

Mainstream Connection

SUMMER 2015

Celebrating Our History

ORGANIZATION HISTORY

Mainstream Living was founded in 1975 in Ames by a group of dedicated parents who wanted community living options for their children with intellectual disabilities. At that time, if a family could no longer maintain their child at home, the only choice was to place the child in a state institution or large Intermediate Care Facility elsewhere in the state. 

Founding Families:

Hadwiger Family,
Julius Family,
Samuelson Family,
Cheville Family



 "Were it not for the services Mainstream Living provides, John would be in one of our two state institutions. By living in the community, John is close to family and friends." ~Ellen Hadwiger, mother of John

 "The dedication and professionalism of the staff reflects not only satisfaction in their work, but the pleasure of working in a well-run organization. Because of Mainstream Living, Carol has been allowed to develop to the upper limits of her capacity." ~Beth & Norman Cheville, parents of Carol



"Mainstream Living has made a productive, contributing citizen out of our son. We, John's parents and his brothers and sister, feel truly blessed to know that John is in a safe and enjoyable learning environment." ~Bob & Jan Samuelson, parents of John 



"The out-of-home  placement for Lane's young age was not easy for him or for us, but the skilled, dedicated, and sympathetic staff greatly eased the trauma of separation. Mainstream Living has been, and is, the key provider in Lane's life." ~Marv Julius, father of Lane, served by Mainstream Living since 1976



1976 Mainstream Living opens its first home in Ames. The home serves six children with intellectual disabilities. The organization employs just a few people and has an annual budget of \$150,000.

1977 The Story County Developmental Center and Mainstream Living form a partnership with a common Board of Directors and Executive Director. The first adult home opens, serving seven people with intellectual disabilities.

1979 The organization expands to Des Moines, opening a home serving six children.

1980 The Supervised Living Apartment (SLA) program, Mainstream's first mental health program, opens in Des Moines. Initially serving 24 adults, this program eventually expands to 94 persons in 1988.

1984 In addition to the Ames office, a corporate office in Des Moines opens due to an increase in the number of persons served in Polk County.

1991 Mainstream Living opens six additional Residential Care Facilities for Persons with Mental Retardation (RCF-MR) in Polk County.

1995 A new Supported Community Living (SCL) program opens in Polk County. The program provides hourly services to clients in their own home or apartment.

1996 Mainstream completes the conversion of all Residential Care Facilities to Home and Community Based Services (HCBS).

1997 Mainstream partners with Progress Industries, the RAINBOW Center, and the Homestead to establish Community Support Advocates (CSA), a pilot program of new funding methods in Polk County. 

2015 Mainstream Living celebrates 40 years of providing services that enhance opportunities, create success, and fulfill dreams. Today, the organization employs 600, serves more than 530 individuals daily, and operates with an annual budget of 17 million.

2014 The third medically fragile home (Knapp House) opens in West Des Moines.

2013 After serving for 36 years, Reno Berg retires as President/CEO of Mainstream Living, Inc. Board of Directors names Bill Vaughn as President/CEO.

2010 A second home (Baker House) for adults with high medical needs opens in Des Moines.

Mainstream Living opens a Snoezelen Program (sensory program for individuals with severe disabilities) in Ames. It is the first Snoezelen Program in Iowa.

2008 The Transition Age Youth (TAY) Program, providing mental health support to young adults ages 18-25, opens in Polk County.

2007 A new home (Aspen House) opens in Ames. The home is built with the support of corporate and individual donations and provides services

to adults with severe disabilities and high medical needs. It is the first of its kind in the State of Iowa.

2005 Mainstream Employment and Learning Center (MELC) opens, with first vocational programs in Polk County. Mainstream Education and Learning Center hires its first job developers and job coaches. 

1998 Story County Development Center and Mainstream Living merge. The last children's group home closes. 

★ A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE ★

Becky Trickey

MOTHER OF TERESA

(served by Mainstream for 22 years)

Mainstream first came into our lives approx. 22 years when Teresa was around 12 or 13. It was a rough patch for us because she was aging out of traditional daycare and we needed a place for her to go while we continued our careers. It was by happenstance that I was speaking to Bill Vaughn's sister, with whom I worked at the time, and she mentioned her brother working for Mainstream and that it might be good for me to contact him. Up to that point no doctor or school representative had much guidance for us. Bill was very knowledgeable about what was available in Story County in terms of services and not only discussed Mainstream with me but also discussed other options that might be worth seeking out in the area. I was so appreciative of his help. We began involving Teresa in Mainstream services and there has been no looking back. It was a godsend for our family.

I can't even count the ways that Mainstream has impacted our lives! Teresa has become very independent, has lived in an apartment with a roommate for the last 14 years with Mainstream providing staff support. We have been so lucky over the years. Teresa has had and continues to have some of the best staff. They have been consistent and very caring. She was once very introverted and extremely shy, but that has changed over the years and in no small part due to the services and staff of Mainstream. They are so helpful in setting goals and helping her to achieve those goals. Had Mainstream not been in our lives she would likely be living a boring life at home with mom and dad. She is so much more fulfilled because of Mainstream.

While there are always struggles with funding, I feel Mainstream really works hard to remain advocates and fight hard to keep funding in place when possible. Staff treats Teresa like family and keeps us well informed of anything we need to know! I can't imagine what Teresa's life would be without Mainstream. She has accomplished so much more than we had ever dreamed in the beginning. We knew there had to be something for us and we are so fortunate to have found these services. I tout Mainstream any chance I get. There are so many families out there that just don't know where to start. We were once one of those families and Bill Vaughn and Mainstream got us headed in the right direction. For that we are VERY THANKFUL!

★ ★ ★ Gini Michel ★ ★ ★

MOTHER OF CALEB

(served by Mainstream for 20 years)

I'm not sure who originally told us about the services of Mainstream Living. It may have been at a meeting with the school regarding the waiver program. It was the beginning of separating ourselves from Caleb. He was young and living at home. Staff came to the house and they would do something with him for a few hours. In late summer of 2004, Caleb moved into an apartment with a friend; the dynamics changed and Mainstream became the focal point in Caleb's life.

Mainstream Living has been an excellent fit for Caleb through all the years. It gave us flexibility, but allowed Caleb to meet new people and live independently. While there have been changes since Caleb first started receiving services, there is more stability with keeping good staff members. The recent addition to the Story City house is also a wonderful improvement. My best memory was watching Caleb move out of our home and finding his independence. He has often told family and friends he is "living large."

CHRIS ZIMMERMAN

★ 13 YEARS ★

*I am grateful to
Mainstream for teaching
me independence,
respect, and how to
adapt to new roommates.
If I could change one
thing, I would sleep until
noon every day!*

★ TERRY INGALLS ★

Staff helps me
do dishes and
drives me places.
Love it here!

25
YEARS

JOHN FRAKES

PARENTS OF JONATHAN

(served by Mainstream for 20 years)

Our son Johnathan was born with cerebral palsy. We did not know this until he was about three months old. Doctors told us he wouldn't walk or talk, and one even told us to place him in long-term care and just move on with our lives. We were very stressed about how we would handle the challenges of raising a special needs child. Both of us worked full time, with a mortgage, medical bills, car payments and credit card debt. We had multiple babysitters for Johnathan throughout his early years. However, many were unable to handle the complications of his care, including his frequent seizures, which required emergency room care and short stay hospitalization.

As Johnathan grew older, there were events in our daughter's life such as soccer and softball games, or dance recitals that both of us could not attend because one of us was taking care of our son. We could not have a spontaneous night out at a movie, or go somewhere on short notice. He required constant monitoring so he would not come to harm. We were managing our lives but on a slippery slope sometimes.

Johnathan had learned to walk, and now required closer monitoring because he was unsteady and could fall easily. In fact, once he suffered a really bad eye injury when he tripped in our living room and hit his cheekbone on a piece of furniture. After a long day at work we often didn't have the energy to play with him or keep him entertained. We realized we were both exhausted most of the time.

We think the biggest impact that Mainstream has had on our lives was around the time Johnathan had completed his school years at Ames High School. About this time we started looking into options for outside-the-home care for Johnathan. Mainstream offered us the best option. We were able to have Johnathan share a two bedroom apartment, only 200 yards from our home, and receive 24-hour care. We cried when the time came for him to move out. When we asked our 13 year-old-daughter what she thought, she put it into perspective for us when she replied that "most kids eighteen years old move out of the house".

We soon found ourselves spending more time with our daughter, able to attend softball games and recitals, and participate in her life more than we could before Johnathan moved out of our home. We were able to visit friends more often, and also have the occasional spontaneous movie or date night. We were able to have all of this, and at the same time know that Johnathan was receiving quality care. We did not have to worry about him all of the time!

Johnathan has lived in southwest Ames for thirteen years now. It doesn't seem possible. He has thrived in this environment. He gets to go to the playground, the swimming pool; there are visits to the butterfly garden at Reiman Gardens, and the occasional trip to his favorite place in the entire world – Adventureland of course! We could never find the time to do all of this for him when he was at home.

We literally owe our lives to Mainstream Living. They improved the life not only of our son Johnathan, but impacted the life of his sister and parents in endless ways. We cannot think of another situation for him that would be as beneficial. We thank the professionals who are Mainstream Living.



AMY MARTIN

When Amy Martin first moved into her Mainstream Living home, she was just 23 years old and the year was 1990. Now, nearly 25 years later, Amy still lives in the same home. Her parents, Pat and Mary, tell the story very fondly:

Amy's brother was preparing to leave for college at the same time that their parents were helping her pack for her big move. With not only one, but both children leaving the nest, the Martin's were particularly worried about the possibility that Amy would not want to stay in her new home. Mainstream staff suggested that Pat and Mary wait at least two full weeks before seeing Amy so that she could fully adjust to her new home.

Try as they might, Pat and Mary couldn't wait to see Amy and ended up taking her for a weekend visit after about a week; the same weekend her brother Rob was home from college. The Martin's worried Amy would not want to return home, but to their surprise Amy packed up her belongings alongside her brother, who would be returning to college the same day. It seemed Amy was also ready to go back "home."

Acknowledging the many changes over the years, the Martin's note the differences they have seen in funding for disability services, along with changes that have taken place at Mainstream. Services are more focused on independent living. Amy's father recalls, "It used to be that staff and guardians had the final word; now it's the client making decisions, and that's a good thing." Pat and Mary are also impressed with the upkeep over the years of Amy's home. They appreciate the neighborhood and the stability for Amy, as well as the opportunities she has been given.

25 years later, Amy continues to enjoy her home and engage herself in many meaningful activities. Her favorites include, Christmas parties, seasonal events and group activities. The Martin's are confident that these activities will continue to be offered as they provide wonderful social experiences for persons served, along with family and friends. Those close to Amy know that she never misses a party.



Once an old bus barn, The Center, has seen many facelifts over the years. While there is still work to be done, the garage doors were long ago removed and the space is much more open and inviting.

Day Programs

THEN & NOW

In 1977, Mainstream Living partnered with the Story County Developmental Center (SCDC), a day program for children with disabilities. At the time, SCDC was located in downtown Ames, and served approximately 15 children. Though several individuals from SCDC still attend Mainstream's programs, the format of the programs has changed dramatically. Once a simple education center, SCDC gave children a chance to learn various cognitive skills, as well as life skills. This included socialization, self-care, and cleaning tasks. After partnering with Mainstream Living, SCDC has taken on many forms, including a sheltered workshop, a job coaching center, and a community integration program. Named the Mainstream Employment and Learning Center (MELC) in 2005, Mainstream now provides four distinct areas designed to provide more individualized services. The Center provides Supported Employment (or enclaves), Day Habilitation, the Sensory Center (formerly known as Snoezelen), and the ACE (Advocacy, Connections, Empowerment) Program. Serving 120 people, these programs continue to serve as a vital part of the community, and an avenue for persons with disabilities to reach out to others.

ROBYN
GUARDIAN OF JAMIE BETTIS

Jamie has been blessed with tremendous staff and the support that Mainstream Living has provided her. The staff and administration have gone above and beyond the call of duty. Thank you from both of us for all you do.



DAN BELLINGHAUSEN

★ 32 YEARS ★

Mainstream Living is there to help people. They help me if I have a problem.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



SAM MCCALL

When asked what he thinks about Mainstream Living, Sam gets a dreamy look in his eyes. "I've known about it a long time," he says. "I've been here since, something like...1977." Through the years, Sam has been involved heavily with both residential services and day habilitation. "Mainstream is a good place to live at, and a good building to work with," he says, referring to the two programs, respectively.

It is obvious that he has a scope of not just the services he utilizes personally, but has witnessed throughout the years what Mainstream does for others. He describes the organization as "Spaces [consumers] can work on their attitude, and work hard on their smarts." He says that staff helps "work on people's outsides and insides," which upon further clarification, means both physical and mental health.

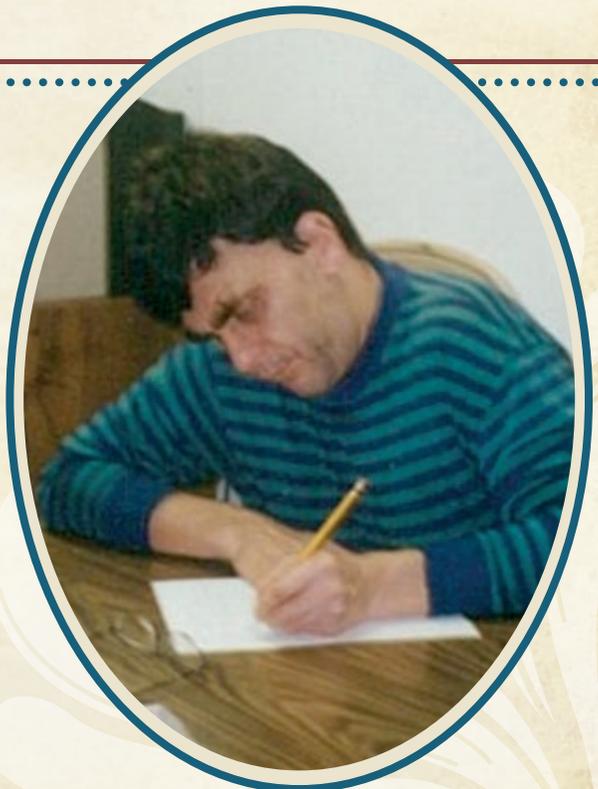
When asked to reflect on the past, Sam has no doubt in his mind that he has changed for the better. "I could barely talk before," he says, referring to his previous speech difficulties. "My speech is back now," he boasts in a coherent voice. For anybody who knows Sam now, it seems unthinkable that in the past, he was not much of a talker. "I've changed a lot. I know that," he says. Sam also suggests that Mainstream has helped him with his attitude. "My attitude is half and half," he states, meaning that he still has lapses of a bad, or self-defeating attitude. The good half, however, he very much attributes to Mainstream Living, and the work of the staff.

Although Sam loves to joke around and give people a hard time, there is nothing but thankfulness and admiration in his voice when talking about Mainstream Living. For a man whose life has been bumpy and difficult, it seems as though this organization has been his rock. It has provided the support he needs, while stepping back in order to give him his independence when he is able to function on his own. In Sam's words, "They put people in charge."

Mark Kitchen

I love ISU sports like softball, volleyball, basketball, and football. I came to Ames after my dad died. I have been in Ames for 40 years. I went to Ames High School and then went to Story County Development Center (SCDC) for 15 years. After that, I got my apartment. My mom and dad take me to church and home for the holidays. I work at Hach and Danfoss and put together parts for tractors and package chemical tubes. The money pays good and I buy my season tickets with my money.

I like to go to ACE (Advocacy, Connections, Empowerment), because we choose our activities. I meet my friends there. I have good staff at Mainstream who work with me. They take me to buy food, help cook my meals. They take me to all my sports games. I have a life.





Saturday August 29

SAVE THE DATE

3M Building in Ames

The event is a celebration of the families, employees, partners, and supporters who have made Mainstream a success.

Join us for entertainment, food, games, and other surprises.