

# HEROES AMONG US

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

 **TRINITY**  
Services, Inc.



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*Trinity Services, Inc. is a nonprofit, nonsec-  
tarian organization that provides the high-  
est quality person-directed services and  
supports to people with disabilities and mental  
illness so that they may flourish and live full and  
abundant lives. Founded in 1950 as the Trinity  
School in Joliet, Trinity Services now supports  
more than 5,500 people in more than 30 com-  
munities in Chicago's southwest, northwest and  
western suburbs; Central Illinois; and Southern  
Illinois. In addition to a school program, Trinity  
provides community day services, employment  
and behavioral health services, a variety of resi-  
dential options, and more.*





# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

Did you ever expect to live through a pandemic?

For many staff members of and people receiving support from Trinity Services, the answer to that question is, vehemently, “no.”

The COVID-19 pandemic took most of us by surprise with its intensity, ferocity and absolute upheaval of life as we knew it. “Social distancing”, “masking”, and “quarantine” became part of our daily vocabulary. We wondered if we’d ever be able to experience the simple activities we once took for granted. We all learned lessons about the fragility of life and the value of health.

As we reflect on 2020 and all that it taught us, I encourage you to read on through these pages to discover stories of some of the most unsung heroes of the pandemic.

Staff members who care for people with disabilities are health care workers. They are essential workers in the truest sense. People with disabilities depend on them.

Some people Trinity supports need staff to help them with their basic, everyday needs like eating and bathing. Others rely on staff to help them work through depression, anxiety and other mental health concerns. And others need staff to help them monitor physical health conditions or assist them with working toward different goals and dreams. For some, social distancing was an impossibility.

Staff members at Trinity Services continued to step up to help the people they support despite their own concerns about the coronavirus. They knew they were needed, and they heroically rose to the occasion.

Beyond providing direct care, staff members at Trinity Services went above and beyond to ensure that people stayed engaged and maintained the quality of life they wanted to have through the pandemic. Approximately 200 staff members even volunteered to shelter in-place at group homes for weeks or even months at a time during the pandemic to keep people as safe as possible.

In the following pages, I invite you to read about some true heroes among us — heroes who deserve our utmost respect and gratitude for all they gave and sacrificed throughout the pandemic for the benefit of the people they support.

Sincerely,

Raymond D. McShane  
*Chairperson of the Board*

# HEROES AMONG US

## *DSPs make personal sacrifices to ensure health, safety of those they support*



*Trinity's mascot Lillie Leapit congratulates Allyson Corry, Marquita Winston and Jenifer Meehan for sheltering-in-place for six weeks at a house to keep six women safe.*

When the harsh realities of the COVID-19 pandemic began to hit home in Illinois, Trinity Services staff members did not shy away from the challenge.

They read the same news articles, saw the same social media posts, and faced many of the same fears that most people did. Yet, they came to work undeterred from their mission of helping people with developmental disabilities and mental illness flourish and live full and abundant lives.

## *Making sacrifices for the people they support*

Approximately 200 of Trinity Services' direct support professionals (DSPs) who care for people with developmental disabilities made the selfless choice to move into group homes during the COVID-19 pandemic to shelter in-place there and continue to care for the people they support. In doing this, they provided the greatest amount of protection possible to 52, or just more than half, of Trinity's residential locations and about 300 people who live in those homes.

DSPs put those they support first to ensure that, with the elimination of staff shift changes, they were as safe as possible.

Some of these staff members struggled with missing their loved ones, overcoming their fears of COVID-19 and even enduring the loss of loved ones during their shelter-in-place commitments. Still, they stayed.

DSPs are essential workers. They are unsung health care heroes on the front lines, providing around-the-clock care for people with disabilities and mental illness. Many of the people they support have preexisting medical conditions, putting those people at a higher risk of severe complications should they contract COVID-19.

DSPs know that there is a worst-case scenario threatening to take the lives of people they care for and love, and they do everything they can to protect the people they support.

Bryce Kirwan and Steven Linton are just two frontline staff members at Trinity Services who volunteered to shelter in-place at one of Trinity's group homes in Manhattan, Illinois. Kirwan and Linton acknowledged that they had fears about COVID-19, but in April 2020, both made the commitment to shelter-in-place for the rest of the month. Their decision came immediately after, on April 3, one of the home's residents tested positive for COVID-19 and went to the hospital for medical care.

Both Kirwan and Linton knew there were risks involved with going to work and live at a home where someone had the virus. Kirwan worked with the gentleman who was ill for a week prior to moving in.

"It was something I wanted to do," Kirwan said. "It was easy for me to say 'yes.' It was a great sacrifice. I knew for the next 30 days, my life wasn't going to be the same at all. Everything would be different. I did my best to stay positive and optimistic. I knew that's what it would take to get through this. I knew this was what I wanted to do, and I just did it."

Linton, who has exercise-induced asthma, said he talked to his parents and roommates about the risks before making a decision.

"I can't say I wasn't fearful," he said. "I read about how detri-

mental the virus is. I decided the attention it is getting is very important, but I can't keep living my life in fear. I decided this was an opportunity for me. I think I'm blessed, and God watches over me, so I wasn't too worried about it."

Both Kirwan and Linton said they relied on each other and on the five men they supported to get through the difficulties of the pandemic together. Each day, they ate meals together, did activities together, spent time outside when possible, watched TV and spent some time to themselves. Fortunately, none of the men contracted the coronavirus.

"I just knew that any time I spent giving into the fear would hold me back in the long run," Kirwan said. "I tried to keep my mind on the positive stuff and focusing on things I could control. I knew all we need is time here. If we can focus on what we can do every day and slow down and take time, we're going to make it out of this just fine."

### Getting the job done with both hands tied



When DSPs finish stay-in-place shifts, they are greeted with a socially distanced celebration thrown by colleagues. Here, Tanganika White and Nicole Johnson are thanked for a 30-day shift during which they supported five women.

When Trinity Services and most other providers of developmental disability support services entered the COVID-19 crisis, they did so with both hands tied behind their backs.

For more than a decade, Illinois' reimbursement levels for DSP wages have not kept up with the cost of living and have remained at or barely above minimum wage.

In 2020, the extremely essential work of providing care for people with disabilities was reimbursed below the living wage of \$13.60 for a single adult in Will County, where most of Trinity Services' residential sites are located. However, many DSPs are single mothers working to provide for their families. The living wage is \$27.39 for one adult and one child, according to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Living Wage Calculator.

Trinity Services was operating at a deficit of 20 percent of the direct support staff it needed when it entered the pandemic. It was difficult to respond to a crisis situation without a full workforce, but Trinity's staff members are extremely dedicated to the people they support.

Additionally, as did many hospitals, nursing homes and care facilities, providers of developmental disability services faced a severe shortage of personal protective equipment entering the pandemic.

Trinity Services is grateful to Governor J.B. Pritzker's administration, including Department of Human Services Secretary Grace Hou, for their strong leadership throughout the crisis in working to respond to the need that Trinity Services and so many other organizations faced. Despite their efforts, Trinity still struggled to obtain all of the resources it needed in a timely manner given the national shortage of essential supplies.

Trinity's ability to quickly implement its "stay-in-place" staffing model was facilitated by its strong working relationship with the leadership team of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME Council 31, Local 2690).

To support DSPs who embraced this model, Trinity appreciated the collaboration and open dialogue with AFSCME Council 31, Local 2690 President Roosevelt Journigan and the entire Local 2690 executive board, as well as Kevin Watson, AFSCME staff representative, and Anne Irving, regional director.

### The true value of direct support

"People need to understand the value of DSPs," said Thane Dykstra, Ph.D., Trinity Services' president and CEO. "They are invaluable health care workers. They just happen to be the most underpaid health care workers, unfortunately."

Most of Trinity's staff members have had to work through some anxiety or fear, but they continue to rise to the occasion and show heroism in the face of a difficult, scary situation.

"It's really brought out the best in people," Dykstra said. "Some of our program participants have communicated how appreciative they are of all that staff members are doing to keep them safe. There's no doubt that this is an unprecedented crisis, and starting with two hands tied behind our back, we're still fulfilling our mission – helping people flourish and have full and abundant lives. As CEO, I could not be more proud of our staff. There are too many heroes to list. Those individuals providing direct supports at Trinity and other organizations are superheroes."

# ADAPTING TO THE NEW NORMAL

## TRINITY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS, STAFF AT DAY PROGRAMS, SCHOOL ADAPT TO HARDSHIPS CREATED BY PANDEMIC



*Trinity School Teacher Annette Bailey reviews health and safety protocols with one of her students virtually over the summer.*

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, no one could have anticipated just how long it would last.

As one year of pandemic life has passed, it is evident that despite the hardships COVID-19 has consistently created for staff members, people supported by Trinity Services, and families, they are not only adapting to the changes but flourishing within them.

In the wake of the pandemic, Stephanie Behlke Leigh, Community Day Services and Network VI director, said staff members who usually worked in community day service programs did not think twice about switching to residential settings and sheltering-in-place there for the safety of the people they support.

“I was extremely proud of people’s willingness,” Leigh said. “The vast majority of staff were extremely willing to do something new, and they understood right away what they needed

to do and why they needed to do it. And, certainly, their minds were focused on supporting the people that we serve and keeping people as safe as possible — even if they didn’t know them and hadn’t worked with them before.”

Leigh said that one staff member in particular, who was relatively new to Trinity, was one of the first to transfer to a residential setting and remain there throughout the pandemic. She ended up officially transferring to work at that house because she fell in love with the people who live there.

Joy Vrlec, the director of Trinity’s school, said back in March, the impending unknowns of the pandemic came as a shock to everyone at the school.

“We knew [other schools] were closing, and we knew that our school was just around the corner,” Vrlec said. “Our initial thought was just that it’s not going to work. The students we serve need to be here with us.”

But despite the original apprehension of being outside of the classroom, the students and teachers at the school rolled with the changes. Throughout the course of the pandemic, the school has developed comprehensive plans to ensure that the students are able to learn — even if it is outside of the classroom.

Some staff members delivered packets with the curriculum for each week to students’ homes. Some taught in an outside setting for speech and occupational therapy over the summer, and others translated documents completely in Spanish to assist Spanish-speaking families, Vrlec said.

In winter 2020, classes were completely remote, and the students and parents adjusted to the hardships of this change.

Curriculum packets included detailed instructions on following remote guidelines for both the people assisting students and the students themselves.

“Our families are doing good,” Vrlec said. “They’re doing their best, and I’m really proud of them. We’re just helping each other survive this. It’s not easy, but we’re making it work for everybody’s sake.”

Similar adaptations came about for other programs at Trinity Services, including the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Programs.

Mike Wittman, clinical director of PSRs at Trinity, said the biggest change for his network was the closure of PSR programs from mid-March through mid-August, when therapists spent this time completely within residential homes.

“For five months, all we wanted was for the programs to reopen,” Wittman said. “However, making that a reality actually took nearly two months of planning and presented new challenges and needing new procedures to be in place. I will say I think all of us have surprised ourselves with how much we can handle during the pandemic and how we can rise to the challenges.”

Wittman said that although this has not come without its struggles for the people Trinity supports, they have proven to be strong in fighting to overcome these challenges. Some people have used this time to work on their artwork or writing, and others have shown their appreciation for all that the staff have done to adapt.

“I’ve said this countless times over the pandemic, but I do really believe those we support are more resilient than many of us,” Wittman said.

Taylor Rook, Trinity’s therapeutic recreation coordinator, said her job has changed significantly over the pandemic, turning fun activities she normally guided into virtual ones. Fortunately, the challenges she has faced in doing so eased over time.

“I think it has gotten easier as we go, because we are in a groove of what needs to be done and what type of activities are successful and work for the people we serve,” Rook said. “There are some challenges still as we go through this because of the unknowns of the pandemic.”

Leigh said that, luckily, CDS programs were able to reopen in August 2020 by following state guidelines and creating a COVID Preparedness Plan for each site. Although not everyone has been able to return to programs in person, the fewer numbers have given staff the opportunity to personalize activities and perfect curriculum for the future.

“Due to having fewer people, we’ve been able to offer more individualized supports and personalized activities than we ever have before.” Leigh said. “Our staff have been able to work on a curriculum that is based on positive psychology, which is going to be a year-long curriculum. Because we had the downtime during some periods, we were able to really enhance the quality of our services for years to come.”

## TRINITY MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS LEAD CHARGE TO KEEP PEOPLE HEALTHY, SAFE THROUGHOUT PANDEMIC



*Personal protective equipment like what Independent Living Coach LaCara Eubanks is pictured wearing is essential to keeping staff members and people receiving services safe.*

As the enormity of the coronavirus’ threat began to be fully realized in America and throughout the world, the dedicated medical professionals at Trinity Services immediately began working to ensure that there was a plan in place to keep people as safe as possible.

Trinity Medical Director Dr. Rajani Patwari, MD, worked with Trinity Medical Clinic staff and residential network nurses to develop a six-prong approach to respond to the pandemic:

- 1.** Under the supervision of network nurses, each person receiving residential support from Trinity had their health monitored through daily symptom logs.
- 2.** Preventative measures like increased handwashing, hydration, and sanitization of high-touch surfaces were ongoing among staff members and people receiving support.
- 3.** Efforts to increase education and awareness about the coronavirus and vaccines were ongoing for staff and people Trinity supports through webinars, flyers, discussions and more.
- 4.** Outside visitors were limited throughout the pandemic.
- 5.** In case of outbreaks, crisis prevention and response plans were in place.
- 6.** Additionally, employees stepped up in every possible way to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, including by spending weeks and even months sheltering in-place at group homes.

“We were able to contain and control the spread of infection,” Dr. Patwari said.

When someone Trinity supports began to show symptoms of the coronavirus, a three-tier response was enacted to monitor symptoms.

Medical Clinic staff and residential network nurses were tasked with monitoring symptoms of people Trinity supports.

In Tier 1, people with mild symptoms were monitored at home. In Tier 2, people with greater symptoms were monitored and evaluated in Trinity’s Medical Clinic. In Tier 3, people with severe symptoms were admitted to a hospital.

“When someone we support tests positive, he or she quarantines and has their symptoms monitored closely,” Dr. Patwari said. “Anyone who was exposed to that person is tested.”

The person was then monitored until they tested negative for the virus.

Trinity’s Medical Clinic was very active in performing tests for staff members and people Trinity supports who were exposed to the virus.

“I am really proud of our staff who worked very hard and with compassion,” she said. “I salute them and feel that Trinity could not have come this far without them.”

## **TRINITY’S HOMELESS SUPPORT PROGRAM HELPS ROUGHLY 50 PEOPLE FIND HOUSING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, people have been told to stay home in order to stop the spread of the coronavirus and save lives, but for people experiencing homelessness, this precaution was not possible.

In Will County, that is where Trinity Services’ Homeless Support Program (HSP) stepped in. The team sprung to action when shelters closed at the beginning of the pandemic, working to support people in hotels and find housing for them.

The team worked with the Will County Veterans Assistance Commission, MorningStar Mission, the Will County Center for Community Concerns’ Continuum of Care, and United Way of Will County.

The team of six, led by Peggy Schronski, has been able to help approximately 50 people find housing and greater independence since March 2020 through rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing.

Rapid rehousing helps people living on the streets, in their cars or in emergency shelters overcome immediate obstacles to housing.

Permanent supportive housing helps people who were chronically homeless and who have disabilities secure stable homes in which they can receive the supports they need.

Schronski said the pandemic created challenges around finding housing for people, and some landlords only offer a certain number of subsidized units. HSP staff members were on the front lines daily, taking people to see potential homes and helping them move in if a location was a fit. The team also worked to help people get furniture and other household items they needed, especially as manufacturing and supply of these items suffered because of the pandemic.

Many of the people the HSP supported during this time lost their jobs because of the pandemic, and for those who continued to work, most had to quarantine at least once because of exposure to the coronavirus.

The pandemic delayed progress for some clients who were already receiving support from the HSP.

One woman was scheduled to exit the permanent supportive housing program to live on her own, but two weeks before, she was laid off from her job and tested positive for the coronavirus. After being without work for a month, she found a new job and is now working toward reaching independence.

“It’s difficult especially for people trying to get on their feet,” Schronski said. “Depending on how many days they miss work, it’s a paycheck they miss out on.”

“The hardest part is it’s heartbreaking that the shelters were full, and hotels were full. Just to see all the people working together to make this happen, to get people in housing, was the best thing.”

HSP staff, along with staff from aforementioned partner community organizations, worked together to ensure people had the support they needed while they were in hotels, waiting to be connected with more permanent housing. Local food pantries and businesses donated meals to people staying in the hotels. The HSP also received referrals from Guardian Angel Community Services.



While supporting people in the hotel, HSP staff helped a pregnant woman and her children who were survivors of domestic violence, which has been exacerbated during the pandemic. The abuser was removed from the hotel and not allowed to return, and the HSP found housing for the woman and her children.

“She had the baby some months ago, and she’s doing very well,” Schronski said.

At all times, HSP staff worked to ensure that people staying at the hotel were safe. When people entered the hotel, depending on where they were coming from, they were asked to quarantine for two weeks.

During the pandemic, the HSP helped three permanent supportive housing clients move into their own housing, independent of the program, and helped support three new families through the program. Schronski said all of these households are doing well, and people who were laid off were able to find new jobs.

“One woman had a baby this year and is doing very well in her own house with her family,” Schronski said. “Another woman is a hair stylist. Times were very difficult for her, but she’s doing very well now, has moved out on her own and is working. We’re excited for our clients to move on and be out of their own, and to accept three new families.”

As the pandemic continues, HSP staff members conduct phone and video chat visits with their clients to ensure that they are doing well and have all of the resources they need.

The staff members also work to maintain positive relationships with landlords by ensuring clients pay their portion of rent and explaining circumstances to the landlords if payments are delayed.

Schronski said she and her team look forward to the end of the pandemic so that they can go back to visiting and supporting their clients in person, and so that the obstacles that the HSP helped so many people overcome turn into a distant memory.



## TRINITY COUNSELING CENTER OFFERS FREE MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATIONS TO PEOPLE IN WILL, GRUNDY, SOUTHERN COOK COUNTIES DURING PANDEMIC

The Trinity Counseling Center offered free mental health consultations to people in its coverage area in Will, Grundy and Southern Cook Counties during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In times of change and uncertainty, feelings of fear, stress and anxiety can increase and potentially become difficult to manage.

In recognition of the increased need for support during the COVID-19 crisis, Trinity Services and the Trinity Counseling Center wanted to help.

“We offered these services because we recognized that the situation was difficult and scary,” said Bonnie Hassan, director of the Trinity Counseling Center. “As a result, many people were feeling increased stress, fear and anxiety. Providing for the mental health needs of our community and increasing people’s connection to needed resources is an important part of the work we do.”

These free consultations were provided remotely by phone or video, and they were offered throughout Governor J.B. Pritzker’s stay-at-home order.

“If someone is nervous about reaching out, they can expect a safe place where they can share thoughts and feelings confidentially, receive support and access resources,” Hassan said.



*Daphne enjoys a moment outside, in front of windows covered in hearts for essential workers, during the beginning of the pandemic.*

# EXPANDING ABILITIES

## TRINITY SERVICES LAUNCHES ABILITIES BEHAVIOR SERVICES TO EXPAND AUTISM, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY, DEMENTIA SUPPORTS IN SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS

Trinity Services expanded its autism and developmental disability supports in Southern Illinois through the opening of Abilities Behavior Services in late 2019.

For years, Trinity has provided ABA services to people in the St. Louis Metro area and Southern Illinois, and this expansion will ensure that more people in this region have access to the support they need.



### *Serving children and adults*

Abilities provides applied behavior analysis (ABA) services to children and adults with developmental disabilities and dual diagnoses of a developmental disability and a mental illness. ABA is a scientific method focused on understanding and improving behavior using evidence-based interventions to increase skills, reduce challenging behavior, and enhance quality of life.

In Mascoutah and Edwardsville, Abilities serves children and adults ages 2-28 in clinic, home and community settings. In Mascoutah, services are also provided through a weekly social group, and in Edwardsville, through social groups for children ages 4-6.

For children ages 3 and younger diagnosed with a developmental delay, ABA is a highly effective form of early intervention that can improve learning, communication and social skills as the brain continues to develop.

For adults with developmental or intellectual disabilities, ABA helps pinpoint which environmental factors influence behavior for a person, and which skills the person and their staff and family members need in order to experience behavior change so the person can reach their goals.

“I am excited to continue to provide high-quality ABA services in St. Louis Metro area,” said Roma Kline, Board Certified Behavior Analyst and licensed professional counselor. “People with autism face challenges in communication, socialization, and adaptive living skills. At Abilities, we strive to improve daily function in order to increase our program participants’ quality of life.”

### *Serving seniors with dementia*

There are more than 220,000 Illinoisans living with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, and due to the nature of these conditions, each person will contend with challenging behavior like confusion with routines, or even dangerous or disruptive actions.

Research demonstrates that behavior therapy like ABA is a safe, effective method to manage symptoms of dementia. Despite this, there are very few providers that offer this service to seniors.

Abilities seeks to transform how the most difficult aspects of one of the most expensive diagnoses in America are managed, and they proudly offer this service to seniors in Southern Illinois. Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) provide in-home consultations to clients and visit when most needed, including during meals, routines, family gatherings and other daily activities.

“Dementia is one of the most pressing issues to our health-care system, and its behavior symptoms take a huge toll on families,” said Dr. Maranda Trahan, Ph.D., BCBA-D, leading dementia care services at Abilities Behavior Services. “Abilities is committed to getting caregivers the coaching they need today to keep loved ones at home for as long as possible.”

Services are provided in homes, assisted living facilities, skilled care centers and hospitals.

For more information about Abilities’ services, call (618) 566-0313 or visit [www.abilities.today](http://www.abilities.today).

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

<b>Revenue</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Tuition	983,918	849,649
Fees for Service	58,220,659	52,226,232
Contributions and Grants	2,958,491	2,003,006
United Way	135,860	115,138
Investment	293,200	321,989
Business Income	532,591	614,894
Miscellaneous	213,381	192,199
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$63,338,100</b>	<b>\$56,323,107</b>

<b>Expenditures</b>		
Salaries & Related		
Personnel Expenses	42,961,326	38,576,113
Consumable Supplies	1,427,097	1,320,387
Occupancy	6,122,071	5,912,812
Transportation	1,263,806	1,337,029
Other Expenses	1,176,978	1,626,948
Depreciation	2,007,524	2,034,877
Interest Expense	108,710	113,288
Management and General	4,422,447	4,994,499
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$59,489,959</b>	<b>\$55,430,216</b>
Increases in Net Assets	\$3,848,141*	\$892,891

*\*Includes limited-time funding enhancements from the federal government and Illinois Department of Human Services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

# SERVICES

By the numbers



3500  
people served



More than  
600  
people served  
residentially



More than  
600  
people served in  
Community Day  
Service programs



Autism  
services



Employment  
services



Clinic



School



Behavioral Health

More than  
40  
programs  
and services



## Community Living

- Homes and apartments in residential areas

## Living Centers

- Two 16-person residences for people with disabilities

## Community Day Services

- Life skills training programs
- Horticultural therapy
- Woodworking
- Recycling

## Behavioral Health

- Intensive outpatient services
- Community living programs (homes and apartments)
- Community support teams

## STRIDES

- Therapeutic horseback riding program

## Counseling

- Individual therapy
- Group therapy
- Child and adolescent services
- Family therapy and couples counseling
- Court-mandated anger management
- Divorce mediation

## Autism Program

- Home-based services
- Applied Behavior Analysis services

## Trinity School

- Education for students ages 3-21

## Career Access Network

- Supported employment
- Competitive employment
- Job training/coaching
- Career Access Network
- Drop-In Center

## Respite Services

- Respite care for caregivers of persons with developmental disabilities in Will and Grundy counties

## Illinois Crisis Prevention Network

- Prevention, consultation and training

# GAINING NEW GROUND

## TRINITY BREAKS GROUND ON NEW PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING COMPLEX IN NEW LENOX



*Trinity Park Vista is a 16-unit permanent supportive housing development in which Trinity Services staff members provide support to up to 19 people in Northlake, Illinois.*

Trinity Services is proud to announce that it broke ground on Prairie Trail at The Landings, a permanent supportive housing apartment complex for people with disabilities in New Lenox.

A groundbreaking ceremony took place Oct. 28, 2019, at the future building site, located at 418 Landings Drive in New Lenox, behind Presence Immediate Care near U.S. Route 30 and Cooper Road.

Prairie Trail will offer 22 one-bedroom and three-bedroom units, each with their own kitchen, bathroom, living space and storage. To live in the building, people must have a low income and a disability that requires the support of a caregiver. Trinity Services staff members can provide a variety of supports, including help with budgeting, job counseling, social skills and cooking, for example.

The building will sit on one acre of land and will be surrounded by another acre designated for walking paths, gardens and recreational programs for residents. Landscaping job skill development will be offered on the grounds.

The first floor of the building will have offices for Trinity Services staff members and a common room for meetings and social events. Each floor will have a laundry room, and a lounge on the second floor will offer additional space for residents to enjoy movies, games, reading and computer access.

Prairie Trail is in close proximity to job and volunteer opportunities, shopping, transit, health care, professional services, recreation and more.

At the groundbreaking ceremony, Trinity staff members and members of Trinity's Board of Directors and Foundation Board were joined by New Lenox Mayor Timothy Baldermann and representatives from Brush Hill Development, Worn Jerabek Wiltse Architects, Synergy Construction Group, Waner Enterprises, and Will County Land Use. All of these organizations contributed to the initiation of the project.

There is a significant need for permanent supportive housing developments in Chicago's southwest suburbs. More than 10,000 adults with disabilities are on a waiting list for this type of housing throughout the state. These individuals receive an average of \$750 per month in Supplemental Security Income to cover all living expenses, but that is typically not enough to cover rent.

Prairie Trail will give residents a place to call their own, building their confidence and providing them the support they need to flourish and live full and abundant lives.



*A rendering of Prairie Trail at The Landings, created by Worn Jerabek Wiltse Architects, P.C.*



*Trinity Services, Inc. is partnering with the Orland Park Police Department to create a Mobile Crisis Response Unit.*

## **TRINITY SERVICES, ORLAND PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEIVE \$700,000 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE GRANT FOR MOBILE CRISIS RESPONSE UNIT CREATION**

Trinity Services, Inc. and the Orland Park Police Department are expanding efforts to ensure people with mental illness have access to the services they need, following receipt of a \$744,039 grant by the Office of Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice.

The grant funds the creation of a Mobile Crisis Response Unit that will be composed of a project manager, 35 crisis intervention team officers, four licensed clinicians and four clinical responders who will work to ensure people with mental illness and co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse are provided services they need following interaction with law enforcement, working to reduce arrests and recidivism. The initiative will include police departments in Oak Forest, Midlothian, Orland Hills, Palos Park and Palos Heights.

The unit will train 300 local mental health and substance abuse providers, and 300 police officers, state's attorneys and public defenders on Mental Health First Aid; Question, Persuade and Refer for suicide prevention; specialized treatments for female offenders, including the Trauma Recovery and Empowerment Model; and opioid awareness. The unit will also conduct six resource awareness campaigns.

When police officers suspect someone is having a mental health or substance abuse crisis, they will conduct an initial mental health and substance abuse screening. This screening will also be completed for all individuals detained at local police stations. When the screening determines a person is in

crisis, a clinical responder from the MCRU will be contacted.

The clinical responder then replies by tablet or in person to screen for mental health needs. If a mental health or substance abuse disorder is identified, the clinical responder can, if appropriate, schedule an initial appointment with a MCRU licensed clinician within 48 hours in lieu of arrest or longer incarceration.

Licensed clinicians working at the Trinity Counseling Center will assess people referred through the MCRU, provide mental health services, and connect people to housing and employment resources, if needed.

"I look forward to being able to get people connected to appropriate services earlier so that they get the support they need, preferably without additional police contact," said Bonnie Hassan, director of the Trinity Counseling Center.

Since early 2017, the Trinity Counseling Center has partnered with the Orland Park Police Department to assist police when they encounter someone in need of mental health services. The creation of the MCRU will expand this partnership and the scope of people who can be assisted.

## **TRINITY SERVICES' HOMELESS SUPPORT PROGRAM RECEIVES NEW GRANT FOR EXPANSION OF SERVICES**

Trinity Services, Inc.'s Homeless Support Program received a new \$268,684 grant in October 2019 from the Will County Continuum of Care (CoC) for the expansion of its rapid rehousing program.

The grant will allow Trinity to support an additional 12 households with rapid rehousing services, bringing the total number of households it can impact through this program to roughly 30.

The program helps people experiencing homelessness overcome obstacles that are standing in their way to obtaining a home. For example, if a person is unable to afford a security deposit and first month's rent but would be able to afford both given a month to save money, rapid rehousing can help the person during that first month until he or she can independently afford to move into his or her own home. Rapid rehousing services are available for a household for up to 24 months.

Trinity's Homeless Support Team applied for this funding from the Will County CoC, which ranked requesting projects and selected grantees based on performance, cost-effectiveness, community need, project quality and strategic resource allocation.

People who are referred to Trinity's Homeless Support Team have entered their information into the Will County Continuum of Care's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which collects information about how long a person has been homeless, if the person has children, if the person has a disability and more in order to evaluate need. The Continuum of Care serves Will, Grundy and Kendall counties.

Based on the information entered into the HMIS, people are connected with services at an organization with an opening in one of the three counties.

Most of the time, Trinity's Homeless Support Program receives referrals from local emergency housing shelters, according to Sandy Metroz, former director of the team. Before receiving rapid rehousing services, a person must have been homeless for at least 24 hours.

In addition to housing, the team offers a comprehensive array of services to its clients, including food, clothing, counseling, transportation assistance, advocacy services, life skills classes, educational and vocational opportunities, tutoring and case management. Life skills classes focus on topics related

to relationships, health, nutrition, personal finance, parenting, child development, career development and more.

Metroz said she is excited to receive the additional funding for rapid rehousing services so that she and her team are able to help more people.

## **TRINITY SERVICES RECEIVES GRANT FROM STATE TO PILOT REMOTE SUPPORT SERVICES IN SIX LOCATIONS**

The Technology Enhancing Capabilities (TEC) Lab at Trinity Services is the recipient of a brand new grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities.

Trinity is one of seven organizations chosen to receive grant funding from the Division. The funding is designated for a pilot program of remote support services in six community-integrated living arrangements (CILAs), also known as group homes.



*Trinity Services' President and CEO Thane Dysktra, Ph.D. (left) shows Illinois Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton (middle) and Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services Grace Hou a remote support station during a visit.*



The Division put out a request for information regarding assistive technology practices that organizations around Illinois are using and additional practices they would like to pursue if funds were available.

Connie Melvin, director of the TEC Lab, served on a statewide assistive technology workgroup, which made the recommendation that the State launch an assistive technology pilot program.

“We are very excited about being part of the pilot program,” Melvin said. “It’s really the first time the State has recognized the importance of more cutting-edge, mainstream technologies and that they can benefit people with disabilities.”

Melvin and Trinity staff are working to identify six different locations where Trinity currently provides support to people with developmental disabilities, in which Trinity can provide remote support services.

Remote support services are defined as a type of technology that connects a person with a disability to an off-site remote support worker who coaches the person to meet their goals and outcomes. The array of remote support devices that may be located in a person’s home will vary based on their individual preferences and support needs.

Additionally, the funding will help Trinity Services implement complimentary assistive technology in the six homes. This technology will help enhance people’s independence. For example, if a man is able to cook himself meals independently but from time to time has difficulty remembering to turn off the stove, a device that can be installed on the stove can alert his remote support worker when the stove has been turned on and when it has been turned off. If the stove has not been turned off in some time, the remote support worker could check in on the man to remind him.

Melvin explained that when identifying people who may be able to benefit from remote support technology, it is important to thoroughly educate the candidates, their loved ones and their staff about the technology before implementing it to ensure everyone involved is comfortable with how the technology works and what to expect.

“We fully recognize that remote technology is not necessarily relevant for all people with disabilities, but it gives us one more type of service that we can offer the people we’re supporting at Trinity,” Melvin said.

Melvin’s goal is to have the technology up and running in its initial stages in six months and full implementation completed one year after receiving the funding.

Currently, Trinity offers remote support services in a couple of locations in Illinois. For example, one woman uses an electronic pill dispenser that can send a text message to her loved one or a staff member if she does not take her daily medications. This device allows her the autonomy of living on her own and managing her medication herself, while also offering the security of support if she forgets the medication one day.

With this new grant, this is the first time the State of Illinois is funding assistive technology as a service option.

“It’s their way of being able to dip their toes into this world and give providers the opportunity to identify types of technologies that can benefit the people we support,” Melvin said. “This is the first time this has really been formally recognized, as far as more modern technologies go. I think it has opened up a whole new world of possibilities for the people we support.”

Melvin added that similar state-funded programs in Indiana, Minnesota and Tennessee are achieving success at helping people become more independent.

Despite this being the first State funding Trinity has received for assistive technology, the organization has been progressive in its approach to incorporating technologies into the lives of the people it supports through the establishment of the TEC Lab. The lab offers a loan pool of high- and low-tech devices for people with disabilities and a multitude of learning opportunities for people to learn how to use devices to increase their independence or help increase the independence of the people they support. The lab offers an annual conference which is the first of its kind in Illinois.

“Trinity has recognized the importance of assistive technology and made those programs and offerings available to people we support,” Melvin said. “So this funding is above and beyond what Trinity is already doing, which is pretty darn impressive across the state and country.

“As we have success in this area and the opportunity to go through this pilot program and learn about what we need to learn, we could identify remote support as a potential service option for other people. Our hope is once the pilot program is over, the State will allow us to open a service option for people who this makes sense for and who are in favor of pursuing remote technology in their own homes.”

For more information about Trinity’s TEC Lab, contact the lab at 779-702-5499.

# REWARDING EXCELLENCE

## NATIONAL DISABILITY PROVIDER ASSOCIATION NAMES TRINITY SERVICES' JACQUE ANDERSON 2020 ILLINOIS DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR



*Trinity Services Independent Living Coach Jacquie Anderson (front) poses for a photo with men she supports (left to right) Robert Brown, Sam Challa, Charles Paslawski and Brian Zon.*

Jacquie Anderson makes it her mission each day to help at least one person she supports experience a sense of accomplishment. On April 16, 2020, Anderson was honored for an accomplishment of her own, as she was named the 2020 Direct Support Professional of the Year for Illinois by the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR).

Anderson has provided support to people with developmental and intellectual disabilities as an Independent Living Coach, or Direct Support Professional, at Trinity Services for eight years. She describes herself as someone who likes to try new things and have new experiences, and she uses this aspect of her personality to help the people she supports have more experiences, as well.

In receiving this recognition, Anderson joins 54 other recipients of ANCOR's 2020 Direct Support Professional of the Year awards, chosen from a field of 300 nominees.

Anderson supports a group of approximately 20 men who attend Trinity's Community Day Services program New Lenox Woodworks. At the program, the men contribute to the creation

of wooden items like Adirondack chairs, picnic tables, candle holders, decorations and more. These items are sold to the public, and proceeds help support the program.

Though the program has a variety of staple items that people take interest in year after year, Anderson always thinks outside of the box. She comes up with new project ideas for the men she works with, as well as new ideas for what they can do during downtime.

"I had them build dream catchers and taught them about Native Americans," she said. "We've cooked brownies and cookies together. If there's something we haven't all experienced, we try it together."

Regardless of a person's abilities, Anderson finds a way to get everyone involved in the day's activities. She also continually pushes herself outside of her comfort zone around the men she supports, creating a comfortable environment for them to try new things, too.

This innovative approach to work and life is why Anderson's supervisor, Ryan Nieders, nominated her for the DSP of the Year Award.

"She's a very hard worker and very energetic," he said. "She brings a ton of ideas to the table during our morning meetings or individually with me. She is always coming up with things to do for our program participants. She is pretty much always smiling and telling jokes or just making people laugh, in general."

Trinity Services' Director of Community Day Services Stephanie Behlke Leigh added, "Jacque is creative and always thinking of ways to bring additional depth and content to our programs. She has a talent for exploring personal interests and developing an activity or experience to connect with people."

Anderson credits Nieders for allowing her to express her creativity. She said he never puts boundaries on her ideas and always encourages her and the program participants at New Lenox Woodworks to try new things.

One man who struggled with verbalizing his thoughts would get frustrated because of this. Anderson decided to learn sign language alongside him, teaching him three words each day and making a game out of the learning experience. He caught on quickly.

Anderson has taken the men on a hike to Starved Rock State Park, taught them how to make winter hats out of yarn, helped them create artwork for their game room at New Lenox Woodworks and so much more.

“Jacque is a lifelong learner eager to take on any new skill, and she helps to instill this value in the people around her,” Leigh said. “If you are around Jacque, you will grow, and you will flourish.”

“They teach me as much as I teach them,” Anderson said of the men she supports. “It’s a give and take. I come away learning something I didn’t know, and they come away learning something they didn’t know. I enjoy that they’re willing to try new things and explore with me.

“I want them to have a sense of accomplishment each day. If I get one person to accomplish something, I did my job.”

Though Anderson is currently unable to work with the men she normally supports because of the coronavirus pandemic, she continues to support people with disabilities by helping out in a residential location. She also continues to go above and beyond. When she and her colleagues were running low on disinfectant, Anderson made a special early morning trip to the store to buy some.

“We are so proud of Jacque for all the creativity and genuine care she brings to the people she supports,” said Thane Dykstra, Ph.D., president and CEO of Trinity Services. “Jacque has brightened the days of program participants and her colleagues for years, and this recognition is well-deserved. We are grateful that ANCOR chose to recognize Jacque at this level.”

## **TRINITY PARENT, BOARD MEMBER RON STRICKLIN RECEIVES AWARD FOR ADVOCACY EFFORTS FROM THE ARC OF ILLINOIS**

Trinity Services, Inc. is proud to announce that Ron Stricklin, a member of the Trinity Services Board of Directors and parent of a son supported by Trinity, received the Outstanding Family Member Advocate Award from The Arc of Illinois.

This award is given to family members who actively devote time and energy to enhance the life experience for their family member and all people with developmental disabilities. Stricklin has done this through years of advocacy and volunteer work.



*Trinity Services parent and Board Member Ron Stricklin (center) holds his award alongside Trinity Residential Network VII Director Jen Hodges (left) and Trinity President and CEO Thane Dykstra, Ph.D.*

The award was presented to Stricklin virtually on June 11, 2020, during The Arc of Illinois’ 70th Annual Convention.

Jen Hodges, director of Trinity’s Residential Network VII in the Des Plaines area, has known Stricklin for years and wrote his nomination. She said he has been a tireless advocate for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities since he learned his son was diagnosed with a rare disorder called CHARGE syndrome.

“He helped his son move into his current home in 2005, is an active member of the fundraising team, advocates at the State level, serves as a Board member and is a lead member of the Parent Advisory Committee,” Hodges said. “He sees his path as not only advocating for his own son but for all people with disabilities.”

Stricklin has spent hours writing letters to legislators and visiting their offices, even when they openly disagree with legislation that would help people with disabilities. He also raises funds for and donates to help people supported by Trinity take part in events and activities regardless of their financial situation.

“He has a heart of gold that radiates through all of his efforts for people with disabilities,” Hodges said. “Trinity and The Arc are excited to present Ron with the award for Outstanding Family Member Advocate.”

“I want to thank The Arc of Illinois for awarding me this wonderful award,” Stricklin said. “I am honored to do the work and honored to be affiliated with Trinity Services and the good work they do.”

## TRINITY SERVICES CELEBRATES ACHIEVEMENTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, MENTAL ILLNESS AT INAUGURAL TA-DA AWARDS GALA

A crowd of more than 150 people gathered to celebrate each other's achievements and cheer each other on at Trinity Services Inc.'s inaugural Ta-Da Awards Gala held February 27, 2020, at the organization's ROXY Special Event Venue in Lockport.

Trinity proudly rejoiced over the many achievements of people with developmental disabilities and mental health needs who receive support from the organization by rolling out the red carpets, serving up the sparkling juice and turning up the fun music at the event.

Guests of honor were men and women who received a Ta-Da Award in 2019.



*Ta-Da Committee Member Kara Szurgot (second from left) takes a photo with award winners (left to right) Anna Rezek, Tanya Beaudry and Kim Raymond.*

These awards are written for people receiving support from Trinity Services who attain or make progress toward personal goals, improve their health, increase their independence, learn

new skills, or show kindness to others. Nominations come from Trinity staff and peers, and are approved by a committee whose members travel to award-winners' homes and programs to present the awards.

The committee is composed of people receiving support from Trinity as well as Trinity staff members. The committee worked to design the Ta-Da Awards from the ground up. The committee's goals are to inspire, empower, encourage and support people.

At Trinity Services, recognition is an essential part of the culture. It is important to celebrate people's achievements, no matter the size or scope, as each achievement is a very personal part of a person's journey.

For example, one man who is passionate about art planned an educational trip to Joliet Junior College to view their art exhibit. He planned this on his own and followed through, asking questions and expressing his thoughts about the artwork.

Another man learned to use self-checkouts at the grocery store independently.

Additionally, one woman chose to open her room and her heart when another person needed respite care. She agreed to share her room for more than a week.

"Out of my almost 15 years at Trinity, the Gala was one of the most memorable, most meaningful experiences I've had the pleasure of being part of," said Jen Klouse, Trinity's Director of Admissions and Ta-Da Committee Chairperson. "I think one of the most important things we can do in life is celebrate each other and do that together."

"My heart was full of joy. There was not a single person in the room that wasn't smiling or laughing or dancing or having fun. That's what life is all about is capturing those moments together and just being in the moment together."

In 2019, 121 Ta-Da Awards were given at Trinity. When these awards are presented, the Ta-Da Committee plays “Celebration” by Kool & The Gang, and walks into a program announcing who they are there to see. When possible, the person who nominated the recipient is present to read the nomination and give the award-winner his or her official Ta-Da certificate. Then, the recipient may choose a prize. The cheers for award-winners during these presentations reverberate throughout the room.

For many people supported by Trinity Services, party invitations and special occasions to dress up are very exciting.

The joy that filled the ROXY during the Ta-Da Gala was apparent, as people enjoyed catered food and a bustling dance floor.

Award-winner Nicole Martin, who received a Ta-Da Award in 2019 for learning to transfer out of her wheelchair independently, said she was so happy to be part of the Ta-Da Gala and grateful to be recognized.

“When a group of people come together and have the same goal in mind, knowing the importance and value of the awards and the Gala, we were able to achieve the success of seeing people experience a joy that is difficult to capture in words,” Klouse said.

Klouse said she was grateful for the committee members, volunteers and staff members who made the awards possible throughout 2019 and ensured the success of the Gala.

“I hope each of us continues to take time to recognize those meaningful moments with the people we serve and celebrate them, and that we continue to help them achieve the goals and experiences that are meaningful to them,” she said.



A total of

**243** TA-DAS HAVE BEEN AWARDED SINCE THE PROGRAM'S REINSTATEMENT IN APRIL 2019.

*Ta-Da Award winners Tim Gunter (center) and Greg Wettour (far right) take a photo with, left to right, Trinity Services President and CEO Thane Dykstra, Ph.D., Trinity Residential Network III Director Mickey Gossen, and Trinity COO Tina Fogarty.*

**186** TA-DAS WERE AWARDED IN FY20

**57** TA-DAS WERE AWARDED IN FY19

## TRINITY SERVICES, INC. CELEBRATES NATIONAL DISABILITY VOTER REGISTRATION WEEK WITH HELP FROM WILL COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

Trinity Services, Inc. and Will County Clerk Lauren Staley Ferry's staff helped register more than 40 people to vote, in person and through mail-in registration July 17, 2019, at a National Disability Voter Registration Week Open House at Trinity's central office in New Lenox.

The open house was sponsored by Trinity Services' Advisory Committee, which is comprised of people with developmental disabilities who receive support from Trinity.

At the event, people stopped by the registration station, where they could meet with Carol Schneider, an election analyst at the

Will County Clerk's Office, who registered participants to vote in next year's presidential election. From there, they picked up a mock ballot and took it to voting booths, generously supplied by the Will County Clerk's Office, to decide the best automobile manufacturer, best vocal artists and best ice cream flavor.

Voters dropped their ballots into a ballot box and went on to pick up a Trinity Services-specific ballot on which they could indicate which issues were most important to them and which types of services they would like to see in regards to recreation, health, education, vocation and more. More than 60 people supported by Trinity participated in this in-house election.

Upon completion of all stations at the Open House, voters received "I voted" stickers and the opportunity to enter a raffle to win a gift card.

Smiles and excitement were witnessed throughout the Open House, as people became registered voters – some for the first time – and others regained excitement for the idea of voting.



*Will County Clerk Election Analyst Carol Schneider administers an oath to Richard, who receives support from a Trinity Services staff member in raising his right hand, as part of the voter registration process.*

“My heart was full,” said Jen Klouse, director of admissions for Trinity Services and chairperson of the organization’s Advisory Committee. “One of the greatest things we can do is provide meaningful opportunities and experiences for people. The smiles and reactions of people is something you can’t put into words.”

Klouse added that witnessing Trinity staff members helping people fill out ballots and navigate the Open House was beautiful, as was seeing how proud people were about gaining voting knowledge and experience.

This Open House was also meant to get people excited about participating in their next election. In Will County, the next election is the Presidential Primary on March 17, 2020.

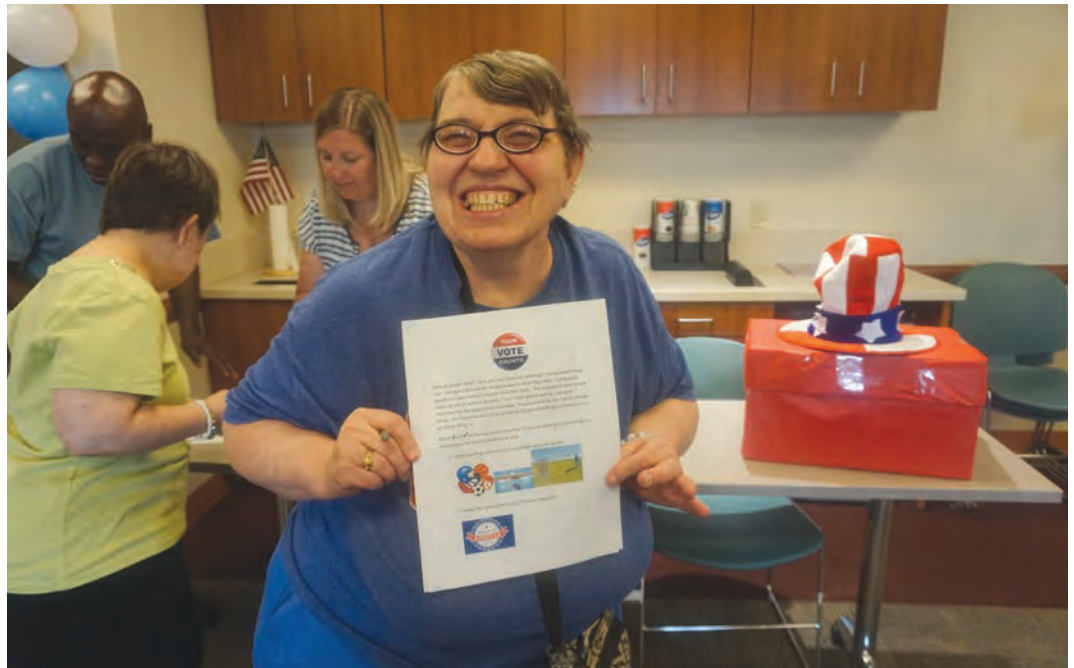
“I was excited that my office could partner with Trinity Services to register their clients to vote and help familiarize them with the election process,” Staley Ferry said. “My goal is to make certain that every eligible voter is registered and ready to participate in upcoming elections. Dedicated Will County Clerk staff members like Carol Schneider are always eager and willing to assist new voters.”

Schneider said she was glad to participate. “It was a joy to see how happy and excited people were to be there and watch them go through the process and learn everything,” Schneider said. “I think it will help them to be able to vote in the upcoming elections.”

This is the first event of this kind that the Will County Clerk’s Office has participated in for people with developmental disabilities. Staley Ferry said she looks forward to a continued partnership to assist voters with disabilities.

“We would be thrilled to do more,” Schneider said. “We look forward to a partnership in bringing awareness to disabled voters in the future.”

This is also the first event of its kind that Trinity Services’ Advisory Committee sponsored for people receiving support. It was inspired by the American Association of People with Disabilities’ REV UP Campaign, which seeks to get people with disabilities registered to vote, educated about this year’s election and prepared to cast a ballot. The campaign’s slogan, “Be seen. Be heard. Be counted.” was on display during Trinity’s Open House, encouraging people to celebrate the value of voting.



*Marguerite smiles as she holds up her Trinity Services-specific ballot during the Open House.*

“The event was a moment of empowerment for them, learning about voting and recognizing they have a voice,” Klouse said. “I think they’ve learned that, so now they will share that with their friends who maybe have not had that opportunity.”

“This was a wonderful experience to share with Carol and the Will County Clerk’s Office. We look forward to working together to create future events.”

# Mission

*To provide the highest quality  
person-directed services  
and supports to people with  
disabilities and mental illness so  
that they may flourish and live full  
and abundant lives.*

**Central Office**  
301 Veterans Parkway  
New Lenox, IL 60451  
815-485-6197  
[www.trinityservices.org](http://www.trinityservices.org)

 **TRINITY**  
Services, Inc.