

Our Purpose:

Every day, we renew our commitment to providing choices and opportunities for persons with disabilities and their families through a culture of innovation and caring, to enrich their lives and maximize their independence.

Our Passion:

Our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and funding partners are passionate about helping those we serve create meaningful days, productive years, and, ultimately, more fulfilling lives.

Our People:

New Star serves over 650 children and adults each day whose lives are impacted by mild to profound disabilities. Our service area reaches those living in and around the Chicagoland area and Northwest Indiana.

*CARF Accredited
Illinois DHS Licensed
Indiana FSSA Licensed*

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO



*President/CEO
Dan Strick*

This spring's newsletter captures the many ways New Star has been busy increasing community integration for the people we support. These initiatives have been driven by two of our core values: choice and collaboration. At its core, community integration simply means being involved in the community as much or as little as each of us chooses. New Star collaborates with community partners to make that happen for our consumers, so they can choose their level of community integration when working, living, learning, and playing.

We recognize that no one organization or person is good at everything, and that partnerships with employers, funders, legislators and the community are essential to success. Melody Mart in Homewood, for example, has partnered with our employment program to help James find satisfying community employment. What began as a trial position a few hours a week, has now grown into a five-day-a-week job that has enabled James to become a thriving member of his community. Our employment partnerships have increased significantly in Northwest Indiana as well, where we are partnering with the Indiana Bureau of Rehabilitation Services to expanding our services through a new "Establishment Project."

Other partners, like Comcast NBCUniversal, the Arc of the United States, Great Lakes Charitable Foundation, and the Suburban Service League, are lending their expertise and philanthropy to keep our consumers connected. Through their generosity, we are refurbishing our computer labs, implementing technology coaching classes, and integrating the use of iPads, iPods and technology support for our consumers.

Finally, our self advocates continue to be trendsetters among their peers when it comes to community integration. Two consumers in Indiana, for example, have been selected by the Arc to participate in its speaker's bureau, where they will travel the state to talk with their peers about choices and advocating for oneself. I am always impressed to see our advocates in action, and enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with them in Springfield as they rallied and meet with legislators.

Thank you to every one of our partners as we continue to help our consumers realize their full potential as they become more fully engaged within their communities.

SHOOTING STAR SPOTLIGHT: MEET JAMES



Meet our newest “Shooting Star,” James. James came to New Star two years ago with what he describes as a desire to “make new friends and earn more money!” James has done both by working with our community living staff and employment specialists.

James’ story at New Star has been one of achieving greater independence in his life and his work. Shortly after his arrival, he moved into one of our residential homes in Crete, where he quickly became friends with his new house mates and neighbors. James loves his quiet neighborhood, and especially enjoys cooking for his house mates on Sundays. “I’m the only one who likes to cook at my house,” he proudly exclaimed. “I make really good sausage, eggs and pancakes!”

James is very goal driven, which became clear when he started working within our Chicago Heights workshop doing assembly line tasks such as heat sealing and quality assurance. Looking to earn more money, James expressed interest in becoming part of New Star’s janitorial team. This work experience helped him continue his path toward greater independence by enabling him to secure a job within the community. For the past year, James has been working successfully doing janitorial work at Melody Mart in Homewood. He loves his work, and they love him – so much so that they have recently increased his hours from two days a week to five!

James’ case manager, Sheree Phillpotts, describes James as “simply a pleasure to work with!” She added, “He is extremely hard working and takes great pride in what he does.” All of us here at New Star take great pride in James as well. He is a shining example of the determination to succeed and drive for independence within the amazing people we serve.

PARENTS AND GUARDIANS EMPOWERED THROUGH SUPPORT (PAGES)

Are we doing everything we can? Who can we talk to? Does anyone understand what we’re going through? What’s working for other families? You have questions. Our new Family Support Group may have the answers!

Caring for a loved one with intellectual and developmental disabilities can be isolating and, at times, feel overwhelming. This past fall, a group of New Star family members came together to brainstorm about ways to support each other more effectively as they travel down this challenging road.

The result? A new family support group called Parents and Guardians Empowered through Support (PAGES)!



PAGES offers New Star parents, guardians, and family members an opportunity to connect, vent, celebrate, share resources, and learn together. “We want to help families realize that they aren’t alone in this journey,” says Kelly Christie, a New Star parent and founding member of the group. PAGES meets every other month at 6:00pm at New Star’s Chicago Heights location. Our next meeting is being held on August 1. No RSVPs are necessary, but if you’re interested in learning more about it before attending, feel free to contact Kelly at kchristie67@aol.com.

New Star was founded upon the strength and determination of family members who knew that they could do so much more together than they could accomplish on their own. PAGES extends that tradition of parent-led collaboration to improve not only the lives of those living with disabilities, but also those who love and care for them.

GETTING “ESTABLISHED” IN INDIANA

More than just the flowers are blooming in Indiana! So too is New Star’s Indiana employment program through our new “Establishment Project.” It’s a new project that has allowed us to increase our services and capacity to provide support to individuals.

The Establishment Project is supported through the Indiana Bureau of Rehabilitation Services to provide better access to technical assistance and supports for Indiana residents with disabilities. As a recipient of this support, New Star has been able to increase our staffing capacity in Indiana, expand our foundational skills training, and improve our services and outcomes, especially in supported employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Growth within our Indiana employment services has also been driven by our staff becoming certified this year as Benefit Information Network (BIN) liaisons. Agencies providing BIN Services help individuals with disabilities learn how working will affect the financial, medical, and housing benefits they currently receive. New Star is one of only a handful of organizations in Northwest Indiana that provide BIN services, which has resulted in the rapid growth of our program. Our employment referrals have more than doubled in the past year. That’s great news when it comes to New Star getting more “established” in Indiana; but it’s even better news knowing that we’re helping more consumers to establish themselves within the community.

For more information regarding New Star’s Employment Services for either Illinois or Indiana residents, please contact Kara Pierce at (219) 440-7430.

INTEGRATED NOT SEPARATED



Volunteering for the Crete Lions Club Tootsie Roll Drive was a great way for New Star consumers to feel good about giving back while learning valuable job skills.

People with disabilities should have the same opportunities as people without disabilities, and should not be separated into groups just because they may have similar needs. That’s the underlying principle driving a nation-wide effort to transition individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities out of sheltered workshops and day programs and into community-based jobs and activities.

While New Star has always looked for opportunities to involve our consumers in the community, we recently stepped up those efforts by creating a Community Integration Committee (CIC). Our CIC brings together staff members from all program areas to help New Star’s programs and practices become more consumer-centered and community-based. Members meet monthly to define what community integration could

look like for New Star consumers regarding their employment, education, civic responsibility, personal relationships, recreation and more. They are also tasked with identifying barriers to achieving greater community integration, and developing strategies to overcome them.

The result? New Star consumers are out every day, finding new ways to live, play and work in their community. So don’t be surprised if you bump into them touring your workplace, picnicking at your local park, volunteering with your service club, or sitting with their special someone at your favorite restaurant.

LEARN

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

New Star has been busy bridging the digital divide this year for our consumers!

With a generous \$10,000 grant from Comcast NBCUniversal, in collaboration with the Arc of the United States, we launched a pilot project to create Digital Learning

Labs this past fall. These Labs expanded our computer center to include mobile technology such as iPads and iPods. Consumers who were selected to participate enjoyed weekly classes where they learned to use apps like iMovie, Master Task, and iModeling to assist with job training and mastering essential life skills.



New Star consumers enjoyed learning new job training and educational apps on their iPads during Digital Learning Labs.

Also partnering with New Star in this initiative are the Suburban Service League and The Great Lakes Charitable Foundation. Through their collective philanthropic efforts, New Star will have the opportunity this summer to update the equipment within our Crete and Chicago Heights computer labs, and expand our program offerings to include Technology Coaching Classes. These small group classes will be open to consumers and family members, and offer a hands-on approach to teaching new skills that support community integration and employment. For example, participants will learn how to use technology to attend online meetings and webinars, create social media accounts, record video resumes, and search for job opportunities.

Don't miss our exciting Open House Event on Tuesday, June 20th from 10am to 11am in our Chicago Heights location!

Activity stations will be set up for consumers, parents, guardians, and family members to get a sneak peek of what the Technology Coaching Classes have to offer, test out different apps, and register for classes. AND...you just might win one of several laptops that will be raffled off by Comcast NBCUniversal (must be present to win)! Contact Erica Gibson at (708) 279-1011 or egibson@newstarservices.org to RSVP.

DON'T "DIS" MY ABILITY

On this year's International Day of Acceptance, New Star consumers had fun working with staff to identify their strengths and unique gifts to creatively "reframe" the common misperception that those living with disabilities are defined by them!



BREAKING GROUND AND BETTERING LIVES

Construction is now under way at 1038 Leavitt Ave in Flossmoor, where New Star is building a six-unit apartment building. These apartments will become home-sweet-home for six individuals with developmental disabilities who want to live independently in the community.



The properties that once stood there, a private home and the former Martsci Montessori School building, have been demolished and excavation is complete. We look forward to the foundation work beginning in the coming days.

This exciting opportunity for individuals with disabilities has been a collaborative effort between New Star, the Village of Flossmoor, The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) and the Housing Authority of Cook County (HACC). IHDA is funding construction and HACC is funding operations.

“Our construction team and architect are making great progress on the apartment building. The Village of Flossmoor is always helpful as we move forward,” says Dan Strick, President/CEO. He added, “This is a wonderful opportunity to further our mission of helping people with disabilities become fully engaged in their community.” Tenants are likely to be people between 22 and 35 who are high school graduates and have jobs. Tenants must meet income eligibility through HACC, and be Medicaid Waiver funded through the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DHS/DD).

Once completed, the apartments will be the first of their kind in Illinois. The state currently offers no permanent supportive apartments designed specifically for intellectually and developmentally disabled individuals. In fact, DHS will be looking closely at our project to see if it can serve as a model for future housing opportunities for developmentally disabilities individuals.



Construction should be complete sometime in November, and we anticipate having applications available later this summer. For more information regarding these apartments and other community living opportunities, please contact our Intake Coordinator, Graig Gillis at ggillis@newstarservices.org or (708) 841-1071 ext. 222.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

New Star's Self-Advocates have been busy this spring letting us know that names really do matter! Known for several years as ROHSA (Ray of Hope Self Advocates), the group recently voted to change their name to PossABILITY Partners. The Advocates still see themselves as serving as a ray of hope for those with disabilities. However, they wanted a name that more accurately reflected their active partnership with each other and the community, raising awareness around what's possible for people with disabilities.



Our PossABILITY Partners are proud to show off their New Star T-shirts!

PossABILITY Partners also drove another name-changing initiative this year related to New Star's use of the word "client." Like many organizations in our field, New Star has traditionally called those we serve our "clients." Based upon the recommendation from PossABILITY Partners, however, we have now changed the term "client" to "consumer." The difference is subtle but important. The word "client" suggests a one-way relationship – an individual who receives services, but has little say in the process. The word "consumer," however, reminds us that the individuals we serve are our customers. As such, they are active participants in the service delivery process, providing valuable feedback regarding the quality and quantity of programs New Star provides.

STORMING SPRINGFIELD

Holding signs such as "I have the right to be in my own home" and "I have the right to earn my own money," New Star's PossABILITY Partners joined other self-advocates from across the state for the annual Going Home Rally in Springfield this past May. The Going Home Rally is an advocacy campaign dedicated to helping people with disabilities achieve full inclusion and equality. It's an opportunity to speak up and speak out that the PossABILITY Partners look forward to every year.



April and other New Star self-advocates capture the attention of legislators during the Going Home Rally.

Following the Rally, our self-advocates visited with their elected officials to express their support of the more than 1,600 individuals across Illinois who live in state institutions. As one of our self-advocates, Veronica, described, "We speak up for others who might not be able to speak for themselves." Veronica and other New Star consumers' also had the opportunity to participate in a short film about the institutionalization of individuals with disabilities that was produced by The Going Home Coalition. The documentary, which can be viewed at www.goinghomeillinois.org,

puts a face on this complicated issue and gives voice to those, like Veronica, who are thankful they no longer live in state facilities.

We are so proud of our self-advocates' passion and determination when fighting for the rights of their peers. They are an inspiring example of the PossABILITY we all have to make a difference when we partner together to change the world.

NEW STAR RECREATION SERVICES

New Star Recreation Services (NSRS) has had an amazing number of adventures in the community recently. We are currently preparing to expand our services to welcome military veterans with disabilities through our *Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds* cooperative with Allen Force. This program pairs veterans, and their companions, with fitness opportunities supported by a fitness trainer in their home community.



NSRS is preparing to host day camps for children ages 3 to 21 at three different locations this summer, and adventures every Friday, to “see the sights and sounds of the city.” As always, there is a full agenda of daily activities and special events to attend including dances, nature hikes, camping activities, bowling, swimming and all the fun under the sun!

NSRS is also hosting Lekotek programs for families to learn from our play therapists how to play and interact with their children with disabilities. The toy lending library is available for those who choose to sign up for this family-engaging program.

Finally, we wish to remember our dear friend and volunteer Schoena Gifford, who passed away in January. She was a passionate and powerful advocate for our program and her granddaughter. She is missed and remembered fondly.

PROUD TO BE PURPLE

Thanks to everyone who supported the Special Olympics Raffle! Our athletes were “proud to be purple” in their new uniforms at the games! A special thanks to our Athlete Sponsors, Rob and Sue Benetti, Kelly Christie, and Cassi Wade - in memory of Donna Wade - whose sponsorships made sure that our athletes had everything they needed to go for the gold!

We are SUPER PROUD of all our athletes and coaches! They worked very hard to make this a great day for all involved in Special Olympics!



Go Team New Star!

"DANCING WITH NEW STAR" ANNUAL GALA

It was a perfect spring evening on April 1st, when nearly 300 guests came out to enjoy our "Dancing with New Star" Gala at Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park.

The evening featured over 100 silent and auction items and, for the first time, an electronic bidding system. It was a big change, after more than a decade of using paper bidding sheets, but plenty of volunteers from Prairie State College were on hand to help guests master the process. Attendees enjoyed the convenience of bidding directly from their seats and using their cell phone to check out.



Alec Moseley, a 21 year old amazing young man who was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome as a boy. With the help of his family and dance coach, Jessica Sartori, he has risen above life's challenges and discovered that his extraordinary talent for dancing was just one example of the "ability" within his disability. Alec and his dance coach performed four routines for us, and received an overwhelming standing ovation.

Our Diamond Raffle was a hit and featured 100 glasses of champagne, each with a gift bag attached to the stem. One gift bag featured a 1/2 carat round brilliant diamond while the other 99 featured cubic zirconia. Congratulations to Marchelle Goens, who was our lucky winner, and many thanks to James and Sons Jewelry for providing the gorgeous gems!

Perhaps the highlight most frequently expressed by our guests was the ballroom dance performance by

While guests raised the roof with our DJ, they helped us raise over \$73,000 in support of the more than 650 children and adults with disabilities whom we serve! We truly appreciate everyone who attended, solicited program book ads, sponsored, gave donations, and brought in auction items, as well as all those who volunteered countless hours to make this year's Annual Gala a huge success. Thank you!



The Semprevivo Family takes time out for a moment to show us their smiling faces!



Alec Moseley and his Dance Coach, Jessica, wowed our guests with their amazing talents!

WINE TASTING

Sniff...sip...drink...savor and REPEAT! That's exactly what was happening on Thursday, February 2nd at Old Plank Trail Community Bank in Crete when we held our annual Wine Tasting!

Sponsored by Old Plank Trail Community Bank, the evening featured 8 premium exclusive wines from top vineyards around the world, presented by PRP Wine International. Guests received a complimentary New Star wine glass, and enjoyed appetizers paired with each wine sampling.

We'd like to acknowledge Old Plank Trail Bank for underwriting all the events' expenses, making each dollar raised so much more impactful to our services, and ultimately to our consumers. Cheers to them and to all who joined us for this very special Happy Hour!

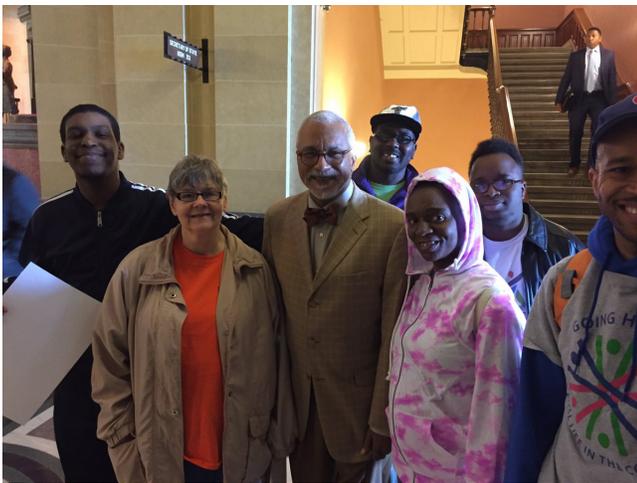


New Star Board Member, Phil Paige (Left), and Wintrust Founder and CEO, Ed Wehmer (Right) take time out to enjoy the wine!



New Star Staff and Board Member Mary Mayer (Right) share in a toast to New Star!

VISITS WITH OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS



New Star consumers spent the day in Springfield meeting with their local legislators like Senator Donne Trotter!



(Left to Right) Board Member Deb Kopec, Cook County Commissioner Stanley Moore, Marie Isidore, and New Star President/CEO Dan Strick tour New Star's Dolton Campus!

IN MEMORIAM

Thank you to the following donors for making gifts in Memoriam since our last publication of *Abilities*.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

<u>Day Programs and Administrative Offices Closings:</u>	
July 4:	Independence Day
August 25 & 28:	In-Service Training
September 4:	Labor Day

<u>Upcoming Events:</u>	
June 10:	Stroll n' Roll Prairie State College, 8am
August 1:	Parent Support Group 6pm, Chicago Heights Campus
September 25:	Annual Golf Outing Idlewild Country Club, 11am

Abilities is a news publication of New Star, a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization that resulted from the 2016 merger of New Hope Center and SouthSTAR Services. New Star's mission is to provide choices and opportunities for persons with disabilities and their families through a culture of innovation and caring, to enrich their lives and maximize their independence. Collectively, we offer our consumers and their families over 110 years of history and experience in providing job training and employment, daily life skills enrichment, senior care, residential services, and special recreation to over 650 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, residing in the Chicagoland area and Northwest Indiana.