

The
COMPASS
So that our mission is never lost...

Helping people with disabilities flourish and live full and abundant lives
3rd & 4th Quarters 2019

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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.

Trivia Night at ROXY



Join us at 6:30 p.m. Friday, March 20, at ROXY Special Event Venue, 1017 S. State St. in Lockport, IL, for an evening of trivia! Tickets are \$200 per team of eight or \$25 per person.
www.TrinityServices.org/TriviaNight

Trinity breaks ground on new permanent supportive housing complex in New Lenox

Trinity Services, Inc. is proud to announce that it recently 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 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 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 two offices for Trinity Services

(Continued on page 5)

Letter from the President of the Board



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The COMPASS

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Dear Friends,

This year has been full of so much positivity and success at Trinity Services, and we have you and your ongoing support to thank.

As you will see in this issue of *The Compass*, we have been so fortunate to receive the support of countless generous donors, sponsors, and volunteers through fundraisers, events and the general goodwill and generosity of our friends and neighbors. The support we receive directly benefits people with developmental disabilities and mental illness who receive services from Trinity, and it certainly gave people much to smile about around the holidays. Thank you for supporting our mission.

Additionally, we were very fortunate to receive three new grants in 2019 (Pages 9-10) for three of our programs. The work of our staff members to apply for and secure this funding will ensure that the Trinity Counseling Center's important work with the Orland Park Police Department to expand mental health services, the Homeless Support Program's reach, and the Technology Enhancing Capabilities Lab's innovative services can grow.

Our neighbors and friends in New Lenox have been very welcoming to us, supporting the development of a new permanent supportive housing complex in the village (Pages 1, 5). Once constructed, Prairie Trail at The Landings will be able to support 26 people with disabilities to help them live more independently and achieve their goals.

Our services are also expanding in Southwest Illinois, through the launch of Abilities Behavior Services (Page 4). This subsidiary of Trinity Services provides applied behavior analysis (ABA) to children, adults and seniors with dementia in the

Southwest Illinois region, helping these important services reach people in remote locations. The practice of using ABA to treat behavioral symptoms of dementia is progressive, and we are excited to see the Abilities team use this practice to help more people.

Through all we do, it is important to recognize the impact of moments in people's lives. On the adjacent page, read all about how a dog named Tilly brightened the lives of three members of a Shared Living family. The way Tilly was introduced to the family seemed like fate.

If you gain joy from reading about Trinity's positive impact, you may want to consider joining the Family and Friends Group. Details about the group are on Page 7, and I hope you will contact Pat Slack, the president of the group, to join. The group does so much good and creates many peak moments for the people Trinity supports. The group hosts a variety of social events throughout the year, and if you had the chance to attend even one of those events, you would want to attend them all. There are no words to describe the beauty of the joy on the faces of people who attend Family and Friends events, and the group needs more help to keep these events and the joy they bring going.

As always, thank you for supporting our mission of helping people with disabilities and mental illness to flourish. I hope you had a holiday season full of joy and love, and that your 2020 is off to a wonderful start.

Sincerely,

Raymond D. McShane,
Chairperson of the Board

Shared Living family grows by one after fortunate trip to hockey game introduces them to rescue dog named Tilly

Though they may not be related by blood, Willie, Tilly, Al and Kara are a happy family.

Kara Hackmon is a Shared Living provider who contracts with Trinity Services to provide support to Willie and Al. The three live together in Crete, and they recently grew their family by one — a dog named Tilly.

Growing up, Willie always had a dog. His most recent dog, his beloved Sweet Pea, passed away in March, and he felt the loss of her absence. Since July, when Kara made the switch from working as a team leader at Trinity to becoming a Shared Living provider, Kara and Willie were in regular contact with local animal shelters in search of the perfect canine addition to the family.

Though their efforts were diligent, they continually found that the dogs they wanted had already been claimed by other families.



Willie and Tilly pose together shortly after meeting at the Chicago Wolves game.

Despite the letdowns, the family pressed on, filling their days with many fun activities and good times together. Both Willie and Al are movie buffs, and they've gone on trips with Kara to see drive-in movies, and at every shopping trip, they enjoy stopping by a store's movie bin to comb through new releases.

With Kara's involvement, both Al and Willie are involved in special recreation in Orland Park. Al enjoys a healthy eating group and a movie group, and Willie participates in bowling and swimming.

"We're pretty busy," Kara said. "I look at the calendar, and sometimes it seems like there's no date that doesn't have something written in it."

Elle Liberty, the associate director of Trinity's Residential Network III, said she has been very impressed with Kara since she began supporting the men.

"Willie loves to be on the go, and she has really been able to help him do more things," Elle said. "They've gone to a Chicago Wolves game, 'Miracle the Musical', Joliet Slammers games, and a water park. Al's preference is to relax in his bedroom, but Kara tries to find things that pique his interests. Kara advocates so well for what the guys want - currently working on Willie's most recent desire to go rock climbing."

Kara also advocates for the men to have their own privacy so that they can have greater autonomy and oversight of their space and possessions.

"It's really been great," Kara said of her time with the two. "We've been having a lot of fun."

Along came Tilly

At a Chicago Wolves hockey game on Oct. 5, Willie met a new best friend.

Tilly, a 2-year-old, brindle-colored Boxer mix, was full of energy and, after being rescued as a stray, more than ready to go home to a loving family.

Waggin' Tails Animal Shelter, from Cicero, was in attendance at the game, and Kara and Willie thought it was the perfect opportunity to meet some dogs.

Though Tilly was the third dog that night that Willie took interest in, it is clear that their relationship was meant to



Al and Tilly share a hug.

be.

"Neither of us had been to a hockey game before," Kara said. "That was cool in and of itself. We walked right over and said, 'We'll take Tilly.' Willie was beaming; he was so happy."

Tilly is full of affection and energy, which she is happy to share with her family and anyone they welcome into their home.

The family is working on training her, currently covering commands like "sit", "stay" and "drop it".

"She's wonderful," Willie said.

Willie added that he loves to walk Tilly and play with her.

Kara said Tilly bonded with Willie first, listens to him most and always wants to be where he is.

When the pair are in a room together, they both respond to each other's names because of the similar sounds.

Since joining the family, Tilly has gained three proud new owners, and Willie, Al and Kara have gained one happy dog.

Trinity Services launches Abilities Behavior Services to expand autism, developmental disability, dementia supports in Southwest Illinois

Trinity Services, Inc. is proud to announce that it has expanded its autism and developmental disability supports in Southern Illinois through the opening of Abilities Behavior Services.

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

Serving children and adults

Abilities Behavior Services 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. Services are provided in clinic, home and community settings. In Mascoutah, services are also provided through a weekly social group, and in Edwardsville, the organization is forming social groups for children ages 4-6.

For a person new to Abilities, the organization will provide a free consultation to determine his or her basic needs, concerns and eligibility, and to discuss fees and insurance. From there, the person's caregiver(s) will be interviewed, and Abilities will work with the person and his or her caregiver to develop goals and measurement procedures. Abilities staff will develop a comprehensive plan for the person, conduct collaborative meetings, train the person's caregiver and review progress.

For young children (ages 3 and



A Division of Trinity Services, Inc.

younger) diagnosed with a developmental delay that affects cognitive, physical, communication, social, emotional or adaptive development, 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 his or her staff and family members need in order to experience behavior change so the person can reach his or her 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 de-

mentia. 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 healthcare 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."

BCBAs assess behavior, develop intervention plans, work to help clients improve life skills, and train clients and their loved ones on ABA techniques. BCBAs partner with long-term care communities to train their staff in behavior management strategies in order to keep their residents in the least restrictive settings. Abilities aims to reduce hospital admissions and the inappropriate use of medications.

Services are provided in homes, assisted living facilities, skilled care centers and hospitals. Long-term care insurance policies are accepted for services. Rates are also available for private pay.

Abilities has sites in Mascoutah, Edwardsville and Carbondale. For more information about Abilities' services for children, adults or seniors, call (618) 566-0313 or visit www.abilities.today.

Prairie Trail at The Landings *(Continued from page 1)*

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.

DD Director Allison Stark visits Trinity Services



Allison Stark, director of the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Development Disabilities, visited Trinity Services' Main Office on Dec. 9 in New Lenox. She met with leadership staff and visited Trinity's Community Day Services program on Gougar Road, The Branch: Well-Being and Enrichment Center, and the Technology Enhancing Capabilities Lab, all in Joliet. To the left, she is pictured putting on a SUBPAC which allows people to feel vibrations from sound during a virtual reality experience. To the right, she is shown in full virtual reality gear.



Someone You Should Know

Alicia Sales



"I can be helpful and part of someone's life who just needs a helping hand — I'm that person."

The quote at the bottom of this page is one of Alicia Sales' favorites, and it also accurately describes a motivation for the growth she is seeking and achieving in her personal and professional life.

Sales is the program coordinator of the Frankfort Community Day Services (CDS) program, which provides educational support to people with developmental disabilities. She has dedicated her service to Trinity since 1998 and recently completed her master's degree in human services management.

Sales hails from the small town of Cleveland, Mississippi. She married her college sweetheart, and the two eventually moved to Illinois, his home state. She has her bachelor's degree in social work from Mississippi Valley State University after initially starting out in education.

After student teaching, Sales realized it was not quite her passion, but helping others was.

"It was meant for me to go in that direction," she said. "When I was in middle school, I remember there was a young man with disabilities who was having a bad day. When you're young, people tend to shy away from people with disabilities, but I felt compelled to help."

Sales said she has always wanted to lend a helping hand, and she is a big proponent of treating others the way they want to be treated.

"It guides me — that and my faith," she said. "Knowing I can be helpful and part of someone's life who just needs a helping hand — I'm that person. I love meeting new people and working with

people."

When Sales and her husband moved to Illinois, Sales was looking for a job in case management. That is when she discovered Trinity and was hired as a qualified intellectual disabilities professional. She initially planned on working at Trinity for just a couple of years, but she found herself staying year after year. She eventually became the assistant program coordinator at Frankfort CDS and is now the program coordinator.

In this role, she wears many hats but is always hands-on with program participants, ensuring everyone is engaged, and staff members, ensuring they understand their roles and have all the resources they need to be successful. Additionally, as the person overseeing the program, she helps solve problems.

"Every day, there is some level of challenge, whether it's recruiting staff or a person having a bad day. I always stop, reflect and go back to how do I want to be treated in this situation before I present to people. I consider their emotions and what I'm bringing to the table, as well."

Sales brings her calm, collected, thoughtful demeanor into her interactions with staff, as well.

"They are looking to you for that leadership," she said. "You always have to be mindful of how you carry yourself and interact with program participants, because those are teachable moments."

For example, Sales noticed that people who communicate through speech were receiving more greetings from staff in the mornings than people who are unable to communicate verbally. She made a point to greet everyone equally,

and she began to see her staff do the same.

"Alicia is loyal, dedicated and hard working," said Dr. Stephanie Behlke Leigh, director of CDS. "In her tenure at Trinity, she has helped groom many staff into the leaders they are today. Many of our present coordinators credit Alicia with providing essential mentorship and support."

Sales said she is proud of finishing her master's degree and initiating the process. She described herself as a quiet person who keeps to herself, and stepping outside of her comfort zone does not always come naturally to her.

"I like the upward track that I'm beginning to take," she said. "I'm trying to push myself out of that comfort zone, continuing to grow."

Sales said she would like to continue to grow professionally and is excited to bring her educational experiences to CDS by introducing new experiences to program participants and helping staff grow.

"In CDS, you're always in that role of teaching, whether it's with program participants or staff," she said. "I'm seeing that's where I fit in and where my opportunities to grow and learn more about myself are."

In her free time, Sales enjoys singing with her church choir and spending time at her home in Palos Hills watching movies and hanging out with family. She has one daughter who is studying early child development at Moraine Valley Community College.

Sales recently went on her first cruise and is looking forward to traveling more.

"A comfort zone is a beautiful place, but nothing ever grows there."

~ Unknown

Family and Friends Group seeks volunteers to create peak moments for people with disabilities

For a person with a developmental disability or a serious mental illness, holiday party invitations may be few and far between.

Trinity Services' Family and Friends Group seeks to change that by providing a variety of parties and get-togethers throughout the year for the people supported by Trinity Services.

The group organizes five social events — a bingo night in February, a spring dance in April, a picnic in August, a Halloween dance in October and a holiday gala in December.

Planning these events and attending them to provide assistance and also to socialize with attendees takes manpower, and the Family and Friends Group is seeking volunteers who would like to devote some of their time and friendship to people supported by Trinity.

Pat Slack is president of the group and has been involved with it since 1992, when her sister began receiving services from Trinity.

She said that over the years, the group's membership has dwindled as

parents and siblings of people supported by Trinity have grown older or passed away.

The group is in need of more volunteers to keep its momentum going and to continue to provide these fun social events. Volunteers would not be expected to attend every event and could help as they are available. Volunteers also do not have to be related to someone receiving support from Trinity.

Slack said her favorite memories from her time with the Family and Friends group all involve program participants enjoying themselves at events.

At the group's recent holiday gala, more than 260 people attended. Each year, the group invites Santa to come, and attendees — many of whom are not used to waiting in lines and may not normally have patience for lines — wait for 20 or 30 minutes to see Santa and tell him their Christmas wishes.

"One year, one woman just asked Santa for her mom and dad up in

heaven to have a merry Christmas," Slack said. "The smiles on everyone's faces, to see them enjoying something is my favorite part.

"Usually, when someone volunteers at an event, they come back."

Slack said she has seen event attendees become much more engaged with the support of volunteers. For example, at a previous bingo event, volunteers sat with attendees and helped them fill out their cards, resulting in attendees being much more involved and smiling more than ever.

Currently, the Family and Friends Group is focused on building its membership. Then, it may introduce meetings and officer positions.

"Everything this group has ever done as been for the good of clients," Slack said. "We would like to be the group to step in and help support Trinity when they need people behind them."

For more information about the group and to join, contact Slack at (815) 954-4010.

Trinity's A Frozen Christmas event draws hundreds



"Frozen" characters Elsa, Anna and Kristoff stopped by Trinity's Main Office in New Lenox on Dec. 8 to visit with local children during Trinity's "Christmas in the Commons: A Frozen Christmas" event. The event drew hundreds of attendees, introducing more people to Trinity Services and its mission.



Sixth Annual Dinner & Concert Gala benefits people supported by Trinity Services

Trinity Services' Sixth Annual Dinner & Concert Gala, "An Evening of Holiday Music," welcomed more than 200 guests on Friday, Dec. 6, at the Butterfield Country Club in Oak Brook.

These generous supporters of Trinity gathered to enjoy the company of new and old friends, dinner, and music from harpist Caitlyn Stocki, a sophomore at Downers Grove North

High School, and the Clay Corso Jazz Quartet.

Trinity is very grateful to everyone who made this event such a success, including its steering committee, attendees, donors, sponsors, advertisers, and volunteers.



The Clay Corso Jazz Quartet performs at the event.



The Dinner & Concert Gala Committee gathers for a photo Dec. 6 at the Butterfield Country Club in Oak Brook.



Harpist Caitlyn Stocki performs during the event's cocktail hour.

Thank you for a successful #GivingTuesday!

With your support, Trinity Services had a very successful #GivingTuesday on Dec. 3. The international day of giving follows Thanksgiving and the holiday shopping days Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

Because of the generous support of a multitude of donors, Trinity raised more than \$50,000 in 24 hours on #GivingTuesday. Additionally, thanks to all of this generous support, Trinity qualified to receive a \$12,500 matching grant from The Coleman Foundation.

Trinity Services also held a live event on #GivingTuesday at ROXY Special Event Venue in Lockport. The Lockport Swing Thing provided free dance lessons to attendees, and adults

ages 21 and older who donated \$10 or more to Trinity Services at the event or earlier in the day received one free beer from Tangled Roots Brewing Company, which is coming soon to Lockport.

State funding alone cannot fully sustain the services and supports Trinity provides. Trinity relies on the generosity of donors to sustain and enhance services — ensuring improvements at homes and programs, enhancing curriculum at community day services, and providing opportunities for people to learn, achieve and attain more.

Thank you to all who donated to and supported Trinity Services on #GivingTuesday!



Fritters for Critters employees (clockwise, from top left) Justin, Kathy, Corey and Ruth are proudly employed because of support from Trinity Services and generous donors.

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 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, 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.

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 complementary 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.

PAINT NIGHT

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*We sincerely apologize for any errors or omissions.