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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

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Community Relations Committee • furnARTure returns!*

# thrive

THE LIVING OPPORTUNITIES NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2022



FROM THE DESK OF OUR

# ceo

Dear Friends,

Looking back, 2021 was another year full of surprises—and Living Opportunities continued rolling with the punches. With a transition in leadership, the continued threat of COVID-19, and a national labor shortage, our organization has been resilient. We look to each other, and our strength in a shared purpose, to continue in the work we do.

This past year, we benefited from multiple short term grants that made it possible to focus on the recruitment and retention of our direct support staff. These positions represent the backbone of the services we offer, and they have the greatest impact on delivering our mission and vision. We could never do what we do without our amazing staff. In addition, Bridging Communities received grants for fire relief and COVID response that focused on families with a member experiencing a disability.

In October, we made the decision not to renew our lease on Murphy Road and to move the Administrative Offices to our Ashland site on Normal Avenue. This allows us to take the time to truly assess our needs and look for a permanent site to purchase.

As you know, we have not been able to host an annual fund-raiser since 2019. We are blessed to have a dedicated donor base that has continued to keep us in their thoughts during these trying times.

In November, we honored our beloved Jimmy “G” (Gochenour) on Giving Tuesday. Jim spent 19 years dedicated to the mission at Living Opportunities.

Today, we want to welcome Karlie Vandebusch and Baylee LaVoie, the newest members of our Board of Directors. Karlie represents a local business partner where she’s experienced the pleasure of working with many of our individuals as employees. Baylee served on our Board years ago before becoming our Business and Donor Relations Manager. She retired in 2021, but has returned to the board to offer her unique perspectives and insight. I’m also pleased to announce our new Director of Supported Employment, Tara Mardoll. Tara has worked with us since 2015 and we are excited to see her continue in this new role.

Although we’re all experiencing fatigue from the past couple of years, I am optimistic that 2022 holds hope for our organization and community.

Thanks again for all you do,

*~ Amber Robles*

# What's Happening

## the studio

AT LIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Over the past two years, we've all experienced changes in our lives. One of the most significant hardships was dealing with the inability to freely meet with others in social settings. Spending time with friends is paramount to everyone's health and well-being—it's especially vital to people who, at times, experience isolation.

In March 2020, the Studio was closed due to state mandates restricting group support activities. During the closure, the Studio's Director, Dan Mish, and his assistant Olive Fry, hosted daily interactions with artists via video and phone conversations to maintain social connections.

The Studio was allowed to reopen in the Fall of 2021 with a limit of four artists attending each daily session and the requirements of facial masking, physical distancing, and additional cleaning protocols.

While still operating under the limitations and requirements, the artists at the Studio are extremely happy to be back, expressing their creativity through the arts. We are hopeful that in the coming months, we'll be able to fully reopen the Studio to artists and the community.



Eric connects with Olive, our Studio Assistant



# Connected to Community

Vinny loves attending sporting events. One of his favorite activities is going to Crater High softball games. The high school is located nearby, an easy walk down the street from his home. Vinny is such an enthusiastic fan, he was quickly embraced by the Crater Comet's team.

One way that helps Vinny manage anxiety is to twirl ribbon around in his fingers in a soothing way. So before the start of a game last season, upon their introduction to the field, each team member ran to where Vinny was seated and presented him with a ribbon. They also presented him with an official team shirt and a softball, both autographed by the players. "It makes us happy to see that our game makes him so happy," says the team. "It's always fun to hear Vinny cheering for us!"

Being an integral part of the community is important to all of us because it provides a deep sense of connection to others. Best of luck to the Crater High Softball Team this season. *Go Comets!*

## A Special Thank You!

We haven't been able to host any fundraising events during the past two years, so we are especially grateful to the donors who have continued to support our mission through these trying times.



Les and Paula Cracraft  
Raymond Family Foundation  
BioMed Diagnostics  
First Interstate Bank

Koenig Investment Advisory  
Ward Insurance  
Mustard Press  
Rogue Design Group



## SAVE THE DATE!

### Join us for furnARTure

**Sunday, October 2, 2022**  
**2:00-5:00pm**  
**Hosted at the Rogue Valley Country Club**

Make your plans now to join us for the return of this unique and lively event, featuring the creations of our local community and the artists at the Studio at Living Opportunities. For table sponsorship information, please contact Jim Norris at jim@livingoppo.org or 541-772-1503.



## COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE

**Are you interested in joining us as a volunteer?**

We are seeking community members to assist us in planning special events such as furnARTure. If you have an interest in being involved with Living Opportunities, please consider becoming a member of our Community Relations Committee. For more information about the committee, please contact Jim Norris at jim@livingoppo.org or 541-772-1503.