



VILLAGE OF PROGRESS

SERVING ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES FOR OVER 50 YEARS

The Village View - Winter 2025

Volume LVII Number 1



Director's Note:

There's an old phrase, "The more things change, the more they remain the same." That is, even as things outwardly change, their inward character remains largely unchanged.

I wonder if the opposite is also true, "Even as things seem the same, they're constantly changing."

Take the Village of Progress, for example. Compare our operations from a dozen years ago and in many ways, you'd think that nothing has changed. Then, as today, you'd see a half dozen paratransit buses arriving every morning to bring our men and women to the Village and then lining up each afternoon to take them back home. Then, as today, we have the same number of buildings on our campus, the same walking lane and garden.

Yet even as things seem the same outwardly, the Village has seen tremendous change. In the eleven years since I arrived here, for example, we've been buffeted by several outward forces: a major flood, a year-long world-wide pandemic, and a state political budget impasse that lasted for years that crippled many service agencies.

The Village's staff has changed, too. Many employees, from administrative staff to supervisors, have retired. Others have left for other career opportunities. New faces have come in, with new visions and ways of leading.

In this issue of our newsletter, for example, you'll read about the retirement of Donna Mattison after over 50 years of service to the agency. And you'll read about her replacement, Mindy Johnson, who brings new ideas.

THE VILLAGE VIEW

A quarterly publication of
the Village of Progress, Inc.
PO Box 418, 710 S. 13th St.,
Oregon IL 61061

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Director's Note continued:

Our programs have changed, too. The Attendance Grant Program is now ten years old and has assisted many people with disabilities, who can now attend the Village even while the state drags its feet for years to grant them funding. The Village Bakery will be eight years old this year. It has brought change to the Village – and the community – that no one could have foreseen. Another change underway is the development of the Hill Street Neighborhood in Mount Morris, offering a whole different approach to integrated housing for adults with disabilities.

The services we offer have changed in their focus as well. Until the last few years, the Village had continued to follow the traditional sheltered workshop model of providing subminimum wage work inside our facility. Now, things have changed dramatically. The vast majority of our work is performed in the community – and at minimum wages. Likewise, the Village has added a wide range of enrichment opportunities – sports outings, meals at restaurants, 4H, educational classes, bicycle club, and a library club, to name a few. Instead of spending the vast amount of their time within the Village's campus, individuals are encouraged and expected to go out and explore the world around them.

Even as things seem to stay the same outwardly, they have changed tremendously on the inside. And yet, in one respect, the old adage remains true. For all of our internal transitions our mission hold fast – challenging our individuals to reach their potential both at work and in the community. In short, we aim to make their experiences at the Village the best part of their day, every day.

Brion Brooks

Donna Mattison retires after 54 years

Donna Mattison began her relationship with The Village of Progress immediately after graduating from Oregon High School in 1969. She started as a volunteer. But after quickly falling in love with the agency, its mission, and the men and women it serves, she soon transitioned to a full-time employee.

In 1976, Donna took a year's leave of absence to explore the possibility of living in Alaska. At the end of that year, Donna was back at the Village – more convinced than ever that it was the right place for her. She quickly moved up in the organization, eventually attaining the position of Program Manager – a position she held until her retirement.

As Program Manager, Donna oversaw the staffing and supervision of the day to day aspects of the Village. Donna had a tremendous passion for her work and a tremendous love for the men and women who attended the Village.

Brion Brooks, the Village's Executive Director, frequently introduced her to visitors as “the heart and soul of the Village.” While many people have either strong interpersonal skills or strong organizational skills, Donna was the rare individual who excelled at both. Her talents, combined with her passion, has shaped the Village's mission and work for the past five decades.

“It will be hard to imagine this place without her,” Brion said. “She has left a tremendous legacy – not just for the Village, but for the entire community.”

It is breathtaking to think of the positive impact that Donna has had on the many individuals, families, and friends of the Village.



Welcome Mindy Johnson



On December 2, the Village welcomed Mindy Johnson as its new Program Manager. She became only the second program manager in the Village's history, replacing Donna Mattison, who retired at the end of the year after 54 years of service. Donna & Mindy were able to spend several weeks together. Mindy explained, "I'm looking forward to continuing the tremendous love and passion

that Donna embodied for her work and the individuals we serve."

Mindy brings with her a wealth of experience in the developmental disabilities field. After working at Kreider Services as a QIDP, Mindy moved to DD Homes, a position she's held for the past eight years.

In her residential work, Mindy was responsible for developing, implementing, and overseeing disability services for residential homes. This included staff training and ensuring state and federal regulatory compliance. Mindy is a certified CPR/First Aid instructor, trainer for DSPs and Qs, and an instructor in Aggression Management and Crisis Prevention and Intervention. She is well versed in electronic record keeping and a lead trainer at DD Homes in the use of Therap, a widely used online documentation system.

Mindy received her bachelor's degree and a master's in business administration from Ashford University. The Village is excited to have Mindy join our team. If you happen to stop in, be sure to offer her a warm welcome. Johnson commented, "As the Village transitions, I feel blessed to be a part of it. I am very excited to be part of a team that challenges adults with disabilities to reach their potential at work and in the community. I can't wait to see what the future holds for these amazing individuals".

IMPORTANT DATES AT THE VILLAGE OF PROGRESS

THE JOHN HERRMANN GOLF PLAY DAY

JULY 14, 2025

PRAIRIE VIEW GOLF COURSE

BYRON, IL

TOSOC TOUR OF SCENIC OGLE COUNTY

**SEPTEMBER 27,
2025**

CYCLING EVENT AT THE VILLAGE

ANNUAL BANQUET

OCTOBER 22, 2025

AT 5:30

ST MARY'S LEARNING CENTER OREGON

Harlene is Retiring



Harlene joined the Village of Progress in April 1987, and for nearly four decades, she brought joy and energy to everyone around her. A devoted fan of Shania Twain, Harlene was known to enthusiastically sing her favorite songs, filling the halls of VOP with music and laughter.

But it's her warm hugs and radiant smile that will forever be etched in the hearts of those who knew her. Harlene had a knack for making everyone feel special, whether it was through her playful sense of humor or her ability to share a hearty laugh with staff and volunteers. She loved a good chat, especially about what was for dinner or sharing treasured stories about her family.

Harlene's vibrant spirit has left an indelible mark on the Village of Progress, and she will be deeply missed by all in her retirement.



Special Thanks

Stan Bush and Michael Murray from the Constellation site in Byron presenting Brion Brooks a check from the Constellation Employee Giving Campaign.

**Yarn Sale & Craft Sale
@ The Village of Progress
February 17, 18, & 19
9:30am - 1pm**



New Faces at VOP



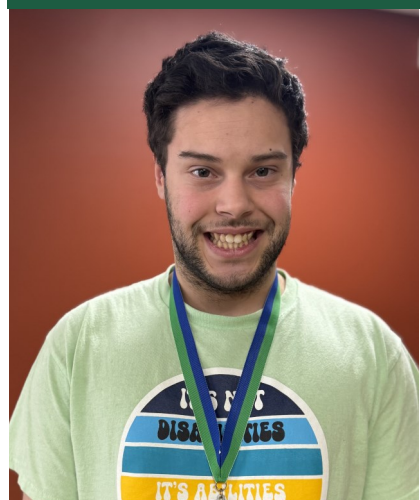
Mike Scully - We're thrilled to welcome Mike to the Village of Progress team! Mike joined us in January 2025 and comes to us from Polo, IL, where he lives with his sister and brother-in-law. With a love for bowling, swimming, and lending a helping hand, Mike brings energy and enthusiasm to everything he does. Known for his great sense of humor, Mike is a natural jokester who loves making people laugh. We're excited to have him as part of the VOP family!



Maria Beke - Please join us in welcoming Maria to the Village of Progress family! Maria joined us in January 2025, coming all the way from Cherry Valley. She loves staying active, exploring new activities, and sharing her creativity through coloring. Maria has a warm and kind heart and has already enjoyed connecting with new faces here at VOP. We're excited to have Maria as part of our community!



Kiley O'Brien - Kylie joined our Attendance Grant Program at the end of January, and we're excited to have her on this journey! She lives in Rochelle with her family and loves connecting with others. Kylie is eager to build new friendships, explore meaningful life experiences, and work toward opportunities for community employment. We can't wait to support her as she reaches her goals!



Jaymi Ramos - Jeremiah recently joined us as a Transition Student from the Oregon SOAR House, and we're thrilled to have him! He stays active by swimming and playing sports, always bringing great energy to everything he does. A dedicated helper, Jeremiah enjoys taking on cleaning tasks and contributing to our community. His joyful spirit and kindness make him a wonderful friend to all. We're so excited to see him thrive with us!

Scholarship Opportunity

The Village of Progress is proud to offer two scholarships to residents of Ogle County. These are available to a high school senior who is disabled or is planning on attending college and majoring in an area related to the disabled, or a full-time undergraduate college student who is disabled or is majoring in an area related to the disabled.



Last years winner Sarah Stevens pictured with Larry Young.

The first scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 is made possible through a joint effort between The Larry Young & Friends Charities and The Village of Progress Foundation. Larry Young & Friends Charities partner with The Village of Progress Foundation every year to help make our annual golf outing a success. Larry Young also serves on the Foundation's Board of Directors.

Our second scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 is made possible through the generosity of the Cacciatore Family. The

Cacciatore family have been long time supporters of the Village. Wanda served on the Village of Progress Board of Directors for 10 years beginning in 1988. She has served on the Foundation's Board for almost 30 years. The scholarship honors her husband, Pete, who was also an enthusiastic supporter of the Village. Pete passed away in the fall of 2014, leaving behind a legacy of commitment to the Village and its mission.



Last years winner Grace Pfeiffer pictured with Wanda Cacciatore.

To be eligible for either scholarship, the student must:

- Be a resident of Ogle County
- Be either a high school senior who is disabled or is planning on attending college and majoring in an area related to the disabled, or a full-time undergraduate college student who is disabled or is majoring in an area related to the disabled

Applications must be received by March 15, 2025, be completed on the Foundation application form, and include at least two written references. The financial status of the applicant is not a consideration. Those wanting an application are encouraged to visit our website villageofprogress.org. or scan the URL code.





SUMMER THRIVE

This engaging summer initiative is designed for adults aged 18+ with developmental disabilities who reside in Ogle County.

Whether you're on summer break from school or simply curious about what VOP has to offer, this program is the perfect opportunity to connect, learn, and have fun!

June 9-13 9a-2:30p

Monday: White Pines Hike & Cookout

Tuesday: Volunteer Day

Wednesday: Niabi Zoo

Thursday: Sports in the Park & Cooking Project

Friday: Bowling & Golf Driving Range

July 7-11 9a-2:30p

Monday: Movie Day - Jurassic World

Tuesday: Badger Mine & Museum Tour

Wednesday: Starved Rock Hike

Thursday: Sports in the Park & Gardening

Friday: Bowling & Craft Project

August 4-8 9a-2:30p

Monday: Historical Tour - Old Joliet Prison

Tuesday: Lake Day and Cookout

Wednesday: Kickball Tournament and Cookout

Thursday: Sycamore Steam Show

Friday: Fun Day at VOP - Cookout, games, music

RESERVE YOUR SPOT!

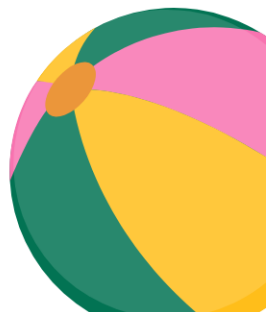
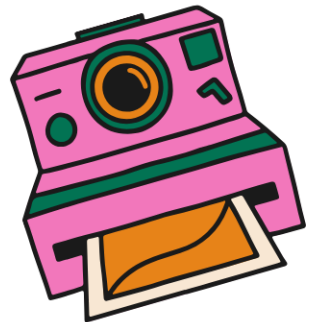
Ready to sign up or learn more?

Contact Mark Probasco at 815-732-2126.

Let's make this summer unforgettable!



VILLAGE OF PROGRESS



Donations to the Village of Progress & Foundation

In Kind: Mary & Jeff Meiners • Jim Reindel • Oregon United Methodist Church

Village & Foundation: Richard & Carol Anderson • Kevin Brehm • Wanda Cacciatore • Kila Christensen • Constellation Matching Program • Samantha Dopke • Rhonda Dowdy • Larry & Deb Drew • Kristy Eckardt • Dennis Flanagan • Jason Hammer • Bill & Marge Lindenmier • Sue McLane-Pfleger • Patricia Piwonka • Jan Prose • Gary & Diane Roos • Sharon Thunberg • Karen Young • Donna Mattison • Margaret Wolf •

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In Honor of: Tom & Jan Champley • Robert Groenhagen • Doug Lieving • Kim Stahl •

THANK YOU.... Our ability to maintain meaningful and effective programs for Ogle County adults with disabilities depends on your donations & volunteer efforts!

Exploring Our Community!

In an effort to increase our exposure in the community, the Village of Progress continues to create a variety of small group outings. Our goal is to promote and improve self-advocacy, informed decision making, budgeting/money skills and greater life experiences. Everyone is able to choose the activities they want to participate in each time.



Ice Hogs Hockey Game



Northwest Territory
Historic Center



Nicolas
Conservatory



Dog Therapy



NIU Huskie Game



Byron Library



Rustic Ridge
Axe Throwing



All Aglow

The Village is funded in part by the
Ogle County Community Mental
Health (708) Board), United Way,
Etnyre Foundation & Rochelle Area
Community Foundation



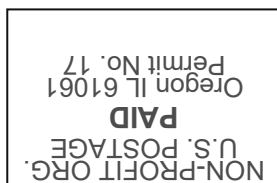
**THE
VILLAGE
BAKERY
IS OPEN
7AM — 2PM
7 DAYS A
WEEK**



Village of Progress Winter Games Closing Ceremony

All Ages • Date: Th 3/20 • Time: 9:30-10:30 am • Location: Nash Gym

Each winter, athletes from Village of Progress participate in a winter games series at Nash Recreation Center. After weeks of hard work and fun competition, we celebrate our Village of Progress athletes with a special closing ceremony. Oregon Park District invites the whole community to pack the gym as we recognize our Village of Progress Athletes. We will have an awards ceremony recognizing athletic achievement and personal growth, a keynote speaker TBA, plus music and celebration for all. This is a free community event. Come and join in the celebration with our friends from Village of Progress.



Village of Progress
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