

INREACH

Empowering people with disabilities to live life their way

· Fall 2020 ·



A Message From Our President *Lori Gougeon*



Lori Gougeon

As we wind down 2020, it's hard to articulate all that has taken place during this past year. Somehow, we are making our way through this terrible COVID-19 crisis, and are still going strong and empowering over 1,200 children and adults with developmental disabilities to be the best they can be. For the past 46 years, InReach has been a leader in providing housing, employment and in-home services to those who depend on us, primarily in Mecklenburg County. However, that is changing as we grow in Union County and opened our first home this year in Catawba County.

As we open our doors to new families each year, we strive to continue to uphold our mission and provide the best quality of care and support possible. It takes a village to accomplish this. The heart of the village is our dedicated staff members – over 600 – that have continued working each day to support our individuals in realizing their goals, aspirations and dreams. They are our true heroes. Our Board of Directors also are key to InReach's success. I thank them all for their

contributions of time and talent as we continue to enhance and develop InReach programs and services. Special thanks go to our Board Chairman for the past two years, Charlie Stewart. His leadership and sincere dedication have been incredible and greatly appreciated by us all. One board member, Jean Zoutewelle, will be rotating off at the end of December after serving two terms. I thank Jean for the valuable contributions she has made to InReach during the past six years, especially in the role as Finance Committee Chair and parent. New members will be joining us in January, and I look forward to working closely with our new Board Chair, Laura Reynolds, at the start of the new year.

I think we all can agree we are looking forward to brighter days and opportunities in 2021. In the meantime, this newsletter features many ways you can support InReach and our program participants now – from our Dream Maker “event,” to purchasing a new pale ale from Triple C Brewing, to bidding during our virtual “Colors for a Cause” Virtual Art Auction, to buying InReach pottery or other last-minute gifts for your family and friends – or simply making a year-end donation online. We appreciate any way you are able to help during these difficult times.

Thank you so much. Wishing you all the happiest of holidays!

Peace,



Creativity Award Winner Barbara Truesdale and Lori Gougeon.



Citizenship Award Winner Sharon Spough and Lori Gougeon.



Creativity Award Winner Rayford Sellers and Lori Gougeon.

Each year InReach honors our staff, volunteers, donors and program participants at our annual InCelebration! We did so again this year in the most unique way – virtually – as we were not able to gather 350 people together in one space. Our virtual InCelebration was a big hit and enjoyed by all who tuned in online on Tuesday, September 15.

WCNC's Larry Sprinkle joined us for his 29th year to thank everyone, especially our staff “heroes” who have continued working each day during this COVID-19 crisis with the individuals served by InReach. We passed out more than 50 awards, and would like to highlight a few:

- Self-Determination Award:** Mac Christenbury and Fred Martin
- Dream Achievement Award:** Catherine Vaught and Ben Tarkenton
- Employee of the Year:** Ryan Cloninger, Atrium Health
- Outstanding Volunteer:** Suzanne Spantgos, Elevation Church
- Outstanding Community Partner:** The Leon Levine Foundation
- HERO Award:** Louise Dennis, Group Home Manager
- Staff Behind-the-Scenes Award (during this crisis):** Debbie Shiflett

- 20 Years of Service Award:** Mike Puckett
- 25 Years of Service Award:** Barbara Crite Rossello
- 30 Years of Service Award:** Lori Gougeon
- Outstanding Instructor:** Tomekia Faulkner
- Outstanding Administrative Staff:** Beth James
- Outstanding Corporate Sponsor:** Philoptochos

New Day Supports & Activity Center Opens in Monroe

InReach is expanding services in Monroe. We have just completed construction on a wonderful new 5,000-square-foot office and Day Supports Center, located at 146 Winchester Ave., near downtown Monroe.

Over a year in the making, the building beautifully showcases our day program and incorporates large, open spaces that permit flexibility as well as smaller rooms for private instruction. These specially-designed areas allow for creative arts, recreational classes, and life skills instruction such as group or individualized cooking classes, completing laundry, making a bed, etc. Individuals served here by InReach have access to places to relax or to be a part of the action. The spacious multipurpose room allows for bigger group events and exercise opportunities. Future events will include social opportunities such as dances and game nights.



New Day Supports & Activity Center.

If you're interested in volunteering, or have a family member that would like to participate, please contact Greg Mead at (704) 536-6661 x476 or Dawn Anderson (704) 536-6661 x475 for more information.



Kitchen



Technology Corner



Creative Arts Area



Reading Nook

InReach has also expanded to provide residential services to the west in Hickory. A new four-bed group home opened its doors in September to serve men with intellectual and developmental disabilities from the Catawba County area. The beautiful home is nestled in a lovely neighborhood and offers 24/7 on-site staff similar to the other 17 homes operated by InReach in Mecklenburg and Union Counties.

For more information on this home or other InReach residential options please contact Tammy Smith at tsmith@inreachnc.org.



Beautiful back patio.



Matthew U. in front of new group home.



Dining room after makeover.



Elite Staging and Design team with ladies of Williams Road Residence.



Kelly, Amy and David of Elite Staging and Design.

New Décor at Our Williams Road Residence

October was a month full of sunny days in Charlotte, but particularly “sunshiny” over at our Williams Road residence where five cheerful ladies reside. These typically happy women have been over the moon because of the generosity of Elite Staging and Design (ESD), a team of accredited home-staging professionals based in Charlotte. Kelly Hickman and her team from ESD completed a home makeover in seven short hours, complete with new furniture, bed linens, headboards, artwork and lamps.

Design Associate, Amy Lewis, met with Raven, Krystle, Barbara B., Barbara T. and Catherine to learn their favorite colors and styles. The ESD team then purchased pieces for each lady’s bedroom that reflected those preferences. Swooping in at 9 a.m. with a truck full of furniture and all the extras, Kelly, Amy and David ushered the five out of the house for a day of “COVID-19 safe” activities and then went to work doing their decorating magic.

The ladies arrived back to their home late in the afternoon to a scene out of “Extreme Home Makeover,” complete with squeals and cheers. The idea of “neighbors helping neighbors” is always such a beautiful one, but this effort took it to another level.

Tremendous thanks to Kelly, Amy and David! You have brought immense joy to some very special ladies!



Ann with her Special Olympics swimming medal.

Our InReach family has sadly lost nine of our longtime program participants this year, several of whom have been with our organization for over 25 years. Dickie, Larry, Ann, Sharon, and Eddie have all been such an important part of our lives – from the daily (okay, maybe three a day 😊) phone calls from Larry, to the big huge pats on the back from the towering Dickie – the loss of these special friends has been keenly felt by all of us.

Among our losses this year was the recent death of 67-year-old Ann Byrum. Many of you got the chance to meet Ann and her sisters, Joan, Betty and Jean, when they were featured speakers at our 2019 Dream Maker fundraiser.

Ann was one of the original residents of InReach's Plaza Road group residence established in 1981 as the first group home in Mecklenburg County. Her father, Erskine, was a member of InReach's Board of Directors at the time. The fourth child of Erskine and Nancy, Ann was diagnosed with developmental delays at the age of 2. Beloved by her family, Ann's spunkiness and zest for life equipped her with a carpe diem kind of outlook on life. From playing Special Olympics' basketball, softball and swimming to busting a move to Beyonce's "All the Single Ladies," her energy and happiness brought a smile to everyone she met.

The passing of Ann and these other very special friends has caused us all a deep sense of loss, but we are forever grateful for the joy and happiness each of them brought and are honored to have supported them all to live life their way.



Ann and the Byrum family at 2019 Dream Maker luncheon.



Ann (back right) and housemates in early years at the Plaza group home.



Ann giving her special bear hug.



Ann (right) and friends at the Plaza group home.



Missy and InReach Creative Arts Coordinator John Wirz.



Butterfly Smiles Pale Ale can and artwork.



Missy, the artist behind Butterfly Smiles.

Just when we need a FUN shot in the arm, Triple C Brewing Company has joined forces with InReach and launched a new brew called Butterfly Smiles Pale Ale, with 10 percent of sales benefitting InReach. In fact, the launch of Butterfly Smiles was the biggest release day ever for Triple C Brewing – and we think the brightly-colored can and joyful butterfly art created by InReach program participant Missy M. is a big reason why.

Missy M. is not only a talented member of our Troupe 801 touring puppeteer group, but also is an amazing pottery artist. Until COVID-19, every Thursday Missy served as a volunteer at Discovery Place Nature where her job was to feed the butterflies. The smile Missy saw on the faces of the butterflies as she was feeding them was the inspiration behind the huge, happy smile she depicts in her artwork. She says, “When I feed the butterflies, they smile at me.”

So, if you enjoy craft beer, we hope you'll stop by Triple C Brewing and pick up a 4-pack, raise a pint for Triple C and support the work of InReach. You can even buy a Butterfly Smiles Pale Ale T-shirt or butterfly notecards while you're there.

(Butterfly Smiles is also available at Reid's Fine Foods, The Common Market, Brawley's, and many other Charlotte retailers.)



Butterfly Smiles Pale Ale can art.



Butterfly Smiles T-shirt.

“Colors for a Cause” Virtual Art Auction

Just in time for holiday gift-giving, over 40 amazingly talented and generous artists have provided InReach with original pieces that are included in our virtual art auction, “Colors for a Cause.” Bidding starts Dec. 1 and goes through Dec. 5.

Below are the details:

- 🌟 Online previews begin Nov. 23
- 🌟 Auction launches at 9 a.m. Monday, Dec. 1
- 🌟 Bidding closes at 9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 5
- 🌟 Preview party (COVID-19 regulations permitting) to be held Sunday, Nov. 30 from 5 - 7 p.m. at Triple C Brewing, 2900 Griffith Street in Charlotte
- 🌟 Check it out! www.InReachColors.com

Windy O'Connor · Laura Quillen · Paige Robertson · Kami Rudisill

Colors for a Cause

Virtual Art Auction Supporting the Special Needs Community

Auction Sponsored by

INREACH

Empowering people with disabilities to live life their way

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Anne Shwedo Ruffy · Margaret Salisbury · Liz Shea · Lynn Sloan · Ashley Stewart · Stephany Templeton · Evelyn Henson · Keith Keim · Ted Lee · Jenny Lesser · Jennifer Levine · Natalie Linde · Lonnie Billard · Emily Bryant · Rhett Campbell · Lesley Grainger

“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’” ~ Fred Rogers, of Mr. Rogers Neighborhood



It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood.



Board Chair Charlie Stewart.



InReach Melody Makers.

Mr. Rogers opening song – “Won’t You Be My Neighbor” – began with the line, “It’s a beautiful day in this neighborhood, a beautiful day for a neighbor. Would you be mine? Could you be mine?” This is the theme of our 15th Annual Dream Maker event, held virtually for the first time. We celebrate throughout the program the joys derived from the friendships our InReach folks have forged with their neighbors, fellow group home residents, and many others. With many presenters of the online program donning red sweaters like our beloved Fred Rogers, viewers of this year’s Dream Maker’s event are treated to an uplifting message reminding all of us of the value in treating everyone with acceptance, understanding and kindness.



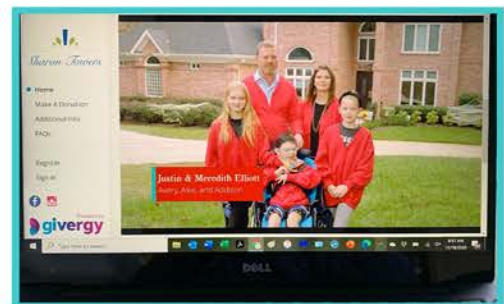
InReach President Lori Gougeon

This annual fundraiser typically provides more than \$200,000 in individual and corporate contributions, dollars that are needed to support a myriad of InReach programs. The proceeds of our 2020 Dream Maker fundraiser have been earmarked for a challenge that is wreaking havoc on the lives of so many across the county, but affecting none more significantly than the special needs community – the loss of jobs because of the pandemic. More than 70 percent of InReach’s previously-employed program participants have been furloughed or have endured a reduction in their work hours. The loss of income from a 20-25 hour a week job can mean less food on the table or being unable to pay rent.

Although we were unable to be together for our annual luncheon, we still belong to the same community of caring individuals – individuals who understand and appreciate the needs of our folks with intellectual and developmental disabilities are more significant now than ever. We hope you will consider digging deep in support of the hundreds of special people who depend upon InReach to keep their heads above water.

If you have not had the opportunity to view this little dose of happiness, please check it out at www.DreamMaker2020.com before Tuesday, Dec. 1.

You also can text Dream to 1-888-646-0646 to donate.



The Elliott Family.



Long-time InReach friend Larry Sprinkle of WCNC.

*“Would you be mine? Could you be mine?
Won’t you be my neighbor?”*



Give Thanks

with an End-of-the-Year Donation

In the midst of this pandemic as we all give thanks this holiday season, we hope you will consider making an end-of-the-year donation to support those we serve at InReach. Your tax-deductible gift will make a tremendously positive difference in the lives of some very special people at a very difficult time, and can be made in several simple ways:

- **Check** sent to InReach at 4530 Park Road, Suite 300, Charlotte, N.C. 28209
- **Online** via credit card at: <https://www.inreachnc.org/donate>
- **Gift cards** from Harris Teeter, Publix and Food Lion dropped off or sent to our office on Park Road will provide meals for those helped through our First In Families program
- **Amazon Smile** where your Amazon.com purchases can benefit InReach with just a few key strokes on your computer
 - Sign in to smile.amazon.com with your Amazon login information
 - Under “Your Account” select “Change your charity”
 - In the “Find Your Charity” search bar, type InReach and click “Search”
 - Click “Select” next to “InReach”
 - Shop away – and bookmark it

Thank you for caring about our friends with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For additional information, please contact Kathi Knier (kknier@inreachnc.org or 704.536.6661, ext. 418).



Perfect Holiday Gifts

If you're looking to do your holiday shopping online this year, and want to benefit some very special people, InReach has several unique, inexpensive gifts that will delight your friends, family and even your dogs.



Handmade InReach pottery.



Organic Dog Biscuits.



Handmade InReach pottery.

Check out these pieces and more at

<https://inreachcreativearts.square.site/s/shop>