

# Messenger

WINTER 2019



## ON THE JOB, AND ON HER WAY

Mary exceeds everyone's expectations - including her own

# Looking forward to 2019

The happiest of New Years to you and your loved ones!

Thank you for taking time to read the latest edition of Messenger. In these pages you will learn about amazing work done in support of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in 2018. None of it, of course, would be possible without your support, your prayers and your encouragement. For all of this, I am extremely grateful.

Looking ahead to 2019, I am excited that we will be able to expand our mission to more people than ever before. We have many innovations in the works that are designed to promote independence and inclusion for people across the country. We also have plans for new outreach into the communities we serve, including our congregations. I cannot wait for them to bear fruit and make a meaningful impact.

Of course, we depend on you and all of our generous donors to help us grow. As you read about the progress we are making, I respectfully ask you to consider making a special donation today to empower people we support to achieve more.

Leading the way as our field changes is what sets Bethesda apart. I hope you share in my excitement for what is to come.

Please accept my best wishes for a wonderful 2019!

Regards,



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Thirtle". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mike Thirtle, PhD  
**President & CEO Bethesda**

*I am Indispensable! You are the body of Christ; each one of you is a part of it.*

*- 1 Corinthians 12*

# Donor Spotlight:

## Al Troyke Leaves a Lasting Legacy

Al Troyke demonstrated his love for Bethesda's mission through a lifetime of support. He gave generously through gifts of stock, cash and gift annuities throughout his lifetime to help make a difference in the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. After his passing in 2018 at age 97, he left a truly transformative legacy gift of \$500,000 to Bethesda.

Al was a humble man who made a career as an executive in finance and accounting for AT&T in New York and New Jersey. Al and his late wife, Laura, had two daughters, Lynn and Jean. Lynn was born with disabilities, and her parents dedicated their lives to helping Lynn and others with disabilities live their best lives possible. They heard about Bethesda and knew it would be the perfect place for their daughter. Lynn came to Bethesda in 1966 and soon after, Troyke and his wife relocated so they could visit their daughter in Watertown, Wis., regularly.

Al lived a simple, frugal lifestyle and gave all he had to help enrich the lives of those in his community. He volunteered in many capacities with Bethesda over the years.

"Al continued to leave a lasting impression on all who knew him until his passing," said Katey Higgins, a development director at Bethesda. "This world was blessed to have 97 years with Al Troyke in it. His pure, loving, giving and grateful attitude will continue to inspire me and many others for years to come."



### What legacy would you like to leave in the world?

Consider establishing a gift in your will that provides people with disabilities with safe and loving homes, opportunities to connect with their communities and the chance to grow in their faith. Contact our Development Department to learn more or visit [BethesdaLC.org/Donate](https://BethesdaLC.org/Donate). Call 800.369.4636 or email [DevelopmentDepartment@BethesdaLC.org](mailto:DevelopmentDepartment@BethesdaLC.org).

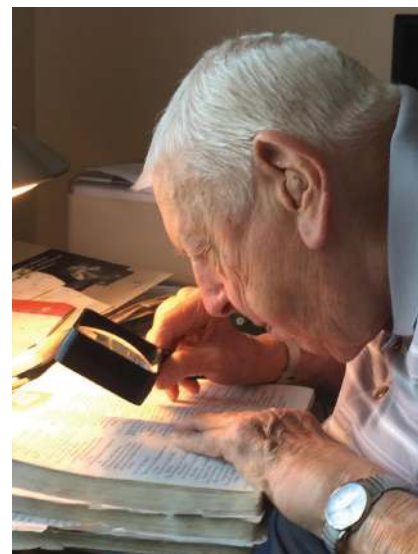


*Al Troyke together with his daughter Jean.*

### Al Troyke (1920-2018)



*Al Troyke and his wife had two daughters, Lynn (middle) who was supported by Bethesda from 1966 until her passing, and Jean (right).*



*The late Al Troyke reading his Bible, which he did every day of his life.*

# ‘I never thought I’d Mary is on the job with your support

When Mary was born at 25 weeks and one-and-a-half pounds, doctors predicted her chances of survival were small.

If she survived, they said she would live in a wheelchair and never walk, talk or run. She had a shunt placed into her brain and was in the neonatal intensive care unit for three months.

“I was born small and had to be connected to a lot of machines, but that’s not the end of my story,” Mary said. “It was just the beginning.” As she grew, Mary showed remarkable progress. Doctors called her a “miracle baby.” Mary was taken home from the hospital by her foster parents who later adopted her. Mary’s mother, Judy, said Mary had to be connected to monitors and machines 24/7.

“Everyone was afraid to pick her up because there were so many wires, but we believed in her,” Judy said. Mary’s parents loved and supported Mary so she would have the best chance at a full life. Judy said as Mary grew, she continued to exceed doctors’ expectations.

“Even when doctors told us Mary had disabilities, I would tell them, ‘But look at how much she *can* do!’” Judy said. Thanks to her parents’ faith in her, Mary’s good attitude, and help from medical professionals, Mary thrived. But Judy said she felt uncertain about Mary’s future.

Growing up, Mary liked to pretend to work as a secretary or nurse, but Judy admits she wondered whether Mary would be able to have a job someday. According to recent employment research, only 16 percent of people with intellectual or developmental disabilities have paid, integrated employment. Finding employment opportunities can be challenging for people with disabilities if they do not have support.

But with support from generous donors like you, Bethesda works to equip people we support with career coaching, skills assessments and employment planning so they can be successful in the workforce. Your support helped Mary, and she has achieved her dream! Today, Mary is working at Bethesda as a stewardship representative, where she supports the

philanthropy team, organizes fundraising materials, helps with donor communications and addresses donor cards.

“My goal was to get a real job. And I got it. I never thought I’d be here, but I am, and I’m proud to be here,” Mary said. Thanks to gifts from generous donors like you, Mary received supported employment services from Bethesda to help build her professional skills.



Mary was born at 25 weeks and one-and-a-half pounds. Mary’s nurses documented her progress in the hospital as she grew big enough to be taken home.



# be here. But I am.'

"Sometimes I would get a little bit lost, or a lot-a-bit lost, and my job coach came up with ideas I needed," Mary said. Mary's coworkers say she has become more outgoing and confident as her skills have grown, and she is excelling in her role. She has decorated her desk, is learning new skills and even invented special nicknames for each of her coworkers, who she says are "like family to work with."

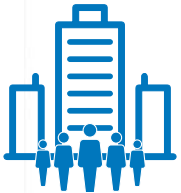
*"If someone had told me when she was a baby how far Mary would come, I would not have believed them," Judy said. "Her working is like another miracle. I believe God is letting me know Mary can do anything she wants to do."*

Mary agrees. "When I look back at pictures of myself, I think, 'I can't believe I made it with all the crazy things I went through.'" Mary said. "For that, I thank God."



## 124+

People in Supported Employment programs at Bethesda and working in integrated jobs in their communities.



## 57+

Businesses that employ Bethesda supported employees. Companies span a broad range of industries including arts and entertainment, food industries, travel, health care and more.



To learn more about our Supported Employment program and read more stories, visit [BethesdaLC.org](https://BethesdaLC.org).

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

# On the Move, On a Mission

## Ambassadors hit the ground running with outreach to congregations

We're excited to share that the new Bethesda Ambassador program is off to a strong start! Our Ambassadors are people of all ages and walks of life who share a passion for the Bethesda mission and are eager to connect congregations to that mission. Working in defined territories across the country, they find opportunities to tell the Bethesda story, making the case for inclusion and empowering those with intellectual and developmental disabilities to connect with their faith.

Ambassadors include college students, deaconesses and retired pastors, and they work in partnership with our Religious Life team and Ministry Consultants. We recently asked two of them – the Rev. Alan Bachert and college student Callie Firminhac – why they got involved and what they hope to achieve.

### When and how did you first learn about Bethesda?

**Rev. Bachert:** When I was a student in seminary in 1969, I did my master's thesis on how people with disabilities were being supported in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. At the time, the seat of disability ministry was Bethesda, so my research would not have been complete without consulting them. I was intrigued, so I got involved with Bethesda and served on the Board of Directors for 11 years. I also served as interim vice president of Religious Life.

**Callie:** I first heard about Bethesda from my college advisor. Prior to my conversation with my advisor, I did not know much about Bethesda. I grew up in a small town in Wyoming where Bethesda homes and services are not common.



### About Rev. Alan Bachert

- Lutheran pastor for 50 years
- Most recently served outside of St. Louis, Mo., at King of Kings Church and then in St. Petersburg, Fla., at Our Savior Church

## We're here to help

While the Ambassador program may be our newest outreach program for congregations, we offer a variety of services and resources to encourage people of all abilities to grow together in their faith. Your donations make it possible for our Religious Life team to provide free consultations to churches of all faiths that are interested in disability ministry. We further ensure all people we support who are interested have access to faith support materials and a faith community.

## Why did you decide you wanted to be involved as an Ambassador?

**Rev. Bachert:** I recently learned about the Bethesda Ambassador program and wanted to be involved in spreading Bethesda's mission to more congregations. There was a time when every Lutheran congregation had an astute knowledge of Bethesda. The church has lost that attention, and I would like to see the awareness return.



# 660

People in congregations reached by Ambassador presentations in just two months' time. Ambassadors promote Bethesda's mission and ministry to and with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**Callie:** I realized I wanted to be part of helping people of all abilities connect with their faith communities. After prayerfully considering the position, I decided to become involved in spring of 2018. I hope to educate congregations in the Wyoming and Nebraska area about the incredible services Bethesda provides like free disability ministry resources.

## What about our work and mission makes you believe so strongly in Bethesda?

**Rev. Bachert:** I have seen over my years with Bethesda that it meets a need in the church for disability ministry. People of all abilities should have their needs met in the church. Bethesda recognizes the unique ways the church can support people with disabilities.

**Callie:** While working at a health care facility in high school, I had the opportunity to interact with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They brightened my days. I am passionate about educating congregations about the amazing work happening at Bethesda so that services can be provided to help people connect with their faith.

## Learn more

Curious about becoming an Ambassador?  
Or know someone who might be? Find out more at  
[BethesdaLC.org/Ambassador](https://BethesdaLC.org/Ambassador) today.

## About Callie Firminhac

- Sophomore at Concordia University, Seward, Neb.
- Pursuing a degree in elementary education with a Lutheran teacher diploma and a minor in early childhood education

Materials are written at a level of understanding that works for people with disabilities so they can be fully included in their congregations. With your generous help, Bethesda is making a deep, lasting impact on many faith lives.

### Available resources include:

- Bible study materials
- Devotions
- Prayer guides
- Confirmation materials
- Educational pamphlets
- Sermon notes

To make a donation, please visit [BethesdaLC.org/Donate](https://BethesdaLC.org/Donate).



# Our Mission:

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



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Watertown, WI 53094-6204

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## New Changes that Affect Your Gifts

The American Council on Gift Annuities (ACGA) announced on July 1, 2018 they are raising the charitable gift annuity rates (CGA) for the first time since 2012. CGAs are a well-known concept of providing attractive income to donors for life in return for a donation of \$10,000 or more to Bethesda.



**What Are CGAs?:** • Any one or two donors receive fixed payments for their lives (payments vary by the age). • Fixed payments are competitive with most fixed income investments on the market. • Donor(s) may begin payments immediately or choose to defer payments. • Income payments terminate on the death of the annuitant(s), at which point Bethesda uses remaining funds to support its mission.

## What is the Impact of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act on Your Contributions?



Since tax laws are constantly changing, we want you to be aware of the changes that occurred in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. • Substantially increased the standard deduction. • Doubled the estate and gift tax exemptions. • Placed limits on state and local taxes and mortgage loan interest deductions. • Eliminated the home equity loan interest deduction. • Increased the contribution limit on charitable gifts of cash.

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**Please visit [BethesdaLC.org/Messenger](https://BethesdaLC.org/Messenger) to read the full articles about new changes that affect your gifts. Connect with us for any questions regarding how these changes affect your gifts by emailing [DevelopmentDepartment@BethesdaLC.org](mailto:DevelopmentDepartment@BethesdaLC.org) or calling 800.369.4636.**  
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