

# Messenger

Spring 2019



**SUPPORT THAT SPANS  
GENERATIONS.**

Bethesda becomes part  
of the family.

# 2019 So Far: Celebrations and New Faces

Greetings –

Thank you for taking a few moments from your day to read the latest Messenger. Within these pages you will see inspiring stories about the innovative ways we are expanding our mission and making a real difference for more people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

One highlight I would like to share is our recent celebration of National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. In a nationwide campaign, we worked to “Connect All Abilities,” showing how far people with developmental disabilities have come and how much still needs to be done to have truly inclusive communities. We distributed thousands of blue #ConnectAllAbilities wristbands, organized numerous events in schools and churches, made TV appearances, spoke up at state Capitols, and really spread the word. I’m proud of our team for leading the way during this recognition month, and we’re just getting started.

I am also excited to announce that we have hired a new VP of Philanthropy, Lorene King. Lorene is a highly accomplished fundraising leader with a strong Christian faith and a commitment to our mission. She will have a large impact on our future.

In closing, I am always mindful that we can do so much, and in so many ways, because of your generosity. It is your prayers for our mission and your financial support that make everything possible. For all you do for us, I offer you my sincere thanks, and our commitment to doing even more.

Please enjoy this edition of Messenger, and I look forward to connecting with you again soon.

Regards,



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*



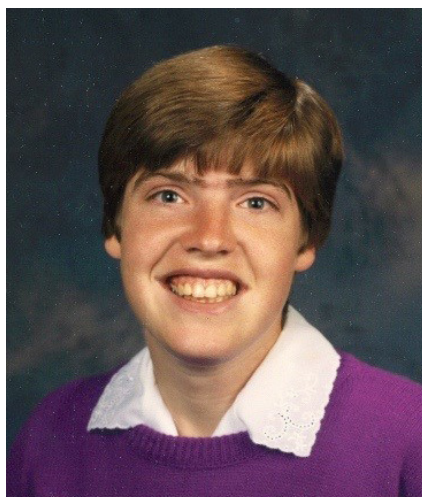
# Donor Spotlight:

## Roger Burtner: A man of his word

Roger Burtner is a man of many talents: Ivy League education, senior research scientist for Chevron, adjunct professor at Case Western Reserve University, consultant, entrepreneur, philanthropist.

But the California retiree is most noted as a caring and giving person who is dedicated to his family and to Bethesda.

“Roger is a man of his word and full of movement,” said Mike Thirtle, PhD, president and CEO of Bethesda. “As a former Bethesda board member, he’s been an active participant in planning, policy development and fundraising. He’s also a wonderful husband and father.”



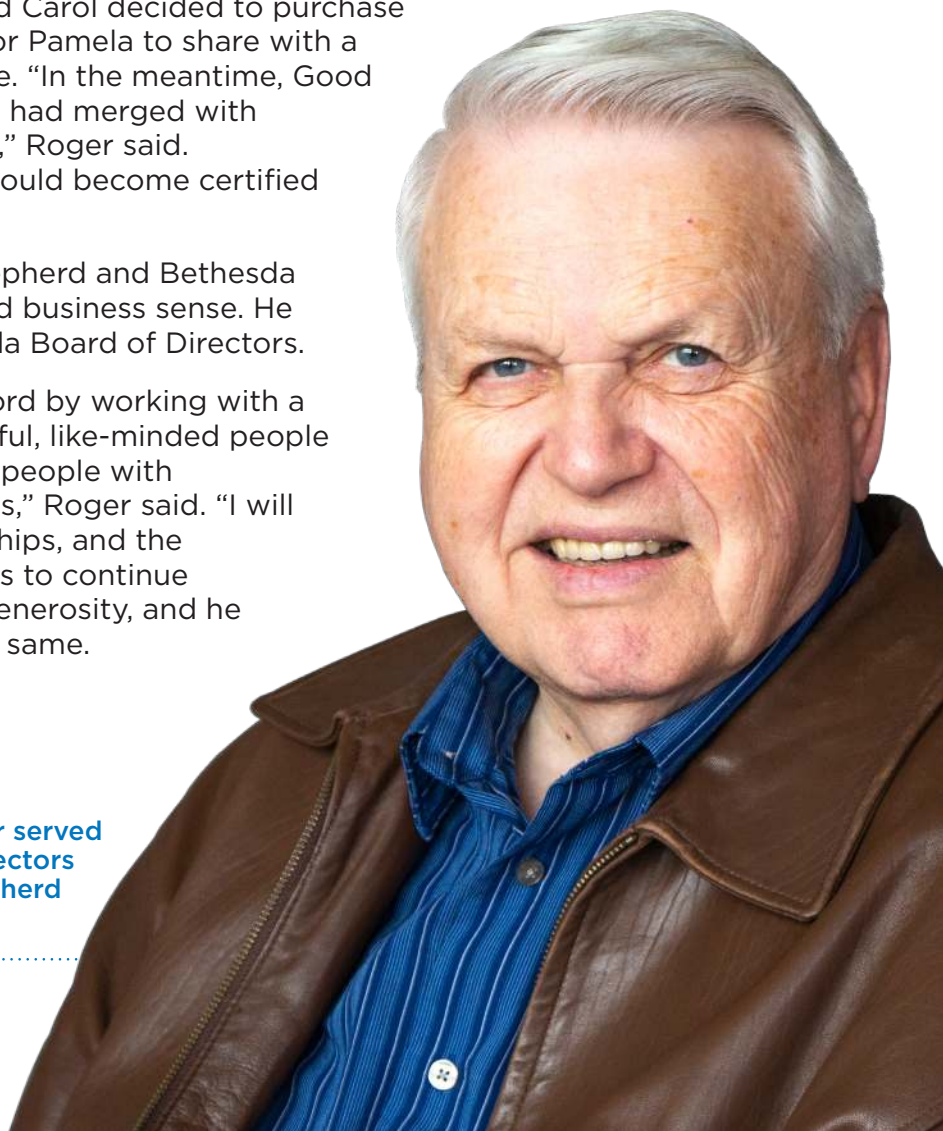
Roger and his wife, Carol, have a daughter, Pamela, who is mildly autistic with some learning disabilities.

“Pam lived at home with us until she was about 22 years old,” Roger said. “At that time, we began to seek a way for her to live more independently. Unfortunately, it was around that time that Pam was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, and Good Shepherd, on whose board I served, was not equipped to manage her medical needs.” Pamela received support from other care providers for several years until Roger and Carol decided to purchase a home for Pamela to share with a roommate. “In the meantime, Good Shepherd had merged with Bethesda,” Roger said.

“Bethesda stepped forward and said it would become certified to provide in-home support for Pam.”

Since 1995, Roger has brought Good Shepherd and Bethesda an equal amount of heart for ministry and business sense. He recently stepped down from the Bethesda Board of Directors.

“It’s been most rewarding to serve the Lord by working with a group of incredibly talented and successful, like-minded people who are all passionate about supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities,” Roger said. “I will miss those friendships, working relationships, and the camaraderie that we shared.” Roger plans to continue supporting Bethesda through financial generosity, and he encourages others to consider doing the same.



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Years Roger Burtner served on the Board of Directors for both Good Shepherd and Bethesda.

# 40 years, countless memories: Beth

***It was 1979 and nearing midnight,*** and Judy Stoiber of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, struggled to get her son Paul to stay in bed. No matter how many times she and her husband took turns trekking back up the stairs with Paul to put him to bed, minutes later they would hear the drumming of his steps back downstairs to join them. Every night, Judy and her husband hoped Paul would let his siblings sleep, but Paul made countless trips back out of his room. Judy was a busy mother raising seven children including her youngest son Paul, who was born with intellectual and developmental disabilities. At ten years old, Paul did not speak, and although Judy and Paul's father were doing everything they could to raise him at home, caring for Paul on their own as he grew was challenging.

"Our house was very hectic," Judy remembers. "Simple tasks like eating meals became increasingly difficult. We did not know how to handle his behaviors as he grew bigger and we were concerned for his safety." Judy knew her family needed professional support for Paul, but she struggled to find the support he needed.

"There are not many places that will take a boy like Paul. I did not know what to do," Judy said. But a friend of Judy's told her about Bethesda.

"We took Paul to visit Bethesda several times and he fit right in with the programs. It was exactly what Paul and our family needed," Judy said. Over the past 40 years, Judy said she has had peace of mind knowing Paul is thriving with Bethesda's support. "Bethesda has made a big difference. Paul calmed down and became less aggressive. Though Paul does not speak, I see him express himself and watch him hold his hands in a prayer sign. I know he has learned those things at Bethesda and I simply cannot say enough good things about their support." Today, Judy lives in an assisted living home in Milwaukee and says it gives her great comfort knowing after she is gone, Paul will still be safe and loved.

But Judy is not the only person who recognizes the impact Bethesda has made on her family. Forty years ago, Paul's sister Anne Drewry was in high school when Paul first went to live at Bethesda. She said she saw a drastic quality of life improvement for Paul and her parents thanks to Bethesda's support.

"We got to watch him thrive in the group home he's been in for many years now. It is a safe, loving environment. The direct support professionals and staff view Paul not merely as someone they care for; instead, they treat Paul with respect and as an equal human being."

## From Dreams to Opportunities: Bethesda Offers More

Today, Anne has a college-age daughter, Kalindi. Kalindi has a disability and is in school, works and plans to live independently someday. Anne said when Kalindi was in high school, like her mother Judy, she wondered what the future would hold for her child.

"We live in a small town without access to



*Stoiber and Drewry family photos featuring Paul with Anne and Kalindi (upper left), Paul as a child (upper right), and Paul with his parents.*



# Bethesda becomes part of the family

public transportation. It can be a limiting place for someone who does not drive,” Anne said. But one day, a familiar name in a magazine caught Anne’s attention.



Anne (left) and Paul (right) visit their mother, Judy (middle) in her nursing home.

“I read an article about Bethesda College at Concordia University in Mequon, Wis., and thought it seemed like the right opportunity for Kalindi. Knowing how much Bethesda has done for Paul and for my family, I trust Bethesda knows what they are doing with their programs,” she said. Anne said over the last 40 years, she has seen Bethesda change to meet the diverse needs of people of all abilities to support each person’s independence and growth.

“When Paul was growing up, there were so few opportunities available,” Anne said. She said 40 years ago, her mother Judy would never have dreamed of a program dedicated to supporting people with disabilities gain a college education. “Back then, there wasn’t this recognition in society of the need for programs like this. I feel thankful that Bethesda’s program at Concordia came to fruition when Kalindi was at the right age for the opportunity.” Today, Kalindi is in her second year as a Bethesda College student. Kalindi has grown tremendously in her self-confidence by making friends in her dorm, developing close relationships with professors and having new opportunities like volunteering at a local food pantry and working in her paid job. She has big plans for her future thanks to Bethesda’s support.

## Looking Ahead: Kalindi Heads Toward a Bright Future

“I’m learning how to branch out in the world, live in an apartment, call my own taxi and live independently,” Kalindi said. “Bethesda College is preparing me for a good future.” Anne’s praise for what Bethesda has helped her daughter achieve echoes her mother’s praise for all Bethesda has done for Paul.

“They have shown her a whole world and have given her confidence to know what she is capable of,” Anne said. “We feel more secure with her going out and living on her own.” Anne said she feels grateful for donors who support Bethesda’s mission.

“We have a huge debt of gratitude for everything that has been done for our family at Bethesda,” she said. “We are so thankful for donors who recognize and support the importance of Bethesda’s mission.”



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Current and graduated Bethesda College Students.



Paul’s story is now on video!  
Visit [BethesdaLC.org/Messenger](https://BethesdaLC.org/Messenger) to view.

## Bethesda College: Daring to Go Further

Bethesda College is a unique, two-year post-secondary certificate program that offers people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to realize their dream of receiving a college education.

Visit [BethesdaLC.org/services/educational-supports](https://BethesdaLC.org/services/educational-supports) to learn more.



Kalindi (middle) pictured with two Bethesda College classmates.

# Confirmed in her faith, sup

**Seven years ago when Kim Trombley**, now Vice President of Bethesda's Religious Life Team, asked a young woman supported by Bethesda named Alana if she was interested in attending church, Alana's answer was surprising: "What is church?" Kim was serving as a Bethesda Ministry Consultant at the time, and one of her roles was to complete the Faith in Action Profile (now included in the new Faith in Action Workbook) that guides the faith supports for all people supported by Bethesda.



*Karen Moyer (right) attends Alana's (left) confirmation.*

"Alana had not been to church before, so that is where our conversation started," Kim said.

Seven years later, on March 17 of this year, Kim traveled to what has now become Alana's home church, Suburban Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, to witness Alana's confirmation. Over the last seven years, Alana has become engaged in the life of her church with members of her congregation supporting her in her faith and with Alana sharing her gifts with them as well. Kim said Alana's connection with her faith community demonstrates the outcome Ministry Consultants hope for in their work - offering connections that build relationships.

"Witnessing Alana's confirmation is a wonderful affirmation of what can happen when a person is included in their faith community," Kim said. "Bethesda Ministry Consultants want to see people with disabilities fully included in their church in ways they choose, not only in activities but also through full participation in the Word and sacraments. Alana's church supports her through her faith journey and it is beautiful to see," Kim said. Forming connections with congregations and providing them the tools to support people with disabilities forms a large part of a Ministry Consultant's role. Bill Mueller, pastor of Suburban Bethlehem, remembers the day Kim told him Alana was interested in coming to visit his church.

"Kim called and asked me to have Alana come on a day when the church was empty to show her around the building to help her feel comfortable," he said. "Since that day, she has been at church almost every Sunday."

Karen Moyer is a member at Suburban Bethlehem and met Alana when her daughter lived with Alana in their Bethesda home. Though Karen's daughter has since passed away, Karen continues to visit Alana at home and takes her on outings, including driving Alana to church weekly.

**"When Alana is in church, she is very happy,"** she said.

*Kim Trombley (left) attends Alana's (right) confirmation.*





# Supported on her journey

"I never see her more relaxed and at peace than when she is there," said Kay Howard, who serves as Parish Assistant at Suburban Bethlehem, and has also played a large role in supporting Alana's faith.

"I saw that we should work with Alana and confirm her if that was something she wanted, and pastor agreed. Alana was so excited and said she wanted to be confirmed. I contacted Kim and got the Bethesda confirmation curriculum and began going over once a week to her home to go through it with her," Kay said. Kay said the curriculum is user friendly enough for anyone who wants to support people with disabilities in their church. "The rich message is explained in very understandable way. It gives people with disabilities the opportunity to become a part of the body of the church and profess their faith."

When Alana talks about her confirmation, her face breaks into a smile. She said she decided



Kay Howard (left), Parish Assistant at Suburban Bethlehem, met with Alana (right) weekly to go through confirmation curriculum together.

to be confirmed, "To be in the church family." Alana enlisted the help of the direct support professionals in her home to help her write and send over 60 invitations for the event. Ultimately, Kim said, Alana's enthusiasm to be part of her church family is a blessing to others.

"I was so blessed to see her acknowledge her beliefs and let us know this is what she wants," Kim said. "As Psalm 139 says, 'We are fearfully and wonderfully made.' God designed all of us just the way we are; we are made with purpose. Those with disabilities have spiritual gifts they can bring to congregations. We are all an essential part of the Body of Christ."

**Bethesda faith resources available at [CPH.org/Bethesda](https://CPH.org/Bethesda)**



## 84%

People with disabilities who say their faith is important to them.



Alana's story is now on video!  
Visit [BethesdaLC.org/Messenger](https://BethesdaLC.org/Messenger) to view.

Forming connections with congregations and providing them the tools to support people with disabilities forms a large part of a ministry consultant's role.



Because of generous donors like you, Bethesda ministry consultants can provide tools like the Building on the Rock confirmation curriculum Alana's church used to help others connect with their faith communities. Your support helps ministry consultants to:

1. Minister to and provide faith support for people with disabilities.
2. Provide religious consultation for congregations to encourage inclusion of people with disabilities.
3. Serve as Bethesda staff chaplains.

To help support ministry consultants in their work, visit [BethesdaLC.org/Get-Involved/Donate](https://BethesdaLC.org/Get-Involved/Donate)

## Our Mission:

Enhance the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through services that share the good news of Jesus Christ.



Corporate Headquarters  
600 Hoffmann Dr.  
Watertown, WI 53094-6204

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## Bethesda achieves milestone: 115 years of caring support



Much has changed over the last century, including the way society treats people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Sadly, they were often written off as unwanted, and services didn't exist to empower people to reach their full potential.

That began to change on April 13, 1904, the day Bethesda was founded in Watertown, Wisconsin. While we were once institution-based, 115 years later we connect people with a variety of loving home options, including Host Home or Shared Living programs.

We actively engage with businesses,

helping people with disabilities gain job skills and employment opportunities. Our Religious Life Team develops devotional and Bible study materials and partners with congregations to welcome and include those with disabilities. And, our Thrift Shops serve as a point of connection to our communities.

While much has changed throughout the past century, our mission hasn't. We are here to enhance the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through services that share the good news of Jesus Christ. We will continue to find more ways to make a difference.

**To learn more and see a timeline of Bethesda's historical milestones, visit: [BethesdaLC.org](https://BethesdaLC.org)**



800.369.4636 phone

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