

SUMMER MESSENGER | 2026



A WORD FROM EMMAUS' NEW CEO, RYAN GRUHALA



Ryan Gruhala
President and Chief Executive Officer of Emmaus Homes

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As valued donors and champions of our mission, your generosity and belief in Emmaus Homes make our work possible every day.

It is a true honor to introduce myself as the new *President and Chief Executive Officer of Emmaus Homes*. As I complete my first month with the organization, I want to express my sincere gratitude for the warm welcome I have already received. While I am still getting to know many of the incredible individuals who make Emmaus so special, I am energized by the opportunity to begin building meaningful relationships across our organization and throughout the community.

I am often asked what drew me to Emmaus. The answer is simple: purpose, people, and mission.

Throughout my career in healthcare, senior living, hospice, and post-acute care, I have found the greatest fulfillment serving organizations rooted in dignity, compassion, and improving quality of life. Emmaus immediately stood out because of its unwavering commitment

to empowering individuals with developmental disabilities to live meaningful, independent, and connected lives.

Beyond that powerful mission, it is the people and culture that truly set Emmaus apart.

Even in these early days, I have been inspired by the passion, dedication, and sense of purpose demonstrated by our team members, the individuals we serve, families, and leadership. It is clear that Emmaus is a place where people are valued and are treated with dignity, opportunity, belonging, and respect. That belief resonates deeply with me.

I also recognize and deeply appreciate the solid foundation built over many years. Emmaus has a proud history of advocacy, innovation, and compassionate service—continually evolving to meet the needs of those we serve while remaining grounded in its core values. I am grateful to step into a role supported by such committed employees, passionate advocates, and an engaged community.

In the months ahead, my priority is to listen, learn, and build strong relationships with all of you.

I believe the most effective organizations are built on trust, collaboration, transparency, and a shared sense of purpose. I look forward to spending time across our programs and communities, hearing directly from those we serve, supporting our dedicated staff, and learning from the experiences and perspectives that make Emmaus stronger.

I am also incredibly optimistic about the future.

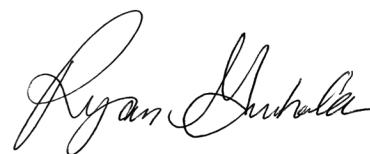
While we, like many mission-driven organizations, navigate workforce challenges, funding pressures, and an increasingly complex environment, I see tremendous opportunity ahead. Emmaus is well-positioned—with a strong reputation, a meaningful mission, and an extraordinary team—to continue expanding its impact.

Together, we can strengthen our workforce, deepen community partnerships, elevate advocacy efforts, and continue finding innovative ways to empower individuals to thrive in the communities they call home.

I am committed to ensuring that Emmaus remains a place where every person feels valued, supported, respected, and heard.

Most importantly, I am committed to ensuring that Emmaus remains a place where every person feels valued, supported, respected, and heard—whether they are receiving services, working within the organization, volunteering, advocating, or supporting our mission through philanthropy.

Thank you for welcoming me into the Emmaus family. I am honored to serve alongside you and excited for what we will accomplish together.



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MORE THAN A TEAM

This summer, the *Missouri Magic Special Olympics* football team will travel to Minneapolis, Minnesota, to compete at the 2026 *Special Olympics USA Games*, taking place June 20–26.

Ryan and his teammates earned their place on the national stage through commitment, perseverance, and a community that deeply believes in them.

That support is felt every week at *Elite Football Academy*, where *Performance Director* Marcus Nozick and his coaching staff train *MO Magic* athletes alongside players from across the region.

Marcus says what stands out most is not just the athletes' talent, but their attitude. "They have the best attitude, the hardest working players, and they are hungry for it," he shared. "There is nothing better than a group of guys like that."

"If you have the ability to help, you help. The feeling you get from it is better than anything in the world."



Elite Football Academy Performance Director, Marcus Nozick with Ryan.

What started as quarterback training quickly became something much bigger. Today, the team trains regularly in speed, agility, strength, mobility, and football fundamentals. According to Marcus, the athletes never stop pushing themselves to improve.

"Their ability to remember and apply it is second to none," he said. "I could work with these guys eight hours a day, seven days a week, and be the happiest man on the planet."

The support surrounding *MO Magic* reaches beyond the field. Tyson Ross, a *Direct Support Professional (DSP)* at Emmaus, began volunteering while supporting Ryan and the team throughout their journey. When one of the coaches could no longer continue, Tyson stepped into an assistant coaching role, bringing the same encouragement, dedication, and commitment he shows every day in his work at Emmaus. Community partnerships have also helped make the team's success possible. Each year,

Jersey Mike's hosts its national *Month of Giving* campaign benefiting *Special Olympics*, culminating in the "Day of Giving" on the last Wednesday of March. On that day, participating locations donate 100% of the day's sales to *Special Olympics* and the *Special Olympics USA Games*. Local stores also sponsor individual athletes, including Ryan, through the Creve Coeur location.

Marcus believes that kind of support changes lives. "If you have the ability to help, you help," he said. "The feeling you get from it is better than anything in the world."

We will be following Ryan and Tyson throughout their journey to the *USA Games*. Stay up to date through Emmaus social media and newsletters as *MO Magic* prepares to take the national stage.



Ryan and Tyson.

MAKING FRIENDS AT THE FARM

Sean says hello to one of his friends at the farm.



For Sean, visits to a local family farm have become much more than a recreational outing.

The farm is owned by the family of Sean's *Direct Support Professional*, Cole Pettey. Cole's father also uses a wheelchair and works regularly with the horses, helping ensure they are comfortable and responsive around wheelchair users. As a result, the property is fully wheelchair accessible, making it an ideal environment for Sean to interact safely with the animals.

During visits, Sean enjoys brushing horses, leading the miniature pony, Blaze, around the property, and spending time with the farm dogs. One horse in particular, Cowboy, has also taken to Sean. Cole recalled a memorable moment when Cowboy licked Sean's face, causing Sean to belly laugh and smile from ear to ear.

"Horses are very intuitive animals," Cole explained. "You can see it in their calm and gentle interactions with Sean." The result is an experience that is both comforting and engaging.

Beyond the animals themselves, the farm offers opportunities for connection with family members, workers, and neighbors. These interactions have helped expand Sean's social circle while strengthening a shared bond built around a mutual love of horses.



SPRING RECAP

Spring has been a busy and exciting season at Emmaus!

In April, supporters, sponsors, volunteers, and golfers came together for another successful *Emmaus Classic Golf Tournament*, raising critical funds to support the individuals we serve. Then in May, Emmaus clients, families, staff, and community members enjoyed a fun-filled evening at the *O'Fallon Hoots* baseball game. From fundraising events to community outings, these moments reflect what Emmaus is all about: creating opportunities for connection, inclusion, and belonging.



Emmaus Classic

Thank you to all those who contributed to the success of the 2026 *Emmaus Classic* presented by *Lockton*. Our supporters' generosity enabled us to raise more than \$65,000! From volunteers to sponsors and golfers, the

community gathered and created a memorable experience full of friendly competition, connection, and purpose. We hope to see you all again next year!



Julie Cubbage, Tanna Clark, Cindy Clark, Erika Rodriguez, Kelsey Barnhart, and Stacy Spradling at the Emmaus Classic.



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Emmaus Night at the O'Fallon Hoots

On May 26, Emmaus, clients, team members and families, gathered at *CarShield Field* for a memorable evening with the *O'Fallon Hoots*. The night began with several Emmaus clients proudly taking the field to throw out ceremonial first pitches, followed by a pre-game parade around the warning track where participants were recognized by the crowd.

Throughout the evening, smiles were everywhere as friends and families cheered on the Hoots, enjoyed ballpark favorites like hot dogs and snacks, and spent time together celebrating community and inclusion. Events like these provide meaningful

opportunities for the individuals we support to connect with others, build confidence, and simply enjoy a great night out.

Thank you to the *O'Fallon Hoots* for partnering with Emmaus and helping create an evening filled with fun, friendship, and lasting memories.

From fundraising successes to community celebrations, this spring has been filled with moments that highlight the heart of Emmaus. We are grateful to everyone who supports our mission and helps create opportunities for the individuals we serve to live fuller, more connected lives every day.

COMING SOON!

We are excited to share that Emmaus is launching a brand-new signature event in Spring 2027!

While we are not quite ready to reveal all the details, we can say that this event will bring together community members, supporters, and friends of Emmaus for a meaningful and memorable experience in support of the individuals we serve.

As we begin planning, we are looking for enthusiastic individuals who would like to help shape this exciting new tradition. Whether you're interested in joining the planning committee, helping secure sponsors, assisting with event logistics, sharing ideas, or volunteering your time, we would love to have you involved.

Great events don't happen without great people, and we're looking forward to building something special together. If you're interested in learning more or getting involved, please contact the Development Department. We cannot wait to share more details in the months ahead!





WAVES OF INSPIRATION

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Waves of Inspiration

Emmaus invites you to join us for our annual Waves of Inspiration event this fall. Tickets go on sale soon. Visit emmaushomes.org/events for updates and information.



Get involved!

