Village Begins to Take Shape

Warmer than normal temperatures prevailed during the month of November, as construction crews began shaping the ground and digging trenches to install storm water drains for the new St. Louis Guanella Village. The first phase of the project will create the infrastructure for the Village by building roads, water and sewer lines to accommodate our new state of the art community for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Michigan. As the infrastructure is being laid, workers have also begun pouring the foundations of the new Children’s Homes that will become the first homes in the Village. During the last week of November, temperatures were still hovering in the 50-60 degree range during the day, allowing our contractors to work at a faster pace. Because of the warmer weather, our residents were able to enjoy watching the giant earth moving machines working outside their windows during the last days of the fall construction season.

Administrator’s Message

Happy New Year! We believe that 2017 will be another historical year for St. Louis Center, as the St. Louis Guanella Village continues to steam ahead and the landscape of our property changes by the day. This could not happen without the Divine Providence provided by our Lord, and the generous donors who continue to support our Legacy Campaign efforts. YOU my friends are making a difference in the lives of our children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and we thank you for your efforts. A huge compliment was paid to us recently by a representative of Sylvan Twp., who said, “St. Louis Center is highly valued in Sylvan Twp. and the Village project is a new concept…Best wishes for the New Year.” This tells us that the local community is excited about our project and our future, and we appear to have their full support.

The infrastructure of the Village is now 50% complete, and once it’s done a new model of service delivery will go into effect. Our enrollment is picking up, and we are now providing services for 54 residents. Finally, please make note of two other important issues in this newsletter. We are still seeking Legacy Campaign donations for our $550,000 matching grant, and we will be hosting a Special Needs Seminar here on February 16th called “Securing the Future,” to focus on financial investments, guardianships, and trusts to assist families with special needs into the future.

In Ewto Ablawi
St. Louis Center is always looking for new friends, and this year’s newest group came from Auburn Hills, MI to provide dinner and Halloween pumpkins for our residents on Thursday, October 20th. Known as Service First Logistics, the team of Angelo Giannosa, Melissa Kennedy, Patrick Hennesy and Erin Long used the SLC kitchen to prepare dinner and get our residents into the holiday spirit. Mr. Giannosa is a member of the Italian American Cultural Society north of Detroit. He and his staff enjoyed their experience and hope to be back again soon.
Fatima Knights Serve Pancakes and Smiles

Fall Saturdays are reserved for the Saturday Morning Challenger’s Bowling League, and our residents love a good breakfast before they leave for Ann Arbor. So on Saturday, October 22nd the Bishop Zaleski Council from Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Michigan Center prepared a pancake breakfast with sausage and then provided Halloween pumpkins for our residents to paint. According to Deputy Grand Knight Gerald Brown, “We love coming here and doing things for the residents. It brings home the meaning of service for us.”

Halloween Fun

The second annual “Trunk or Treat” event was held on Thursday, October 27th to provide a safe, fun environment for trick or treating. The residents dressed-up as ghosts, goblins, and pumpkins to visit the many friends, staff and family members who opened their trunks and their hearts by bringing bags of candy and treats to distribute in celebration of Halloween. In addition to “trick or treating,” the Direct Care staff set-up a “haunted house” in the main building for another “scary” way for the residents to enjoy Halloween.

Our Family Caring for Yours

St. Joseph Mercy Chelsea Hospital has supported St. Louis Center for the past 29 years by hosting a Fall Dinner Auction to help raise funds to support our residents, and during that time the Chelsea community has turned out in full force to show their love. This year’s event was held on Saturday, November 12, 2016, and the theme was, “Our Family Caring for Yours.”

According to Auction Chair Kathi Neuman, “Once again, we thank our great community of St. Louis Center supporters who continue to support our efforts with all of their hearts.” Kenneth Unterbrink, State Deputy of the Michigan Knights of Columbus, presented a $25,000 check to Fr. Enzo Addari, SdC. to assist with the purchase of a new generator.

Receive Newsletter by Email  If you would like to help us reduce our postage costs, send your email address to: kellyf@stlouiscenter.org and we will send the newsletter electronically.
Santa’s Christmas Debut

Thanks to the Sicilian Federation of Michigan and the Federazione Abruzzese del Michigan, the month began with a day of giving on Saturday, December 1st, as St. Louis Center residents were treated to an authentic Italian dinner, Christmas carols, and plenty of gifts for everyone. Santa Claus arrived for his first visit of the year, and many members of the Chirco family from the Italian-American Community in Wyandotte, especially the children, were taught the meaning of Christmas through their gifts of sharing with others who were less fortunate. After the residents enjoyed their meal, Santa came for a visit, and all of the residents who were good boys and girls during the past year received a Christmas gift to begin their festive holiday season.

To continue the joy of the Christmas season, about two dozen soldiers from the Air Force, Navy and Marines arrived on Wednesday, December 14th with toys for the residents of St. Louis Center through the Marines Toys for Tots Program. They began by singing anthems and Christmas Carols. Each resident had the opportunity to select a toy and greet Santa. Cookies and punch were served before the soldiers bid farewell.

Tocco Christmas Fun

Santa Claus made a return engagement on Sunday, December 18, 2016, as Jack Tocco, Jr., along with his friends and family members, continued his father’s legacy of bringing gifts to the residents of St. Louis Center to make sure that every resident received a great Christmas present. This Tocco Family tradition began 27 years ago, and Jack Jr. made a promise to his father before he died in 2014 that he would carry on this tradition after his father was gone. Famous jazz trumpeter Johnny Trudell and Friends returned to play live Christmas carols as Santa Claus made his grand entrance, and then every resident was called one-by-one to visit Santa to receive his/her gift. Afterward, Mr. Tocco presented Fr. Enzo Addari an envelope full of donations for St. Louis Center, and a family photo was taken.
Many families with special needs children or adults have a difficult time navigating the future for their loved ones, and advanced planning can ensure a positive quality of life for years to come. Our advisors can help special needs families by explaining the ins and outs of saving and investing to ensure long term success. Please join us for an opportunity to ask our distinguished panel about financial investments, special needs trusts, and guardianship issues to obtain the answers you seek while planning for the future.
Help us meet a $550K Challenge Match!

Two donors have generously offered to match up to $550K in Legacy Campaign gifts of cash or liquid assets. The purpose of this Challenge Match is to raise the remaining funds needed to construct the Village infrastructure, 4 homes for children with I/DD, 5 homes for adults with I/DD, and to plan for the construction of a new Fitness Center.

The Clock is Ticking!

The Challenge Match began on September 1, 2016, and will expire on June 30, 2017. All qualifying gifts up to $25K will be matched dollar for dollar as long as the gift is received by June 30, 2017. Gifts greater than $25K will receive a maximum match of $25K as long as the gift is received by June 30, 2017. Pledges up to $25K paid by June 30, 2017 will be matched. Will you please help us meet this match? Please contact Peggy Cole, Development Director, at peggyc@stlouiscenter.org or by phone at (734) 475-8430 if you have questions or would like to request a tour.

Ugly Sweater Dance Freeze

Fitness Specialist Caitlin Blomquist is always trying to make fitness fun and include themes from the season so what better way to sneak in some exercise than by dancing? This Christmas she contacted Jeremy Turner of Ugly Christmas Sweater Store Dallas to get a stash of Ugly Sweaters for the residents. Jeremy generously sent over 50 sweaters for everyone to wear on December 20th to the Dance Freeze party. A few students from St. Mary Manchester Youth Group were on hand to help make sure that everyone kept moving and everyone enjoyed cookies at the end of the party.

'David' watches as NiAsia Perdue, Direct Care Supervisor, and 'Mike' rock their ugly sweaters.

'Jerome' danced with one of the Manchester Youth Group members.

'Julian' joined in the dancing fun.

'Alice,' one of the community participants, enjoyed dancing with her mom.
It may be another form of discrimination to suppose that intellectually disabled adults can’t thrive in a community of their own making.

There’s no doubt that in the past, state schools and asylums were frequently rife with abuse and neglect. Clips of Geraldo Rivera’s 1972 expose on the Willowbrook State School can still be found online, as can truly horrifying facts about that facility: 6,000 intellectually disabled children crammed into a building designed for 4,000; staff ratios as low as one employee for every 40 residents; kids subjected to medical experimentation on the treatment of hepatitis A, which ran rampant through the wards because of poor sanitation.

That documentary, and the class-action lawsuit that followed, ushered in an era of policy changes. The Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act of 1980 led to more thorough investigations of abuses, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 helped protect the rights of the mentally and physically disabled. In the 1999 case Olmstead v. L.C., the Supreme Court ruled that forcible institutionalization violated the ADA.

The Olmstead case did something more, too: It required states to support disabled individuals so they could stay in mainstream society. It took several years, but in 2007, Medicaid began offering Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waivers, an alternative funding stream for those who “waived” institutional care. These waivers now help pay for the housing and care of nearly 1,000,000 people with disabilities.

In January 2014, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a “final rule” describing how the waiver program would operate under the Affordable Care Act. That document didn’t disqualify any particular housing models. In fact, it noted, “It is not the intent of this rule to prohibit congregate settings from being considered home and community-based settings.”

But two months later, CMS issued a “guidance bulletin” to help states decide which settings should be deemed too institutional to participate. This document specifically cited farmsteads, gated communities, residential schools, and clustered residences as too isolating. The bulletin allowed for some of these settings to be approved through a process called “heightened scrutiny.” However, several states seem inclined to draft policies that are more restrictive than these federal guidelines.

Massachusetts, for example, has opted to categorically exclude any settings that house more than five people; New Jersey crafted a density rule mandating that no more than 25 percent of the units in any development or apartment building be occupied by waiver recipients. So far, these are just proposals: The states are required to consider public feedback, and at the hearings I attended in New Jersey, so many parents and providers opposed the plan—which, like Massachusetts’, also eliminated large settings—that Governor Christie has already sent it back to the state’s Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) for revision. It’s unclear what the final versions of these policies will look like.
Upcoming Events

Italian American Dinner Dance
January 29, 2017

Securing the Future Seminar
February 16, 2017

Washtenaw County Polar Plunge
Featuring Fitness Specialist Caitlin Blomquist
February 24, 2017

Pasta Dinner with the Priests
February 28, 2017

Randazzo Family Fundraiser
April 27, 2017

For more information, please visit our website:
www.stlouiscenter.org

In Memory of our Friends

Sr. Anna Maria Bilotta, DSMP
Sally Bullinger
Therese Cardoze
Lucio D’Aloisio

Thomas DeFord
Edward Haller
Lynn Houle
Florence Marshall
N.H. Miles

Pietro Mucci
Richard Seyfried
Joseph Vitai
Dr. Stanley Zajdel

Thomas DeFord was an Ann Arbor area icon and was a friend to everyone he met. He passed into the loving arms of God on October 30, 2016, and left behind his wife Susan of 53 years, along with 6 children, 16 grandchildren and many nieces and nephews. His late father, Nelson, had been a member of the St. Louis Center Community Advisory Council during the 80’s and 90’s, and Tom was happy to help SLC when called upon. Tom was a devout Catholic and a longtime member of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Ann Arbor. He was affable, outgoing, and giving during his life. He was also a member of the Legacy Campaign Committee for St. Louis Center with his wife. Tom had been successful in retail sales throughout his adult life and later became a successful realtor at Real Estate One for 19 years. Tom's funeral mass was held on Monday, November 7, 2016 at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Ann Arbor. Eternal rest, grant unto him O Lord!