



Marie Avenue Groundbreaking  
September 17, 1972

# we journey

In this

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2012 newsletter

## january

 **Dakota Communities**  
*Feeling Good at*  
**40**  
Anniversary  
1972- 2012

# In 1967

when our daughter Betsy was born with cerebral palsy, we were at a total loss as to how to care for her ... and there were few options. So, that we were able to build Dakota Communities in 1972-73 was a miracle.

The thing that continues to amaze us is the dedication of employees and volunteers who consistently work to improve lives, dreaming of new possibilities and then making them all happen. So many lives have been changed over these 40 years. We are grateful to you all for your dedication and hard work! And we are looking forward to your vision for the future!

– Karen and Galen Pate, Founding Family



Betsy Pate



## When I reflect back

I think of the stories from the past 40 years. Stories of families who made the difficult decision to reach out for help so their children could be given more opportunities; stories of the children and adults served who realized so many successes because they were given a chance; stories of the amazing and caring staff who believed that nothing was impossible and saw challenges as opportunities; stories of volunteers who became friends with the people served, who became employees, who served on the Board; and stories of community members who reached out as friends.

I am so proud and honored to have been part of the stories of Dakota Communities.

– Kathy LeMay, CEO 1977–2005



# planting trees

One generation plants the trees;  
another gets the shade. (Chinese proverb)

It is with joy and excitement that I join Dakota Communities as president and CEO during its 40th anniversary. I look forward to building on four decades of accomplishments that began when a dedicated group of parents, community members, and volunteers founded one home for 48 children with disabilities in West St. Paul.

Our founders never could have guessed how many people would benefit from "the shade" that they were planting in 1972. Many of the children from that first home at Marie Avenue have grown with Dakota Communities, and it is an honor that we to continue support them as adults today. With the introduction of Non-Residential Services in 2001, the organization has grown to support over 300 adults and children in the community and in our 33 residential homes.

Similarly, as we look ahead to the next 40 years, it is hard to imagine exactly what Dakota Communities will be like. What we can say with certainty is that we will be guided by a focus on quality, relationships, community

engagement, advocacy, and innovative leadership. We will continue to work in service to people, actively supporting their needs and interests.

In this issue we feature stories about incredible people who have been with us from the beginning. We are grateful to them, our founders, and everyone who contributed to our success over the years in big and small ways.

There is no doubt that people with disabilities realize their goals and potential as a result of their partnership with Dakota Communities. What has also become evident to me as I explored joining this remarkable organization is that each one of us who partners with people with disabilities can also better realize our potential. I look forward to meeting you soon as we continue the work of "planting trees."

Warmest regards,

**Julie Manworren**  
President and CEO

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1972

**Galen Pate and Lon Miller** conceive the idea of a home for children; **Dakota's Children** is incorporated

1977

**Kathy LeMay** named as president/CEO



1987

**State of MN** authorizes closing regional centers serving people with disabilities

1991

**Dakota's Children** has grown to 10 homes, 300 employees, and annual budget of \$6 million

1997

Dakota's Children becomes **Dakota Communities**; O'Neill Drive office in Eagan opens



2005-2006

New logo; Weekend Respite and Supported Employment services begin; **Paula Hart** is third president & CEO; honored with **ANCOR's Community Builder Award**

**Dakota Communities celebrates 40 years** ... serves more than 310 children and adults with 300 volunteers, 605 employees, and \$19 million budget; **Julie Manworren** named as fourth president/CEO

2012

1970

**Pat Wilson** becomes first executive director

48 children move into **Marie Avenue Children's Home**: one of first community-based residential facilities for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities in MN

1973



1980

Opening of our **first home for adults** at Victoria Road in Mendota Heights

1981

1986



Honored with second **Cutting Edge award** for integrating volunteer services with people with disabilities

1990

Dakota Communities purchases **9 Residential Alternatives homes**

1992

1996

**CEO Kathy LeMay** recognized as one of MN's four Outstanding Women

**STARS** self-advocacy group created & begins meeting

2001

2000

**Non-Residential Services** introduced; Today we support 115 adults & children in their own homes and communities

2002



2009

**"Be Connected. Be Well."** wellness initiative starts and includes pet therapy, new menus, health coaching, gardening, and volunteerism

2008

2010

33rd residential home opens at **Elgin Court**

2011

Winner of **Boggs Mitchell Award** for Inclusive Recreation

four decades together

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full circle

# Honoring a life well lived

Lee Mahachek passed away on his 48th birthday on November 21, 2011, after living with Dakota Communities for 38 years.

He was ten in 1973 when he moved to the brand new Marie Avenue home opened by Dakota's Children in West St. Paul. As his mother Bev Mahacheck remembers,

"There were wonderful people at Marie Avenue. We would attend a picnic every summer and had a party for Lee on the lawn when he graduated from school."

Although Lee couldn't talk, he did a great job of communicating what he wanted and how he felt. Angie Mattson, his personal advocate and close friend of 16 years, says, "When Lee wanted you to know how much you meant to him, he'd lean into you, softly caress your cheek, arm or leg, and giggle. Sometimes, if he was in a really great mood, he would sneak in his own little kiss."



Angie Mattson and Lee

When Lee moved into his Dakota Communities' Highview home in Eagan in 2000 with three others from Marie Avenue, his life really blossomed. He had his own room and furniture for the first time, and, more important, he gained the freedom to make his own choices. Lee became more independent in his daily routines and began participating in family events and holiday

celebrations. Angie and Lee started making monthly trips to Northfield to visit his mother (who describes Angie as "the daughter I never had"). With Angie, Lee also enjoyed community activities from sampling food at the State Fair every year to catching a Twins game to visiting his stylist at the local hair salon.

Creating art was another passion of Lee's. He loved working with different textures, often throwing clay on the pottery wheel or making abstract paintings. In 2008 his artwork was featured as part of an exhibit at The University of St. Thomas.

Lee will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him including his family, friends, and staff.



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building dreams



Jenni Zeis with Jeff Chapple, 1993



## An employee honored

Jenni Zeis is the deserving recipient of Dakota Communities' 2012 Employee Dreammaker Award. She grew up in West St. Paul and will celebrate her 27th anniversary with Dakota Communities in August of this year.

Beginning as an advocate in the Gold Unit of Marie Avenue in 1985, Jenni quickly advanced to working as a senior advocate and program coordinator at our Diane Road and East Emerson homes. For her dedication to providing innovative services to people with disabilities, she received the ARRM Cares Award in 2003 and a Direct Support Professional of the Year Award in 2004.

Consistently recognized for her compassion and ability to tackle new challenges while earning the respect of everyone around her, Jenni was promoted to human resources coordinator in 2008. Rod Carlson, vice president of program services, has been impressed "with her ability to create new processes and procedures, including those for our wellness initiatives." Jenni is always willing to lend a hand where it's needed, from painting faces at Family Fun Day at Como Park to participating on the Employee Council for Quality and Senior Leadership Team and volunteering at the Gala each year.

"Jenni has a rare talent for seeing a situation through the eyes of the people she supports," says her former supervisor, Toni O'Brien, director of community life. "I began working

with her over 20 years ago, and each day I work with her is a gift."

When she is not working, Jenni enjoys spending time with friends and family. In the spring of 2011 she completed a course at the Leadership Institute at St. Catherine University. She has one daughter, Taylor, and stays active doing yoga and Pilates. Jenni Zeis, and each of our 2012 Dreammaker honorees, will be featured in a video at the Gala on May 11.

# 2012

**GALA DREAMMAKER AWARD HONOREES**

**Donor:**

Tapemark Corporation & The Klas Family

**Employee:**

Jenni Zeis

**Family:**

The Roberts Family

**Self-Advocate:**

Mike Polski

**Volunteer:**

Julie Jones

# congratulations!

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celebrations



### 40th Anniversary Gala & Online Auction

Our Feeling Good at 40 Anniversary Gala will take place the evening of **Friday, May 11, 2012, at the Nicollet Island Pavilion.**

Join us to celebrate what we've accomplished with the help of our committed founding families, donors, volunteers, and employees – and learn where we are going as we move into the next 40 years.

This exciting evening will include a live auction, heavy hors d'oeuvres, dessert, a wine wall, a musical performance by Metro Retro, and our annual Dreammaker Awards. The Gala is our largest fundraising event of the year and benefits people with disabilities served by Dakota Communities. This is also an opportunity to meet our new president & CEO, Julie Manworren.

Based on the success we had in 2010, we will again host an online auction prior to the event. The online auction will be open for bidding from April 19 to May 3, 2012. Visit our website for details.



**Join in the Celebration!**

**Share a story or memory** about Dakota Communities from the past 40 years. Submit it on our website or via email: [awartick@dakcom.org](mailto:awartick@dakcom.org).

**Register to attend** the Feeling Good at 40 Anniversary Gala on May 11. Online registration opens on February 1, and information is available at [dakotacommunities.org](http://dakotacommunities.org).

**Participate in our online auction** from April 19 to May 3, 2012, and help by spreading the word to family and friends.

**Donate a live or online auction item** to the Gala. If you have an idea for an possible auction item, please contact **Amy Wartick** at **651.688.8808 x11** or [awartick@dakcom.org](mailto:awartick@dakcom.org).

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personal growth



Loomis family photo, 1973. From left to right: Daniel, Larry, Mary Jean, Brenda and Theresa



Brenda Loomis, with artwork made for her by her niece Bernadette and nephew Ronan

## One family's successful path

At first Larry and Mary Jean Loomis were a bit apprehensive about their daughter's pending move to the Dakota's Children home.

They wondered if it would be difficult for Brenda, who has intellectual and developmental disabilities, to feel comfortable in a new setting. How would she adjust to the new sights, sounds, and people at the Marie Avenue home? Those concerns were quickly vanquished as Brenda, age 8, met friends and staff at her new home.

Upon moving from a larger facility to the Marie Avenue home in 1973, Brenda met with a team including a therapist, a program specialist, a nurse, and an advocate. Together, with input from Brenda's parents, they created an

individualized plan with carefully constructed daily guidelines for staff.

The change made a world of difference. Brenda began doing therapeutic exercises at Marie Avenue and thrived with more one-on-one time with staff. At her previous home she rarely left the building, and now she regularly ventured into the community for school programs, church services, and swimming.

Mary Jean and Larry welcomed other changes as well. Before Brenda came to the Dakota's Children home, their visits to see her were restricted to once per month. Says Mary Jean,

"To be able to pop in to see Brenda anytime day or night at Marie was an absolute gift. And the staff members were always welcoming and gracious." The Loomis family also enjoyed gatherings with other families at Marie, and they still remain in close contact with some of them.

Today Brenda lives at Dakota Communities' Upper 55th home, and on weekdays she attends a day program at Lifeworks in Eagan. She enjoys listening to books read aloud and any type of music – as long as it has a strong and steady beat. Brenda's family continues to visit her often, and her many young nieces and nephews keep her room decorated with their

latest artwork. During the holidays she joins them and the rest of her family at her sister Theresa's family home.

"The key to Brenda's happiness has been the loving care and assistance she receives from dedicated staff members. They are her nurturing family, day in and day out," says Mary Jean. "Dakota Communities rescued us in our search for a home that was just right for Brenda, and it has been our haven ever since. My heart is filled with grateful thanks." Brenda's first forty years with Dakota Communities have been wonderful – and we look forward to supporting her goals as we head into the next forty.



680 O'Neill Drive  
Eagan, MN 55121

phone | 651.688.8808

fax | 651.688.8892

website | [www.dakotacommunities.org](http://www.dakotacommunities.org)

facebook | [www.facebook.com/DakotaCommunities](http://www.facebook.com/DakotaCommunities)

twitter | [www.twitter.com/DakotaComm](http://www.twitter.com/DakotaComm)



Dakota Communities  
is a United Way Partner

### **SAVE THE DATE: Upcoming 2012 Events**

#### **Family Member Advocacy Meetings (6–7pm)**

Tuesday, January 31

*Augustana Lutheran Church, West St. Paul*

Thursday, February 2

*Maple Grove Library, Maple Grove*

#### **ARRM Day at the Capitol**

Thursday, March 1

#### **Feeling Good at 40 Anniversary Gala**

Friday, May 11

#### **Family Fun Day**

Thursday, June 14

FSC and VOC logos here

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