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A Quarterly Publication from Ottawa Friendship House

Winter 2016

Handshakes & Hellos



Welcome Letter

This is a very special year for Ottawa Friendship House. We are celebrating 50 years of providing supportive services for men and women with intellectual challenges. Our agency would not be what it is today without the support of our community since opening our doors in 1966.

In 1953, a group of mothers who had children with special needs began meeting to share ideas and dreams for their children's futures. The group was called the Mother's Club for Exceptional Children. This group of women knocked on doors, wrote letters and held special events in hopes of developing a program so that their children would have an opportunity to learn and socialize.

In June of 1955, the group offered six-week summer courses for children with disabilities that were so successful that a fall session was added. Their dream of improving the quality of life for their children turned into a reality. Then, as a number of years passed, these same children began reaching adulthood and were needing to find purpose and meaning in their lives.

In 1966, after a year of planning, the group had saved enough money for three months of operating costs in the treasury. They prepared to open a sheltered workshop at the John F. Kennedy Union Center with 8 to 10 individuals ready to work. On October 3, 1966, Ottawa Friendship House was incorporated as a non-profit to provide supportive services for men and women with intellectual disabilities.

Now fifty years later, we've surpassed our very first budget, currently operating at over four million dollars. We employ 52 staff members, and over 100 individuals are improving their quality of life through enrollment in Ottawa Friendship House programs.

Because of the vision and determination with which our agency was founded, we've laid a strong foundation toward fulfilling our mission well into the future!

- Beth Mangold, Executive Director

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Upcoming Events

Friends, Food & Fun... raising!

an evening in support of Ottawa Friendship House

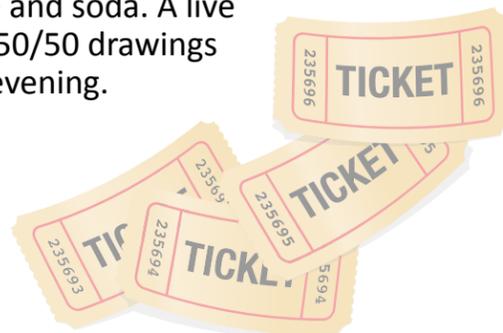
Thursday, March 10, 2016 | 5:00 - 7:30 pm

Ottawa Knights of Columbus Hall | 401 W. Main Street

Tickets at the Door, or Phone 815.434.0737 for Will Call

Your ticket purchase (\$20 donation) includes heavy hors d'oeuvres, draft beer, wine and soda. A live auction plus raffle buckets and 50/50 drawings will take place throughout the evening.

All proceeds will remain local in support of the agency. Please call 815.434.0737 with any questions.



SAVE THE DATES!

>> Saturday, August 27

Concert at Covel Creek welcomes back the Chicago Jazz Septet with special guest Dee Alexander.

>> Thursday, September 29

Business After Hours, hosted by the Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce.

>> Monday, October 3

Birthday celebration. An open house for consumers, staff and families.

contact us

815.434.0737

friends@ottawafriendship.com

www.ottawafriendship.com

DAY PROGRAMMING: KEVIN'S STORY

If Kevin could talk and share about his life growing up as a child with cerebral palsy, his story would begin with two loving parents.

Kevin was the first of four children in the Capsel family and was the apple of his Dad's eyes from the first day that he arrived in this world. Later, when Kevin was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, it did not change that bond. Rather, it strengthened it.

His parents' role changed from "just mom and dad" to supportive therapists. Dad would design and - with the help of friends - build equipment for standing, walking and communication. Mom made sure that Kevin's meal times would ensure his nutritional needs and physically assisted him so that he could eat.

>> Local storyteller Bill Myer provided entertainment as part of the Bridge to Friendship program coordinated with Marquette Academy students.

>> Starved Rock Harley Davidson sponsored a Christmas Dance for the consumers.

>> A number of consumers took part in a dental clinic offered by Dr. Jason Grinter.

>> Our annual Christmas Luncheon featured a magic show by John and Barbara Meyers.

>> This year's Christmas mailer tallied over \$24,000 in donations!

Highlights

Consumer Spotlight



As the other children arrived in the Capsel household, big brother Kevin participated in every family event. This holds true today. Growing up in a lively household, Kevin developed a sense of humor which now is passed on to his nieces and nephew. The ribbing and kidding is done out of love, and the relationships are real and deep across the whole family.

Although Kevin relies on his family to be his arms, legs and voice, his parents did not want to have their son grow up in an isolated vacuum, void of friends and social opportunities. His mom and dad wanted him to have the same independence that their other children had. Kevin attended the Easter Seals school program until aging out and then headed to Lighted Way. In a few short years, he was ready for adult services.

For many parents, this is the biggest choice in their child's future. It lays the foundation for the rest of their lives. After meeting with Ottawa Friendship's executive director, Kevin's parents really took the following words to heart, "Kevin needs his own life, and so do you."

This happened over 33 years ago, and Kevin has utilized Ottawa Friendship House services ever since. Kevin is happy and has a large group of friends. He continues to live with his parents and attends the agency's day program five days each week.

With the support of the day program at Ottawa Friendship House, Kevin feels that he has the best of everything. He enjoys his own aspects of life while his parents enjoy theirs. While Kevin participates in developmental training, his parents appreciate their time together and often connect with their friends for breakfast and lunch.

Today, Kevin's parents are in their late 70s and early 80s. They share that the agency staff has been more like family than "just support staff."

And both agree that they do not know what their lives would be like without Ottawa Friendship House.

New Home News

An Ottawa nonagenarian, known as the founding parent of Ottawa Friendship House, is set to receive recognition as part of a promise made during a June 2014 lifetime achievement ceremony in her honor.

Agency officials revealed in early January that they have purchased a new residential home in Ottawa and will dedicate it in honor of Jane McCormick, who laid the groundwork for the creation of the agency in 1966.

"We did announce in 2014 that a future home purchase would be named for Jane, so I'm glad we're finally able to honor that commitment," said Friendship House Executive Director Beth Mangold. "And not to overshadow this terrific new resource for our consumers, but we have so much to be thankful for in 2016. This year also marks our fiftieth anniversary!"

Adding that it was only fitting for the new Jane McCormick Home to be dedicated in a milestone year, Mangold continued, "Our official birthday isn't until October 3, but we'll be celebrating our successes all year long."

First on their list is celebrating the new home purchase that will soon bear the name of the agency's founder. With a number of consumers already identified to inhabit the agency's newest residential dwelling, staff is working to ensure the home for six residents is furnished and move-in ready by March.

"We last expanded our residential options in September 2014 with the purchase of the Sullivan and Glenwood houses, previously run under different ownership," said Mangold. "Both homes operate as intermediate care facilities and feature round-the-clock support staff on site."



Jane accepting her lifetime achievement award in 2014.

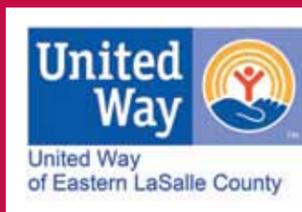
Continuing, she said, "The Jane McCormick Home will offer a new option for semi-independent living and joins the four homes located on our South Ottawa campus. Residents of these facilities have the support of certified staff."

Plans to officially dedicate the home with a plaque honoring McCormick are tentatively scheduled for later this summer. At that time, she will get a chance to visit with the new residents, and they will be able to show her their home.

"It's a truly exciting time to be a part of Friendship House," said Mangold. "And with such a storied history, it's easy to reminisce about the past. But we also have to remember to turn our focus to the future. Here's to another fifty years of successes and being a financially secure and viable option for this community."

The reference to finances is not without merit. As a non-profit agency, Friendship House relies partially on State of Illinois funding which can be unreliable at best these days in the absence of an approved state budget. The agency relies more heavily upon private donations to ensure the organization can continue to grow and meet the needs of the 100+ adults with developmental disabilities who rely upon its services.

The Jane McCormick Home is one such instance in which private donations were used to fully fund the purchase. In addition to the purchase of the home, fundraising efforts made it possible to refurbish and update infrastructures and appliances in current residential housing. Funding also offered program support for equipment and recreational activities.



Ottawa Friendship House is a United Way Partner Agency

A portion of our yearly revenue is graciously donated by our local United Way.

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October 1, 2015 - January 31, 2016

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Or make your donation online through PayPal at www.ottawafriendship.com

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