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living opportunities

PO Box 1105, Medford, OR 97501

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

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thrive

THE LIVING OPPORTUNITIES NEWSLETTER | FALL 2022



FROM THE DESK OF OUR

ceo

Dear Friends,

This year has been one of transition and recovery. Stabilizing the staffing needs at Living Opportunities was our top priority in 2022. Thanks to numerous grants, and the focus of our Leadership Team and Board of Directors, we are on solid ground again.

In this ongoing pandemic world, we have worked to shift our focus from crisis management to strategic recovery, creating a platform for forward momentum. I look forward to sharing more with you in our Annual Report coming in December. Make sure you're signed-up for our emails to receive a copy—you can use the QR code inside this newsletter to easily sign up!

While businesses continue to struggle with the labor crisis, here in Jackson County many employers looked to creatively meet their staffing needs by hiring individuals supported by Living Opps. October was National Disability Employment Awareness Month. To raise awareness, we highlighted many of our local employers and employees on social media. Visit our Facebook page to learn more about Jacob, Victoria, Eric, Wyatt, Axel and Desi.

In October, we hosted our first in-person fundraiser since 2019—and this year's furnARTure event benefiting the Studio was a rousing success! Many thanks to all of our sponsors, donors, and attendees for helping us return with a record-breaking amount raised.

Please join me in welcoming Roger Hassenpflug and Tim Clayton, the newest members of our Board. Roger served as Living Opps' CEO for many years. We are blessed to have him provide historical knowledge and guidance as our board grows. Tim comes with a financial background and a keen eye for numbers. He has years of board service to other local non-profits here in the Rogue Valley.

I am continually in awe of the people that support our work at Living Opportunities. You clearly see the value of our mission, and you are instrumental in making sure we live in a welcoming community that embraces individuality and passionately supports and empowers people. Through your generosity, Living Opportunities will continue to impact the lives of individuals experiencing barriers to employment, housing, and access to the experiences to which we all aspire.

Thanks again for all you do,

~ Amber Robles Myre

Assistive TECH

You've seen them while browsing in the grocery store, on your concert ticket, and in countless other places in our daily lives—those mysterious black and white squares covered in a geometric pattern.

They are QR codes!

A convenient tool that's been around for more than twenty years, Quick Response (QR) codes are named for how they instantly provide large amounts of information. It's easy to upload them to any smart phone or tablet.

1. **OPEN** the camera on your device.
2. **POINT** the camera so the QR code appears and hold it there.
3. **TAP** the link that pops up on the screen.

If your device cannot read the QR code on its own, a free app that will do the job is available in the App Store.

QR codes are also important as Assistive Tech (AT) for people experiencing disabilities. Whether it's to aid in ordering food to eat, providing a verbal cue instead of a person, or help in transitioning tasks, these codes can be life changing.

Here at Living Opps, this and other AT can offer increased independence. As we welcome the next generations, QR codes can engage and support people in ways that utilize devices they are already comfortable with.

For example, when a QR code is printed on a business card or resume, one can easily convey their professional skills to possible employers without using verbal language. While on the job, QR codes can offer

independence by opening apps that display tasks, schedule reminders, dial phone numbers, and more. It appears the applications for QR codes can enrich everyone's lives.

You can try it out today by scanning the Living Opps QR code right here!



2023 Board of Directors

OFFICERS

Tim D'Alessandro, *Chair*
Les Cracraft, *Vice Chair*
Micah Shanks, *Secretary*
Karlie Vandebusch, *Treasurer*
Tim Clayton
Roger Hassenpflug
Brent Kell
Baylee LaVoie
Sarah Lynch
Polly Williams

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Jim Norris, *COO*

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Sara Davis, *Director of Supported Living*
Stacy Fields, *Director of Bridging Communities*
Tara Mardoll, *Supported Employment Director*
Dan Mish, *Studio Director*
David Van Hook, *Director of IT*



MIEKE RYNEAL WITH HER CREATION "INTO THE LIGHT"



ORIGINAL ART BY JUSTIN WARREN



TAKE PART IN A GLOBAL DAY OF GIVING

HOLIDAY ART SHOW

SAVE THE DATE!

Thurs, Dec. 8th, 4:30-7:00pm, 32 S. Central Ave, Medford

Make plans to join us for this special Holiday event, featuring the creations of our local community and the artists at The Studio.

GIVING TUESDAY ~ NOVEMBER 29

GivingTuesday is a global generosity movement that unleashes the power of people to transform their communities and the world. You can make a difference in 2022 by donating to our mission at LivingOpps.org/donate.

Spotlight on Success!

Serene scenes of surrealism. Patterns applied with patience. Colors coalescing with a spark. All this and much more comes to life in the paintings of Mieke Ryneal.

Witnessing someone truly immersed in their creative process is a rare and inspiring opportunity. What's more is to behold their finished artwork. It is a privilege to be surrounded by passionate artists everyday here at The Studio in Downtown Medford. We are proud to feature one such artist, Mieke Ryneal, who has been a prolific part of our community, selling 87 paintings since joining our program.

"Art brings me such joy. It is who I am. This is what I was born to do." Mieke's joy is palpable. You feel it in the dreamy, glowing images she produces. Her work often features pointillism, a technique deployed by the masters that utilizes a wooden stick to painstakingly create thousands of dots of color. Nationally recognized, Mieke has received the Award in Excellence from the VSA Emerging Young Artists Program and her art has been displayed at the Kennedy Center as well as the Smithsonian Institute.

The pandemic brought challenges to everyone. Its impact was deeply felt here at The Studio at Living Opportunities. "I really miss the Studio," says Meike. "I love to paint, it's my happy place. I really miss sharing my paintings with everyone. At least I get to share my art with Dan on video chat which is really great. Every morning when I wake up, I'm hoping the Studio will be open today."

Although we all found ways to thrive through the pandemic setbacks, The Studio is very happy to be opening up again. On October 2nd, we held our 11th annual furnARTure event, live and in-person, where Mieke's latest creation "Into the Light" was a featured piece. She graced the stage to speak with vulnerability, authenticity, and strength. There wasn't a dry eye or untouched heart in the room as she relayed her story of overcoming adversity as a young person, and finding healing and hope in her artist community. Meike said it has all been a blessing, shaping the person she is today and fostering the gift of creativity. Her new painting shows a beautiful forest of aspens, dappled with abstract light formed by her signature pointillist style.

"Trees, just like us, are constantly changing and made up of all shapes, sizes and colors. I think people take them for granted and I'd be really upset if I didn't see them every day." In an awe-inspiring display of receptivity for her message and gifts, "Into the Light" sold for \$25,000 during the live auction!

The experience was almost overwhelming for Meike, she is still "dancing on clouds" of joy. The best feelings ever were the celebrations and happy-tears shared with her mother and all of her friends at Mountain Meadows. A success so very well-deserved and achieved. We look forward to Meike's future triumphs, and are forever grateful to share in the joy and creativity of this incredible woman.