

# ADULT SERVICES PROGRAM ADDRESSES CYCLE OF LIFE

One of the rites of passage upon reaching adulthood is leaving home and living independently. This transition can be challenging for adults with developmental disabilities.

Benedictine's Adult Services Program helps meet the multiple needs of persons ages 21 and over with developmental disabilities who have transitioned into independent adult living. By providing



“Benedictine has been  
*a godsend* for our daughter.”

high quality residential and vocational services to more than 100 adults living and working in Maryland, Benedictine has helped set the standards for a nurturing, compassionate environment in which adults with developmental disabilities can thrive.

“Benedictine has been a godsend for our daughter, Andrea,” says Don Jacques of Edgewater, Md.

“When she neared age 21, we knew we had to plan for her future and visited a number of facilities. What attracted us to the Benedictine program is its comfortable, clean homes, well-trained staff, and safe work environment.”

Don adds, “With multiple developmental disabilities and expressive language delay, Andrea had behavioral issues which could be challenging. After living in her current group home and working in her jobs, she can now comfortably go out into the community with us and can enjoy herself when visiting us.”

Andrea, now age 35, works at Benedictine's Blossoms Garden Center and the Training Center during the day and lives in her group home in Easton, Md. She remarks about Benedictine living, “I like socializing with my housemates, especially at meal time and dining out.”

Don, who is also a member of Benedictine's Board of Directors, recently whole-heartedly endorsed Andrea's lead house counselor Shirley Benson, who was nominated by her peers for the 2015 Sister Jeannette Murray Award. Shirley received the 2015 award at this year's Spring Benefit and was honored for exhibiting all of Benedictine's values in her everyday work. Shirley joined Benedictine in 1993. As a lead house counselor, she provides the

individuals in the group home where she works with support for daily living, including nutrition, personal hygiene, finance, and transportation. Shirley comments,

“The residents enjoy doing the things you and I enjoy doing—planning menus, grocery shopping, going to the bank and library, celebrating birthdays and having company over.”

“I am like a surrogate mom. When we grow up, we are supposed to leave home. The residents here have the best of both worlds—they are living independently with us, but have the support of a family. Everyone at Benedictine works closely together—working with the special needs population takes a team effort.”

Shirley started work as a floater counselor, demonstrating her willingness to work in all of Benedictine's homes at any given time. She views her current position not as a job but as a lifestyle, relying on her personal faith along the way.

According to Beth Mathis, director of adult services at Benedictine School, “The program began in 1982 and we've grown substantially over the years. We presently have group homes in Anne Arundel, Caroline and Talbot counties supporting people ages 21 to almost 70 years old. As the population of people supported aged, it was a dream of Sister Jeannette to offer

universally accessible homes and Benedictine built and opened two locations to meet these needs in 2013.” She adds, “As of July 1 of this year, we opened our eighteenth home, this one located in Easton, Md.”

Recently and moving forward, new residential models of care are being developed in addition to organization-operated homes across the U.S. These services will provide more support to families who are caring for loved ones in their own homes as well as for individuals who are living independently in their own homes. Vocational models may become more community-based as well, resulting in additional supported employment, the creation of entrepreneurial/micro-businesses, or customized employment opportunities provided by local employers.

In fact, Benedictine is one of six providers in the State of Maryland recently chosen to participate in a nationwide Federal Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program. As part of the program, Benedictine will further develop its vocational training and employment placement and coaching services for people with disabilities and share its expertise with other regional organizations that provide job training and job placement for individuals with disabilities. Under the pilot program, new residential models of care are being considered that would lessen agency-operated homes while providing more support to families who are caring for loved ones in their own homes and for individuals who are living independently in their own homes.

“Benedictine is very happy to have been selected to work on this important program with the Maryland Department of Disabilities and the U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Disability Employment Policy,” says Beth. “Benedictine has always valued the dignity of work and we are committed to transforming our work training programs to enhance employment and community-based outcomes. This mentoring program will allow us to share our experiences with other organizations that provide employment programs for people with disabilities. For new models of vocational services, Benedictine will expand on what we are currently doing, building on the business relationships we have developed through the Training Center and Benedictine businesses.”

Beth, who is the liaison working with local businesses to implement Benedictine’s new strategic plan components for Adult Services, adds, “We are working with our board and leadership team to create new cost models, while ensuring we do so in a fiscally responsible way that is consistent with our mission, vision and values.” She notes, “Regardless of the settings where we provide services, employees, like Shirley Benson, will continue to be pivotal in terms of the quality of life for our clients. This is what the Benedictine experience is all about.”



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## NEW STRATEGIC PLAN SETS EXCITING PATH FORWARD FOR BENEDICTINE

Positioning Benedictine as a leader in providing a continuum of services and programs to children and adults with developmental disabilities and autism, the Benedictine Board of Directors resoundingly adopted a new strategic plan earlier this year.

Following a year-long planning process, the new plan addresses quality of life issues for those served by the 55-year old organization as well as program efficiencies, diversification and fiscal stability.

“Over the past several years, Benedictine has experienced unprecedented change. The needs of the children and adults we serve are much more complex, government funding levels are stagnant or declining,” notes Thomas Collamore, vice president of the Benedictine Board of Directors and chair of its Strategic Planning Committee.

“Additionally, we have had executive leadership changes and the establishment of Benedictine as an independent organization. These changes in leadership and independence are positive and will help us assure the continuation of the work of the Sisters of St. Benedict well into the future,” Tom added.

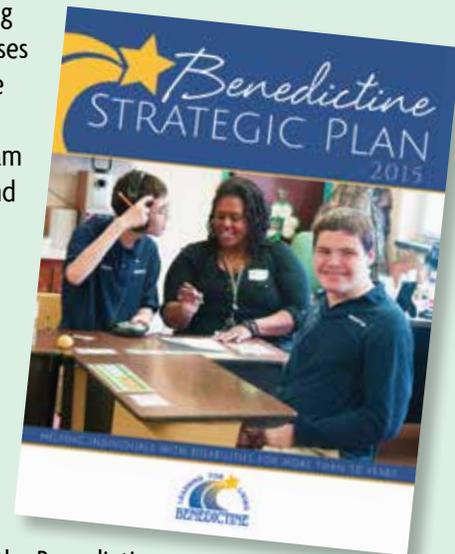
The new plan addresses five core focuses for Benedictine in the years ahead:

- School programming,
- School residential program,
- Adult services residential program,
- Vocational services, and
- Staffing.

There are three strategic areas delineated in the plan:

- Facilities and infrastructure
- Program enhancement and development, and
- Readiness requirements: people and structure.

A PDF copy of the Benedictine 2015 Strategic Plan can be downloaded from the Benedictine website [benschool.org](http://benschool.org) or call the Foundation Office at 410-634-2292 to receive a printed copy.



# Inspired GIVING

Fall 2015

Benedictine Foundation

## THE BOND BETWEEN TWO SISTERS

The love between Caila and Ashley Heffernan is like that of any sisters. They love to hang out together and to take selfies of the two of them together. When Ashley, age 28, decided she wanted to run in the November 8<sup>th</sup> *Across the Bay 10k*, her sister Caila, age 24, was delighted because the run benefits the organization that she now calls home—Benedictine.

Ashley had run a few 5ks before and decided to spend this summer training for the 10k with ten of her friends, some of whom are law students with her at the University of Baltimore School of Law and others who live in her home county, Queen Anne's County. Benedictine, which is one of the three major charities that the bridge run will support this year, is also selling

the race bibs for the event. Other major charities supported this year by the *Across the Bay 10k* include the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Bosom Buddies Charities. Ashley comments, "We wanted to work for a charity that meant something to us personally. My friends have known Caila for years and they wanted to support Benedictine, too."

Caila has been a part of Benedictine's Adult Services Program since she turned age 21. Prior to then, she lived at home with her parents and attended Queen Anne's County Public Schools. Today, she lives in one of the Benedictine's Open Community homes and works in the adult vocational program. Ashley comments about her sister, "The amount she has grown and matured since joining the program is amazing. She loves working in the greenhouse and the flower shop and living with friends has really made her thrive. She is loving life there."

Ashley also states that the change has been wonderful for her and for her parents, who have been Caila's caregivers all of her life. They all find that they are worrying less about Caila's well-being and that Benedictine's Open Community Program has given the family a sense of normalcy.

*(continued)*



Pictured left to right are Ashley Heffernan, Caila Heffernan, and Ashley's best friend Tesia Zajac Dixon. Ashley and Tesia are part of "Beast's Besties" group running in the *Across the Bay 10k*—the Chesapeake Bay bridge run—on November 8, 2015, in honor of Ashley's sister Caila who is a resident in Benedictine's Open Community Program. Benedictine is one of the three major charities supported by this year's *Across the Bay 10k*.

*"The amount she has grown and matured since joining the Open Community Program is AMAZING."*



When it came time for Ashley to name her running group for the upcoming *Across the Bay 10k*, she thought of her sister Caila, who over the years has been nicknamed “The Beast.” The group’s name then became “Beast’s Besties.” It just fit. Since then, the group has sold sponsorships for the team shirts and already has five businesses supporting them—Callahan’s Gas & Appliances of Centreville, the Subway in Ridgely, Md., GS Proctor & Associates, Inc., of Annapolis, Heffernan Properties, LLC, of Queenstown, Md., and Dixon’s Furniture Auction in Crumpton, Md.

Ashley adds, “Caila is so excited that we are running for her and for Benedictine. We are all wearing pink shirts that day so she will see us at the finish line.”



Across the Bay 10k Benefits Benedictine  
November 8, 2015

“A walk through Benedictine’s campus convinced our team that this was a cause worth running for,” noted *Across the Bay 10k* co-founder Peter Paris of Chesapeake Bay Bridge Run, LLC, in announcing that Benedictine is a lead charitable cause supported by the, run across the Bay Bridge.

Runners can purchase race bibs directly from Benedictine at the special price of \$60 per person. To purchase a bib, contact Mary Taylor at [mtaylor@benschool.org](mailto:mtaylor@benschool.org) or call 410-634-2292. Bibs can also be purchased online at [benschool.org](http://benschool.org).

## MORE THAN A LOVE OF MOTORCYCLES AND CARS

Spud Blake has a heart for Benedictine. A retired deputy chief of police for the Prince George’s County Police Department and former chief of staff for the Maryland State Police, Spud founded Benedictine’s Chrome City Ride 14 years ago after running a similar event on the western shore.

Over the last 14 years, the event has raised \$1.7 million for Benedictine from bikers, classic car enthusiasts and sponsors of the event and has grown to include registration locations in Seaford, Del., Easton, Laurel, Salisbury and Annapolis.

Spud recalls, “I co-founded the statewide Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS) Ride with Colonel David B. Mitchell, the superintendent of Maryland State Police, and John “Rodney” Bartlett, president of the Maryland State Fraternal Order of Police, and chaired that event for eight years. My law enforcement friends who worked with me on the (COPS) event were aware that my sister, Barbara, is a resident in a Benedictine home and asked me why we hadn’t done a similar event for the organization,” says Spud, a member of the Benedictine Board of Trustees and chair of Chrome City Ride.

That spark of an idea became a flame after Spud presented the idea to Benedictine’s then Executive Director Sister Jeannette



“We had looked all over  
BENEDICTINE

SAVE the DATE  
*Spring Benefit*  
April 30, 2015 at The Tidewater Inn



Murray. She loved the idea because the event involved the kids and participants could actually come and see Benedictine, the beneficiary of the Ride. It eventually became her favorite event of the year.

“It has been very heartwarming for me to see

what the community does for Benedictine during this event. Each year more and more parents and loved ones get involved and it's nice for them to see this support,” Spud comments.

Spud's family's journey to Benedictine began in 1999 when he brought his mother to see the campus after the urging of a family friend whose daughter was at Benedictine. Spud's younger sister, Barbara, is developmentally disabled and was being cared for by his mother, who was then in her 70s. The family needed to make decisions about Barbara's future and Benedictine fit the criteria as they began to search for Barbara's next home.

Spud reflects, “We had looked all over the country. Benedictine is first-class. The residents of Benedictine are treated with so much dignity. It has been a fantastic place for Barbara and for our family.”

After Barbara arrived at Benedictine, Spud's mother immediately got involved and struck up a friendship with Sister Jeannette. The two became friends immediately and ironically, died within two months of one another in 2013. Spud remarks, “Sister Jeannette rode in on a motorcycle for the Chrome City Ride. For me, this ride honors both my mother and Sister Jeannette, who left a tremendous legacy at Benedictine.”

One of Sister Jeannette's dreams was to have a place for individuals that would take them into their senior years. For Spud's sister Barbara, this means living and working in Benedictine's Adult Services Program. Barbara, now 58, lives in a group home in Ridgely and works at Sweetly Made, the Benedictine retail store in Denton, and in other employment positions at Benedictine.

For Spud, it's the peace of mind he and his family have knowing that Barbara is safe and enjoying life at Benedictine. He comments, “I am blessed to be a part of all of this.”

## BENEDICTINE SCHOOL TAKES AN ENTREPRENEURIAL APPROACH TO LEARNING

Walking through the Benedictine School, you may see Tai Chi being practiced, juggling instruction, iPads being used to communicate, or students working in the Healthy Way Café. These are all instructional methods employed by Benedictine staff to teach students functional academics and leisure, independent living, and coping skills so that they can access the communities where they live in new and exciting ways.

Lorraine Slama, assistant principal and a special education teacher at Benedictine, now in her 28<sup>th</sup> year at the school, comments “Benedictine is different in that we tailor our teaching to the individual needs and interests of each of our students. We can be both adaptable and flexible in our approaches to teaching.” She adds, “The daily successes that our children have help to transform them and their communication and social skills.”

As a certified recreational therapist, Lorraine has used a number of creative approaches. She references finding a child's passion for something, like an interest in dinosaurs, horses, or photography, and using that interest to help him or her connect to the world.

“Our program is highly individualized, which is true in only a minority of residential schools.”

She recalls teaching juggling to Benedictine students to help improve their reading scores. The students in turn taught juggling to other school children which helped improve their own self-esteem.

One of the school's most interesting programs is “Learning Independence for Everyday Skills (L.I.F.E.)” and its Healthy Way Café—a snack bar staffed by Benedictine students. The Café provides healthy eating options for Benedictine's staff while teaching Benedictine students communication and social skills, along with vocational skills like money handling. Some students made aprons for the Café, which taught them cutting and sewing skills.

Lorraine adds, “The students coming to Benedictine today have more behavioral challenges and need more guidance. Because

ver the country.  
BENEDICTINE is *first-class*.”



According to Julie, success at Benedictine can be measured in a variety of ways. Examples include a child making eye contact and speaking for the first time; a child functioning without behavioral issues in a public space; or a child communicating to others through a device like an iPad.

Benedictine's curriculum is an extension of Maryland's public school curriculum, meeting the Maryland Common Core State Curriculum Standards. Benedictine's Unique Learning System aligns with the Common Core and is modifiable to students at any level. The school, however, goes beyond the traditional education needs of its students. As a residential facility, Benedictine carries the strategies used in the

classrooms into the residence halls to reinforce approaches. Behavior plans are always adapted to the current needs of the students and change as the students change. Parents of children who are not residents at Benedictine are also provided with behavior plans to reinforce strategies at home.

Julie comments, "We want to educate the 'entire' child so each will have a meaningful and productive life. This can present an opportunity, as well as a challenge. The national trend today is for students to return to their homes and to assimilate into their home communities after they graduate from high school. We focus on preparing our students for these roles and empower them to take care of themselves."

She adds, "Benedictine fosters staff members who care a lot and can think creatively about the needs of the students and adults we serve. Lorraine is an example of the staff who is constantly thinking out of the box and creating a high quality educational experience here. People see it and feel it immediately when they visit us."

these students do not have a lot of choices in their lives, we create a teaching environment which gives them choices and empowers them."

Computers and individual iPads are part of the up-to-date technology at Benedictine which helps students communicate what they need, especially for children who are on the autism spectrum. Benedictine's "Structured Teaching Approach to Readiness Skills (S.T.A.R.S.)" utilizes assistive technology to encourage independence and increase a student's readiness to learn. The Pictello, an iPad program, enables students to speak into the iPad, decreasing their frustration and helping them access learning, while SMART Boards provide interactive programs that help students enjoy learning more.

In addition to technology, classrooms incorporate relaxation techniques like Tai Chi and acupressure. Classical music and lavender diffusers help provide a calm and positive environment for learning. Julie Hickey, principal and education director at Benedictine, adds, "Our program is highly individualized, which is true in only a minority of residential schools."

Julie goes on to explain that Benedictine's 100-person school team includes a number of highly-qualified master's-prepared special educators, behavior specialists, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and vocational coordinators. Fifty percent of the staff are ancillary paraprofessionals. Benedictine's multi-disciplinary team brings a variety of skill sets to the classroom providing creativity in their teaching approaches, whether it is utilizing therapeutic riding for physical therapy or meal preparation for life skills training.

Julie adds, "The students that come to Benedictine have a lot going on—behaviorally, academically and medically—and we have a greater non-verbal population today. Our staff has to be creative and dedicated in their approach to teaching. As a team we offer more to each child and ultimately have a greater effect on each child's success."

*Where miracles happen...*

## Thank you to our donors!

Friends of Benedictine helped us raise \$413,000 for the fiscal year 2015 Annual Fund campaign.

The campaign concluded on June 30. Annual Fund makes it possible for Benedictine to offer superior programs and services to our more than 200 children and adults with developmental disabilities—many with autism.

Annual Fund supports tuition assistance for those in need, educational program enhancements for the kids and adults served by Benedictine as well as new technology and equipment for our community living options, supported employment services, vocational training and special education programs.

**Use the enclosed envelope to make a gift to Benedictine or visit our website at [benschool.org](http://benschool.org) to make a gift online.**