

Inspired **GIVING**

Spring 2015

Benedictine Foundation

It's every grandmother's wish—to see her grandchild content and happy.

This was not always the case for one of our donors, Bette Kenzie, whose grandson Timothy, at age two, was non-verbal and diagnosed with severe autism. She recalls that when her grandson became an adolescent, he could open more doors and climb more fences. His autism began to create challenges that his parents could no longer handle at home.

Bette knew of Benedictine and after encouraging her daughter and son-in-law to visit, Timothy was enrolled in the school at age 14. She recalls that he was obviously happy there and wonderful changes began to occur. He began to communicate through an electronic device and soon began to participate in social events as part of the bigger Benedictine community. Bette comments, "Benedictine offers the caring and dignity that every child deserves. The school has a caring, personal approach. The children here are in a place where there are appropriate activities—things are geared to them and their needs." She adds, "The school has lived up to Sister Jeannette's goal for Timothy to be everything he can be. A major
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“BENEDICTINE OFFERS
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addition to his abilities is to be able to swim and be safe in the water. This has given him and his family great joy!”

At age 20, Timothy transitioned into one of Benedictine's group homes where he is learning important life skills. Soon, at age 21, he will graduate into a Benedictine adult group home and then go to work in the school's vocational program. Because there are a limited number of openings in the adult homes, his future housing has been uncertain. Bette, who has been a longtime contributor at the school, has decided to help underwrite the purchase and furnishing of a new group home for young adults.

She comments, “Benedictine is in my heart. Group homes play an important role in the lives of these children—giving them a safe haven to be themselves while also giving families peace of mind. Supporting education has always been one of my passions because it is where you can do the most to change people's lives.” She adds, “This gift will enable Timothy to stay in the Benedictine community and will help other families going down the same challenging path. It becomes a community gift.”

During a recent visit to see Timothy in his group home, Bette brought him cookies to share with the others in the house. He sat next to her on the sofa and held her hand. He also gave her a good-bye hug as she was leaving. She states, “This was only the second time he had ever initiated affection like this. It shows me that Timothy is content and happy. He was reaching out and sharing his happiness with me.”

Bette concludes, “This journey has been personal. It has touched my family's life in profound ways. I have been blessed over the years and it is now payback time. That is what makes this so gratifying.

I hope my gift will plant the seeds of giving for others who may want to support Benedictine—reaching out to help other families whose children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews need and deserve the same caring and dignity.”

Benedictine's Healing Touch

Hearing the words,
“We can help him”

still gives Kim Miranda chills when she recalls first bringing her son, Luke, who was then five years old, to the Benedictine School. For Kim, as with many other parents of children with the diagnosis of Down syndrome and Autism who are non-verbal, the frustration of not being able to help your child is overwhelming.

Luke was born with Down syndrome, and by age two, doctors began to suspect he was developing other serious disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and possibly Autism. By age four Luke's behaviors had become more unmanageable, and he was showing



“BENEDICTINE BELIEVES
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regression in all areas. At that point, Luke visited Kennedy Krieger and was formally diagnosed with Autism. Kim recalls, "He was so hyper and had figured out many different ways to escape from the house. We couldn't help him."

Luke's behavior was also affecting the other children in the family. Kim comments, "The other three children would melt into the woodwork when a crisis happened with Luke. Everything revolved around getting through the day with a special needs child."

The family began to look into the idea of a residential facility for Luke. Two doctors, independent of one another, recommended Benedictine. Kim remembers what a hard juncture it was realizing that she needed to take her five-year-old child to live somewhere else. She states, "The admissions staff gets how difficult this process is for parents. I felt they really cared and that they cared about me. The entire Benedictine community was behind me."

At the time, Luke was one of the youngest children to enter Benedictine. He came in the summer for one month to try it out. Kim recalls crying when leaving him and that

Sister Mary Agnes reassured her that there were mothers who cried every time they left their children at the school. When Kim came to get Luke one month later, he and his teacher were sitting at a table with a puzzle. He was able to show Kim what he could do.

She states, "I couldn't reach him, but they knew something I didn't know and were able to reach him." She adds, "That is when I said to myself,

"I don't know what they do at Benedictine, but it is special. They care about the heart of my child."

As time went on, Luke began to communicate even more with his family. His voice activation computer enabled him to speak. Eventually, he began to call Kim "Mom" with his own speaking voice. The schedule he keeps and jobs he does at Benedictine have given him a sense of pride. Now, at age 15, when he periodically comes home for a few days to spend time with the family, he likes to do cleaning jobs at the house. He uses communication applications on an iPad and Boardmaker to show the family what he is feeling.

Keeping a routine is very important to his family stays. Benedictine continues to give the family coping strategies to help manage Luke at home, which Kim has found to be very helpful over the years.

She comments, "Benedictine believes in the relationship between parents and children. Having a severely handicapped child can shatter your home. Once Luke could function in a structured environment, we got our family back." Since then, Kim has had another baby and Luke has been able to share in that joy.

Kim recalls what former Directress Sister Jeannette Murray, O.S.B., once said about raising a special needs child, "See them for who they are."

She adds, "There is a tender caring for these children. They have done this before and it's their calling at Benedictine. It has given us hope for the future and for that, I am eternally grateful."



making **Dreams** *come true*

Benedictine is well on its way to meeting this year's Annual Fund target of \$455,000—but we're not quite there yet.

If you've already given, thank you! If not, you have until June 30 to make a gift to the 2015 Annual Fund. Visit benschool.org to make a gift online or call Kate Rattie, Annual Fund Manager at **410-634-2292**.

\$455,000
goal
\$110,200
to go!

\$344,800
raised



Planning for the Future: Special Needs Trusts

Living “in the moment” may be a mantra of parents of special needs children.

Often overwhelmed by day-to-day decisions and activities, parents may feel intimidated when thinking about “tomorrow” and providing for their children’s future should they no longer be here to care for them.

Sanford “Sandy” Morhouse, a retired attorney, is the parent of a Benedictine adult, Skip. Skip, now 34 years of age, has been at Benedictine School since he was eight years old. Since age 21, he has lived in one of Benedictine’s adult homes in the community and worked at the school.

In thinking about his son’s future at Benedictine, Sandy used early estate planning to set up a special needs trust for Skip. He comments, “Every parent has the issue of providing for their children when the parents die. Parents of special needs kids realize the special responsibility they have in deciding the right option for them.”

There are many planned giving options available when setting up special needs trusts. Sandy encourages parents to think in terms of life insurance policies or variable annuity policies to help fund their children’s trusts, paying over time or paying in a lump sum with cash. He adds that extended family members can also donate to these trusts through

their wills or can have their life insurance policies go to the trust upon their death.

Items of daily living, such as social activities, clothing, and transportation are often not provided for by government sources. Thus, Sandy added an option to his son’s trust to pay for services to care for his son if the trustee was not satisfied with his son’s current residential care. Trusts can also be set up so that other children in the family can be the “eyes and ears” of the trust, working with the trustee to ensure that their sibling has all of their needs met.

Trusts can also be designed so that, after the special needs person is deceased, the remaining assets, or the residual trust, go to the other children in the family and their heirs or to the institution from which the special needs person benefitted. An institution like Benedictine can be a direct beneficiary of the trust.

Sandy reflects, “No one ever wishes to have a special needs child, but when you draw that card, it adds a tremendous amount to your life. Skip has been a special blessing to our family as has this school.”

Sandy’s passion for Benedictine has been evident in his roles as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation, as an active donor to Benedictine and as a member of the Emerald Society, Benedictine’s recognition organization for donors who have made gifts via their will or other types of estate gifts.



Good planning requires good information. We have it for you, online!

When you visit Benedictine’s Planned Giving website at benfoundgift.org you will find helpful estate planning information to assist you in creating the plan that is right for you.

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Click on “Learn About Wills” to watch short videos that explain why you need a will. You can also use our secure online “Wills Planner” to help you create your will. It will walk you through the entire process of creating your will and allow you to send it electronically to your attorney for completion.