

A Christmas Present for the People of COC

Community Opportunity Center (COC) has operated an unlicensed home, Friendship House, in Plymouth Township for over ten years. COC has been renting this home and providing staffing, support services, and transportation to the four residents that call FSH home. While the arrangement worked well for a time with the out-of-town landlord, it began to present challenges when it came to the general repair and maintenance of the home. Recognizing the lack of affordable housing options for adults with disabilities, COC purchased Friendship House in April 2024. This afforded COC greater ease and autonomy in home maintenance and helped to shield residents from the sharp increases in cost of living. Currently plans for renovations are underway, and we are excited about improving the home environment for the people of Friendship House. Once the renovations are completed, the home will be officially renamed as Heaton House in honor of Bill Heaton, a board member who has served COC for 50 years and recently retired.

The purchase of Friendship House is the eighth home added to the property portfolio for COC. Other Homes include Garden City Opportunity Manor, Balmoral House, Redford House, Milburn House, Livonia House, Curtis House, and Plymouth House. All of these properties require costly upkeep including utility infrastructure repair and maintenance, painting, landscaping, roofing, siding, flooring and appliances. Transportation is also a large expense as each home, depending on the number of residents, requires one or two vehicles. These costs are offset by donations, grant writing, and fundraising efforts of COC.

As friends and families of COC consider which annual holiday contributions to make toward worthy causes this giving season, please know that your donations to COC help to reduce barriers to housing faced by those with disabilities in Michigan. Your donations help us create affordable housing in safe livable communities where the people served by COC can thrive. Any donation amount is appreciated and will be put to good use. Wishing all those involved with COC a happy healthy holiday season.



Our Mission

We promise to help the people we serve lead fulfilled lives by providing quality, individualized support.

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A Note of Gratitude to Former Board Member, Bill Heaton



To address the housing shortage for people with disabilities, Bill worked closely with Michigan State Housing Development Authority to acquire financing to establish our Livonia, Redford and Garden City Home sites. He helped expand access to housing for people in need and was very involved with seeking and purchasing homes such as Curtis House, Milburn House and currently, Friendship House.

Bill was instrumental in ensuring that COC homes did not have to pay property taxes. He and Denise King worked with Michelle Halloran, attorney and professor at MSU, specializing in state and local taxation. She gratuitously helped COC appeal the taxation of our properties at the state tax tribunal in Lansing, where COC prevailed.

Bill Heaton joined the board of Community Opportunity Center (COC) in 1974 and retired in January of 2024. He has a heart for service and became connected to the topic of housing for people with disabilities as a parent of a child with a disability. His daughter, Joanie, moved into Plymouth House in 1983 and later moved to Garden City Opportunity Manor in 1999, remaining there until her passing in 2006. Bill served in every board officer role multiple times, most often serving as the Treasurer.

His influence on COC spans from policy to facility maintenance, accounting, fundraising and more. He has a mind for analysis, whether it be numbers, policy decisions or problem solving. He is a well-known friendly face and could often be found at various locations within the COC community assessing homes to prioritize maintenance tasks, discussing financial topics in the accounting office, attending social functions, participating in board meetings, or sitting with the Executive Director discussing current topics and future plans.



COC Board President, Mike Mies, congratulates Bill.



COC Board Members celebrate Bill Heaton's retirement.



Denise and John King celebrate with Helene and Bill Heaton.

Prior to the establishment of the Human Resources department, when HR responsibilities were assigned to various office staff, Bill was always very helpful with determining wage increases and how they would be allocated in relation to employee performance. He also took a leadership role in determining the best insurance benefits available to our employees and was involved in the establishment of the 401 (K) benefit. He and our Board of Directors always valued our employees and wanted to make certain that they were offered excellent benefits and better pay, which we were able to do with our fundraising and investment income.

Being a very cost-conscious person, when the opportunity arose to obtain bread, bagels and other baked goods from Panera, Bill assumed the role of picking up and delivering these items to each of our homes. He managed the weekly delivery of baked goods to our homes for approximately 10 years. For a short period of time, he also facilitated donations from Costco.

Bill is a man of wisdom. During his Board tenure, he could be called upon by the leadership of COC for guidance and advice. He acted with the best interests of the people of COC as his guiding principle. His contributions are both remarkable and foundational. His work on behalf of COC over a span of 50 years has set the course for COC, allowing the organization to maintain long term stability and realize success in its future endeavors.

We are all grateful to you Bill, thank you for all you have done.

■ Housing Crisis Persists

Lack of Affordable Housing for People with Disabilities Persists:

It's acknowledged by a wide variety of service groups and nonprofits within Michigan and throughout the nation that people with disabilities are impacted negatively by the housing crisis in greater numbers than their peers without disabilities. In their 2022 article on affordable housing, Disability Network Southwest Michigan states:

“One issue that contributes to the number of people with disabilities coping with houselessness is a lack of financial resources. Many people with disabilities are living at or below the poverty line. A common guideline is that no more than 30% of a person's monthly income should go toward their housing costs including utilities and insurance. It is estimated that more than 8 million adults receive monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments from the Social Security Administration. The 2022 maximum monthly SSI rate for adults with disabilities is \$841. Following the 30% guideline would require SSI recipients to keep their housing costs below \$252 per month. For many people, this is an unrealistic goal. As a result of living on a fixed-income, many people with disabilities don't make enough to pay market rent rates, and are left looking for affordable, and in some cases, accessible housing without success.” (pg. 1)

The housing, wrap around staffing and transportation services provided by COC offer a solution to counter-balance the housing crisis by creating quality, affordable housing solutions. COC is grateful for the many allies, including families, friends, businesses, nonprofits and foundations, which have joined in this battle to break down the barriers to affordable housing. Your contributions and partnerships are valued and appreciated.

Source: Disability Network Southwest Michigan (January 7, 2022) <https://www.dnswm.org/its-time-to-do-something-about-housing-inequality-for-people-with-disabilities/>

Third Annual Celebrity Bowling Challenge

On April 19 COC and High Five teamed up again for their 3rd annual Celebrity Bowling Challenge. The event was held at Oak Lanes in Westland. Drew Stanton was again the honorary chair of the event. Also in attendance were several celebrities including Kirk Gibson, Jason Hanson, Rob Rubick, Ross Weaver, Greg Jones and Jehuu Culcrick.



Many COC residents and staff enjoyed the bowling event.



James meets MSU and Tiger great, Kirk Gibson.

We once again filled more than 30 lanes with residents, family, and celebrities. Many thanks to everyone that bowled, volunteered, or came out to cheer on their loved one. Everyone had a great time hanging out and mingling with each other. Please keep a look out for information regarding our 4th Annual Celebrity Bowling Challenge in 2025.



COC Parent Mae Young and Accountant Paula.



Holly Heath with Drew Stanton (left) and Rob Rubick.



Kevin, Sean, and Kyle support COC

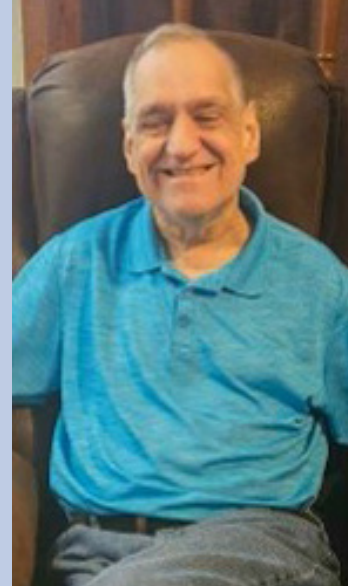
■ Shout Out and Thank You!

We thank St. Kenneth Church in Plymouth for hosting the 3rd annual Valentines Day Dance. The congregation has embraced our residents, and they go all out to provide this wonderful event for the people of COC. Everyone enjoys the food, desserts, friendship, music and dancing.



■ On the Move

On April 1, 2024, Gary moved from the condominium he shared with his sister, Kathy, to Friendship House. Gary himself will admit that it took some getting used to, but now that he is settled in, he is really enjoying living at Friendship House.



Gary's staff say that it has been wonderful having him there. They say that Gary is kind, talented, respectful and has a wonderful sense of humor. Gary is also eager to help out around the house. He helps with laundry, sweeping, dishes, and taking out the garbage among other things. This could be because Gary is an orderly guy and likes things in their place. Whatever the motivation, the staff appreciate his enthusiasm and help.

Gary's housemates are also happy that he is living at Friendship House. Gary plays Uno and attends bowling with his housemates. His new friends are also exposing him to sports. He has bonded with them while watching some games and rooting for their favorite teams. Gary is also known for his singing! The staff and his housemates enjoy when he sings Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin tunes. The singing, along with Gary's great sense of humor and frequent smile have made a wonderful impression on everyone at Friendship house. Gary has made new best friends (with housemates AND staff) while remaining a very faithful brother and making time to visit with his sister. All in all, the move was a success, and all parties involved agree that Gary is an absolute pleasure, and they are so pleased he is there.

Home Activities



GCOM friends at Annie at Detroit's fox Theater.



Zan and Ricky with family at the Humbug Marsh Unit National Wildlife Refuge in Gibraltar.



Brian with his paintings at the Living and Learning painting exhibit in March.



POH friends make a visit to Dairy Queen.



Sara, Julie, Chris and Brian from SIP at bowling event.



Kevon and Kenneth on an outing with their mom, Angela.



Lisa and Craig at Caufield's Novelty Store in Louisville Kentucky.



Bassett friends at Livonia AM Rotary Carnival in May.



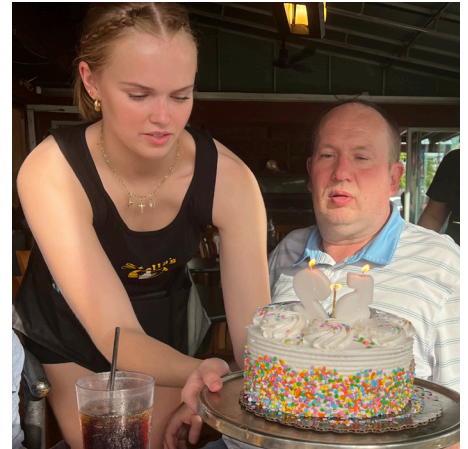
Debbie showing off her bowling skills.



Jeff receives best shooter award from NW Arc Special Olympics.



Shannon and Jim in Kellogg Park in Plymouth.



Lyle has a birthday at Stella's Black Dog Tavern in Plymouth.



Marybeth and Brian on a date.



POH friends catch a Tiger's game.



Jim enjoying the a day of bowling.

Staff News

Employee of the Year, Spirit of COC and Nightingale Awards



The Employee of the Year Award is given annually to the employee who best demonstrates the work and philosophy of COC's long-time Executive Director, Denise King, and who has a heart and passion for COC.

This year's winner is Tracey Lawson! Tracey joined COC in 2010 as a Med Coordinator at Milburn House where she quickly began to create a reputation for her accuracy, dependability and top-notch care giving skills. In 2019 she moved to Plymouth House filling the role of Cook / Direct Care Professional working in the heart of the home and alongside residents. In 2023 Tracey decided to transition back to the Med Coordinator position at Plymouth House and has continued to demonstrate her desire for perfection, attention to detail, and is continuously going above and beyond her role in the home.

Congratulations Tracey, we are so proud to have you represent COC as our Employee of the Year for 2024.



The Spirit of COC Award is given annually to the employee who constantly enhances the work environment for their peers at COC by applying their versatile skills set across different departments and roles. The recipient embodies a spirit of support, care and service to coworkers across the corporation.

This year's winner is Andrea Bey! Andrea first joined COC in 2002 as a Direct Care Professional and worked her way up to Administrator in 2007. She began to think beyond her home administrator role and decided to enhance her skills by going back to school to become an HR professional. She signed on as HR assistant in 2020, and was promoted to HR Generalist in 2024, upon completion of her HR degree. Her detailed knowledge pertaining to daily operations in our homes along with her newly acquired HR skills makes her a versatile and valuable employee – she's a great help to everyone at COC and respected by all. Congratulations Andrea, our 2024 recipient of the Spirit of COC award!



The Nightingale Award was established to recognize the COC employee who has provided exemplary care to a resident, comfort to family and leadership to coworkers during a time of medical crisis for the resident.

This year's winner is Crystal Chappell! Crystal Chappell is an excellent caregiver and home administrator. She has been employed with COC for 10 years and has assumed the roles of direct support professional, medical coordinator, administrator for Redford House and Friendship House and currently, home administrator for Bassett House. Crystal knows her residents well and is very attuned to their needs. She is thorough, accurate and delivers care with kindness and compassion.

Congratulations Crystal! COC is so pleased to recognize you with the COC Nightingale award for 2024!

Support the Mission of COC

Legacy Giving Program

As the people supported by Community Opportunity Center (COC) age, the Corporation is in a position of self-funding extra staffing and services needed as well as modifications to homes and vehicles. Mental Health funding does not adequately support persons living in smaller home settings and the Corporation's commitment to providing quality staff is demonstrated by enhanced wages and benefits that are not fully funded by the mental health system.



For these reasons and more, we need to strengthen COC's resources to continue helping people achieve their greatest potential while living in a caring and safe environment. You can help by considering COC in your estate planning. Means of offering support include:

- Make a donation in memory of a loved one, in honor of a special occasion, a matching gift through your employer or a direct contribution.
- Identify Community Opportunity Center as a beneficiary of a portion of your Retirement Plan, Life Insurance Policy or financial accounts such as a bank or brokerage account or a CD.
- Those over 70½ who must take the required minimum distribution (RMD) from their IRA annually can donate directly from their investment source. In this way it's treated as a reduction in income and the standard deduction on your tax return can still be taken.

Donations are tax deductible. With your gift, you can help us do what we do today, even better tomorrow.

Participate in These Donation Programs

Community Opportunity Center, NPHC (COC) is currently enrolled in two different donation programs. Donating through these programs will never cost you more money. Each year we receive contributions as a result of families and friends of COC who shop at Kroger using their rewards card and iGive.com.

Sign up for a Kroger Plus shopper's card and enroll in the Kroger Community Rewards Program to ensure COC receives your donation. To confirm your contribution, Community Opportunity Center will be printed at the bottom of your receipt. Register at: krogercommunityrewards.com

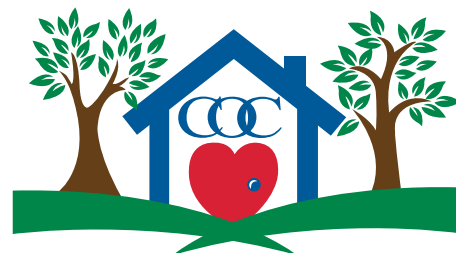


Shopping online through iGive.com connects you to over 700 brand name stores including eBay, Staples, JC Penney, Barnes & Noble, Office Depot, QVC, Expedia, Home Depot, Best Buy, Gap and Nordstrom. A portion of each purchase will be donated to COC. In fact, shopping through iGive.com will often save you money through exclusive coupon codes and deals offered just for our members. Sign up at www.igive.com/welcome



If you need help signing up with any of the above, please contact Glen Hearn in the COC office at 734-838-0540.

Please visit our website:
www.cocliving.com



We Appreciate Our Volunteers!

Volunteer Projects Completed January – June 2024

- Sally Pinchock comes into the main office and helps with filing documents and tax returns for the residents.
- Every other Monday night volunteers pick up donated Panera goodies and drop them off at the main office on Tuesdays as part of Panera's Day-End Dough-Nation program.
- LLEC Law Crew continued to help with raking leaves, pulling weeds, and maintaining the curb appeal at LOH, Curtis, Friendship, GCOM, and Bassett house.



- Sue Deacon continues to do an excellent job designing all COC's public relations literature which includes brochures and our Spotlight Newsletter.
- High school student, Jessica Heath and her friend, Peyton, set up HR folders and completed HR filing for Andrea Bey.
- Volunteers from the court system provide much needed maintenance to COC gardens.

How to Get Involved!

Volunteers have always played a significant role in supporting the COC community. Interested persons and/or organizations will collaborate with the Home Administrators to determine the type of assistance needed and make plans to implement activities to benefit the homes and those living in them. If you know anyone who would be interested in working with extraordinary people and for an exceptional non-profit, please refer them to our website, www.cocliving.com. Click on the "Get Involved" tab. Or contact Glen Hearn at 734-838-0540.

- Chris, Lisa, and Barb plan and help with all craft days at the office.



Thank You to Our Generous Donors

In Honor and Memory

Honorary and Memorial Donations help provide for the general needs of COC and the men and women we support. Call us at 734-422-1020 and we will deliver memorial envelopes to a funeral home or to your home. Also, anyone who desires to remember COC through their memorial giving can send a donation to COC in memory of an individual. Consider an Honorary donation to honor someone special for their birthday, anniversary, or just because you care. Whether remembering or honoring someone, a recognition letter is sent to the recipient and the donor. Your donation will make a difference!

Donations Made to COC January 1 – June 30, 2024

Honorary Donations

In Honor of Bill Heaton

Ms. Bonnie Jarlock

Memorial Donations

In Memory of Carol Burdziak

Ms. Bonnie Jarlock

In Memory of Joyce Diegel

Mr. & Mrs. Edward Diegel

In Memory of Terry Jergens

Mrs. Diane Janes

In Memory of Patricia Marshall

Ms. Kanella Katsikas

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Kowalski

In Memory of Terri Moore

Agrwal Family

Bartolini Family

Mr. William Begley

Mr. & Mrs. Zaidos Church POD

Dr. David Cox

Ms. Cassie Cozby

Ms. Patricia Dallaire
Mr. & Mrs. George Galloway

Mr. David Gentry

Gratz Family

Ms. Patti Hardy

Mr. & Mrs. Billy Heaton

Mr. Kenneth Irely

Ms. Elaine Joseph

Mr. & Mrs. Jim Kapron

Ms. Bonnie LaTourette

Long Family

Ms. Sylvana Z. Long

Ms. Stacy Majba

Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Maly

Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Mies

Mr. Benjamin Moore

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Moore

Mr. & Mrs. William Moore

Mr. & Mrs. T. Puchalsky

Mr. & Mrs. Jim Rickli

Mr. & Mrs. Tom Rosenberg & Family

Mr. & Mrs. Dan Soho & Family

Mr. & Mrs. Mike Smyt

Mr. & Mrs. David Thomas

Mr. & Mrs. Terrance Washburn

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Zabik

Zonzini Family

In Memory of Elieen Murphy

Mr. Robert Murphy

In Memory of Nelia Samson

Ms. Bonnie Jarlock

General Donations

Mr. Michael Averill

Ms. Becky Barcus

Mr. William Cole

Costco Wholesale Van Buren

Ms. Michelle Harrison-Sears

Mr. Stephan Kanyo

Knights of Columbus 3292

Kroger

Mr. John Lawrence

St. Edith Church

Ms. Margaret Yogi

Why Donate...

COC is committed to providing the best possible living situation for the men and women we support. A critical factor that contributes to achieving this goal is contributions of all kinds. Your generous monetary donations help maintain COC's high standards.

Grants

Community Foundation SE Michigan
Mr. & Mrs. Brian Pearson

Bowling Fundraiser

Mr. Jim Gallas

Ms. Dixie Hibner

Meijer – Grand Rapids

Mr. James Rybak

Services to Enhance Potential

Walton Insurance Group

Golf Fundraiser 2024

BDs Mongolian Grill

Bowery Grille & Pub

Buffalo Wild Wings Grille & Bar

Coach's Corner

Costco Wholesale – Van Buren

LaFontaine Automotive Group

Mr. John Lawrence

Mr. & Mrs. Bill Mc Ilhargey

Mr. James O'Reilly

Sports Venue

How to Donate

Use the QR code below OR visit the donation page on our website:
cocliving.com/get-involved/donate.html



14147 Farmington Road
Livonia, Michigan 48154



WINTER 2025 SPOTLIGHT

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Vice President



Holly Heath
Executive Director



Tom McLean
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Dan Cytacki



Lyle Daniels



Ed Diegel



Marge Mitchell



Jenny Sherman



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