

Messenger

Summer 2021



Spirited People Leading Spirited Lives
..... *Work That Matters*



LETTER FROM Cindy Clark, President & CEO

WHAT WE DO *Many people with developmental disabilities find it hard to live independently. At Emmaus, we provide services so they can be in control of their lives and **live like you and me.***

Dear Friends,

Over the past year, many times I have shared how critically important advocacy can be for an organization like Emmaus. I'm thankful for our many supporters who took up our call to action and advocated for the more than 200 clients we are entrusted serve. I'm so pleased to share what our work has accomplished in the previous few months.

Since the beginning of the legislative session, nearly 100 friends and family members contacted their elected officials on behalf of Emmaus, resulting in dozens of both calls and in-person/Zoom meetings. Those efforts, coupled with our partnership with Easterseals Midwest, had a profound impact on our representatives. Here are just a few comments from our legislators about the critical nature of our work:

"This is one of the most important things we're doing in this entire fiscal year 2022 operating budget. We heard more from disability advocates than from advocates for any other issue." – Representative Dirk Deaton, Chairman, Subcommittee on Appropriations – Health, Mental Health, and Social Services.

"This [developmental disability funding] was given more attention and more conversation than any other issue this year." – Representative Peter Meredith, Ranking Minority Member, House Budget Committee.

Recently, Missouri legislators announced an additional \$56.5 million investment into residential services for Missourians with developmental disabilities. These are among the first steps to fix the broken and outdated rate system in our state. The \$56.5 million also draws down additional federal dollars, which more than doubles the overall impact.

While this increased funding is a significant move in the right direction, this investment barely provides enough funding for service providers like Emmaus to increase wages for direct support professionals. These funds were made possible from one-time funding through a federal COVID-relief bill, so our work with legislators must continue.

Our recent accomplishments have put us on the right track. Still, with both the cost of living and minimum wage continuing to rise, additional funding is needed. This funding will help ensure that the people of Emmaus have consistent and reliable support necessary to live healthy, meaningful lives.

Your voice remains crucial in our mission to provide services to people with developmental disabilities. And while much has been accomplished, much more work remains to be done. And with your help, we'll do it together.

God Bless,

Cindy Clark
President & CEO

TECH THAT MATTERS

Technology has always lent a helping hand for people with disabilities. Without it, Pat and many of our other clients could not grow to become more independent or connect with their loved ones.

The technology that Pat uses on a daily basis has given him the chance to do routine tasks on his own. Since Pat uses a wheelchair, being able to do things for himself through limited movement or with the control of his voice is essential for his personal growth.

Pat was in the first group to participate in the Adam Morgan Foundation's Technology 4 Independence Program. The program has helped Pat add the following skills to his daily life:

- **Using the talk-to-text feature on his iPad and Alexa**
- **Utilizing smart plugs/lightbulbs so he can turn things on or off with Alexa**
- **Using these features to communicate with others through email and Facebook**

When Pat's Alexa was installed in his room, he gained the ability to control his lights, television, and radio with the sound of his voice.

"It's awesome!" Pat explains. "I've been fortunate to be able to do things by myself, especially from the press of a button and using my voice. I really like how Alexa can turn my television and lights

on and off in my bedroom."

Pat has also gotten a lift installed in his wheelchair, giving him the ability to access higher tables and items around his home. This is especially useful when Pat needs to reach the Keurig on the kitchen counter to make his favorite coffee.

The wheelchair lift also comes in handy when Pat FaceTimes his sister Kathy. He can angle himself towards his iPad's camera, giving Kathy the chance to see Pat's big and contagious smile.

"Pat's new technology has helped him become so much more independent," says Kathy, Pat's sister.

"It amazes me to watch him raise his wheelchair up and down to make things more accessible. He's been getting back to being his old happy self and learning how to use this new technology has played a big role. I am not worried about him because I know Emmaus is taking great care of him."

At Emmaus, we can't do work that matters without having technology that matters. This new technology, courtesy of the Adam Morgan Foundation and Emmaus donors like you, has helped Pat achieve independence and reach new heights.



REDEFINING WORK THAT MATTERS



Emmaus Direct Support Lead, Natasha, has recently given the phrase “Work That Matters” a whole new meaning at Emmaus.

Natasha is always excited to teach valuable lessons to Brad and all of his housemates she supports. Her passion led to a fantastic idea that would teach Brad and his housemates how to love, share, and give to those who are less fortunate through an unforgettable experience.

With the help of her team, Natasha launched a plan to demonstrate the value of giving back. Two primary goals would drive Natasha’s project; to teach Brad and his housemates the importance of giving back to those less fortunate and to support people experiencing homelessness in the St. Louis community.

They started by purchasing several essential items to put together in what Natasha would call a “Bless Bag.” (The items purchased would come through the generosity of Natasha and her team. The clients they support did not spend any of their own money to buy these items.)

The bags contained essential items such as hand sanitizer, socks, shoes, deodorant, razors, shaving cream, toilet paper, toothbrushes, toothpaste, lotion, and various snacks included in a backpack that would also be given away.

After Natasha and her team put the Bless Bags together, they would then hand them out to people in need across the St. Louis area.

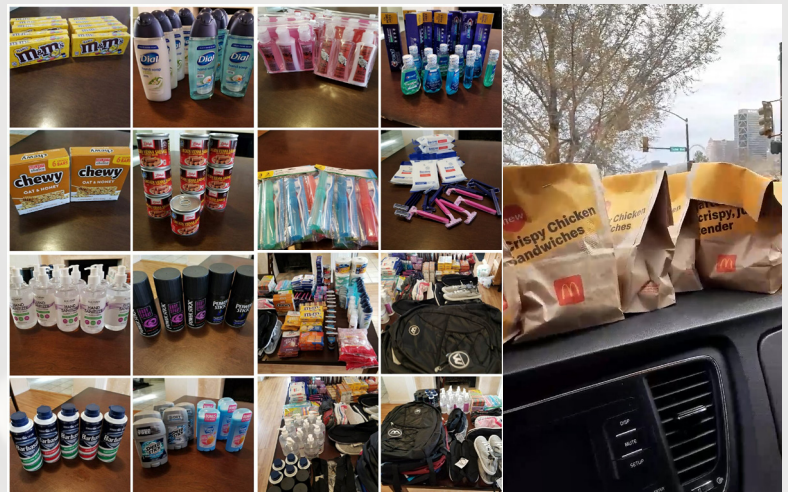
“I love to give to others, and I wanted Brad and the other clients I support to feel that joy,” Natasha explains.

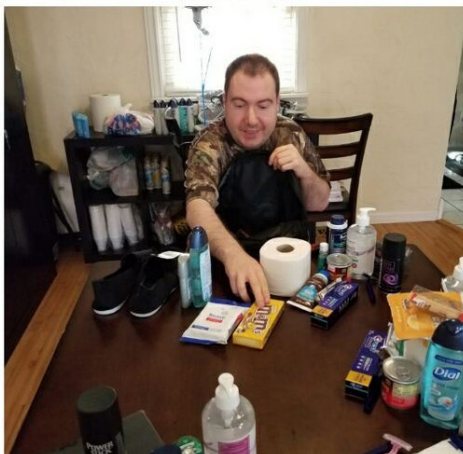
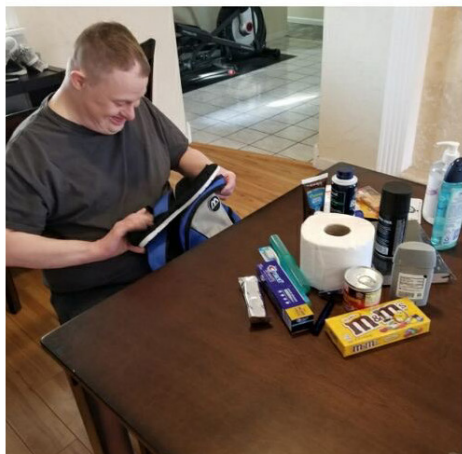
“This project was a great way to show them how to help others through giving and sharing. It was also a great way to give back to our community and to show them how to be thankful for what we have.”

On top of the Bless Bags, Natasha and her generous team also decided to visit McDonald’s on the way to drop the bags off. They purchased sandwiches and meals for more than thirty people to give out on their journey.

“Those who received our Bless Bags were very appreciative and thankful,” says Natasha, who has worked with Brad for years. She knew that this project would be unique to him.

“Brad likes it when I take him out into the community. He makes a hand motion and says ‘drive,’ which means he wants to go. During the deliveries, we saw tears of joy and smiles of happiness from both our clients who gave out the bags and especially from those who received them.”





During her time at Emmaus, Natasha has brought countless valuable lessons into the men's home.

Getting to know Brad has been an absolute pleasure for Natasha because he has a cheerful nature. This contagious personality has made it easier for Natasha to wake up and do work that matters with a smile.

"Brad is a loving individual. He is a joyful person who greets me with a smile and a hug every day. He is always happy and helpful in assisting me or anyone in need. For example, when he willingly helps me do home chores like cooking and cleaning, it shows me that he is appreciative for all that I do for him and his home."

During the pandemic, Natasha and her passionate team came up with several creative home activities for Brad and his housemates to enjoy. Together, they would play games, do

puzzles, have festive house parties, watch movies, do craft activities, and cook delicious meals. Along with each activity often came a lesson that would help Brad grow to become more independent.

Brad's time with Natasha has taught him how to communicate his wants and needs through interactions. Natasha knows that she is making a difference in Brad's life because he has grown a lot since starting to work with him.

"In the past, I have helped Brad do daily chores such as putting his laundry in his hamper and washing his hands after using the restroom," Natasha adds.

"It is amazing to see that he is now doing a lot of these things independently. He learns quickly, and it is showing through his willingness to do things without verbal prompts. For that, I am grateful."

Natasha embodies the Emmaus mission because her support has taught Brad how to live independently, just like you.

Natasha hopes to continue these service projects with Brad and the rest of the home in some capacity every month.

Why? Because giving back to one's community is an enriching and life-changing experience. For Natasha, the value of teaching others what is right is just an added bonus on top of the work she does daily.

This is

**WORK
THAT
MATTERS**
#emmaus

A CALLING FROM GOD

People of faith often refer to their work as a “calling from God,” reflecting God’s invitation and initiative to include them in God’s redemptive work in the world.

Joyce Golian is one of those who understands her daily work as being a divine calling. Joyce has been an Emmaus Direct Support Professional for just over a year, and her “road” to Emmaus involved faith, trust, and assurance in God.

Before Emmaus, Joyce was unemployed, and she found herself looking for a new career. One evening, after once again getting rejected due to being overqualified, Joyce was driving home.

The Emmaus Homes office happened to be located on Joyce’s drive home. Although she knew about Emmaus at the time, she did not fully understand the work of our organization. As she was praying to God, asking him for a sign, she accidentally turned in to the parking lot of Emmaus.

“Or was it an accident?” Joyce exclaims. “I would usually pass the Emmaus Homes office on the road between my sister’s house and my house. As I was praying for guidance, instead of turning on the usual road home, I happened to turn into the parking lot of the Emmaus office.”

After doing some research, I found that they were hiring, and I applied for an open position. One week after my interview, I got a call, and I was accepted to become a Direct Support Professional at Emmaus.”

When Joyce first walked in the door to meet Barbara, Margie, Deborah, and Laura, the ladies she would learn to support, she never expected to make everlasting friendships.

However, an inseparable bond quickly developed, and they soon found themselves forming a sisterhood.



“We respect, listen, and show kindness to each other,” Joyce says. “The ladies are just like everyone else. They have their own opinions (trust me), and they have their own way of doing things. I made four new friends for life.”

The women always look forward to seeing Joyce walk through their door because they know it will never be a dull day for them.

When they see Joyce, they know they are about to have a fun day of cooking, crafting, roasting marshmallows over a bonfire, or going for a walk at the local park.

Not only do the women enjoy having fun with Joyce, but they also learn from her. When Joyce first came to Emmaus, Margie would always walk with a cane. One day, Joyce asked her if she would like to leave her cane behind and something incredible happened:

“She said yes. We walked together arm and arm. She eventually started taking one step by herself, then two steps, and now to this day, she can walk independently all by herself. I am so proud of her accomplishment.”

You can call Joyce’s journey to Emmaus an accidental turn into a parking lot. On the other hand, you can call Joyce’s journey to Emmaus a sign from God. Either way, Joyce has forever changed the lives of others, and she has four lifelong friends to prove it.



ADVOCATING FOR WORK THAT MATTERS



Dorothy puts the phone to her ear, this may be the first time she's called a legislator, but it's a familiar nervous feeling.

She remembers when she and Matt, her son, sat down in the principal's office. That was almost thirty years ago. She chuckles to herself as she pictures that man's poor face by the end of the meeting, after she set him straight, made sure he understood that Matt deserved the same opportunities in the classroom as his peers without disabilities.

Over the years, Dorothy and Matt have been through a lot of conversations with guys like that. What's one more?

Thank you again to everyone who advocated on behalf of people with developmental disabilities this past legislative session. Your voice was powerful! As our legislators affirmed, the message can never be shared too much, so let's keep at it - **together!**



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WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES! **WWW.EMMAUSHOMES.ORG**



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