The Mission Project newsletter available digitally

As good stewards of your donor dollars, we’re happy to announce that Compass newsletter readers can receive it via email. We’ll continue to print and snail mail Compass for those who prefer to receive it that way. But if you want to help us save trees and postage and printing costs, we’ll pop it in your email box instead. As always, we’ll use the savings to enhance programming and services for our participants.

To update your subscription preferences, visit www.themissionproject.org and click on the orange button at the top.

The Mission Project enables capable adults with developmental disabilities to live independently and safely in community with individualized support.

Delivering excellence To The Mission Bank

“I know I’m an important part of this bank,” says Corey Graham (second from right), with co-workers (left to right) Assistant Kristen Own, Vice President Shannon Winter, Senior Vice President Dave Shepherd, Vice Presidents Renee Harper and Ashley Polleisz.

The Mission Project’s Corey Graham brings a staunch work ethic to his job at The Mission Bank. Corey recently celebrated eight years of distributing the mail to his co-workers at the bank, among other responsibilities.

Corey’s co-workers appreciate his dedication. When winter roads are too hazardous for Mission Project van drivers to navigate, Corey sometimes walks to his job. “His work ethic is extraordinary,” says Dave Shepherd, Mission Bank senior vice president.

His co-workers also appreciate Corey’s attitude. “Every couple of weeks, Corey tells me how much he enjoys working here,” says Dave. “It’s great to know how much Corey values the bank. It reminds us how blessed we are to have good jobs with people we enjoy.”

The bank, which has employed Mission Project participants for more than 10 years, benefits from the partnership, as well. “The Mission Project is an important program for the community that we want to support,” says Dave.

Dave has keyed into Corey’s passion for cars. They have a running “name that key” challenge. Each week, Dave brings in a car key and asks Corey to identify the make, model and year. “It would blow you away how often he’s right,” says Dave.

The Mission Bank was chartered in 1980 and is privately owned. Based at 5201 Johnson Dr., the bank has two branches in Mission and four other full-service branches in Johnson County.
Loud and proud

Mission Project speakers share their stories

Public speaking, which ranks near the top of surveys about what we fear most, is daunting for most people. For those on the autism spectrum, it’s particularly challenging.

And yet, four Mission Project participants, Kelly Randall, Corey Graham, Amelia Zang-Carta and Lauren Stern, spoke with poise and confidence at a recent conference.

The conference, Beyond the Diagnosis: Autism Across the Life Span, sponsored by Johnson County Community College and the University of Kansas Center for Autism Research and Training, targeted professionals and families touched by autism. Sarah Mai spoke of The Mission Project as a model for independent living for adults with developmental disabilities; Kelly, Corey, Amelia and Lauren then shared their stories.

“Their speeches were so powerful,” says Sarah. “They informed, impressed and inspired their audiences.”

Helping participants hone skills in public speaking is an example of a strategy that underpins all Mission Project programming – to develop new skills and master challenges.

“We create opportunities for participants to set goals, make decisions, consider options, solve problems, speak up, ask for support if needed, and evaluate outcomes,” says Sarah. “Public speaking allows participants to stretch and give back to The Mission Project.”

We’re fortunate to have Goldie Pappan, one of our participant’s mentors, coach them in public speaking. Goldie is a University of Kansas audiology graduate student and participates in Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities, a national program that promotes leadership in the field of developmental disabilities.

“The participants have amazing life stories,” says Goldie, “It would be a shame if they couldn’t share those with others.”
Have vans, will travel

Having meaningful work and earning a salary are as vital to Mission Project participants as they are to most people. In fact, working is a core value of The Mission Project. But when we started 11 years ago, there was limited public transportation. Getting participants to and from work presented a major challenge.

Travel to 2015: Thanks to donor support and our incredible volunteer transportation manager, Mission Project parent George Dirnberger, The Mission Project runs five vans and provides more than 8,500 rides a year. With van acquisition and maintenance; salaries for our full-time driver, Bob Hartley, and our part-time drivers, Jim Paul, Bob Rigg and Chuck Scott; and computer software to plot the routes, transportation costs remain our largest program expense and our greatest funding need.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to First National Bank and Church of the Nativity. Their donations enabled us to buy our fifth, much-needed van.

“The van gives Mission Project participants the ability to be self-sufficient,” says First National Bank Marketing Director Jennifer Sanborn. “With a safe ride to work, they have the chance to earn an adequate income and afford life’s necessities. The van helps them thrive and contribute to strengthening their community.”

We can’t overemphasize what this program means to the lives of our participants. And we can’t thank you enough for your continuing support.

Have vans, will travel

Our participants love their shiny new van and getting to and from work safely and on time. Thanks to the generous donors who helped us buy it.

One hundred twenty golfers took advantage of wonderful weather to help us raise nearly $40,000 at the annual Mission Project Golf Classic, held Sept. 21, at Lake Quivira Country Club. Thanks to everyone who attended. A special thanks to Widex USA Inc., our course sponsor. (Far left) Lisa Battani and (second from right) David Nissen of Associated Audiologists Inc.; (second from left) Geza Verik and (far right) Rennae Pickert of Widex USA Inc. Both companies are longtime Mission Project supporters.
The Mission Project will be revving up our health programming, increasing our partnership with the professional trainers at Tim Crough Fitness and setting a precedent for wellness education for adults with developmental disabilities, thanks to a grant from The Westerman Foundation.

Pleased as Punch

Our own Sarah Mai has been named Fieldwork Educator of the Year by Rockhurst University’s Department of Occupational Therapy Education.

The Mission Project’s executive director and a licensed occupational therapist (OT), Sarah was selected for her knowledge and innovation in the OT field and her devotion to mentoring and collaborating with Rockhurst’s academic fieldwork coordinator. Since 2014, The Mission Project has provided fieldwork for Rockhurst OT graduate students.

“Sarah is an energetic, passionate OT evangelist,” according to her nomination. “She makes a difference in the lives of those she serves, those she works with and those she teaches.”