

Messenger

Fall 2019



**NO FEAR.
NO LIMITS.**

Grounded in his faith,
Chase finds his voice

 Bethesda Bethesda

Promoting independence and empowerment. Making a true impact.

Greetings -

Thank you for reading this special Impact Edition of the Messenger. In this issue you can learn how your generosity is making a difference in people's lives, and how every day we are shaping and evolving the industry through creative thinking and innovation.

I can't wait for you to see the numbers, as they demonstrate the depth and breadth of our nationwide mission. You'll also see the faces behind the numbers. People like Chase, a young man with limited vision who, empowered by Bethesda, overcame his anxiety to present at the 2019 LCMS National Youth Gathering. Or Jen Steurer, an area director in Missouri who is putting assistive technology to work and watching people we support achieve more independence than they ever dreamed. And you'll meet Donna Hedin, a retired nurse whose generosity has spanned decades, and continues today.

Looking to the future, we're excited about a new initiative with tremendous potential impact - Bethesda Cornerstone Village. This will be an integrated Christian community living option in Victoria, Minnesota. Serving active people 55+ and independent adults with developmental disabilities, it will be a first of its kind in the U.S., and more of these communities will follow.

So much of our impact is possible because of our direct support professionals. In early September, we celebrated DSP Recognition Week and reflected on their kindness, commitment and dedication to the people we support. On behalf of all of Bethesda, I offer my thanks to all our DSPs. I am confident you join me in that feeling of gratitude.

We're just getting started here. We have so much in store that I look forward to sharing with you in future issues. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy the Messenger. Have a wonderful fall.

Regards,



Mike Thirtle

Mike Thirtle, PhD
President & CEO Bethesda

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

- Galatians 6:2 NIV

Creating a place where everyone belongs

Construction has begun at Bethesda Cornerstone Village Victoria, an integrated Christian community living option for active seniors and independent adults with developmental disabilities, on the site of a previous Bethesda intermediate care facility in Victoria, Minnesota.

“Cornerstone Village will be a first of its kind in the U.S.,” said president and CEO Mike Thirtle. “It will be a place where people of all abilities live, socialize and even worship together. We could not be more excited about the potential Cornerstone Village has to enhance the lives of people of Victoria.”

Cornerstone Village is expected to open in July 2020. Once complete, it will offer 52 residential units that will integrate people with disabilities (up to 25% of units) with adults of all abilities 55 years and older.

“Bethesda’s spectrum of services continues to evolve as we strive to reflect the needs of the people and families we support, which in recent years has focused on independence and community inclusion,” Mike said. “We are proud to be a change agent in implementing forward-thinking solutions that improve the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We’re excited to take this step to create a truly integrated community.”

Go to BethesdaCornerstoneVillage.org to learn how we’re changing the housing landscape and expanding options for people with disabilities.



Staff, people we support and the public gather to celebrate this one-of-a-kind development.



An architectural rendering of Cornerstone Village.

No Fear. No Limits. Grounded in

It's a steamy Sunday in July, and Chase is sitting at the front of a presentation hall in the Minneapolis Convention Center. Hundreds of teenagers are streaming in, laughing and chattering while they find seats. It's the 2019 LCMS National Youth Gathering, and all the work Chase has been doing for the last six months has come to this. In a few short minutes, he'll be sharing his story with a packed room of conference attendees. He's never done anything like this before.



Chase talks with attendees after sharing his story at the 2019 LCMS National Youth Gathering.

“I would not have had the confidence [to present] if I wouldn't have come here to Bethesda,” he says. “Because if I didn't speak in front of people at Bethesda, I don't think I would have been able to do it today.”

Chase has a developmental disability and limited vision—but his biggest disability is his anxiety.

“He worries about what things are coming up,” says Tawnya Arueya, Area Director. “He would persevere on those same issues and it would cause him to be really upset and really anxious.”

“Bethesda has helped Chase with his anxiety by being able to talk about what causes his anxieties and why does he get nervous about things, as well as going over goals and steps to improve how he handles situations,” says James Tierney, a Direct Support Professional (DSP) who's known Chase for 10 years.

“With Bethesda, I've been able to manage anxiety and I've been able to cope with stuff better than I could have if I wouldn't have been with them,” Chase says.

Chase has shown incredible growth at Bethesda, says James. But that's not Chase's only support—whenever he starts to feel scared or anxious, his faith gives him courage.

“My faith is important to me,” he says. “Bethesda's made my faith more enriching.”

“My faith is important to me. Bethesda has made my faith more enriching.”

– Chase

His faith is so strong, in fact, that when Ministry Consultant Matt Anderson learned Bethesda was looking for people to present at the National Youth Gathering, Chase immediately came to mind.

“It's important that people with disabilities become leaders and lead in the ministry,” Matt says. “God has given us all gifts, so we should give people the opportunity to use whatever abilities they have to further God's work in their community of faith, their families and their homes.”



Chase's story is now on video!
Visit BethesdaLC.org/Messenger to view.

Through his faith, Chase finds his voice

Mona Fuerstenau, Director of Ministry Partnerships, couldn't agree more.

"I think the gospel message is sometimes better heard from an unexpected source, and people with disabilities can be an unexpected source of God's love and the Christian mission," she says.

The time has come for Chase to talk. He's done the preparation. He's prayed. He's ready.

"I'm not nervous," he says, "because I know Jesus and God will be with me."



588

people attended our workshops at the 2019 LCMS National Youth Gathering.

And then he's swept up in it. He talks to a rapt audience about his experience being bullied because of his disability, and about his fears of moving to a new home, because it means he also has to find a new job and a new church.

But through it all, he says, he knew everything would be okay so long as he prayed and relied on his faith to see him through.

The hour flies by, and Chase wraps his talk with a challenge to the audience: to find people with disabilities and invite them to church.

And then, with a resounding "Amen!" the talk is over. The students in the audience line up to meet Chase and talk to him, to ask him questions and thank him for being there. And through it all, Chase is beaming.

"I think I rocked it," he says. "It was hard but with the power of the Holy Spirit, it gave me that confidence."



2,800

youth groups stopped by our booth.



Using advanced technology

From cell phones to smartwatches to virtual assistants, we use technology to make our lives easier every day. But for a person with disabilities, technology and smart devices don't just make life easier—they open whole new worlds of possibility.

Our Bethesda homes in St. Louis, Missouri, are proof. In early 2019, we installed a customized suite of assistive technologies in four homes, including Amazon's Alexa, smart plugs and bulbs, tablets and more. And for the people we support, these technologies are more than just a convenience—they've been helping them do more, achieve more and live more independently.

“Their self-confidence has increased pretty significantly, It's been amazing to watch people blossom and grow. They're getting to live their dreams and fulfill the goals they've had their whole lives.”

– Jen Steurer, Bethesda Area Director

“We were super excited about getting this technology, but we weren't sure how it was going to work out,” says Jen Steurer, Area Director. “It has taken off way better than I could've ever imagined.”

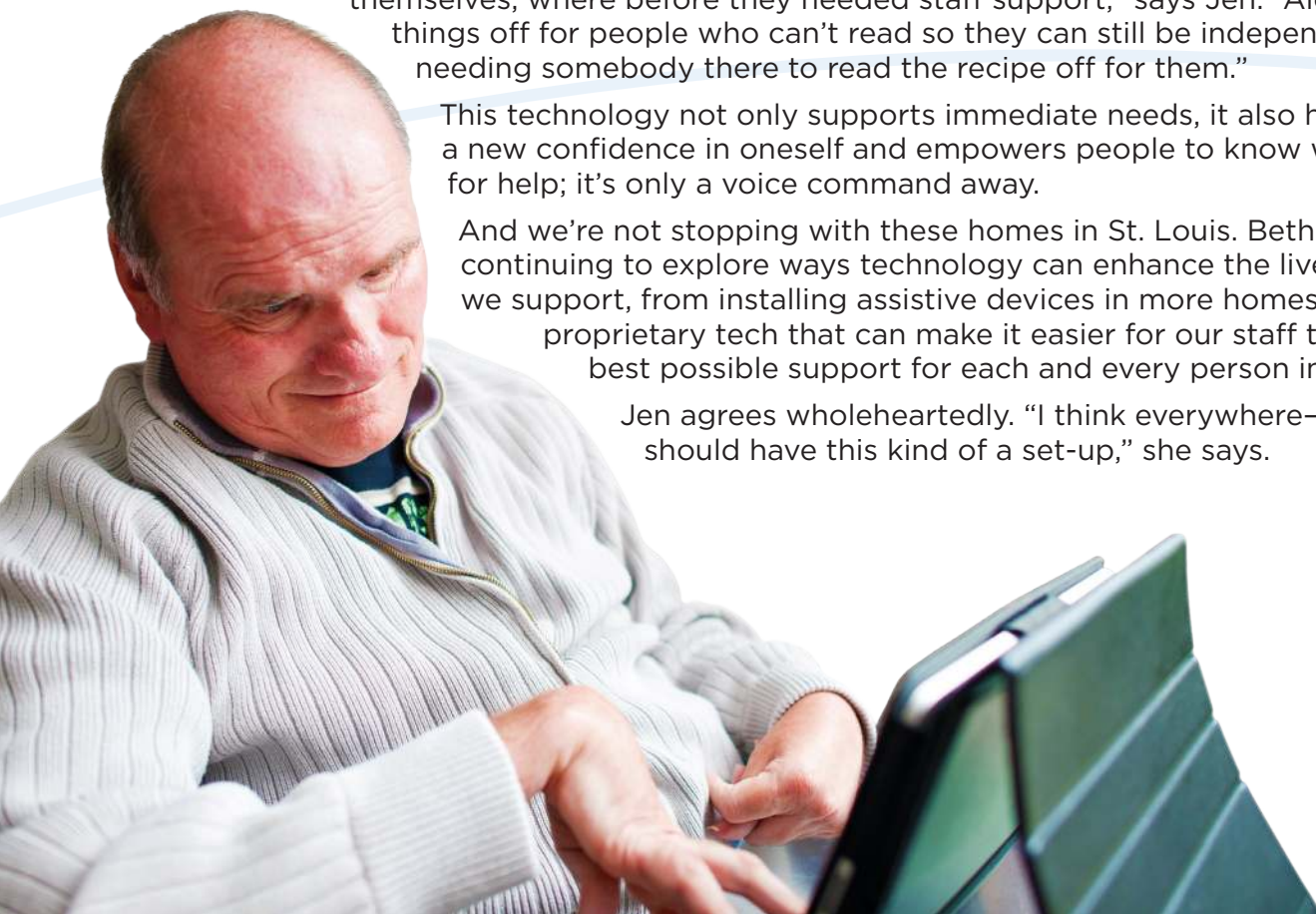
Smart plugs turn the lights on and off from anywhere in the room. Smart speakers allow people we support to set reminders and manage their own schedules. For those who need critical behavior support, they can use two-way video technology to get what they need without even having to leave the house. And many in our homes love using Alexa to look up recipes.

“It's definitely increased independence because now they're cooking things in the kitchen by themselves, where before they needed staff support,” says Jen. “Alexa can read things off for people who can't read so they can still be independent without needing somebody there to read the recipe off for them.”

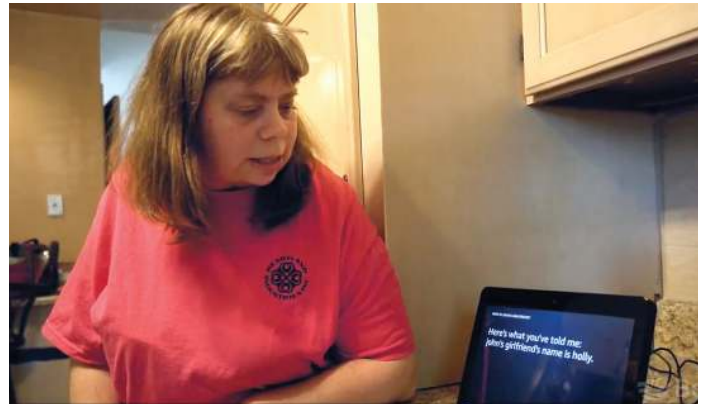
This technology not only supports immediate needs, it also helps develop a new confidence in oneself and empowers people to know where to look for help; it's only a voice command away.

And we're not stopping with these homes in St. Louis. Bethesda is continuing to explore ways technology can enhance the lives of people we support, from installing assistive devices in more homes to developing proprietary tech that can make it easier for our staff to provide the best possible support for each and every person in our homes.

Jen agrees wholeheartedly. “I think everywhere—everywhere—should have this kind of a set-up,” she says.



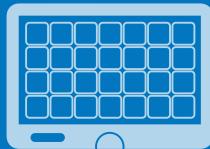
to advance independence



Tablet



Smart TV



Medication Dispenser



Smart Washer/Dryer



Virtual Assistant

On average, it costs \$5,000-\$7,500 to outfit a Bethesda home with a suite of assistive technologies. The suite could include anything from tablets and smart TVs to medication dispensers, motorized blinds and more; each home is customized based on the needs of the people who live there.

Tablets

are useful for two-way video technology, as well as interactive coloring programs that promote relaxation and stress relief.

Smart TVs

allow people with limited mobility to engage with their favorite shows.

Medication dispensers

remind people to take their medications at the correct time, dole out the right dosages and even alert staff to missed doses.

Smart washer/dryer

units simplify laundry day by automatically dispensing the proper amount of detergent and fabric softener, as well as making it easier to troubleshoot any potential issues.

Virtual assistants

empower the people we support by allowing them to set reminders so they can manage their own schedules, look up recipes and even perform everyday tasks like turning on the lights from anywhere in the room.



Donor Spotlight: Donna Hedin adds to a lifetime of caring through her generosity

Donna Hedin knew at the tender age of 3 that she wanted to be a nurse when she grew up. And for an astounding 50 years, she did just that, caring for people of all ages at Children's Minnesota Hospital in St. Paul. During her career, she personally helped the smallest and most vulnerable of babies.

Over the years, Donna observed how advances in technology gave more preemie babies than ever the chance to survive. Yet many go on to have special challenges, including intellectual and developmental disabilities that last a lifetime. While people with these disabilities may receive support as children, when they become adults they can be left to fend for themselves—and their needs can go unmet.

"I saw a lot of babies that would need the help of Bethesda," said Donna. This is why Donna has chosen Bethesda as a place she has entrusted her charitable dollars.

*"I saw a lot of babies
that would need the help
of Bethesda."*

-Donna

It turns out Donna is not the only person in her family who has had a special place in her heart for Bethesda. "I was really close with my mom—she was very important to me," Donna shared. "I didn't have any idea she liked Bethesda!"

And like Bethesda she did.

Lynora Hedin gave many gifts to her favorite charity, dating all the way back to 1975. "I'm really proud of my mom for doing that," Donna said.

Today, in retirement, Donna continues that tradition of giving in honor of her mom, and is involved with Bethesda in many ways. Her gifts have helped many important projects and have enhanced the supports we provide. Donna has visited the Watertown campus, including the original chapel, as well as Camp Matz. Naturally, Donna also talks to her friends about Bethesda whenever she can.

Dennis Vanden Heuvel, development director for Bethesda, has known Donna for years and greatly appreciates her commitment to Bethesda. "Donna is so generous, but in the end she wants to know that her generosity has a purpose," he said.

Through her ongoing engagement with Bethesda, Donna is adding to her 50 years of caring, and continuing to impact lives along the way. "Bethesda services aren't going away because the needs aren't going away," she said.



*Donna and her mother,
both generous donors to Bethesda.*