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THANKS ALLEN EDWIN!

Allen Edwin Homes builds community and supports the work that the Volunteer Center of Greater Kalamazoo is doing to connect people with community through volunteering. We extend special thanks to Allen Edwin Homes for their support of our mission and their sponsorship of printing this publication. It is community partners such as Allen Edwin Homes, that enable the Volunteer Center to connect 10,500 individuals with volunteer opportunities.



We value what you value.

For more information, please contact us at:
709-A S. Westnedge Ave. Kalamazoo, MI 49007
269.382.8350 phone 269.382.8362 fax www.volunteerkalamazoo.org

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO HELP OTHERS IN NEED

In 1998, Benjamin Flaten was assaulted, leaving him with a severe head injury that affected his ability to walk and challenged his brain to process information. Soon thereafter, while still recovering from the injury, he was involved in a serious car accident. He was told he wouldn't walk again.

His determination has lead him not only to walk again, but to dedicate his life to serving and helping others.

"I don't feel pain when I'm helping others," Ben said at a recent interview with the Kalamazoo Gazette. "I hope my story inspires others to do good as well," he said.

Ben was awarded a 2010 STAR Award in the Young Adult Volunteer category for his service to Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo Dog Training Club, People's Food Co-op Harvest Fest, Rock and Mineral Club, Kalamazoo Blues Festival, Camp Discovery and the Kalamazoo Nature Center to name a few.

Ben and his service dog, an American Bulldog



Ben Flaten and his service dog Pearl.

Photo Courtesy of Sam Zomer / Excerpts Courtesy of Kalamazoo Gazette

"I don't feel pain when I'm helping others."

shows through with some fanciful designs on eager young faces." Not only do the kids enjoy it, but Ben does too. "To see the joy on a kid's face is wonderful," he said. "I just love to experience that joy."

What inspired Ben to become so involved? "I suppose another reason I chose to volunteer was since I lost my ability to work after the injury, it made a new way to become part of the world all-over. Pearl and I are having a chance to help others in need."

To learn more about Ben and the other STAR Award winners, please visit: www.volunteerkalamazoo.org.

named Pearl, spend a lot of their time at the Kalamazoo Nature Center, where Ben feels at home. He spends time presenting information in a way that captures the attention of his audience, both young and old, and compels them to learn something new about nature. He even paints young KNC visitor's faces.

Sarah Hopkins of the Kalamazoo Nature Center said "Ben excels at face painting. He is quite artistic and this talent



HARD AT WORK IN KALAMAZOO

Most days at the Volunteer Center, we begin by answering phone calls from people in the community that are looking for information about how they can volunteer. It's energizing to talk with people who are eager to help others and are looking for ways to share their talents in a meaningful way.

The need for volunteers is great and diverse. This is evident when we review the hundreds of active volunteer jobs listed on our website. There are children that need tutoring, frail elders that need compassionate visitors, animals that need shelter and protection from abuse, food pantries that need hands to deliver food to those in need, and so many more.

Many people ask what we do at the Volunteer Center and to explain we decided to share some memorable comments with you.



Pfizer Employee Day of Caring Project.

We had a wonderful experience working at the Portage Community Center. Not only were we able to “beautify” the outdoors, but it was rewarding for those of us who participated and created teamwork as well. Thank you for the opportunity! ~Julie P.

The Volunteer Center is the lightning rod that conducts all the wonderful energy of volunteerism that makes Kalamazoo such an electrifying place. Keep up the excellent work. ~John S.

Volunteering through the VolunTEENS program has been an amazing experience for me. I've volunteered in the Borgess ER, the Portage District Library's Summer Reading Program, Kalamazoo Valley Museum, and Big Brothers Big Sisters through VolunTEENS. Each experience was as fun and rewarding as the next. I'm incredibly thankful for the opportunity. ~Isabella W.

As we work to connect volunteers to the causes that need them, we depend upon your generous support. You can ensure that volunteerism remains a vital part of our community for years by making your gift today. Use the form below or make a secure donation online at www.volunteerkalamazoo.org.

YES! I want to support the programs and services of the Volunteer Center by making a tax-deductible contribution. Charitable Tax ID #: 382026621

Please Accept My Gift of: \$500___ \$250___ \$100___ \$50___ \$25___ Other___

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

My Check is Enclosed (payable to the Volunteer Center of Greater Kalamazoo)

Please Bill My: VISA MasterCard Credit Card Number: _____

Exp. Date: _____ 3 digit # on back of card (V-#): _____

Name as it appears on card: _____

Billing Address: _____ City: _____ State/Zip: _____



STRETCH YOUR DONATION

Did you know that the Volunteer Center has an endowment fund at the Kalamazoo Community Foundation? Did you also know that when you make a donation to the endowment, the contribution may be worth up to three times the actual expense? Thanks to the Michigan Community Foundation Tax Credit, you can multiply the effects of your charitable gifts and receive a generous tax credit on your state taxes. Please consider making a donation to the Volunteer Center through the *Volunteer Center George Romney Endowment Fund*. Please visit www.kalfound.org for more information.

VOLUNTEER TO GOLF!

The Volunteer Center's golf outing on August 13, 2010 is a tremendous opportunity to kick back and enjoy a day in the sun with friends. Tee it up on a beautiful course, featuring some truly spectacular holes at the Lynx Golf Course in Otsego. You'll have the opportunity to win some great prizes through our raffle and 50/50 drawing. Stick around afterwards to enjoy lunch, reflect on the great shots you made and learn about the Volunteer Center. Special thanks to our sponsor BDN Industrial Hygiene Consultants, celebrating their 30th Anniversary, for their continued support of the Volunteer Center's programs. For registration, more information and how to donate, please visit: www.volunteerkalamazoo.org. All proceeds benefit the Volunteer Center.



YOU ARE INVITED!

We would like to cordially invite you to the Volunteer Center of Greater Kalamazoo's Annual Meeting. Join us in celebrating the past 45 years of the Volunteer Center and learn more about the history of the organization and what is new at the Volunteer Center today. We have important new updates to share with you and want to hear from you on how we can be a resource to our community. The Volunteer Center Annual Meeting will be held Tuesday, November 16, 2010. Contact us for more details and location. We'd love to reconnect with you! Light refreshments will be served.



Kalamazoo Drop-In Childcare Center.

ROTARY SUPPORTS VOLUNTEERISM

A special thanks to Bruce Heleniak and the Gull Lake Rotary for their recent donation to the Volunteer Center. Both the Volunteer Center and Gull Lake Rotary are committed to excellence through continued service to those in need. "We are extremely pleased to financially support the online volunteer-match, board training, VolunTEENS program, and STAR Awards which your organization offers to individuals in the Kalamazoo area" said Bruce Heleniak. "We salute the Volunteer Center...you truly epitomize our Club motto: 'Service above Self.'"

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Chris Sizemore,
Executive Director

One question we often ask new volunteers is: what interests you? Changing the world? Making a difference? Relieving suffering? At the Volunteer Center, we are in the “helping people, help people” business.

We continue to connect individuals to organizations to make a difference through volunteerism. In the end, each volunteer makes a huge difference, not just to the organization, but to the constituency served by the organization. Do you see the positive change in the community made by your efforts? Consider volunteering at a new organization or start volunteering for the first time. Not sure where to start? Call us, stop by the office or search our website (www.volunteerkalamazoo.org) for new opportunities. We want to help you get involved in your community.

~Chris

VOLUNTEENS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

It was only Lindsay’s first day as a VolunTEEN at the Kalamazoo Drop-In Child Care Center, but she had already learned two important lessons: “Not many kids like to go down for naps,” and “Every single day at the Drop-In Center is different.”

Breanna was finishing up her first week as a volunteer and says, “It’s actually pretty fun!” Breanna chose the Drop-In Center because she wants to open her own baby sitting business and has big dreams of becoming a teacher. “Volunteering with the children has reassured me that I want to teach.”

Breanna and Lindsay, both middle school students, are discovering the joys of volunteering relatively early in life. By engaging students early, the VolunTEENS program seeks to turn teens into lifelong volunteers, by giving them a glimpse into the needs of the community while allowing them to gain experience for applications and resumes, explore career options and have fun.

“Volunteering with the children has reassured me that I want to teach.”

Lindsay summed up her draw to the program: “I thought, this might be fun actually! Instead of just spending my summer sitting at home staring at the fan blades.” Both girls plan to explore volunteering next year, as well. “It’ll depend on my interests next year, but I like it at the Drop-In Center.”

To learn more about the VolunTEENS program or view the more than 200 year-round opportunities for students, visit www.volunteerkalamazoo.org.



Lindsay Ann Norris and Breanna Bizzell volunteer at The Drop-in Childcare Center.

DISABILITY NETWORK ACHIEVES EXCELLENCE

Achieving Excellence as a Nonprofit Organization has always been an objective at Disability Network Southwest Michigan, however last December a BoardConnect® workshop by the same name brought together board members and staff to participate in a collective learning experience that resulted in positive changes in the governance of their organization.

“Having all of our board members at the workshop brought real value and helped them to understand the Roles & Responsibilities of serving on the board,” said Joel Cooper, Executive Director at Disability Network SWMI. “It was really convenient to have the Volunteer Center trainers come to our site on a regularly scheduled board meeting night. All of our board members found value in the training, even those who have served 4-5 years.” Disability Network now requires all incoming board members to attend BoardConnect training.

The most immediate change in procedures was implementing the use of a consent agenda. Now instead of spending hours reviewing committee meeting minutes they are able to focus on present and future needs. “Using the consent agenda changed our world,” says Joel. “The volume of information we process can be overwhelming and at our last meeting we had 12 items on the consent agenda and we addressed them all in 3 minutes!”

“This training has resulted in the biggest positive change that I’ve experienced in nine years.”

“I can’t tell you the significance of how the training has changed the level of board engagement at board meetings and in committee work. Engaging our board members in this training has resulted in the biggest positive change that I’ve experienced in the nine years that I’ve been here. The change has set the right climate, we have good board members that are engaged, and now we’re ready to do effective strategic planning.”

Looking for a similar experience as Joel and Disability Network?

Please call us for more information at 269-382-8350.



SENIORS ROCK!

Back in January we (Curious Kids) listed *Senior Rockers* as a volunteer need. We were looking for grandmotherly/fatherly people who would rock babies and play with toddlers. After using the Volunteer Center’s services, we had an awesome response from people, some who found a place to fulfill a passion they have for working with children.

“After using the Volunteer Center’s services, we had an awesome response from people.”

We now have five wonderful Senior Rockers who come on a weekly basis. They are forming loving relationships with the children as well as friendships with our staff. What a blessing these people are! Thanks Volunteer Center!

~ Kathy Silva, Curious Kids