

# mainstream connection

## Message on Collaboration



Mainstream Living has always encouraged collaboration among staff and has been blessed with long-term employees who are committed to our purpose and mission. The services we provide to people with disabilities would not be possible without high-quality staff, so we continue to make recruitment and retention a high priority while developing creative strategies for employee engagement. Mainstream Living is known for our longevity and our commitment to being the premier service provider and the best place to work in our industry. It would certainly not be possible without continued collaboration from both long-term and new staff members.

After 39 years of providing quality services, we have developed numerous relationships with individuals, organizations, funding partners, and businesses. Our volunteers enhance the quality of life for the people we support through one-to-one relationships, helping to plan events, or doing yardwork or painting projects. Our corporate and individual donors provide us with the funds and goods that allow us to meet our mission, expand our services, and secure our future. Some of our most collaborative partners have been assisting Mainstream Living for many, many years. Businesses such as Hach company and Danfoss provide employment through small groups or enclaves that assist people with disabilities in transitioning from tax-supported to tax-paying citizens. The United Way of Story County is a critical partner for our Ames locations and we are grateful for their continued support, advocacy, and help in addressing our emerging needs as we grow.

And finally, collaboration with our Board of Directors – both current and past – ensures that our purpose and mission are effectively carried out. Mainstream Living board members volunteer their time and talents to ensure that good policies are established and that our strategic plan is implemented.

Mainstream Living is appreciative of each and every relationship we have developed over the years, and we take seriously our responsibility to offer good value for the many services supported by taxpayers in our counties. Yes, I am thankful for the great support we have been receiving from all these stakeholders! I look forward to continuing these strong relationships as we work together to ensure that people with disabilities receive the very best support.

**William Vaughn**  
President/CEO

**M**ainstream Living has six core values – integrity, innovation, collaboration, accountability, respect, and empowerment. Each of these values plays a key role in the way we provide services, treat our employees, and work with the public. While each value is vital to the way Mainstream Living operates, collaboration truly stands at the center of everything we do. Collaboration is not just the right thing to do, but something we believe is necessary because it assists us in expanding our network of those who will join us in carrying out our purpose and mission.

The rehabilitation programs for veterans' hospitals have a saying – "Nothing about us without us!" This particular motto mirrors our perspective on the importance and value of collaboration with the persons we serve and their families. We want our consumers and their various support networks to play an active role in our organization. We serve several individuals who have been with the organization since we opened our doors in 1975, and we are incredibly proud of the collaboration that has taken place over the last 39 years.

## Community Connections

On February 22nd, 2014, Tim and Gregory, longtime Mainstream consumers, attended the Gi-Gi's Playhouse Gala, "I Have a Voice" at the Marriott in Downtown Des Moines. It's the largest and most important annual fundraiser for Gi-Gi's, and helps to raise necessary operating funds for the Playhouse. Gi-Gi's Playhouse is an international achievement center that provides free programs that are educational and therapeutic in nature to individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and the community.

The Gala is a black tie event and includes a plated dinner, silent and live auctions, raffle, inspirational programming and entertainment. Tim and Greg rented tuxes for the evening and looked dashing! They arrived early and greeted guests – many of whom were friends. They posed for pictures and were treated like celebrities attending the Oscars. When the doors opened, guests were led to beautifully decorated tables where they enjoyed dinner and dessert.

During the program, a video was presented, which provided an overview of Gi-Gi Playhouse programs. Greg and Tim were featured in several segments of the video and cheered when they saw themselves. The founders of Gi-Gi's spoke briefly, followed by remarks from a mother who had recently given birth to twins. She shared her inspirational and heartwarming journey of having one twin with Down syndrome. A young man

with Down syndrome spoke about the wonderful experiences he has had living independently, working, traveling, attending professional athletic events, being a groomsman in a wedding and public speaking. The silent auction continued throughout the evening, but Tim especially loved the auctioneer during the auction. A live band wrapped up the evening. Greg enjoyed listening at the table while Tim chose to boogie to the beat! It was a successful evening for Gi-Gi's Playhouse and a night to remember for Greg and Tim!



# CHRISTMAS IN JULY

The sun is shining and you can help make summer even brighter for our consumers! Mainstream is growing and has opened several new sites in the last few months. We are in need of many things to help fulfill requests at our sites and some for specific consumers in need. We are requesting new items only (unless specified below). Donations may be dropped off in Ames at 2012 E. 13th St. and in Des Moines at 333 SW 9th, Suite C. Donations will be accepted through July 31st. Please contact Amber Corrieri at 515-232-8405 or [acorrieri@mainstreamliving.org](mailto:acorrieri@mainstreamliving.org) with questions or to arrange pick-up.

Backpacks (needed for 2 males)  
Toiletries, including sunscreen  
Household Cleaning Supplies  
Bath towels and wash cloths (new)  
First aid kit  
Flashlights  
Paper products – toilet paper, trash bags, paper towels, etc.  
Laundry Soap  
General household cleaning supplies  
Craft supplies (paper, markers, crayons, scissors, tape, craft kits, etc)  
Backyard water toys  
Basketball backboard

DVD player  
Sorry board game  
Uno Attack  
Other board games (kids or family style)  
Adult bicycle (can be gently used)  
Cook books (can be gently used)  
Small tool box with tools  
Pens - Black  
Mandala coloring books  
New or gently used clothing for teen/young men and women  
Table cloths - large rectangle  
Label maker  
Twin size sheets – regular size  
Twin size Blankets

Towels – Bath and wash cloth  
Books – middle school – young adult style  
Hand crank ice cream maker  
Liquid measuring cups  
Queen/twin size bed sheets and comforter sets  
Wall decor – something for men  
Tupperware sets  
Knife set, with knife block  
Lunch bags (gender neutral)  
Digital camera (may be gently used)  
Gas grill



## MAINSTREAM LIVING AND MCFARLAND CLINIC

### Mutual Respect, Shared Mission

Mainstream Living's long-standing partnership with McFarland Clinic started out naturally, when Dr. Jack Swanson was the pediatrician for many of the children who were served when the organization began in 1975. While long-term staff members have difficulty recalling just how Dr. Swanson came to care for almost every individual who Mainstream Living served at the time, they all have fond memories of the service and care that was given by Dr. Swanson and McFarland Clinic, noting specifically how attentive and responsive the physicians, nurses, and support staff were to the unique needs of the children with disabilities.

Although Mainstream Living no longer serves children, many of our adults with disabilities continue to receive excellent care from McFarland physicians, and many have very special relationships with their McFarland doctor. One of those very special physicians is Dr. Edward Nassif, who cares for some of our medically fragile consumers. In his years serving Mainstream clients, Dr. Nassif has gone above and beyond the call of duty by making house calls, providing flu shots to staff and consumers in the home so they are not exposed to germs at the clinic, and has even attended special events such as birthday parties for consumers. A few years ago, Dr. Nassif organized a pizza party for the consumers, staff, and families at Aspen House and brought along an Elvis impersonator for entertainment. Colleen Gibbs, Assistant Team Leader at Aspen House says, "He's [Dr. Nassif] just an all-around great guy. He is very close to family, staff, and consumers at Aspen House and spends extra time here when they are sick. We are very lucky to have him as a doctor!"

While Mainstream Living has and continues to receive excellent care from McFarland physicians, the relationship between our organizations has evolved. McFarland Clinic is a strong supporter of Mainstream Living programs, providing financial support during our end-of-year campaign and sponsorship of the

Be Amazing! Race. Current McFarland Clinic CEO Steve Koger also just completed his term on the Mainstream Living Board of Directors, helping to provide guidance and expertise for a number of years. When leaving the Board, Koger expressed both gratitude and appreciation and said, "Mainstream provides an extremely valuable range of services to a diverse population with very special needs. They have a long history of providing outstanding service to the population they care for and a dedicated staff that believes in their mission."

It certainly seems natural that organizations like Mainstream Living and McFarland Clinic would need to work well together in order to provide coordinated care and services to people with disabilities. However, the partnership between Mainstream and McFarland extends far beyond the typical doctor/patient relationship. There is mutual respect between the organizations, a commitment to collaboration, and a shared mission to provide the very best service. As Mainstream Living approaches the 40-year mark, we are proud of our history and the partnerships we have developed with organizations like McFarland Clinic and look forward to continued partnership.



**McFarland Clinic PC**

[www.mcfarlandclinic.com](http://www.mcfarlandclinic.com)

## MELC and Food at First: Exceeding Expectations

Six years ago, the Mainstream Employment and Learning Center (MELC) began to help with table settings, and sort through donated Tupperware containers for the Food at First program in Ames. Scott Walker, former director of Food at First recalls, "We were hoping that they could accomplish some of the routine tasks that are essential, but hard to find volunteers for." He quickly learned that people at MELC were efficient volunteers who could assist with nearly every aspect of the program.

Food at First is an organization that takes food that would have otherwise been wasted, and distributes it to members of the community. They do this through a free meal program, as well as a perishable food pantry. Walker founded the organization in 2004, and by the time MELC was on board, he was struggling to find people to cook Friday night meals for around 50 people. To his surprise, MELC volunteered to help with this every single week. "It turned out they were able to prepare entire meals, which helped us to launch our Friday night meals – I don't think it would have happened for quite a while (if ever) had they not stepped in," says Walker. From that point on, Food at First knew that the people from MELC would be valuable volunteers.

With good faith from Walker and his team, MELC volunteers have continued to expand their partnership with the program. In addition to daily food prep tasks, they have transported food from the Food Bank of Iowa, sorted and organized shelves, and prepared casseroles to be given to families at the perishable food pantry. Most recently, the Advocacy, Connections and Empowerment (ACE) Program has begun to repackage bulk foods for distribution at the free market. "I have always been impressed with the quality of work – frankly, that part has exceeded my expectations more than any other," says Walker.

This long-standing partnership has proven to be valuable not only to Food at First, but has provided so much more to those served by Mainstream Living. Chris, a member of the MELC program, is excited by the mention of Food at First, and talks about how he likes to help with deliveries and mixing ingredients together. A man of few words, he unequivocally states that volunteering there makes him feel, "Happy." His sentiment is shared by several other members of MELC, some of whom help with Food at First every single week.



While providing these types of fulfilling opportunities to consumers is important to Mainstream Living, this type of collaboration also helps to break down barriers regarding people with disabilities. When Walker talks about changing attitudes, he states, "I know that many folks have come through and seen the group [MELC] at work, and there's no way to know the impact that a conversation, or just an observation, may have had on those folks." Steve Padgitt, a volunteer and Board Member for Food at First, previously had little interaction with people with intellectual disabilities. He admits that he was taken off-guard the first few times he received a scheduling phone call from Diana, a participant in the ACE program. He had expected a staff member, but soon became accustomed to working things out directly with Diana. "I really think it's nice that she takes the initiative to do that and that I'm working directly with her instead of a staff person. She is just a pleasant person," he says.

The people at MELC are grateful for the relationships they have formed through Food at First. "They treat me with respect, kindness, [give me] responsibilities, and I have a fun time," says Molly, a MELC participant. Too often, ignorance or lack of awareness can result in people with disabilities being denied these basic courtesies. Ultimately, it is partnership and relationship building that will result in inclusion, justice, and respect for people with disabilities. MELC's partnership with Food at First is just one way in which Mainstream Living is able to work toward this goal.

## Unity Place – Addressing Homelessness Cannot be Done Alone

In 2013, Mainstream Living became a provider partner with the Polk County Housing Trust Fund. This partnership makes it possible for us to receive funding to create or preserve affordable housing inventory or provide services to persons in need.

The Polk County Housing Trust Fund (PCHTF) is the comprehensive planning, advocacy and funding organization for Affordable Housing in Polk County. Focused around these three core activities, PCHTF is responsible for crafting the community strategic plan for affordable housing and leading its implementation. It is also tasked with helping the community understand the need for, and benefits of, adequate affordable housing. The organization is also tasked with allocating community funds aimed at increasing and preserving the inventory of affordable units in Polk County and improving

the lives of the people who live in them. In collaboration with Primary Health Care and the Polk County Housing Trust Fund, Mainstream Living has filled a niche in our community by providing safe, affordable housing for women who meet low income guidelines – otherwise known as Unity Place.

The goal of Unity Place is to bridge the gap in the community continuum of housing supports for women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Unity Place provides sober, supportive housing while helping women transition out of emergency shelters, recovery homes, or other transitional living programs. This program provides the tenants with the opportunity to develop the additional skills, incomes, and stability needed to become self-sufficient. The ultimate goal is to help tenants reunite with their families, gain life skills, prevent relapse, and attain the self-esteem needed to move forward and enjoy a successful life. Mainstream Living employees are available Monday through Friday to provide individualized supports and services. Program referrals are made through the Primary Health Care Homeless Outreach Program.

Our collaboration with the Polk County Housing Trust Fund is relatively new, but has quickly become a vital partnership as we work to fulfill an under-served need in Polk County. The PCHTF is working to end homelessness in the Greater Des Moines area, but recognizes that it cannot be done simply by providing housing. Their collaboration with non-profits like Mainstream Living helps us to address housing needs while providing skills and supports that enhance opportunities, create success, and fulfill dreams.



Mainstream Living is now on Facebook! Connect with us on Facebook for updates on special events and other important things happening at Mainstream Living.