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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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THE LIVING OPPORTUNITIES NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2025



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FROM THE DESK OF OUR

ceo

Dear Friends,

Spring is always a season of fresh beginnings—and this year, we have more to celebrate than ever!

I am thrilled to share that we've officially opened the doors to our new headquarters on North Riverside Avenue in Medford. This 10,000-square-foot space represents more than a building—it's a vibrant new home that brings together our administrative, leadership, and direct support teams under one roof. After years of planning, searching, and renovation, it's deeply rewarding to see our teams settling in and collaborating in ways that already strengthen our programs and services. We are also acutely aware of the need other non-profits have for meeting spaces and are eager to share ours. If you haven't had a chance to visit yet, or you're a non-profit that would like to use a space, we'd love to welcome you. Reach out for a tour anytime.

While we honor this milestone, we're also turning our attention to the future. This Spring, we're kicking off our Strategic Planning process for 2025–2030. With input from staff, board members, the people we support, families, and our community partners, we'll be shaping our goals for the next five years—centered on innovation, quality, and long-term sustainability. We know that thoughtful planning today ensures continued impact tomorrow.

Part of that future also depends on strong advocacy. This legislative session, we're joining voices across the state to call for essential rate increases to stabilize and uplift the Direct Support Professional workforce. These front line staff make our mission possible, and they deserve wages that reflect the value of their work. We're proud to stand alongside other providers and partners in this critical effort and will continue to keep you updated on opportunities to lend your voice.

Finally, I'm delighted to welcome Julie Brown, General Manager at RVT, to our Board of Directors. Julie brings a wealth of leadership experience and deep personal ties to Living Opportunities. Her commitment to community engagement and her strategic insight will be tremendous assets as we navigate this exciting chapter ahead.

Warmly,

~ *Amber Myre*

50 FOR 50!

GIVING CAMPAIGN

Join us in commemorating our 50th anniversary. For just \$50, \$500, or \$5000 you can be part of our legacy. Give today at: LivingOpps.org/donate

RJ IS GOING STRONG AT GRANGE CO-OP

For the past eight years, RJ has been a valued employee at the Grange Co-op in White City. This is his first job, which in itself is impressive. Working five days a week, RJ takes on a wide variety of tasks. When asked what he enjoys most about his job, RJ doesn't hesitate: "The bunnies and baby chicks. I help them out sometimes—I clean their tanks, give them food and water."

RJ's love for animals is just one of the many things he enjoys. Standing tall at 6'3", RJ takes pride in using his height and strength to lift heavy boxes and move large trees. "When someone asks me to lift something from the top, I can help them out with that," he shares.

RJ is also incredibly reliable. Living less than a mile away, he rides his bike to work—even in the snow. His job coach, Sara, checks in once a week, but RJ is largely an independent worker. He values his team's camaraderie, and enjoys joking back and forth with his friend Mick. When asked what his coworkers might say about him, RJ responds, "I'm a good listener and stay focused on the job. They'd say I'm a hard worker, trustworthy, and they love having me around." His supervisor, Brett, wholeheartedly agrees.

The team often celebrates holidays together. Recently, a Secret Santa gift exchange surprised him with a useful new bike attachment, making his commute even easier.

Outside of work, RJ has a passion for sports. He participates in the Special Olympics, competing in power-lifting and bowling. "I have a competition in Klamath Falls next month!" he says excitedly. While he has won medals, RJ emphasizes that it's not about winning—it's about having fun. Go team RJ!



DAN MISH RETIRES

After 19 years as the Director of The Studio at Living Opportunities, Dan Mish is officially retiring. When Dan first started, he planned on focusing on fine art. But he quickly realized that fostering a welcoming and joyful community was just as important. "Being social, having a place where you can talk to people, laugh, sing, and build friendships," Dan shares, "all that is just as crucial as making art," he explains. Over the years, Dan played a significant role in The Studio's success by adding drama and music programs. Dan has always felt deeply connected to his role. "I've always been an artist, a musician, and an actor. My whole life has led me here. What I want to stay consistent after I leave is the feeling of joy when people walk through these doors." As Dan reflects, a large handmade card lies on the table, filled with heartfelt messages. Dan Mish may be retiring, but his impact on The Studio and the lives he has touched will remain.



A NEW CHAPTER at the Studio

MEET THE DYNAMIC DUO LEADING THE WAY

As long-time director Dan Mish steps into retirement, The Studio at Living Opportunities enters a new era of collaborative leadership. At the center of this transition are two inspiring individuals: Shani Maynard, our new Studio Manager (left), and Gin Crabb, our new Studio Coordinator.



Shani first joined Living Opportunities just months before the start of the pandemic as a job coach in the Supported Employment program. From day one, her compassion and eagerness to help made her a valued part of the team. Shani grew up surrounded by art and expression—drawing, dancing, singing in advanced choir, and acting in theater class. Stepping into The Studio has re-ignited something powerful. "Seeing people creating, and feeling the magic Dan fostered," Shani reflects, "it reminded me how important it is to access creativity and share it with others." In her new role, Shani is eager to learn how to support each artist in discovering and expressing their own magic. "A leader is someone who's willing to be vulnerable and kind," she says. "Even on tough days, I try to see my own light so I can bring light to the table. I want to brighten people's days."

Joining her in this leadership journey is Gin Crabb, who also got their start in Supported Employment and whose thoughtful and kind spirit is already helping shape the Studio's future. "The Studio is successful because of collaboration on all levels," Gin shares. "That's what will help us grow and keep the magic alive."

Together, Shani and Gin are committed to increasing access and expanding the Studio's reach—strengthening community partnerships, increasing opportunities for artists to sell their work, and exploring new tools and technologies like adaptive equipment and 3D printing. Their vision is rooted in openness, connection, and creativity. The impact of this team is already being felt. One day, Gin began experimenting with leftover paint, layering and blending colors from discarded palettes into richly textured canvases. Shani joined in, trying the technique herself. Then, a Studio Artist watched, got inspired, and created their own version. In that moment, the Studio's culture of collaboration came alive—ideas sparking ideas, artists influencing each other in fresh, original ways.

"We're lucky," Shani says. "Every day, we get to work in this amazing environment. We get to do the job we love. And I think it shows."



ORIGINAL ART BY BRYCE OLSAD

the studio
AT LIVING OPPORTUNITIES

SAVE THE DATE

**"LIVING IN COLOR" SPRING ART SHOW
AT THE STUDIO
ROGUE VALLEY MALL
THURSDAY, MAY 8 ~ 11AM - 7PM**

Join us at The Studio at Living Opportunities for our Spring Art Show, where artists showcase their creativity through vibrant paintings and mixed-media works. Purchase affordable fine art, calendars, postcards, and T-shirts. Celebrate local talent and experience the joy of art!