



**SHELTERING TREE**

*Serving and empowering persons with developmental disabilities.*

## Over \$100,000 Donated in Just Over a Month!

In February this year the major funding piece was granted for the second independent living housing project initiated by Sheltering Tree to be located a 7400 Military Avenue near Marian High School.

In April came the news that \$100,000 in cash was needed before June 1<sup>st</sup>. A most generous donor stepped forward offering \$50,000 if \$50,000 could be matched in fundraising. An appeal went out to families and friends of Sheltering Tree on behalf of those persons with developmental disabilities.

The donations came in, from \$10 to thousands. Over 90 supporters sent best wishes and donations. The Rabe family helped the campaign by holding a "mad hatter" dance. By June 2<sup>nd</sup>, \$102,000 and change had been raised. Just saying "thank you" can hardly cover all the hearts that want to see this happen for those who are loved. But from everyone to everyone, thank you, thank you!

### **Omaha Gives, Too!**

Thank you community of Omaha for donating over \$2,300 with bonuses to Sheltering Tree through the "Omaha Gives" one day in May fundraiser for non-profit organizations sponsored by the Omaha Community Foundation.

# Fall 2015 Newsletter



You are helping to change their lives to one of joyful independence and self-filling dreams. You, the generous and understanding, are our heroes.

### **September 17<sup>th</sup> Fall Dinner!!**

The annual Sheltering Tree Fall Dinner is at a new location at St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church Community Center, 5050 Harrison Street, Omaha, NE. It is the first anniversary of the opening of the Bellevue Residence and the start of construction for the Benson project near Marian High School. Money raised will go to the operating expenses for both projects.

It is not too late to offer donations of items for the silent auction which starts at 5:30 p.m. along with a cash bar with dinner to follow at 6:30 p.m. We will pick up your items with great appreciation. Contact: Silent Auction Chairperson Luann Rabe at 402-493-7271 or Jenn Vinton, Fall Dinner Chairperson at 402-202-7478.

**Fun and Funds:** Successful fundraisers from this busy summer were used to buy a nice, clean low mileage car for the daily outings into the community for residents in Bellevue.

### **Golf Tournament Scores Again**

June 26th at the Tregaron Golf Course

in Bellevue the 6th annual golf tournament for Sheltering Tree was once again a winner coordinated by Chairman Duane Thome. \$8,577 was raised. The golfers had a beautiful afternoon for their scramble, lots of prizes, and a hearty supper to follow with desserts handmade by the chef and residents of the Bellevue independent living apartments. Next year's tournament is going to be June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Also Michael Thome's aunt, Shirley Dugan obtained a \$2,500 grant from the Norwex Cleaning Products Company for Sheltering Tree.

### **All Things Bright and Beautiful**

The bright, colorful furniture on the lawn at 1903 Gregg Road residential site in Bellevue got the attention of neighbors, the media and metro area at the first annual Sheltering Tree painted furniture sale. Selling over 100 pieces of beautifully refurbished furniture on the lawn and on line netted over \$3,500. But they have only just begun, according to the chairpersons, Kara Wesely, Erin Dahms, Trisha Kuiper. They are already planning for next year. The sale is scheduled for Saturday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. It is a delightful sight with specials not to be missed. Even those of us who think we don't need one more thing, found darling, affordable gems that couldn't be left behind.

[www.ShelteringTreeCommunity.org](http://www.ShelteringTreeCommunity.org)



## GOING PLACES – DOING

**THINGS:** Sheltering Tree's mission is to help each person with developmental disabilities fulfill his or her hopes and dreams. Sometimes this journey begins by a person just getting out and doing things.

Take the summer art group for example. It was an already warm July morning and we, a parent, a staff person, and a whole carload of guys were off to see the outside sculptures in downtown Omaha. Week by week this group had spent hours at the summer art fair in the Old Market, gone to the Joslyn Art Museum twice for different modern art special exhibits of national and local artists, spent time creating things in the Joslyn's imagination center, gone to art galleries, had coffee in a shop with art on the walls for sale, played at the Kaneko and now more than a few jokes were flying at the statues in front of the Century Link Center.

We were at the awesome bronze pioneers crossing the prairie park when a sudden inspiration hit us to go to the nearby "slides" at the Gene Leahy Mall. The sheer number of others with the same idea meant standing in line but the whoops going down the slides were worth the waits.

Does it take more time to plan the places we go and the things we do? Yes, lots of time, inquiry, imagination and the occasional last minute inspiration.

But after one especially thrilling ride down the slide on wax paper, one of the young men said, "I am really happy. I was at the top of the slide and I was talking to God and saying how happy I am and I think He said, 'I'm happy when you are happy.'" And that is why we do it.

## Happy Birthday to Bellevue "God grant you many years"

Last September 3<sup>rd</sup> ten young men and a wonderful managing couple moved into their own apartments at 1903 Gregg Road, Bellevue to enjoy the first independent living for persons in the metro area. The happy chaos was as exciting as freshman moving into a college dorm.

It is working "astonishingly well" according to one mom. The routine is varied and fun, the companionship they have struck up is comfortable as they entertain and help one another. Minor concerns are aired and cleared by formally forgiving each other at weekly community meetings among residents and managers. Events, outings, volunteering, exercising, and working schedules are compiled each week for the benefit of staff and families.

It is a model that works and lives are enhanced. One sister commented that her brother hadn't stopped smiling since he moved in. Each would gratefully say thank you to all who have made this possible.

## GROUND BLESSING – August 15, 2015

Blessing of the ground for the next independent living housing project at 7400 Military Avenue near Marian High School will be offered by Bishop Basil of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church of Wichita and Mid America on Saturday, August 15<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m.

The 24 units of housing, referred to as the Benson Project, will sit at the northwest corner of 72<sup>nd</sup> and Ames Circle on land purchased from the Sisters of Mary near Marian High School.

The many steps before construction starts can seem long and laborious but they are well underway. The architects and engineers are preparing the plans for bidding the ground work this fall. If final federal and foundation grants

fall into place, the project will move into construction by spring 2016 with a late fall opening. There are 22 units for men and women residents and two units for live in managers. Hopes are high, prayers are still needed. All appreciate your help in this prayer appeal.

## SAFETY – OUR FIRST CONCERN

Sheltering Tree is unique in the world of being a service provider certified by the NE Department of Health and Human Services. WE TAKE PERSONS INTO THE COMMUNITY ON EVERY OCCASION for their jobs, volunteering, educational classes and clubs, events and just plain fun. We don't have workshops where a person stays all day doing repetitive assignments.

It presents a unique challenge in safety,



as well, and one for which Sheltering Tree will be setting the highest standard of security that has been created to date for persons with developmental disabilities. Protecting these adults becomes the first consideration in hiring staff and training them. Sheltering Tree is working with Kanakuk Kamps in Branson, MO. who have set the national security standards for the youth camping industry. Their program was created by worldwide experts in the field of security. This plan will be adapted to meet the needs of persons with developmental disabilities.

It is said that 95% of the abuse and neglect of these persons is never reported by them personally. Each person in services with Sheltering Tree will be mentored and equipped to protect themselves and others. Staff and volunteers will be trained and supervised carefully. The expectation is that Sheltering Tree, as the first organization to take persons out into the community at all times, we will also lead the way in setting the standards to protect them.