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From Our President



70 years.

It's hard to put into perspective how long we have been providing individualized programming and supports for people.

On July 26, MSS celebrated its 70th anniversary. We were honored to have Minnesota

Governor Tim Walz award us with a Proclamation, declaring the date MSS Day in Minnesota.

The day allowed us to reflect on the thousands of people that we have had the privilege to serve and how your generous support has helped make it all possible. You've helped us offer innovative and creative programming for 70 years! THANK YOU — we could not do it without your support.



During our Years of Service event in July, I had the honor of presenting Joe Thompson of our St. Paul program with a plaque celebrating

his 55th year with MSS! This is a remarkable achievement and we are proud that Joe, and so many others, have chosen us to be their service provider. Congratulations Joe!

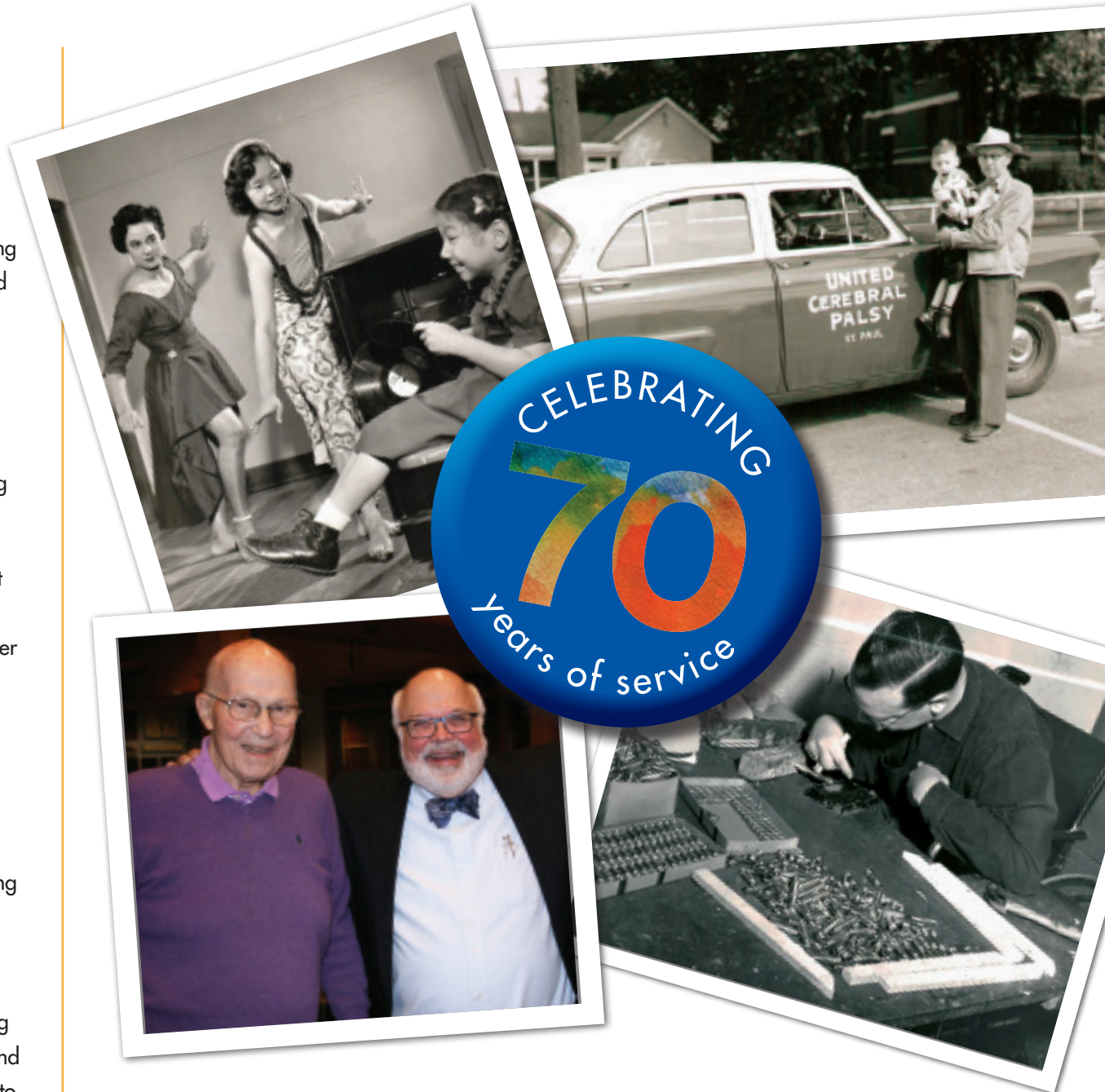
Our 6th Annual Celebrate! gala is Saturday, September 21 from 6-11 pm at the Anderson Student Center on the campus of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. With your help, our first five events raised more than \$250,000 to support a variety of programs and services, and this year's evening will be great once again. For more information and how you can purchase tickets, please visit mssmn.org/celebrate.

I hope you will join us in this celebration!

Julie Johnson, President

Our Vision Through the advocacy and person-centered services provided by MSS, the people we support will be regarded as full, vital, and contributing members of society.

www.MSSmn.org



It started 70 years ago as five couples formed a friendship in the waiting room of the old Gillette Children's Hospital in St. Paul. These couples became a working group who were looking to do one simple thing ... improve the lives of their children.

The families were at Gillette Children's hospital because there was a doctor there who welcomed young patients with Cerebral Palsy.

In July of that year, 1949, those five families founded the nonprofit corporation, United Cerebral Palsy of St. Paul, which is now known as MSS.

The inaugural location was a private school in the basement of the St. Paul Rehabilitation Center which served 10 children. Today, MSS has grown to six locations in the Twin Cities Metro area, supporting nearly 500 individuals.

Three years after opening its doors, two members of the organization, John Stevens and Al Erickson, both living with Cerebral Palsy, joined three other men with Cerebral Palsy and founded what is now MSS' employment program. The men started a craft shop in St. Paul and were incorporated as Handi-Cap Inc., sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of West St. Paul, the Wards Alumni Group and the Cerebral Palsy council.

This year, the employment program at MSS has served over 175 participants in various stages of their employment journey, providing a diverse range of employment opportunities across the

Continued on back cover

MSS' Creative Arts Programming Turns 20



"If you build it, they will come."

It's not just the most famous line from the 1989 film, *"Field of Dreams"*, but also the bold foresight that helped launch the MSS creative arts program 20 years ago.

In January 1999, Michelle Dickerson was hired as the Director of the MSS Burnsville location. In October 2007 we moved out of Burnsville and into our current Apple Valley location to accommodate our growing space needs.

A few months after Michelle was hired, MSS was advertising for a DSP. One response to that ad would change the course of programming at MSS forever.

"Sandy called in regard to the ad and she said she wasn't interested in the position we had available," Michelle said, about Sandy Strudthoff-Mckee. "She was a very interesting person and I wanted to keep our conversation going. Sandy mentioned she had an extensive art background, but we didn't have a position for her."

Not wanting to miss the opportunity, Michelle took the idea of creating a staff position to then-MSS Vice President, Lyth Hartz. After discussions, the idea was moved to then-President, Gene O'Neil.

"I explained to Gene the benefit of having a dedicated art staff position," Michelle explained. His response was direct: "Why should I let you do this?" he asked.

To this question Michelle dropped the famous movie quote, "If you build it, they will come."

Whether Gene was a Kevin Costner movie buff, or just had tremendous faith in his Burnsville Director is irrelevant. From that moment, the culture and opportunities at MSS were permanently changed.

"I hired Sandy in November and our arts programming began," Michelle said. "She was a one-person arts department and she insisted the art be the person's own work. We didn't do hand-over-hand with a staff member. The works of art were originals." The early days of art programming consisted of drawing, painting and some textile work, but that changed ... quickly.

"Art became extremely popular with not only the people we supported, but with staff members," Michelle said. "We have a lot of staff that don't hold positions directly related to the arts, but they have a passion for one form of art or another."

Two more Art Facilitators were hired a couple of years after Sandy was brought on.

The popularity of art programming caused a shift in how staff members were recruited. "When we would advertise for a staff position, it started to become 'service care professional/artist'," Michelle said. "We were getting quality staff members because of their interest in the arts."

One of those individuals, Lauren Hughes, was hired in 2009 as a DSP and has had a dramatic impact on the innovation of creative arts programming at MSS.

"I wasn't hired for a specific job related to art," Lauren said, "but I have always been passionate about the arts. We have such creative people at MSS so it just makes sense to provide as many opportunities as we can to let that creativity flourish."

Her passion for art was the springboard for Lauren at MSS, as she is now the Director of Arts Development. With her leadership and vision, MSS artists now display their work at The Show Gallery Lowertown (Co Lab, solo and community exhibitions), the St. Paul Art Crawl, cafes, public spaces, and a variety of art fairs and events throughout the Twin Cities.

MSS artists have been featured on Twin Cities news outlets, StoryCorps, and at the Coachella Music Festival in California.

They've created a feature film, sculpture garden, custom shoes for a WNBA superstar, and more.

"If you build it, they will come."

Truer words have never been spoken.

Newsletter Going Digital in 2020



We have made the decision to distribute our newsletter digitally starting in 2020. This means we will be discontinuing the hardcopy version you have been receiving in the mail and will be sending it to you via email. Our last newsletter of 2019 will be mailed to your address on file.

To receive our newsletter in your email, simply enter an email address at www.mssmn.org/subscribe. It's that easy and you will be helping us save thousands of dollars in the process. If you think we already have your email address on file, please sign up to ensure you receive the newsletter and other important communications from MSS.

By providing your email address, you will be helping us save in excess of \$7,000 per year in printing and mailing costs. You will be helping us put more money toward programs and services for the people we support!

In addition, by providing updates to you in an email, you will be able to help spread our message to your family and friends with a simple click of a button.

If you have questions about this or have difficulty signing up, please contact MSS Communications Manager, Tom Hoen, at 651-793-4118.

Thank you for your generous support of MSS!

New Employment Program Offered

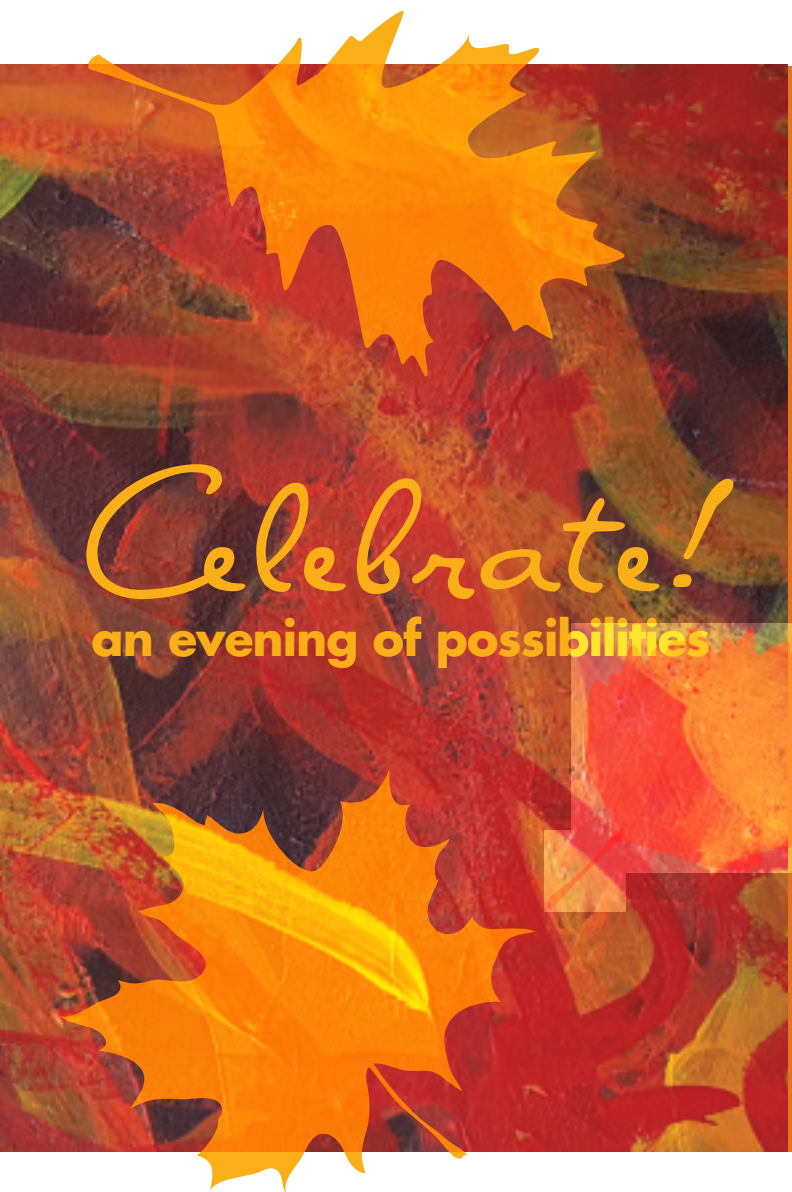
MSS is in the process of piloting a new Employment Exploration program in collaboration with the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MN-TAP). Approximately 20 people from MSS are part of the pilot.

The program gives people an in-depth look at the process and experience of competitive integrated employment, blending hands-on learning and real-world work experiences with classroom-style instruction and individualized feedback. This immersive program is designed to support people to make a truly informed choice about pursuing competitive employment and provide insights on potential career paths and areas of interest.

There are two distinct pathways for Employment Exploration available through MSS. "Exploring Competitive Integrated Employment" focuses on traditional employment opportunities, with five people from Oakdale and St. Paul taking part. "Exploring the Arts as Employment" is a program that offers an opportunity to explore a career as a working artist, with 12 people from Eagan participating.

We are excited to have this chance to give people opportunities and experiences to gain a new perspective on what it means to work competitively and look forward to expanding the scope of our Employment Exploration throughout MSS.

Contact MSS Employment Manager, Taylor McLaughlin, at tmclaughlin@mssmn.org or 651-793-4122 with questions regarding this program.



Join Us!

MSS will proudly host our sixth annual gala, Celebrate! An Evening of Possibilities, at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul on Saturday, September 21, 2019. We are honored to again have Premier Banks as our presenting sponsor.

Supporters like you raised more than \$90,000 at last year's Celebrate! to continue the innovative work of MSS. We hope you will join us this year to celebrate 70 years of supporting people with disabilities.

In recognition of our 20th year offering creative arts opportunities, we will be celebrating the arts in a big way! Both anniversaries will be honored through participant speakers, art sale, and two artists creating art live during the reception. Those two pieces will be included in the live auction. You could be the lucky winning bidder who will have new artwork with a unique story! This year's Fund A Need will benefit creative art programming.

Come support individuals with disabilities and enjoy an amazing evening with live and silent auctions, an art sale, wine pull, and Heads or Tails game with a fantastic get-away as the prize. Sponsorships are still available. To learn more and find out how to support MSS, please visit mssmn.org/celebrate or contact Shannon Brumbaugh, Director of Development, at 651-793-4126, or email her at sbrumbaugh@mssmn.org.

Celebrating Milestones

We had the pleasure of recognizing 46 individuals at our annual Years of Service celebration July 23 at the Mounds View Community Center.

This event gives us the opportunity to honor those who have trusted us to provide services to them for so many years, as well as remember those who have passed away in the last year.

We recognized a range of milestones, from those who have been with us for 10 years, all the way to Joe Thompson from our St. Paul program, who celebrated his *55th year* with MSS. We are honored to have so many people choose to share their lives with us for so many years!



How You Can Help MSS!

MSS values your support. We rely on your feedback to keep our programs running efficiently, and to ensure your family members and loved ones receive the highest quality services possible. We also want to make sure that you are kept up-to-date on important happenings at all MSS locations, and for that reason we are implementing a new initiative to streamline support, communication and increased involvement among all of you.

The primary goal of this system is to assemble family member/caregiver volunteers from each MSS location to form groups to assist in brainstorming, organizing, and implementing ideas in the following categories:

- staff appreciation events
- communicating with MSS stakeholders regarding legislative/funding issues
- resource sharing and a support system for families/caregivers in different stages of life
- fundraising
- gathering feedback from stakeholders
- mentoring/greeting new MSS families/caregivers and their loved ones

Ideally, we would like to have at least one volunteer in each category from each MSS location. Volunteers can sign up for the category/categories of interest to them and will be asked to meet quarterly at our St Paul office with MSS staff

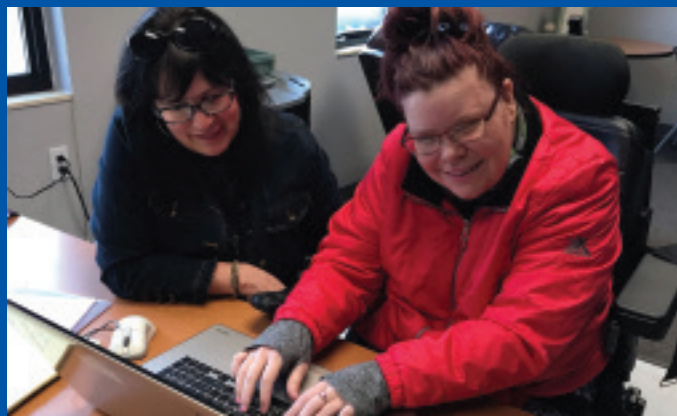
members and the other volunteers who represent the same category.

By holding quarterly meetings and having a dedicated team of family members and caregivers working closely alongside our staff, we will bring new ideas and people together and continue to offer innovative programming.

Volunteers are critical for our success! We have volunteers at all our locations and they contributed over 660 hours of their time during the second quarter of 2019, which we are extremely thankful for.

If you are interested in representing an MSS center in one or more of the above categories, please contact Jodi Meerovich at jmeerovich@mssmn.org or Alison Mertens at amertens@mssmn.org.

We look forward to hearing from you and having you on our team!



The MSS newsletter is published three times a year.

www.MSSmn.org
Phone: 651.778.1000
Fax: 651.772.4352
TDD: 651.772.8592

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Did You Know?

Support MSS Through Your Traditional IRA

We can't succeed without you. Your continued support makes it possible to offer more art opportunities, more employment and community involvement options; more of what the people at MSS want.

There are many ways to support us. While most often, people think of making gifts to MSS with a check or credit card, there are other ways to make an impact on the lives of people with disabilities.

When planning your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) withdrawal strategy, you may want to consider making a charitable donation directly to MSS. At age 70 ½, IRAs require you to take a minimum distribution each year. By having your IRA custodian transfer this gift directly to MSS, you would fulfill your requirement without increasing your taxable income. This is a perfect way for those of you who cannot claim itemized deductions to give because of the new, higher standard deductions.

If you are age 70 ½ or older, you may support MSS by instructing your IRA custodian to transfer any amount up to \$100,000—this must be done directly by the institution holding your IRA. If you file a joint tax return, your spouse can also make a charitable contribution of up to \$100,000, meaning couples can exclude up to \$200,000 of their retirement savings from income tax.

MSS does not provide legal advice so please consult your financial planner or tax professional.

70 years

Continued from front cover

organization. Some have the opportunity to explore what employment means to them; others are working in competitive integrated settings in the community, and many continue their fantastic work in our supported work crews at various sites throughout the Twin Cities metro area.

From the start in that hospital waiting room 70 years ago, until today, all the opportunities, programming and services MSS can provide is made possible in large part due to your incredible support. We can't thank you enough for helping us reach this milestone and we look forward to the next 70 years!

IRAs

Putting Your Money Where Your Heart Is

