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Our Mission

Our Mission is to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live in the *same* neighborhoods, work for the *same* employers, and share in the *same* experiences to which we all aspire.

CONTACT US

541-772-1503
www.LivingOpps.org



facebook.com/LivingOpportunities
facebook.com/StudioatLivingOpps



youtube.com/LivingOpps

Thank you to our sponsors:

**Les and Paula Cracraft
Raymond Family Foundation**



2020 EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR Quantum Innovations

Norm Kester with Robert and Tavis

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thrive

THE LIVING OPPORTUNITIES NEWSLETTER | FALL 2020



FROM THE DESK OF OUR

ceo

Dear Friends,

During this tumultuous year, I saw Southern Oregon show up to support one another in a beautiful way. As I come to terms with the tragedies of 2020, there is one thing I know for sure—our wonderful community and our steadfast employees came together to help their neighbors in a time of need.

On September 8th, our staff showed bravery, tenacity, and leadership as wildfires ravaged our community. They went above and beyond to ensure the people we support were evacuated safely. Many did this as they faced unknown tragedy in their own neighborhoods. Eight employees and individuals we support within the Living Opportunities family lost their homes, and many more have been displaced. Some will not return home for a very long time. In response, supporters from our community and from across the United States made donations to help provide temporary housing, essential supplies, and more.

The ripple effect of this tragedy will be a housing and staffing crisis. Local housing options were already limited, especially for those who experience disabilities. Living Opportunities is already experiencing a staffing crisis as valued employees resign to move out of the area.

Like so many others struggling with the housing crisis, I am committed to working with local housing authorities and state representatives to increase affordable housing. We will collaborate with local contractors and landlords to help us rebuild for the people we support and our employees. If you are interested in partnering with us, please don't hesitate to reach out.

We appreciate our volunteer board members who lead this organization throughout a difficult year. Special acknowledgment to retiring board member Brent Pearson for his six years of service. In 2020, our donors exceeded all expectations—words cannot express our appreciation for your support. My biggest thanks, however, goes to our employees. This organization continues to thrive, and the people we serve lead great lives, because of our incredible staff.

Thank you, one and all!

Thanks to our Donors

Without the generous support of friends and donors like you, the stories of hope and resilience you'll read about herein would not be possible. Together with every individual and family who counts on Living Opportunities' support each day—we thank you. Your kindness echoes through our work and into the lives of many.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR

board chair

Living Opportunities has always been an extraordinary, mission-driven organization. 2020 has brought the most significant challenges Living Opportunities has faced in its 45-year history. While many businesses and organizations ceased providing services, our staff has persevered, meeting every challenge head-on. They've done an outstanding job—adapting quickly and creatively, with unparalleled care and dedication.

Because state and federal revenues are under strain, important funding for our programs and services could be in jeopardy. We are actively monitoring the legislature and continuing to advocate for the people we serve. Meanwhile, as the fundraising events that provide much needed support for our programs have been postponed or moved online, Living Opportunities is grateful for the community support we continue to receive.

I remain hopeful we will be able to meet face-to-face in the near future, so together we can celebrate the heartfelt stories and successes of the people we support. Until then, stay safe and stay healthy!

—Polly Williams

What's Happening the studio AT LIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Through technology, The Studio at Living Opportunities has been alive and well during these hard times. The new normal starts with Dan and Olive reaching out to sing or hear songs our musicians have written. They will Facetime with an artist who proudly shows off their latest work. The theatre group meets on Zoom to practice their acting skills. Our objective is to keep everyone socially connected, so they feel loved and supported while spreading the joy of music, art, and theater.

In October, we launched a virtual furnARTure fundraising event. Our artists described what they enjoy most about The Studio, and shared their desire to return in person when conditions allow. You still have an opportunity to watch our video and support The Studio with a generous donation.

LEARN MORE AT
www.livingopps.org/furnature2020



Supported Living

Living Opportunities supports 70 people who live in their own homes in Jackson County.

Most of these people are extremely busy throughout the week and love it that way, enjoying the same daily activities as anyone. Being busy provides a schedule and routine that offers a comfortable life balance.

In March, Oregon's Governor enacted an executive order to "Stay Home, Stay Safe" in response to Covid-19. For the people we serve, this was unimaginable. Overnight, they were forced to staying home all the time, with activities and social life disappearing. As they became isolated, many individuals didn't understand, which resulted in confusion, fear, and anger.

Our amazing Supported Living staff responded by providing education to every person we serve. We taught them about viruses and how to keep themselves and others safe. This meant adapting to each person's learning style and ability—from individuals who only communicate with pictures, to people needing very detailed information. We adapted our services to the new normal by helping people be as active as possible. We used technology to connect with their family and friends. We watched and created healthy cooking videos, worked on craft projects, ordered groceries online, and held home dance parties. Our professional staff went the extra mile to keep everyone busy, healthy, and safe.

If you are moved to help, we need more hardware to support our use of technology. Please contact Deb McHargue at 541-601-6843 for more information. If you are interested in volunteering to mentor and spend time with the people we serve, please contact Sara Davis at 541-772-1503.



Employment Department

In March, as the economic downturn hit, our business partners began calling to share their plight, and apologizing for necessary layoffs. The pain they expressed was real, and we realized we would have to work hard to make this transition for the supported employees and their caring employers as smooth and easy as possible.

The world changed. Things stopped. About 80% of the jobs with our business partners were lost. But we couldn't stop—too many people depend on our services for their lives to be productive and full. We remained diligent. We kept in touch with the businesses and they kept in touch with us. Our confidence grew as we swiftly and successfully addressed new and unfamiliar challenges.

Jointly, we are bringing the pieces back together. Our partners have re-imagined their businesses and brought the same employees back to work. Some of the jobs are fully reinstated, new types of jobs have been created in response to this pandemic, some jobs are reduced in days or hours—but the trend is positive.

Just as we regained momentum, the unimaginable happened. Ravaging wildfires. Again, the community responded together. At the time of this letter, the future is being written step-by-step.

THANK YOU FOR INCLUDING US AS A PART OF YOUR PLAN

We also found a way to reinvent our 2020 Employer of the Year recognition, scheduled for our Gala in May. Instead, we brought the event to Norm Kester and the team at Quantum Innovations. The unexpected benefit was that most of the Quantum employees were able to share in this award presentation. Congratulations to a wonderful business and valued partner.

In all of this, if you have opportunities for our job seekers who want to join a workplace team as they also rebuild their lives, please contact Baylee LaVoie at 541-772-1503.

