

TWP CONNECTS

WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 24

Connecting people with disabilities to the resources they need

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2021 Year in Review

In everything we do, The Whole Person (TWP) shows who we are, what our mission is, and how our services impact both the general community and of all the people with disabilities who reside here.

The 2021 fiscal year saw The Whole Person take bold steps forward to increase the quality and scope of our work. The growth and expansion of the programs and services we offer have been made possible by the generous financial and volunteer support of the individuals, corporations, foundations, organizations, and agencies involved in TWP's independent living mission.

In 2021, The Whole Person **served over 2,274 people** with disabilities, providing information and **referrals for 3,000+ people** with disabilities and their families. Our staff and board continue to work toward common goals focused on the philosophy and practices that empower people with disabilities to exert influence, choice, and control in every aspect of their life. Through a myriad of community collaborations, TWP works to ensure that people with disabilities are fully integrated into the community.

TWP's staff and board join together in expressing gratitude for the organization's growth and influence this past year and excitement for the good things to come in 2022.

Consumer Directed Services



Consumer Jackie benefitted from our Home Modification Services this year.

Greetings from TWP's Consumer Directed Services Team! Our work is the "backbone" of the organization's effort to ensure that Missouri residents with significant physical disabilities can hire

and manage their own Personal Care Attendants and live as independently as possible. During the recently concluded fiscal year, **CDS served more than 1,400 people with disabilities** through the dedicated work of our Independent Living Advocates (ILAs).

TWP's ILAs recognize that our work comprises a significant part of Consumer Directed Services and the mission of connecting people with disabilities to the resources they need, and we are committed to keeping things moving smoothly into the new fiscal year. While additional ILAs are recruited for this important work, the skills exhibited by our current staff are nothing short of AMAZING and deserve a well-earned round of applause. WAY TO GO TEAM!!!!

Continued on page 2



Be the one
to create
**positive
change**
for people with
disabilities
in Kansas City.

See page 7

Take the challenge:
thewholeperson.org/B1

MISSION

The Whole Person connects people with disabilities to the resources they need by supporting independent choice and advocating for positive change in the community.

VISION

The Whole Person envisions a fully accessible community where opportunities and choices are not limited by disability.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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An accessible PDF, screen reader compatible file, is available in the newsletter archive on our website.

2021 Review *Continued from page 1*

Employment Services



Employment Services offers personal help.

TWP's Employment Services department faced unique COVID-19 challenges this past year. Since the onset of the pandemic, the employment team came up with creative ways to meet the needs of job seekers with disabilities as COVID-19 challenges continued. **Employment services are now growing virtually, and job readiness activities have increased.** When the pandemic first appeared, many consumers' employment goals were put on hold. Then as COVID-19 challenges lessened, those goals were reinstated. Referrals for consumers seeking job placement services have continued to increase. With the job market expanding at this time, our team is hopeful that placements will grow at an ever-increasing rate.

Core Services



Deaf Peer Support Group.

TWP, a Center for Independent Living, offers specific core services for people with disabilities.

Blind and Low Vision

Blindness-Low Vision Experience has weathered the pandemic thanks to Zoom, which created opportunities for people to participate in activities regardless of their access to transportation. Recent efforts to get back to in-person activities resulted in a **TWP-sponsored beep kickball tournament** on October 9th and a **tandem bike ride** on October 31st in partnership with BikeWalk KC. A float trip with the MO Department of Conservation has been rescheduled for May 21, 2022.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

This program has **hosted five "Sipping and Signing" events** at four local coffee shops (Blip Roasters, Café Ca Phe, Café Corazon, and Homer's) for Deaf and hearing people to mingle. They also offered three Basic ASL workshops for baristas from various coffee shops at Blip Roasters. Micki Keck, Deaf Services Advocate, was featured on local news programs twice and in a local Latino newspaper about bringing the Deaf and hearing communities together. Bar K 2 provided the space for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Days twice in the past year.

Also, TWP's Deaf and Hard of Hearing staff **taught four community ASL (American Sign Language) classes** in the past year, with more people with hearing loss signing up than in the past. Participants from the local community included a reporter from KMBC, employees from KC Streetcar, museum educators from The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, a local celebrity children's illustrator, volunteers from local domestic violence shelters, and many more. Staff also taught a Junior ASL class this past summer. The team hosted a Deaf intern who was introduced to various Deaf organizations via Zoom.

TWP Programs and Services

- Independent Living Services
- Consumer Directed Services
- Employment Services
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services
- Individual and Systems Advocacy
- Telecommunications Access Program
- Benefits Enrollment Center
- Kansas Resident Services
- Transition Services
- The Whole Family Project
- Blindness Low Vision Experience
- Youth and Adult Services
- Adaptive Sports
- Legal Services

The intern also collaborated in a community project for Blip Roasters, read and discussed books and articles about disabilities, and helped to facilitate the Junior ASL class.

Money Follows the Person

The MFP department **completed 18 transitions** this year and had 12 consumers successfully reach the end of their MFP year. This means **12 people with disabilities moved out of a nursing home and into a home of their choice in the community.** This year, TWP's MFP staff participated in Missouri Assistive Technology's Robotic Pet project, helping two of our consumers reduce feelings of isolation during this time of COVID-19. The Transition Specialists also supervised two level II occupational therapy assistant students from Washburn University.

Youth Services



Pre-Employment Transition class.

One of the highlights of working in Youth Services is presenting an **eight-week transitional course for students with disabilities at their high school.** The goals for our consumers are to become more comfortable with their disabilities and think about how they can advocate for themselves. TWP's Youth Services staff offer the students resources and the skills they need to succeed when transitioning out of high school. We enjoy engaging with a diverse student population who have a wide range of disabilities. Reaching out to the schools has been rewarding in terms of building relationships with students and teachers.

The partnership between The Whole Person and Vocational Rehabilitation continues to see **growth and success in the Peer Mentoring program.** The young people with disabilities who participate in this program are able to work one on one with a mentor to set goals that will help them in their personal career development. While working with a mentor to research these areas and explore possibilities for their future, they can safely navigate the challenges teenage life brings

with a trusted person. Participating consumers credit their success to the relationships they have built and the skills they have learned through the program.

Summer Pre-Employment Transition 2021 classes were held in-person at TWP and on Zoom. There was excitement at TWP as we welcomed six students into the class in July-August. Speakers from the community provided the students with a clear path on how to become and to remain a good employee. The students learned about employers' expectations, how to dress for an interview, how to construct a resume, and the difference between hard and soft skills – important factors in getting and keeping their dream job. Missouri Connection was introduced to the students as a resource to search out different careers. The class ended with the students creating a vision board.

Housing



TWP partners with Habitat for Humanity to help people with disabilities obtain housing.

Wow! What a year this has been in the housing world at TWP. We had a wonderful expansion of our housing services, partnerships, and even developments to place consumers.

We also **expanded our real estate and homeownership services** for Kansas. For anyone living in Kansas or Missouri who is interested in the prospect of homeownership, contact Travis Rash or The Whole Person to get that process started. We can connect individuals to homes they will own, provide guidance on the homebuying process, and offer connections to financial resources for homeownership.

TWP's Habitat for Humanity partnership is another great way to connect individuals with disabilities to a home that they own. We will finish two additional houses this year. One of the homes was featured in a recent article in the Kansas City Star. The article highlighted several important areas

of improvement citywide for individuals with disabilities, including housing. The Whole Person is proud to contribute to the development of affordable and accessible housing. This particular home will be built with the specific consumer's needs in mind, from the ground up.

We have also **expanded our relationship with additional affordable housing developments** in the Kansas City metro to include many affordable options.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call 816-561-0304, or email travis at: travisr@thewholeperson.org

Resource Development

Collaborative partnerships are key to the success of our Resource Development department. Through working relationships that include **referrals and participation in cross-disability committees, task forces, health fairs, advisory councils, and both in-person and virtual speaking engagements,** TWP shared our mission and message of empowerment, independence, self-reliance, and integration of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

Our annual **Expressions Art Exhibition** flourished in 2021, traveling to five locations throughout the metro to showcase the artworks of seventeen artists with disabilities. A workshop for Expressions artists with Master Artist Chico Sierra provided insights for building a successful career in the arts. **The Accessible Arts Greater Kansas City (AAGKC)** Roundtable initiative was developed in partnership with the Missouri Arts Council to improve the Kansas City arts environment by engaging people with all types of disabilities in meaningful arts experiences. Participants are metro arts organizations and artists of all abilities who are invited to share ideas and advocate for greater arts accessibility.

Resources from grants brought in \$168,080 for programs and services, not including Independent Living grants and a new two-year grant from the National Council on Aging for TWP's Benefits Enrollment Center. Resource Development grant funders included the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation for wheelchair tennis; the State Street Foundation and John W. Speas & Effie E. Speas Memorial Trust, Bank of America N.A. Trustee for Employment Services; Oppenstein Brothers

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Foundation, Commerce Bank N.A. Trustee, for The Whole Family Project; Health Forward Foundation for adaptive sports; R. A. Long Foundation for Youth Services; Soroptimists International KC for cleaning and hygiene supplies for women; and ArtsKC, Missouri Arts Council, and Francis Family Foundation for Expressions 2021. July's inaugural **Big Dill Classic Pickleball and Cornhole Tournament** gave TWP exposure to share our message to a new audience about our adaptive sports programming. The annual fundraising gala continues to spotlight the work of organizations and individuals who live the mission of TWP each day. (Read more about this event on page 6.)

TWP can continue to grow and provide more opportunities for consumers to gain and retain their independence thanks to the many individuals, businesses, foundations, and organizations that generously supported our work during the 2021 fiscal year. We thank you.

Volunteer Program



Volunteers help with Planting Independence.

Volunteering has returned!!! After some very trying times, TWP volunteers have finally been able to get out of their homes and offer hands-on help for our projects again. TWP volunteers got to assist over 30 of our consumers living with disabilities with their yard work in April. We also had a fun-filled pickleball/cornhole tournament, then wrapped up the year with our fundraising gala. In addition to helping with events, volunteers performed many more tasks around the TWP office. None of this could be possible without the wonderful, dedicated people who lend a hand in these important ways. **In FY 2021 we had over 300 volunteers performing over 2,000 hours of community service** by helping TWP and our consumers. We would like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt Thank You.

Public Policy



Representatives from our area are always willing to listen to consumer's concerns.

Like everyone else, the TWP Public Policy Department has had to adjust how we've continued to advocate for people with disabilities during the pandemic. We went virtual!

At the city level, we wrote a letter to the Mayor of Kansas City, Missouri advocating for the removal of a local law that allowed police to stop anyone for mundane reasons like walking or having dirty bicycle tires, which clearly did not interfere with public safety. And it passed! This was an important win because it decreases the potential for unnecessary interactions between law enforcement and black/marginalized people with disabilities.

At the state level, staff and consumers responded to **our Call to Action** as we asked Missouri elected officials to **increase funding for the Consumer Directed Services program**. Although the proposed increase was removed by the Governor in the state budget, we still sent a very clear message to legislators that was heard across the state about the importance of this program for people with disabilities.

At the federal level, our **TWP Advocates in Action** group learned about important matters such as becoming their own patient healthcare advocate. The group also contacted federal senators and representatives to support increased funding for home and community based services.

We invite you to provide feedback and participate in all upcoming events or opportunities for civic engagement in 2022.

Advocates in Action meetings occur virtually on the fourth Tuesday of each month

from 2:00-4:00 pm via Zoom. For more information, contact Kendra Burgess at kburgess@thewholeperson.org.

Social Security

The Social Security Administration has closed their offices to visitors as a result of the COVID-19-19 pandemic. However, they continue to process applications and hold hearings. Processing applications has slowed somewhat with an average wait time of about eight months for a decision on an initial application.

Currently Social Security is holding hearings by video using Microsoft Teams. While there have been some technical issues, the technology has allowed Administrative Law Judges to hear testimony of claimants and their witnesses remotely, decide cases and award benefits.

Throughout the year, The Whole Person has **provided legal representation on Social Security Disability claims and appeals**. We have assisted with the process of gathering information and documentation necessary to file initial applications. In addition, we have prepared and presented cases on appeal to the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review.

The Social Security Administration continues to allow initial claims to be filed online. Appeals and the submission of evidence on appeal can also be done online. There is no fee for filing an application or an administrative appeal.

Guardianship

The Whole Person **provided legal representation in guardianship cases in Missouri courts** throughout the year. In order to proceed with a petition to serve as guardian and/or conservator, it is necessary to obtain a letter from a doctor to establish that an individual has an impairment that prevents them from being able to safely manage their own affairs. In order to file for guardianship, courts require payment of a filing fee. Filing fees vary from county to county and range from \$93.00 in Cass to \$230.00 in Clay County. The Whole Person charges attorney fees on a sliding scale basis depending on household income. Depending on income, fees range from \$100.00 to \$750.00.

Home Health Care/ In Home Care



Billboards in the Kansas City area advertise the Home Health program.

What a wonderful crazy year 2021 has been for in home services and home health care at TWP! We have really grown and developed a great team who are patient-centered and really try to deliver the mission of The Whole Person. We have been able to provide services for many current consumers while continuing to bring new. Some of our nurses have seen their home health patients be able to transition to in-home care nursing to assure they are getting their needs met. We have collaborated with TWP's Money Follows the Person team to **help bridge the gap between nursing home-level care and home**. This is a particularly vulnerable population because they have to find where to get their medications and get established with a community doctor to fill their prescriptions and meet their health care needs. We were able to utilize part of a **nursing home transition grant from the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation** to assist a client with paralysis who had ongoing needs associated with her disability. 2021 has been a rewarding year for both departments at TWP and we can't wait to tackle whatever 2022 brings us!

Consumer Benefits

The Consumer Benefits program has been busy this year adding new services.

The first addition is our **partnership with Kansas City Medicine Cabinet**. KCMC assists persons to obtain medical equipment, prescriptions, and other health necessities to remain independent in the community. We have just completed training with their staff and are able to issue vouchers for qualifying members in the community.

The second new program is our **collaboration with Neuro Community Care**, which provides services for post 9/11

veterans with a neurological diagnosis. Their partnership with Wounded Warriors provides funding for community support specialists who work with each warrior on goals to remain independent and engaged in the community.

The third addition is the state of **Missouri's Brain Injury Waiver program**. The program allows people with brain injuries to access needed supports such as home modifications and therapies to avoid institutionalization.

We also continue to serve as a **Benefits Enrollment Center for the National Council on Aging** for the next two years. This program is geared toward assisting persons with applications for SNAP, MO HealthNet/KAN-Care, Medicare Savings Programs, and Low-Income Energy Assistance. This program is open to consumers in both Missouri and Kansas. Since January 1, 2021, TWP staff have assisted over 700 consumers with applications for these and other means-tested programs.

Kansas Office



The Vaccination Clinic and Health Fair put on by the Kansas office was very popular!

The Kansas office was busy in 2021. We have continued to **distribute Personal Protective Equipment to consumers** during the pandemic. In September, the state of Kansas asked all CILs in the state what they could do to support vaccinations. TWP's Kansas Office hosted an **October COVID-19 Vaccination Health Fair** in collaboration with the Unified Government of Wyandotte County Health Department. COVID-19 testing was also available. TWP had informational tables from numerous departments, giveaways, and door prizes with a drawing every 30 minutes. The event was a success with 47 booster and original vaccine doses getting into arms.



TWP employees visited VanGogh Alive to review accessibility in the event.

AAGKC in Action

Starlight Theatre is an active participant in Accessible Arts Greater Kansas City (AAGKC), a new collaboration of arts organizations, presenters, and artists seeking to make metro area arts experiences more accessible for people with all types of disabilities. It was formed through a Partnership Grant awarded by the Missouri Arts Council to The Whole Person in 2020.

Inspired by the group's insights and encouragement to consider what makes an arts experience meaningful for audiences and artists regardless of disability, Starlight contacted TWP for assistance in assessing their indoor venue. The theatre's ongoing goals include broadened patron accessibility and accommodation. Starlight's staff were interested in TWP's assessment and advice about improvements that could be made toward their goal.

Starlight is currently hosting a traveling digital exhibition of the work of Vincent Van Gogh, called "Van Gogh Alive." The theatre has transformed its indoor space to a gallery of high-quality projections and interactive recreations of Van Gogh's work. TWP was contacted to bring staff members who specialize in accessibility to help them review current materials and what might be missing. Five employees with different disabilities visited Starlight to do a walk-through/rollthrough of the exhibition and provide feedback on its current structure and accessibility.

As Starlight presents one of its largest non-performance-based indoor programs and looks ahead to pursuing similar programming in the future, its staff were pleased to have TWP employees share their knowledge regarding the current and future accessibility of Starlight's indoor space.

Night of Independence 2021

The Whole Person's 2021 Night of Independence Awards Gala – An Evening in Paris, was held on Saturday, September 24 at The Abbott Event Space. This annual evening of giving honored individuals, businesses, and organizations that are furthering our mission of providing independent living services and programming for people with disabilities in the Greater Kansas City metropolitan area. **Honorees included:** Dr. Mark T. Fisher, Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine, Children's Mercy Hospital; City of Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation; Worcester Investments; and Mona Randolph, posthumously receiving the Paul H. Levy Award. Our Co-Chairs, Jennifer Salva and Logan Weed, alongside CEO Julie DeJean, honored each award winner with an art glass trophy. Other committee members included Jordan Ward, Chris Albright,

Jessica Barranco, Hilary Muehlberger, Kelly Grooms and Mitch Chalk. The evening was highlighted by Kelly Eckerman, KMBC 9 News, who served as emcee. A beautiful Parisian-themed atmosphere was a backdrop to an evening of music, entertainment, cocktails, silent and live auctions, dinner, and awards program. Special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor Capitol Federal, Underwriting Sponsor UMB, and Advocate Sponsor Fred & Jami Pryor Foundation for their support. **The Fund-A-Need spotlighted TWP's Home Modifications Program**, which utilizes skilled, experienced volunteers and local contractors to design and build wheelchair access ramps and other residential modifications such as grab bars, handrails, door widening, stair lifts and basic bathroom modifications, so consumers can live safely in their homes.



(From top, left to right) Entertainment by accordion player Jane Christman; Kevin and Janice Klinkenberg in front of the Paris backdrop; Panoramic view of the event space; The silent auction was a success! Mime Beth Byrd outside event venue The Abbott

2021

Night of Independence Award Winners

Dr. Mark T. Fisher
Individual Award

City of Kansas City, Missouri
Parks and Recreation
Organization Award

Worcester Investments
Volunteer Group of the Year

Mona Randolph
Paul H. Levy Founders Award

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thewholeperson.org/parisgala2021

Getting to Know our New Adaptive Sports Program Manager, Melissa Burns

My first day as program manager for The Whole Person's Adaptive Sports and Recreation program was September 29, 2021, and it has been an exciting whirlwind of getting to know TWP's sports and recreation activities and participants.

Adaptive sports have been woven into my DNA through my accumulated aca-



ademic studies and life experiences. After high school in Salina, Kansas, I received an undergraduate scholarship for both volleyball and track and began coaching at the high school level in Colorado. Since then, my life has revolved around teaching, coaching, and volunteer work all over the world. Getting to work with diverse populations, ages and cultures has been



Melissa participates in the Blindness/Low Vision Group tandem bike ride. A Health Forward grant funded 2 new bicycles.



Melissa coaches Adaptive Tennis.

some of the best, and some of the toughest experiences I have had. Throughout that time, I finished my Master's degree in Education and then my PhD in Psychology with an emphasis in Sport and Performance.

My goals are to **connect facilities, sports, and recreational activities** to individuals with disabilities to improve quality of life. I am very excited to be here, in a position I am so passionate about. Call out "Burns" or "Coach" and I will answer! Contact Melissa at mburns@thewholeperson.org.

Be The One to create positive change

As we close out 2021, The Whole Person (TWP) is aware that our neighbors, community partners, donors, volunteers, and staff are looking for greater meaning in the ways they spend their time, and their resources.

We joined the Kansas City community of nonprofits to respond, recover and reimagine a world that is still emerging from the "pause of 2020." Through resilience, we remain responsive to the needs of our consumers so they will be well, active, independent, and a vibrant part of the community.

The guiding principle of The Whole Person reflects the independent living philosophy that the freedom to make choices, and the ability to live independently in the community, is a basic civil right that should be extended to all people regardless of disability.

For 43+ years, TWP has offered community-based, consumer-driven programming for people with all types of developmental/cognitive, mental health, and physical disabilities in the Greater Kansas City metropolitan area, all aimed at promoting, supporting, and empowering independent living choices and preventing institutionalization.



The Whole Person continues to maintain and expand our work through the support of neighbors, community partners, donors, volunteers, and staff, who act in the moment, who believe in our mission, and are driven by the same passion: that people with disabilities deserve opportunities like everyone else.

Join our **"Be the One"** Giving Challenge and share your ...

Time – To volunteer as an individual, family, church group, club or corporation for a special activity, event, planning committee or project.

Talent – To use your expertise to benefit participants in our programs and services.

Treasure – To donate your resources to help us pay for home modifications for those who cannot afford them.

Voice – To spend time advocating and educating others about access and independence for people with disabilities.

Network – To leverage personal and professional relationships, or social media, to share our mission.

In 2022, "Be the One" to help us continue to create positive change for people with disabilities. **Join us in community.** Be the one who understands that giving ... is living.

Visit: thewholeperson.org/B1

*Connecting people with disabilities
to the resources they need.*

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Signing up for our email list is a great way to stay connected to TWP. Visit thewholeperson.org to sign up.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

For media inquiries, interviews or statements, please contact:

Mike Wiley
816-627-2262
mwiley@thewholeperson.org

PRESENTATIONS:

- **TWP Services**
- **Disability Awareness and People First Language Training**
- **Universal Design Building Tours at The Whole Person**
- **ADA Assessments**

For more information on presentations for your place of business, contact Mike Wiley, at mwiley@thewholeperson.org or call 816-627-2262.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR AREA YARD CLEANUP!

- Corporate Volunteer Day
Friday, April 22, 2022
Time determined by your team
- Individuals and Groups
Saturday, April 23, 2022
8:30 am to early afternoon



To learn more about this opportunity, contact Kelly Grooms
816-627-2232 | kgrooms@thewholeperson.org
or go to thewholeperson.org/volunteerplant

Thank you to our sponsor:

Westlake **ACE** Hardware
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EXPRESSIONS

FEATURING ARTISTS WITH DISABILITIES

12th Annual Expressions Art Exhibition

Call for Artists is Open!

Deadline to apply is Jan. 17, 2022

Apply at:

www.thewholeperson.org/expressions

Opening Reception:

Friday, March 4, 2022

6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Rochester Brewing & Roasting Company
2129 Washington St | KCMO 64108

www.thewholeperson.org/expressions

Local health and safety protocols observed.