeping and maintaining staff due to all the open job opportunities throughout the area. Employing roughly 300 people, OMI strives to create a work environment where employees not only earn a paycheck but enjoy coming to work each day. Thanks to the wonderful and unique people we provide services to, OMI is very fortunate to be able to offer employees a rewarding career. The American entrepreneur and motivational speaker Jim Rohn once said, "Only by giving are you able to receive more than you already have." The amazing, caring and dedicated people who work at OMI give of themselves on a daily and weekly basis and in doing so establish a bond with those receiving services within the organization. Building off this, in 2018 we have planned new initiatives and incentives to recruit and retain employees.

The services offered by OMI continue to be strong and stable. Our 18 residential sites receive regular referrals and continue to serve 70 individuals, providing opportunities for those with all functioning levels. In 2017, OMI officially started our Supported Apartment program to provide programming support to those individuals who choose to live on their own or with a roommate in the community. While this living choice is not for everyone, we are happy to have already witnessed success with individuals who had been living in foster care homes or living with their parents. OMI is excited to be providing this new option of support to individuals who have the abilities necessary to live in this type of setting.

2017 also brought us continued gratitude for the support we receive from the community. OMI is thankful for the kind neighbors and neighborhoods that we have homes in. We are thankful for the donations and volunteers that help to support all the additional fun activities, events and extras provided to those we serve. With 2017 officially behind us, we want to thank everyone who has been a part of the organization this past year and hope you will join us again in 2018. ■

## Welcome David

*Emily Simonson, Program Coordinator*



Meet David! David moved from his family home to officially join the Foster 9 crew in the beginning of October. David has a twin sister, another sister and one brother. David loves sports and played hockey and baseball in high school before a car accident left him with a traumatic brain injury. He still enjoys cheering on the Vikings and the Twins! David is always on the go and enjoys participating in any activity. A few of his favorites are going to lift weights at the gym, playing bingo or eating out at his favorite restaurants, like Ciatti's or Old Chicago. David is now working at WACOSA. Cutting rope is his favorite job so far. David loves music and singing and knows the lyrics of almost any song. Feel free to stop by Foster 9 to say hello! ■



Salvation Army clean-up



Tri County Humane Society Woolstock



Country Manor Luau

## Opportunity Matters' 2017 Community Involvement

*Brenda Eggerth, Volunteer & Communication Manager*

Once again in 2017, all supervisors, lead support staff and administration staff worked to carry-out Opportunity Matters' core value of community by volunteering at various non-profit organizations throughout the St Cloud metro area. Staff completed anywhere from 2-4 hours of volunteer work at such organizations as; the Tri-County Humane Society, the Salvation Army, Country Manor Senior Campus, the Boys and Girls Club, and the American Red Cross. In total, OMI employees volunteered over 100 hours in 2017. ■

## The Evolution of OMI's Annual Holiday Party

*Sam Pierskalla, Program Services Director*

Opportunity Matters recently held our annual holiday party at the Holiday Inn in St. Cloud with over 250 guests attending. It is an event that many of the individuals supported by OMI look forward to attending each year. It is amazing looking back through time how this great event has evolved and grown to be what it is today.

The primary focus of the holiday party has not changed throughout the years. It has always been about providing an event celebrating the holiday season for those OMI supports, while enjoying the company of family and friends and of course having some good food. Over the years, music and dancing were added which created even greater excitement for the event.

When Opportunity Matters first started providing residential services in two ICF-DD homes, a holiday party was held at each home. The individuals, staff and family members were all welcome to attend. Food was provided while everyone opened their gifts. It was fairly simple and generally a small gathering of no more than 30 people. When OMI expanded their services and started smaller, four person waiver sites, the same approach was taken. The clients invited families, friends and staff to join them in a holiday celebration at their home. Eventually as OMI grew the decision was made to hold an organization wide party where all individuals served, their family, friends and staff could attend. Over the years, the holiday party was held at a number of off-site locations to accommodate the growing number of guests attending. The venues ranged from Sauk Rapids VFW, to the 400 Club, to the Eagles Club to most recently, the Holiday Inn.

As the number attending the holiday party has grown over the past several years so has the cost to hold the event. This year, Opportunity Matters had to make difficult decisions to regulate costs while continuing to provide this annual celebration to our individuals and their families. By covering the food costs of two guests for each of the individuals served by the organization, Opportunity Matters was able to continue the annual tradition that many look forward to. We appreciate all the feedback from guests who expressed understanding of this necessary change, many of whom were with us all those years ago when we were just a small organization celebrating the holidays at two ICF-DD homes. ■

## Opportunity Matters to Host Social Slam Events

*Camden Scott, Lead Program Director*

Opportunity Matters will soon be hosting another free Social Slam event for individuals with disabilities who live throughout our Central MN communities. You may be asking “What is a Social Slam?” A Social Slam is simply a catchy way to say “social event or gathering.” In 2017, Opportunity Matters received feedback from members of our community of the need for a place where individuals with disabilities can meet one another, spend time in a safe environment, play games or just sit down and get to know one another. Many of these individuals struggle to get out of their homes and find supportive friends. In late 2017, Opportunity Matters responded to this need by hosting the first of what we hope will be many Social Slam events that will give individuals opportunities to establish friendships and develop them into lifelong and meaningful relationships.

We are currently planning to schedule several more events in the coming months and throughout 2018. Be sure to watch for future mailings or Facebook postings for more information on the dates and times these free events will be offered. ■

## OMI Introduces CPR/FA Blended Learning

*Becka Kurtz, Business Technology Manager*

As technology continues to advance, OMI has adapted our trainings for employees to utilize the newest technology to provide the most comprehensive trainings possible.

Our first step was the change to a paperless payroll system. This was done through introducing an employee portal that allows employees to punch in/out, request time off, catch organizational announcements and elect benefit changes online. This change greatly cut down on the amount of paper used by the organization, streamlined payroll processes and gave employees greater access to manage their information.

In 2017, we successfully launched our new employee orientation and annual competency trainings for employees on Litmos, a cloud-based learning management system. This system allows learners to complete trainings at their own pace and then test out when they have completed the training. This change greatly increases the flexibility OMI employees have when completing their trainings by reducing the amount of time they must rearrange their schedules to attend classroom style trainings.

In 2018, Opportunity Matters is partnering with the American Red Cross to bring Blended Learning for First Aid/CPR to our employees. All OMI employees are required to be certified in first aid and CPR, which is provided by the organization. Blended learning offers a combination of online learning and in-person skill sessions. This change will allow employees to maximize learning as a self-paced training with less time spent in the classroom, yet ensure they comprehended the information by testing out in person with a trained First Aid/CPR/AED instructor.

As technology continues to evolve, OMI looks forward to learning about these advancements and how they can better serve our employees. ■

## Like Us on Facebook; Learn More about OMI

*Brenda Eggerth, Volunteer & Communications Manager*

Have you taken a moment to “like” Opportunity Matters’ page on Facebook? Those who do are kept up-to-date on happenings and events around the organization, are treated to photos of staff and individuals served and have a chance to win in contests and giveaways. Most recently, Opportunity Matters has also started using the job posting resources offered through Facebook to reach more people about current job openings within the organization. So the next time you log in to Facebook take a moment to check us out and see what you have been missing! ■



Find us on:  
**facebook®**



## Looking Back

*One of my favorite memories of Opportunity Matters is...*

“Shortly after I started at OMI we had our annual Great Get Together. I was at the event with my family and ran into one of the individuals from Foster 7. She remembered me from visiting her house earlier in the week and we had a nice visit. As the DJ started up she wanted to go dance. It was so cute as the staff and myself were prepared to go dance with her, this client grabbed the hand of my stepson (who at that time was 13 years old) and took him out to the dance floor. At first I was shocked as my stepson doesn’t really dance but the two of them were busy dancing for the next three or four songs. When they came off the dance floor they were both smiling. It is a memory that always makes me smile.”

...Lynn Jacques, Human Resources

*One of my favorite memories of Opportunity Matters is...*

“Shortly after I began working at OMI, I had a warm welcoming moment. I was over at one of our residential sites doing some work and when I had completed my work I had a conversation with two of the individuals who lived there. They were very happy and upbeat and were telling me how much they appreciate the work I was doing. They also told me about a few other items I could help them with when I had time. With me being new at the time, it was a good feeling to interact with them and know that they were happy and very appreciative. I think they felt good knowing I cared and wanted to help them as well.”

...Mike Schmitz, Maintenance

*One of my favorite memories of Opportunity Matters is...*

“Several years ago I worked with a young man who was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and intellectual disability. He had been admitted to our Crisis program several times over the course of his life; and I still remember the tearfulness his mother showed when two unfamiliar staff arrived to take him away from the only place he had ever lived. Over the course of his stays in Crisis; his mother continued to keep in touch with me and the other staff who had arrived that first day and had developed such a close working relationship with the young man. After nearly a year following his last discharge from our program; I and the other staff received Father’s Day cards from the young man and his mother with photographs she had taken of the three of us in Crisis. The gesture remains a powerful reminder to me of the opportunities each of us has in making a positive impact on another’s life; whether we recognize it at the time or not.”

...Nic Collette, Consulting

*One of my favorite memories of Opportunity Matters is...*

“The interaction I get with the individuals we serve when they come to the main office and those of us in administration get to visit with them. One individual, who has limited verbal skills, comes to my office weekly to get money from his office account. He walks in and sits down in the visitor chair and we “chat,” I got him to say “money” once; and only once. He knows he can say it, but he just likes to tease me.”

...Bridget Mohs, Finance Manager

*One of my favorite memories of Opportunity Matters is...*

“Some of the fondest memories I have at OMI are from way back in the days when I was a Direct Care Staff. At that time we had two ICF/DD homes with 12 clients in each home. Each summer we planned a four day camping trip for the individuals we served. The camping trip took place at a resort near Spicer which was owned by parents of a staff that worked for OMI. The individuals who attended enjoyed the games and activities we planned. There was volleyball, softball, fishing, pontoon rides, camp fires and of course, swimming. Not only did the individuals we serve enjoy the camping trip, so did the staff. Even staff that were not on duty were invited to stay throughout the four days and most often did. It was great because if we needed extra hands there were extra staff available to help out. The days flew by and both staff and clients enjoyed the break in the daily routine.”

...Sam Pierskalla, Program Services Director

*One of my favorite memories of Opportunity Matters is...*

“I have so many fond memories of OMI that it is hard to narrow it down, but one of my favorite memories has to be from long ago at Christmas time at Manor 1. Everyone would get dressed up and all the individuals served (12 in the home) would get so excited as all of the staff from the house and family members showed up and everyone ate great food and then all gathered in the living room and dining room to open presents. Everyone received gifts and felt so happy and thankful. All the individuals wanted to see what everyone else received and there was much clapping and cheers for each others gifts. All the staff that worked at the site always showed up and hung out with the individuals and the families. It was always a very heart warming evening.”

...Regan Stommes, CEO



# Welcome to Our Newest Board Member

Regan Stommes, CEO

Opportunity Matters' is excited to welcome Kaylan Nelson, who joined our Board of Directors in the fall of 2017. Kaylan is the Clinical Market Manager at Microbiologics. In her role, she develops and manages the global marketing direction and strategic vision for Microbiologics clinical product portfolio. Her expertise is in product ideation, product strategy, product marketing, and market research. While at Microbiologics, she has launched several product lines and dozens of specialty products as well. Prior to her work at Microbiologics, Kaylan held positions at Cybermation where she helped launch the digital healthcare division of the organization.



Kaylan has had a passion for helping others since an early age. She was involved in a number of organizations throughout her youth, and when she went to college she knew there was more she could do. As an adult, her focus has been on two main areas: veterans assistance and animal rescue. Kaylan's husband is a disabled veteran and seeing the assistance he's received from veteran-related organizations inspired her to get more involved as well. Her other area of focus has been in animal rescue. She has held a number of positions in two local animal rescues and has fostered over 30 dogs. This passion for helping others, both people and animals flourish is what makes her so excited to be part of the Opportunity Matters family!

Kaylan grew up near Foley, MN and has a Bachelor's Degree in Marketing from St. Cloud State University. In her spare time, she and her family enjoy visiting museums, playing board games, and spending time with their animals. ■

## Our Non-Event Fundraiser

*Twisted Twilight Committee*

Thank you to everyone who donated this past fall to Opportunity Matters' Twisted Twilight Non-Event Fundraiser. Over \$6,000 was raised to benefit the individuals served by Opportunity Matters. The committee is currently busy working on the details of our 2018 fundraiser. Keep an eye out in upcoming newsletters for more information.

## 2017 Twisted Twilight Non-Event Donations/Sponsorships Received

### \$1,000+

DeZurik  
Bremer Bank

### \$500+

Kurt & Sarah Erickson  
Center for Diagnostic Imaging

### \$200+

Jill & Randy Lyon  
St. Cloud Sprinkler Company  
Dale Jacobson & Dana Laudenschach  
Mike's Trim Carpentry  
Doug & Toby Moe

### \$100+

Bruce Nelson  
Peter & Barbara Backer  
Joanne Seifert & Sharon Sandberg  
John & Terri Skalla  
Michael & Jeanette Klisch  
Patricia Wierzbicky  
360 Chiropractic  
Mark & Irene Eilers  
Roger & Jean Storkamp  
John & Anita Stoering

### Donations

Jerry & Deb Dusich  
Bridget Mohs  
Cassandra & Jason Jonas  
Kathy Trueman  
Kurt & Ruth Huntsiger  
Gary & Jean Kierzek  
Isaha & Kaylan Nelson  
Jenner & Nan Nelson  
Greg & Kathy Pullis  
Harold & Sharon Ramler  
Mike & Cindy Grogan  
Natalie & Jacob Ethen



Money raised at the Twisted Twilight Non-Event Fundraiser was used towards the purchase of a new van for our Foster 6 site.

# Holiday Party Photos

To see more photos from OMI's Holiday party visit our Facebook page or website at [www.opportunitymatters.org/newsandevents](http://www.opportunitymatters.org/newsandevents).



## What we "Like and Admire?"

With the new 245D regulations focusing on person-centered and person-directed planning for the individuals we support at OMI, the Program Directors, Program Managers and Program Coordinators have been very busy writing new plans for all of the individuals that focus on their hopes, dreams and what they want in their lives. Part of those plans center on what staff and others "Like and Admire" about the individual. In 2018, we plan to include a few of these "like and admire" articles in each edition of our Visions newsletters to help you better understand why we enjoy the individuals we serve so much! ■

### What We Like and Admire about Colline

**Her caring and thoughtful personality:** Colline takes great pride in being a helpful and caring person. She is always thinking about what she can do or how she can make someone feel special. She loves hearing from people how much her kind gestures mean to them. If someone is feeling down, Colline is the first one there to offer them some of her amazing baked goods or a handcrafted item to put a smile on their faces and make them feel a little better.

**Her amazing work ethic:** Colline's house staff say that they admire Colline for her amazing work ethic and how she always strives to do a good job, no matter the task. She always stays busy and is willing to try new things. ■



### What We Like and Admire about Mary



**Her sense of humor and hard work ethic:** Talking with Mary's sister, she loves Mary's work ethic and sense of humor. She recounted many stories about how Mary could keep up with the jokes and pranks with all of the older kids. She also talked about how any time Mom and Dad needed chores done Mary was always ready to help and do them.

**Her natural ability to lead others:** Mary's work placement talked about how much they enjoy Mary's leadership. During the work day Mary frequently helps her fellow co-workers by giving instructions and helping them do things. They said Mary sets a great example by staying busy and doing quality work. Mary's staff also said they enjoy her stories and jokes saying she is the best! They talked about how elaborate her stories are and how she always makes them laugh.

**Her compassion and willingness to help others:** Staff at Mary's house comment on how kind Mary is to her housemates. Mary will usually ask if they can come with on her outings so they can have fun too. If something is wrong with her peers Mary usually will ask if she can help them.

**Fun Fact:** Staff report that Mary may be the greatest UNO player of all time! ■

## Donations/Grants

*We are grateful to the many individuals, families, businesses and foundations whose contributions are vital to the success of Opportunity Matters Inc. The following list reflects gifts received from October 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017.*

### \$500

Money raised by the Irondale High School Class of 1977  
Joyce & Tony Tillemans Fund

### \$200+

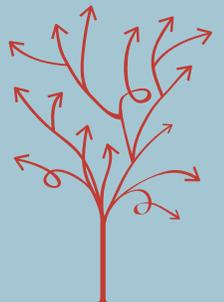
Doug & Toby Moe - in memory of Corey Thomas Moe  
Richard & Marlene Schlichting  
Mike's Trim Carpentry  
Nicole Schlichting  
The K Foundation

## Donations

August & Rachel Guerra  
GL Berg & Associates  
Harry & Sharon Ramler - in memory of Agnes Stock  
Lynn Jacques  
Sarah Bucholz  
Chris & Michelle Brown  
Nancy Voigt

## In Kind

Carlson Cleaners  
Mike's Dirt Work  
Kemps



## Board Members

### President

Gary Sabby, *T & S Agency, LLC*

### President Elect:

Anita Stoering, *Wolters Kluwer*

### Secretary

John Skalla, *DeZURIK*

### Treasurer:

Courtney Vorell, *Rum River Special  
Education Cooperative*

### Directors:

John Herges, *Falcon National Bank*

Kaylan Nelson, *Microbiologics*

## A New Level of Independence

*Brenda Groseclose, Program Director*

*Drea Metcalf, Program Coordinator*



Jackie lived at OMI Foster 9 for many years. She had wanted to live in her own apartment for quite awhile, but the resources and services were not yet developed to support her in that venture. In March of 2017, when OMI opened the Supported Apartment program, one of Jackie's housemates was the first individual to move into that new program. Jackie then started working even harder to make that a reality for herself and in October, 2017, she signed her own lease and moved into her own apartment in Sauk Rapids. She now lives in a 1 bedroom apartment with staff providing support with grocery shopping, appointments, budgeting, independent medication administration, helping her to learn to use her new smart phone and using public transportation to get where she wants to go. Jackie's programs have changed since she moved into her apartment. She used to have a program to help her remember to do her household tasks. Now that she is on her own, Jackie doesn't need these reminders and takes great pride in maintaining her space and keeping it clean. Staff have even had to start having her wait to run her dishwasher until it is full as she wants to run it every day but with just her, it doesn't fill up very quickly. She really loves that now if she puts something down somewhere in her apartment; it is still there when she

comes back. Jackie's main concern with moving into her own place was making sure she would still be able to go to work at the DAC in Princeton and to Bingo at the Waite Park Legion every Sunday. OMI was able to accommodate both of these requests. Jackie is doing well enjoying her new home and her new level of independence. ■