

Twin Valley Developmental Services, Inc.

25th

Anniversary Celebration



*Highlighting the Progress and Success of the
Organization and the People That Make it Shine*

Fall 2003

Forward

A Letter From Ed Henry, CEO of Twin Valley Developmental Services, Inc.

We certainly hope you enjoy the stories that follow in this book. Somehow life got so busy the 25th year of Twin Valley that we didn't celebrate. Sometime after that, the idea of the success stories that follow was born. We struggled with who we could get to write it. A big thanks goes to Howard Kessinger who introduced me to Stephanie Wing, who has interned at the Marysville Advocate. His recommendation of her organization and writing skills shows to be very true in the following stories. The part that pleases me the most is not only that she writes so well, but she truly catches the spirit of just how great the accomplishments of our people really are.

There were times in the last several years that I got discouraged by all the paper and processes that our programs involve. In the "good 'ol days" we just rolled up our sleeves and got the job done. Now, the proper paper has to be in place and the proper channels followed. I suppose there is some good in that. After reading what follows, you will certainly know that there is some "very good" in the results!

Starting and watching this agency grow for the last 27 years has truly been a rewarding experience! I can remember quite clearly how the first board and I would reflect that if we ever served 25 people in our sheltered workshops and had a couple of group homes we would be a huge success. Several people over the years have told me what a "dreamer" they thought I was and that I wouldn't last long (because my plans were too grandiose) when I would give talks to local clubs and describe the board's and my dreams for Twin Valley.

I have huge respect for the many board members we have had over the years. Through many agreements and disagreements, crisis and good times, they have lead Twin Valley well, as reflected in the following pages. The many "leaps of faith" they took with me on many new programs and adventures are most amazing. It's a good thing I was inexperienced when I took this job, because several of our major accomplishments defy any business sense. The 24-unit HUD expansion, the preschool, the popcorn business, several of the group homes we started, all the supported employment sites, all made no business sense. Looking back, it amazes me that most were not only very, but extremely successful ventures. Not because they cash flowed-though they did-but because they allowed our people to grow to become independent beyond all expectations. When you visualize that the huge successes of the people that follow replace a life in a back bedroom or state institution had they been born a few years earlier, you understand just how remarkable these stories become.

But you know, all of the above, and all the committees and power positions you must hold to make this happen pales in comparison to a stroll through either of our workshops, or job sites, or living facilities. Being given a tour by one of our proud residents of their bedroom or apartment. Being given the "you're crazy" sign by Jimmy. Being called ornery (gee, I never understood why :)) for the thousandth time. Being asked by Wilma about my baby (the youngest of which is now taller than I!) Being asked by Chris or T.J. "can I move into my new apartment yet?" Watching numbers of our people succeed on jobs no one ever thought they could do. And this list could go on for pages. This is what the 27 years have really been about. The love, the success, the failure, the highlights, the downfalls-from the highest of the highs to the depths of depression-it has been a privilege to allow all the people we have served here at Twin Valley the chance to experience. I thank deeply the people I have served. Their success, and respect, has made my life one filled with complete fulfillment. My ultimate fulfillment is that part of me that believes that I have helped many of them attain the same!

Ed Henry, CEO
Twin Valley Developmental Services, Inc.

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Twin Valley Reflects on Past Successes as 25th Anniversary Passes

More than 25 years ago, an organization was formed that would change the face of disability services in northeast Kansas forever. Twin Valley Developmental Services, Inc., founded in 1976 with the cooperation of ARC (Association of Retarded Citizens) of Washington and Marshall Counties, was created as a place for local adult citizens to come during the day.

Initially funded through a Developmental Disability Council grant from Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services; Twin Valley set up two sheltered work sites, one in Greenleaf and the other in Beattie, Kan. Originally, the centers serviced only 12 clients who lived at home and were brought to the workshop sites. Today, the organization, which has expanded to include several sheltered and independent work and living sites in both towns and several other towns throughout the area, serves 86 adult consumers and 12 children.

Over the last 25 years, Twin Valley has strived to locate opportunities for their consumers to learn marketable job skills and eventually real, on-site work opportunities. Initially, the centers began this process by sorting nuts and bolts for Lamoreaux Building (now JSL Corp.) of Waterville, Kan. at the workshop sites. Then, they sorted patterns for McCall Patterns of Manhattan, Kans. Other jobs have included a cloth diaper operation, popcorn preparation and bagging, and laundry service for the Super 8 Motel, as well as several other subcontracts; including Valley Vet

Supply and Breman Farmers Mutual Insurance Company. Twin Valley also recently opened Thriftique, a local thrift shop that sells fine quality recycled clothing and other goods as well as baling and selling the clothing for delivery to third world countries.

To find other work opportunities, the Business/Marketing Department at Kansas State University was contacted in 1976. With their assistance, the staff began sending out letters to businesses within the community and all of northeastern Kansas in the hopes that there would be interest. Clients have remained busy completing various work projects ever since.

At the time, all of Twin Valley's jobs were performed at the workshop sites in Greenleaf and Beattie, and the staff at Twin Valley wanted to branch out to local businesses in hopes of placing some of their clients in an actual workplace environment.

The first business placement occurred ten years after Twin Valley opened its doors. Master Teacher, a Manhattan based business that markets to educators through publications, workshops, and gift products, needed assistance preparing publications for mailing. Twin Valley CEO Ed Henry luckily contacted them during this period and, after procuring a "supported employment" grant from Kansas Rehabilitation Services, the first job site began. 15 years later, Twin Valley consumers continue to work at the site daily.

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Timeline of Key Twin Valley Events

10/1976-Twin Valley Developmental Services, Inc. is formed.

04/1977-Both consumer workshops (Greenleaf and Beattie) open services.

1978-Beattie group home opens, serving five people.

1979-Preschool for children with disabilities opens.

1980-Greenleaf group home opens, serving six people.

1981-A 24-unit HUD (including a six unit group home and apartment) opens in both Greenleaf and Beattie.

1984-A 12-unit HUD, consisting of a six unit group home in both Greenleaf and Beattie, opens.

1987-Job sites and emphasis on job placements increases. Eight enclaves (a group of two or more consumers with one staff member serving as a job coach working on specific jobs in a local industry at their workplace) are created and nine consumers are placed in actual jobs over the next few years.

July 2003-An eight unit apartment complex opens in Greenleaf.



Photo by Stephanie Wing

Newly opened Greenleaf apartment complex.

Soon after, another local business, Titan Trailers of Waterville, offered to hire consumers to prepare trailers for prep jobs prior to painting. In the beginning, few expected it to last. Now, fifteen years later, Twin Valley consumers work all over northeast Kansas, in businesses as varied as the consumers themselves. Employers include food stores, restaurants, trailer manufacturers, and many more.

When all of the organization's clients worked only in the sheltered workshops their wages totaled only \$35,000 annually. After the first couple of years of job placements, many consumers were placed with local employers and in 1997 Twin Valley consumers made nearly \$400,000. This allowed some to own their "own" homes or rent their "own" places, thus blasting many myths that individuals could not be productive. Twin Valley has assisted many individuals to not only get their "own" jobs and live in their "own" place, but to become active and very productive citizens in our local communities.

Today, more than 50 consumers are employed in individual or supported employment. Ed Henry, Twin Valley CEO, credits this to experience in the original work site settings.

"These settings allowed both our staff and our clientele to gain the confidence they needed to become productive citizens," says Henry.

The cost of care, job training, and preparing the consumers for this kind of placement varies according to the needs of the consumer, because some need job coaching once a week and some need one-on-one care literally around-the-clock, says Henry. The amount of care the organization is able to provide has

also expanded in the last 25 years.

"In the beginning, we served people with relatively easy-to-serve disabilities. Since that time, the severity level has just grown and grown. Now we can serve basically any severity of disability. We can build a program to fit the needs of almost everyone that comes to us," said Henry.

Another vital service Twin Valley provides its consumers is the availability of assisted living housing in Greenleaf, Beattie, and Marysville. These houses and apartments are available for individual residency and group living situations. Consumers and their families often seek housing placements when other options, including living at home, aren't possible or they need care best provided at these facilities. Here, consumers can get all of the individual assistance they need in an environment conducive to their growth.

In addition to services for adult consumers, Twin Valley also provides support for children with disabilities. Some of these services include locating grants for the child's family to purchase necessary equipment (including wheelchairs, prosthetics, and other medical devices), providing respite for parents, and day service or job opportunities for children during the summer months. In one instance, the organization even arranged for a young consumer to take driving lessons and eventually obtain his license.

Over the course of its history, Twin Valley has worked to provide the most valuable opportunities and services to those in the community who could greatly benefit from them. Through job and life coaching, assisted care, and friendship the organization has well exceeded expectations in its ability to allow individuals served to shape their lives to their liking. While the last 25 years have been an extraordinary step forward for disability services in northeast Kansas, the staff at Twin Valley (now numbering more than 90 people) hopes that the next 25 will be even more amazing.



Photo by Stephanie Wing

Beattie workshop site.

Clients learn valuable job skills at local businesses

Enabling consumers to enter the work force and become productive members of their community is one of the main goals of Twin Valley. In order to accomplish this, the organization relies on work contracts from businesses within the state. The types of businesses include everything from pizza restaurants to trailer manufacturers. Projects have included janitorial work, packing ribbons and bookshelves for shipping, and nearly everything between.

Landoll's, a local manufacturer of large equipment, including fork-lifts and various agricultural machinery, has been working with Twin Valley for almost 14 years. The consumers perform custodial duties, as well as some grinding work on aluminum trailers produced at the site.

Terri Gose, Landoll's Manufacturing Administrative Assistant, says that her company feels privileged to be involved with an organization as valuable as Twin Valley.

"Before these kind of organizations came about, persons with disabilities were put away and not given any opportunities to succeed. Thanks to Twin Valley, these same people are able to feel productive, earn their own money, and in some cases even become self-sufficient. It is an incredible step forward," said Gose.

Marlene Giebler, Manager of the Marysville Pizza Hut, has been employing individuals from Twin Valley for almost 15 years.

"Several years ago, Ed Henry came to me with the idea of employing some of his consumers at the restaurant. Since then, I have hired at least six Twin Valley consumers and could not be happier with them. They're great kids," says Giebler.

Aside from the work experience, Giebler says that Twin Valley allows its consumers to get some valuable social interaction.

"They work with many different kinds of people and are exposed to the public everyday. Twin Valley gives them a chance to interact in the real world. They become dependable, responsible, loyal employees and I truly enjoy the opportunity to employ them," said Giebler.

Also impressed with Twin Valley and the dedication of its consumers is Lori Hanson, Director of Distribution at Master Teacher. The Manhattan, Kans.



Photo by Stephanie Wing

Above: Donated clothing is bundled and prepared for shipment at the Greenleaf site.

Below: Consumers working at the Master Teacher job site in Manhattan, Kans.



Photo by Stephanie Wing

based company provides support to educators around the world through a variety of services including publications, seminars, and various customized awards and plaques. For them, Twin Valley consumers perform a vital function.

"The people at Twin Valley sort publications and prepare them for packing, sort out ribbons, ...

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BUSINESSES

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and much more. Some of them work here at our facility and some at the Twin Valley site, but they all work very hard to make sure the products are ready to ship on time. They more than meet our needs," said Hanson.

While the exact number varies, Hanson says there are normally around 12 consumers working at the site. These consumers work everyday, excluding a break in June and one near Christmas time. Many have to wake well before dawn to catch the Twin Valley bus that takes them on the hour long drive to Manhattan. Despite what seems like a tiring trip, this spring marked 15 years of working at the Master Teacher site.

"We are very happy that this relationship has been a successful one. We really like having them here with us; they are really wonderful people. They really put things in perspective-and sometimes it's just good to stop and smell the roses," said Hanson.

Since its inception 25 years ago, Twin Valley has strived to provide a variety of work site options for its consumers. Today, thanks to opportunities provided by local businesses, consumers have more options than ever before to gain valuable work and social experience.

Consumer achievements amaze staff, highlights the outstanding efforts of clients and organization

THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN STORIES OF EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL TWIN VALLEY CONSUMERS WHOSE LIVES ARE TRULY INSPIRING...

Larry Gould

It's 7:30 p.m. on a typical summer Tuesday. As he walks up to his house, he is greeted by Sheena, his beloved Chow. While the rest of Greenleaf is settling in after dinner, Larry Gould is arriving home after another long day of work. But by now, he says, he's used to it. He even jokes that he likes the hours and the pay is good, so why complain?

Larry Gould has been working with Twin Valley for more than a decade, beginning shortly after his high school graduation. Gould has a learning disability and sometimes has trouble understanding things, so his parents thought Twin Valley would be the perfect place to learn job skills to prepare him for the future. Through the organization, Gould was able to do more than merely learn job skills; he was able to apply them in real work situations at actual job sites. In addition, he was also able to live on his own in one of Twin Valley's Greenleaf apartments.

"I liked it a lot. It's a good place to work, and the staff is easy to work with. I think it's really good for people with severe disabilities. I lived there for three or four years until I got married and my wife found a house," says Gould.

A few years after joining Twin Valley, Gould was offered a job at Eaton's Body Shop in Washington, Kans. It is here he remained and can be found every Monday through Friday

fixing "re-builders" (cars that are totaled) and preparing them for resale. Though he no longer lives in the Greenleaf apartments, Twin Valley still provides transportation to and from work for Gould.

Every evening after his work at Eaton's is complete; Gould begins his second job, working at a fish farm in Greenleaf. He has been doing this for several years and says he enjoys working with the fish.

"We are raising all kinds of fish now; channel cats, grass carp, and now some of the more exotic fish-Japanese Koi and Butterfly Koi. And it's not bad working the extra hours because I get a fourth of the profits now," said Gould.

While Gould has been benefiting from Twin Valley programs and facilities for many years, it has recently become a family affair.

"My mom is moving into the new Greenleaf apartments when they open soon. I think she'll like it a lot-I did," says Gould.

Whether it's working through supported employment, utilizing sheltered living, or simply receiving transportation, Twin Valley has had a great impact on Larry Gould and his ability to obtain and maintain employment. Through the confidence and skills he received with the organization, he has gone on to not only be an active member of his community, but to be arguably one of the most on-the-go Greenleaf residents. Just ask Sheena the Chow.

Mary Kay Feldkamp

She knows ribbons. She knows exactly how many to sort, stack, and package in precisely what order. Once she gets started, some staff members can't even keep up with her.

For the last 15 years, Mary Kay Feldkamp has worked at Twin Valley's Master Teacher job site in Manhattan. Living in Twin Valley's Greenleaf apartment building, Mary Kay makes the early morning trip three times a week, and rarely misses a day. Staff members see it as a chance for her to interact with friends and co-workers, earn income, and interact within her community; but she sees it as fun.

Feldkamp came to Twin Valley in July 1980. At the time, she was living and receiving training in Wichita and her parents were searching for a place to move Mary Kay so she would be closer to the family home in Centralia. Soon after hearing about Twin Valley, they made the decision to move their daughter back to north-east Kansas and enter her into the organization's sheltered living and work programs. Now, more than 20 years later, Mary Kay is an inspiration to other consumers and staff members.

Mary Kay began working at the Master Teacher site in 1988 as one of the first Twin Valley clients on the job. In addition to sorting and counting ribbons, Twin Valley consumers sort and prepare pins, polish gold apples, and perform a variety of other duties involved in preparing items for shipment. At first, some staff members at Master Teacher were concerned that she might not have been able to handle the tasks involved with the work.

In just a short time, Mary Kay more than proved them wrong. Sorting and packaging with ease and a great deal of speed, her 'can-do' attitude shines and she has become one of the most popular consumers at the site. Most every Master Teacher employee knows her and at a recent ceremony marking the 15th



Photo by Stephanie Wing

Mary Kay spends most of her day at the Master Teacher site in Manhattan sorting ribbons and preparing them for shipment.

anniversary of the site, she was honored as being a stellar example of hard work and dedication.

When she is not at Master Teacher, Mary Kay can be found stuffing inserts at the Washington County News (a job she performs every Wednesday) or at home preparing meals and socializing. She also helps recycle at the Greenleaf site on Friday mornings. According to staff there, Feldkamp is not one to sit around, which is evident by her busy schedule.

As if these activities were not enough, Mary Kay also participates in the Special Olympics every year, where she bowls, competes in the ball throw, and participates in various other track and field activities. Bowling, she says, is her favorite.

Not one to let a disability prevent her from accomplishing everything she can imagine, Mary Kay Feldkamp is an outstanding person with true ability, determination, and grace; especially at the ribbon table.

Bob Harris

Walk into Titan Trailers in Waterville, Kans. on any given weekday and you're likely to see him. He is easy to spot, simply by the huge, friendly grin on his face. He has worked there for more than three years and is known by most everyone. His name is Bob Harris and he has been a Twin Valley consumer for almost six years.

When Harris first came to Twin Valley he, like most, was looking for a job and guidance. He starting working at Wal-Mart, then Landoll's, and now works full time at Titan Trailers.

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BOB HARRIS

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In fact, they were so impressed with his work that he was one of only a few to be hired as a permanent employee. Harris says that he really likes it there and all of his co-workers seem to agree that he is an excellent worker.

Harris said he believes that Twin Valley has helped by giving him support and teaching him better work skills.

“They’ve really been good-they still help me sometimes with my money,” said Harris.

Not only has Harris been successful in the workplace; he also lives on his own and owns his own car. But the accomplishment Harris seems most proud of? His bowling average. He is a part of a local bowling league, in addition to an avid hunter and fisherman.

Harris has made incredible advancements during his time with Twin Valley and this is surely only a sign of many great things to come.

Mark Runnebaum

Being the 14th out of 15 children, Mark Runnebaum has certainly had a lot of family support throughout his life. It was this support that, in many ways, helped to foster Twin Valley’s development and growth.

When Mark was 20, he completed the special education program at his high school and needed an organization like Twin Valley to help develop job and social skills, as well as assist with day-to-day functions. Unfortunately, these services were not widely available. So Bernard and Mary Louise Runnebaum, with the help of many other dedicated members of the community, created such a service; thus Twin Valley was born.

“We worked very hard to get it started, and we are definitely reaping the benefits of it now, because Mark has such a wonderful place to stay. Twin Valley is a very efficient, well-run organization-and they certainly keep him entertained; we really appreciate it,” said Mary Runnebaum.

When Mark entered the program he started at a workshop and moved into sheltered living in Beattie. He is currently living in the Marysville apartments and likes it very much, according to Mary.

“He is proud of his apartment and keeps it very clean. He does his own mending and even folds his dirty clothes before putting them in the basket.

He is very content there,” said Runnebaum.

Through Twin Valley Mark has had the opportunity to work in several different jobs, including at Landoll’s, janitorial work and even raking up leaves. Mary says the experience has been a good one and has taught her son a lot.

“Working with Twin Valley has definitely taught him a lot of work skills. He doesn’t read or write, but he has great survival skills and we owe that in large part to them.”

Gary Funk

He’s got a collection of cups that could fill a room...or two. Shopping is one of Gary Funk’s favorite things. He loves to buy clothes and a variety of cups. On this particular day, he was especially proud of his newest acquisition; a tie-dyed gas station variety 44-ounce. Gary is quiet, calm, and respectful. However, that has not always been the case.

Gary came to Twin Valley in July 1993, after spending time in literally every institution in the state. When he arrived, staff said that he had a serious anger problem and could even get violent in his rages. He yelled, hit, and was even known to throw furniture on occasion. His condition required one-on-one attention 24 hours a day.

During the next few years, Twin Valley helped Gary through some anger management counseling and he even began working out in the community. His outbursts became more infrequent and the consumers who lived with Gary began to warm up to him.

Today, Gary collects garbage along the roadside in his community. He goes on most Twin Valley trips and gets along well with those around him. He has his own apartment in the Beattie complex, which is nearly spotless. His transformation has been truly remarkable.

In fact, on a recent outing, Gary and staff encountered a former staff member from an institution Gary has been in prior to coming to Twin Valley. She was amazed at just how far Gary has come since his arrival in Beattie.

Twin Valley helped Gary control his temper and learn valuable social and work skills. He is now a productive, responsible member of the local community and the Twin Valley staff, Gary’s family, and Gary couldn’t be more proud.

Brian Butters

Brian Butters is your average 16-year-old boy. He is the football and basketball manager, participates in Choir, Drama, and is excited to have just earned his driver's license. Butters loves video games with lots of action and listening to music. But there is something different about Brian that makes his story extraordinary.

In 1996, Butters fell off a float during a parade and suffered brain trauma that resulted in cognitive and speech damage. The fall also left Brian with limited use of his right hand. Because he was right-handed, this meant he had the added chore of learning to write with his left hand.

Brian's mother, Tammi Gano, said that shortly after the accident she was contacted by Twin Valley about help they could provide him.

"They gave us a lot of information, provided us with children's grants, and Brian was also able to get a laptop computer to use to take notes in class and to help with fine motor skills. I know I couldn't have afforded to do that for him by myself," said Gano.

Another service Twin Valley was able to provide Brian was the opportunity to attend the Little Apple Driving School, which allowed Brian to get hands-on training and eventually a license.

Although Brian had to teach himself to use his left hand, that hasn't limited his creative ability. He is an excellent artist, and despite the fact that his high school was forced to eliminate its Art program, Brian continues to use painting and drawing as an outlet.

When asked why he is so involved, he had this to say:

Steve Buck

"He has this great smile-I call it his 'pumpkin face smile'-he just lights up the room. Steve is always so happy," said Barb Buck.

Barb's son Steve has lived with the effects of Downs Syndrome his entire life. In fact, when he was born, his doctors told Barb that he probably wouldn't walk until he was at least three years old. It seemed that Steve had other plans.

"They told me he wouldn't walk until he was older, but he started walking at one and a half and didn't stop for ten years! That's just the kind of person he is. Don't tell him that there is anything he can't do; even then," said Buck.

Barb credits Steve's high school with helping him adjust.

"I do it because I want to show everyone that I can do something, that I can do everything they can do," Brian said.

As for the future, Brian has plans of attending college, but is not quite sure of a major. Possibilities include web design, architecture, or maybe even science education. For Brian, the sky seems to be the limit. For that, his mother is thankful.

"Brian has big dreams and great goals. I thank Twin Valley for a lot of that. He has great support behind him and that helps him achieve."



Photo by Stephanie Wing

Brian studies on the laptop computer Twin Valley was able to provide him to take notes and work on fine motor skills.

"He was in special education program there, but he participated in everything all of the kids did. He went to prom, senior breakfast, and when he crossed the stage at graduation everybody stood up for him. Everyone just really liked him there," said Buck.

However, once high school was over Steve needed help with finding a job, as well as with other routine tasks.

"It's a small town. It's hard to find a place that can help you, but Twin Valley has changed his whole life. Their services have been invaluable. The staff-Frances-everyone there is great; they really do a wonderful job of rounding out their lives," says Buck.

When Steve came to Twin Valley he moved into the sheltered living in Beattie. It was there that he learned many of the skills that have helped him...

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STEVE BUCK

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become such a successful consumer. He did his own laundry, kept his apartment very clean and became close friends with many staff members and consumers. Eventually, Steve made the decision to move back to Marysville.

In Marysville, he lives a very full and exciting life. Steve stays in shape by working out at a local gym as much as possible and has been working at the IGA there since 1998. A model employee, Steve has never been late to work and rarely calls in sick. Although Barb says that there is the occasional negative comment made while at work, most are very accepting of him.

"There are people that are mean, that say things like they don't want their groceries taken out by a retard; it doesn't really bother Steve. He knows that it is all just a part of being different."



Photo by Stephanie Wing

David Taylor places price stickers on donated items at Thriftique, Twin Valley's new thrift shop.

David Taylor

David Taylor loves to watch the sky. In fact, he's been doing it for the last seven years as a Marshall County National Weather Service volunteer. He says that he thinks it's a good way to help the community-and it's fun. Part of that community is Twin Valley Developmental Services, which has been assisting Taylor full time for the last six years.

For Taylor, Twin Valley has been an "on and off" part of his life for the last 20 years.

Taylor first came to Twin Valley in the 1980's, after a referral from the Topeka SRS Department. He worked various jobs before eventually leaving to work at a local kennel. However, Taylor's congenital spine

failure limited him to light work and he found himself returning to Twin Valley after only a few years.

Originally a self-proclaimed "city guy" from Topeka, Taylor once served in the United States National Guard, before illness would have prevented him from service. During his time at Twin Valley he has worked at Titan Trailers, both as a trailer polisher and as a member of the clean-up crew, the Master Teacher job site, and was the "official taste tester" while Twin Valley was involved in producing Big Top Popcorn.

These days, Taylor performs a variety of tasks at the Greenleaf work site, including painting and bailing clothing as a part of Twin Valley's newest project.

Taylor credits his successes in these positions to the support he receives from the Twin Valley staff.

"They have really improved my job skills and work habits since I came here. There's always a supervisor around to help if I have trouble," Taylor said.

But for Taylor, Twin Valley is more than just a job-it's a family affair. Taylor met his wife, Kay, at the Beattie site and the two have been married for six years.

"We really like working together here, it makes it nice to be here everyday," said Taylor.

However, the best part of working at Twin Valley, according to Taylor, is the atmosphere.

"Everybody has a special bond here-we're like one big happy family."



Photo by Stephanie Wing

Taylor opens and sorts a donations brought in from members of the community.

Joann McCurley

For Joann McCurley, the world is fuzzy. Although she does have limited vision, McCurley is legally blind and has been her entire life. However, that hasn't stopped her from achieving things once thought unthinkable for someone with such a condition.

McCurley has been with Twin Valley for 17 years. When she arrived, she had very serious problems with anger and was often not able to get along with others. She didn't have a job, and her future was uncertain. Twin Valley assisted Joann with anger



Photo by Stephanie Wing

Joann prepares her evening meal at her home in Beattie, Kans.

management classes and gave her a position on the Master Teacher work crew.

"I've come a long way; my behavior has gotten a lot better because of Twin Valley. They taught me an easier way of dealing with stress and anger management. There was a time when I couldn't do it-but now I can pretty much do it all," McCurley said.

Joann now does her own laundry, can do simple cooking-and perhaps her greatest feat of all-owns her own home. She claims the best part about being a homeowner is more freedom.

In addition to her already outstanding accomplishments, Joann bowls in the Special Olympics every year and has an amazing ability to recall dates and days. In one short conversation with her she can tell you the exact date she came to Twin Valley, what day of the week she left the Topeka School for the Blind, and if you give her a date, she will be able to tell you what day of the week it was or will be. It is truly remarkable.

Joann has come a long way since November 6, 1985 (her first day with Twin Valley), and she is quick to give credit to the staff who have helped her along the way.

"It's a really nice place-the support here is really good. It's nice to have support and transportation. The work I do here is relaxing and everyone makes sure I am in good health. It has really made a difference."

Robert Cass

Popping popcorn seems like a dream job to many. The aroma of a fresh batch, the sounds of the kernels exploding, and the necessary 'taste test' all seem too good to be true. This was especially the case for Robert Cass. For him, it couldn't get any better than this. He was working a job that he loved, got along well with his boss and coworkers, and was earning enough money to finance living on his own.

In March of 1993, Cass came to Twin Valley after spending time at Vocational Rehabilitation. It was here that he learned some of the valuable work skills that would eventually translate into several

successful positions throughout the region. It was also where he learned about Twin Valley.

When he first joined the organization, Robert worked at several different job sites, including Landoll's, where he polished and prepped trailers. During this time, Twin Valley was in the midst of taking over Big Top Popcorn, a local manufacturer who produced and sold flavored popcorn throughout the country. After the takeover was complete, consumers were needed to run the operation and Robert was quick to step in.

In no time at all, Robert had learned how to mix the syrup, pop the corn, and nearly every other function of the budding new Twin

Valley venture.

"Popping popcorn was my favorite; it was where the money was! I got along with my boss, and made enough money to live on my own," said Cass.

Unfortunately, Twin Valley left the popcorn business a few years ago. However, because of the skills and confidence Robert gained while working in the popcorn factory, he has been able to find work at other local businesses and currently works nights at Longhorns, a restaurant and bar in Washington, Kans. He has also continued to live on his own; though that too has changed recently.

On March 29, 2003, Robert married a woman he met while...

Continued on the next page...

Joyce Hill

For Margaret Blaske, Twin Valley staff member, the first time she met consumer Joyce Hill will always be one of her favorite memories. Blaske was performing volunteer hours towards a degree in social work and one of her first assignments was to help Hill pick out the perfect outfit for a country music concert she was attending later in the week.

“Joyce was so shy! She wouldn’t look or talk to anyone and mostly kept to herself, but we did have fun picking out that outfit for the show!” recalls Blaske.

Hill came to Twin Valley from KNI in Topeka in 1979 and has made steady improvements since her arrival. Staff members recall Hill as being very reserved and unable to handle constructive criticism during her first years with the program. She cried a lot and didn’t interact much with other consumers or staff.

However, through counseling and various other programs designed specifically for her needs, Joyce is more assertive and much more emotionally equipped to handle stress and criticism. She is also currently working at the Beattie site metering cards and envelopes that the site “stuffs.”

Hill can also be seen at the local cafe in Beattie or at the beauty shop, where she gets her hair done every Tuesday. And there’s always shopping with Margaret.

“Joyce has just made so many wonderful advances since we first met. She gets along well with everyone at the Marysville apartments, where she has her own apartment. She is also starting to do some of her own cooking...the changes have been tremendous.”



Photo by Stephanie Wing

Joyce Hill stuffing envelopes at the Beattie workshop site.

ROBERT CASS

Continued...

working at Longhorns. While he still enjoys the job, he is now looking for a day job that will allow him to be home at night with his new bride.

Robert Cass has been a successful member of the Twin Valley family for ten years. While his occupation has changed, he has remained hard working, energetic, and driven to achieve. Whether popping popcorn, prepping trailers, or anything else that may come his way, you can bet Robert will give it his all.

Sandra Black

Turning 40. It is the milestone birthday that send chills down the spine of even the bravest of souls. The occasion is often celebrated with black clothing and the ritual over-the-hill jokes. It was no different for Sandra Black, who, upon receiving a bouquet of black balloons, pushed them away with the sneer of disgust seen so many times. While this scenario is pretty common, for Sandra it marked another incredible advancement in an extraordinary life.

Sandra was diagnosed as profoundly retarded at birth and at the time her parents were encouraged by medical professionals to institutionalize her and “get on with their lives.” Finding this an impossible and horribly cruel task, they came to the conclusion that it was best to keep her at home with her family there to care for her.

At the time, it was not mandatory to educate people with severe disabilities, so Sandra didn’t enter her first classroom until she was 14. She was nonverbal, and at times, self-abusive. Sandra shared the classroom with four other students, and it was her teacher who first mentioned the possibility that Sandra might have autism.

After successfully graduating, Sandra moved into a group home at Twin Valley. However, she still lacked communication skills and couldn’t sleep well. The situation was worsened by all of the noise and confusion that often accompanies living with five other people.

In 1991, Sandra’s life was changed profoundly. She was introduced to a program called facilitated communication (FC). This program allows Sandra to use an alphabet board and a speaking device called a Zoo McCaw. With the aid of these tools, her parents discovered Sandra was able to spell and read words, allowing her to better express her wants and needs. She was also more eager to take over much of her...

Continued on the following page...

SANDRA BLACK

Continued...

decision making.

“She is able to tell us what she wants, how she feels, and what she would like to do. The first word she spelled was ‘ice cream,’ which is her favorite thing. Some words she spells like they sound, but we are usually able to tell what she means,” says Frances Richard, Sandra’s mother.

Frances said that it was through FC that they were able to discover that Sandra wanted to live on her own. With funding from Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and Twin Valley, Sandra was able to move into her own home. Quite an outstanding accomplishment! Sandra gets the help she needs from an assistant, who helps her with household tasks and accompanies her outside the house.

“FC has helped open doors for Sandra, and has made her a much happier and more independent person. Since moving into her new home, she sleeps much better, hurts herself less often, and has a lot more smiles,” said Frances.

Unless, of course, the subject is turning forty.

Steve Boehm

Eight years ago, Steve Boehm walked through the doors of Twin Valley Developmental Services, Inc. He had a problem with anger management and was very hard to get along with. In fact, several people in his apartment building were afraid of him.

Boehm is originally from Seneca Kans., but was having difficulty finding work there when he heard about Twin Valley. Here, he was able to have a place to live, take anger management courses, and begin working.

Steve’s first jobs included working with Titan Trailers and then Landoll’s. At each job, coworkers and supervisors said he was very meticulous and hard-working.



Photo by Stephanie Wing

Steve pulls clean laundry from the washer. The Beattie site cleans laundry from the Super 8 Motel in Marysville daily.

Eventually, Steve came to the Beattie job site, where he worked with the laundry service Twin Valley performs for local motels. Steve was so skilled at it that he began training others and eventually hired staff was no longer needed; all services were performed by Steve and other consumers.

In addition to successful work, Boehm has made tremendous gains in his approach to stress and has gained control over his anger.

“I really wanted to try to get better. Now I know when to keep it under control. It has really helped me,” Boehm said.

Steve has done so well with Twin Valley that he is now a member of the Quality Assurance Committee; which is made up of consumers who function as the “conscience” of Twin Valley. They interview fellow consumers in order to make sure everyone is happy with their services and assure that everyone is getting the most out of their experience. He has been a member for the last three years.

In addition to full time work with Twin Valley (Steve works Monday through Friday and every other weekend), he is also active with the Knights of Columbus and his church. Steve loves to dine out and has a very active social life.

The same man that came to Twin Valley eight years ago who frightened neighbors and was unable to control his temper is now one of the most active and popular of Twin Valley’s consumers.

Twin Valley Staff Proves That Personal Contact, Compassion, Are The Keys to Success

THE MOST MEMORABLE ASPECT OF TWIN VALLEY IS ITS PEOPLE. COMING FROM ALL ACROSS THE STATE OF KANSAS, THEY MAKE TWIN VALLEY STAND OUT AS A PREMIERE ORGANIZATION THAT TRULY CARES FOR ITS CLIENTS. THE STAFF HELPS TO ENRICH THE LIVES OF DOZENS OF CONSUMERS THROUGH ONE-ON-ONE ATTENTION AND THE KIND OF CARE THAT HAS UNFORTUNATELY BECOME SO RARE IN TODAY'S FAST-PACED, IMPERSONAL SOCIETY. THESE ARE JUST A FEW OF THEIR STORIES.

Joan Brabec

When Joan Brabec steps into her office every morning, she knows the day will be exciting, entertaining, and challenging. Working with consumers, laughing with them, and watching them progress is all an important part of her job description. For the last 23 years, Brabec has been a member of the Twin Valley staff, performing tasks including everything from driving the Twin Valley bus to volunteering her time with the Special Olympics. Currently, as Director of Administration, Brabec's primary responsibility is to oversee the financial aspect of the organization.

In 1980, while raising three children, Brabec decided to enter the work force and was quickly hired by the newly formed Twin Valley. Initially, she was responsible for clerical and office work, but her everyday tasks varied upon the needs of the organization. Throughout the years, her responsibilities grew and she eventually took over her present position. For her, the experience has been like gaining another family.

"We are all very close. There is a very low turnover rate with the staff, so we get to see everyone grow, have children, and so on. It's one of the best parts of the job," says Brabec.

In addition to staff, Brabec credits her positive experience with Twin Valley to the consumers.

"Everyday when I come to work, the consumers smile and welcome me. They have wonderful personalities and we have a good working relationship," said Brabec.

While these consumers have driven several changes within Twin Valley, including more residential and work sites, Brabec says that the overall number of new consumers seeking their assistance is lower than that of previous years.

"Usually we have four or five new people a year. This year we have only had one. This is not necessarily bad, though. It simply means that they are able to become more independent through other facilities or services," said Brabec.

Another change Brabec sees is the aging staff and consumers.

"As the general population of our consumers and our staff ages, issues arise such as retirement or with the consumers a need for different types of services," says Brabec.

The organization has been quick to adapt to these changes, she said, which is part of what makes Twin Valley so special to her. Now, 23 years after joining the Twin Valley family, Brabec is just as passionate about her work with the organization and still looks forward to every unpredictable day.

"The staff works really hard to make sure consumers get exactly what they need. They are caring and friendly and make everyone feel welcome. My work is never slow, but is always rewarding."

Cheryl Diederich

When Cheryl Diederich began thinking about a career change, she didn't have to look any further than next door. 15 years ago, Diederich's neighbor Joan Brabec, a member of the Twin Valley staff, suggested to her that she pursue an open position as job coach. For Diederich, the position would mean a friendlier work environment and much less travel to work every day, so the answer seemed to be an obvious one. Now, she looks at it as one of the best choices she has ever made.

"Once you spend some time with and get to know our Twin Valley consumers, you realize what wonderful people they are and what value they bring to our community," says Diederich.

Working to oversee job sites, Diederich sees the daily accomplishments the Twin Valley consumers make while in a 'real world' work environment. For her, this is the best part of the job.

"Seeing them grow and feel good about themselves is great; they just glow!" said Diederich.

In addition to changes within the consumers,

Continued on the following page...

CHERYL DIEDERICH

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Dietrich's time with Twin Valley has seen the development of several new work contracts and the availability of job sites. It is exciting to see the variety of jobs available to Twin Valley clients, she says. This is what makes the organization so accommodating to every individual, regardless of needs.

"Twin Valley has something for just about everyone. Depending on their capabilities, we can match them with the appropriate job," said Diederich.

However, while there is work available for nearly everyone, the amount of work they are allowed to complete is something that is sometimes discouraging to her.

"Because the state regulates how much money the consumers can make to keep their health insurance card, there are many who aren't able to work as much as they want to. There are even some [consumers] who can only work an hour or two a day," Diederich said.

Limiting the amount consumers can work also limits their interaction with their community and their ability to earn enough income to live on their own, says Diederich. She believes that the focus should be on getting everyone out into the community working.

"Only allowing them to make so much a day creates a backward slide. They should be rewarded for working, not punished," says Diederich.

Despite these regulations, Diederich says that the fact that they are able to work in so many different places within the region is evidence that Twin Valley is helping to change some of the old stereotypes.

15 years ago, Cheryl Diederich entered the Twin Valley family. Throughout these years, she has seen changes in the organization, the consumers, and within herself. She has met people who have become lifelong friends and had the wonderful opportunity to help better someone's life on a daily basis. While she initially took the position as a part of a career change, she found a second home that would permanently touch every part of her life.

Frances Richard

From the moment you enter the world of Frances Richard, you feel truly blessed. Her smile is warm and familiar, like that of an old friend. As she walks you through the work site in Beattie, Kan. she is greeted by nearly every consumer, all wanting just a minute with their friend Frances. For her, it is more than a job. It is her passion.

Richard's involvement with Twin Valley began several years before she became an employee. Her daughter, Sandra, was born autistic and began living in a Twin Valley assisted living home in 1983. It wasn't until nearly seven years later, when Richard was looking for a career change that she happened to see a Twin Valley ad in the local paper looking for a residential coordinator. Knowing how much the organization has helped her daughter, she decided to give it a try. This spring she retired as the Program Director for Marshall County, after 14 years with Twin Valley.

Over the years, Richard says the biggest change has been the expansion of the organization.

"We have spread out a lot in the last few years. We now have a number of different job sites in several towns across northeastern Kansas, so we are able to serve more consumers," says Richard.

The best part of working with Twin Valley, according to Richard, is watching the consumer progress.

"My favorite part of coming to work each day is watching the consumers grow and change as they become more independent. Sometimes the smallest achievement can seem like a mountain climbed," said Richard.

Unfortunately, Richard says she is worried about the impact the state budget cuts will have on the ability of Twin Valley and other organizations to help the consumers reach these accomplishments.

"Right now it is already challenging to find staff and adequate funding to help our customers fulfill their dreams. I'm worried about what it going to be like in the future if the budget cuts get any deeper," said Richard.

Although it is getting more difficult to get funding, Richard says that the services Twin Valley provides are invaluable to the community and should remain.

"Twin Valley gives the consumer the chance to work and live in their own communities. We help them gain independence and confidence, which everyone needs," said Richard.

While Richard values the opportunity to help someone better their life, she says that it is her life that has been forever changed.

"They have such a wonderful sense of humor. On your most down days they lift you up. They end up giving you a lot more than you give them."

Gayle Hawkins

Twin Valley is made up of many wonderful individuals who are committed to the task of assisting those in need. They work long hours in sometimes very challenging situations. The reward? A smile, a friendship; the feeling of profound joy in knowing a life has been forever changed for the better. From the instant you meet one of these gifted persons you can see there is something that sets them apart from the rest. One such person is Gayle Hawkins.

After moving to the area in 1983, Gayle heard about Twin Valley and shared in their vision to enrich the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. She had prior experience as a staff member at the Beatrice State Developmental Services in Nebraska, so she thought this job would be a perfect fit. The rest, as they say, is history.

Sixteen years after coming to Twin Valley, Gayle holds a number of positions. These include Case Manager, Intake Eligibility Manager, Behavioral Management Chairperson, Community Council Chairperson, and as she says, "anything in between." However, Gayle says that the most fulfilling part of her job is still "working with the people and seeing them succeed at things big or small."

Gayle reflects fondly on many memorable events that she has experienced during her years with Twin Valley.

"One year my husband and myself and other staff at Twin Valley took a group to the Special Olympics in Wichita, Kansas, and one of the guys was getting ready to go to the dance that night. He had forgotten his cologne, so my husband gave him some of his cologne. The individual smelled the cologne and said, "Man, this is good stuff, it will bring the girls." My husband still, to this day, will laugh about this, because every time he saw this guy at the dance he had girls on both arms, and danced up a storm," recalls Gayle.

Organizations like Twin Valley, Gayle says, are crucial because they provide something otherwise missing in many small communities.

"Twin Valley offers those with disabilities the opportunity to participate in the workplace. As they become a part of the work force, their interaction with peers opens the door to social possibilities and further expands their place in the community," notes Gayle.

During her time with Twin Valley, Gayle says that the changes within the organization have been remarkable. They are able to offer a quality experience and many new features, such as more apartment

living and more job opportunities.

"Since becoming involved with Twin Valley, it has grown by leaps and bounds. New apartment complexes have been built and community homes have been purchased. Employment opportunities have expanded, and people are living in affordable housing within their own communities. Individuals are also living in apartments and home that are rented from people in the community. There are job sites that employ individuals to work in community factories and businesses," said Gayle.

However, Gayle is fearful that the future may not be as bright, as the state funding faces severe cuts.

"One or two years ago I would have said that Twin Valley will continue to grow in employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. I also expected to see those opportunities grow for individuals as they moved into their home communities, striving for a "normal" living experience alongside family and friends. When I think of SRS budget cuts, I fear that things will have to be cut, such as community activities and living support for individuals in the community. This could mean less employment, because employers will have to keep the employees in their business busy and not offer contract work for individuals in sheltered workshops," said Gayle.

Gayle hopes that the support of the community will see them through these tough times.

"Hopefully, with the support from individuals, families and friends, prayers and dreams, Twin Valley will continue to play an important role in providing services to those with disabilities."

Vicky Lehman

In August of 1978 Vicky Lehman graduated from Crum's Beauty College and was preparing for a career in cosmetology in Hiawatha, Kans. That is, until Twin Valley came calling.

"Ed called me and asked if I would be interested in coming to work at Twin Valley. Working with individuals with disabilities had always been something I had wanted to do, so my thoughts were- I could always do hair, but I may not get the chance to do this again," said Lehman.

When she began, Vicky was hired to fill a file with papers so Twin Valley could be eligible for federal funding. This involved writing the consumer's Individual Program Plans (IPP's) that taught things...

Continued on the following page...

VICKY LEHMAN

Continued...

such as writing their name, shampooing their hair, and preparing simple food items. She has done most everything since then.

25 years later, Lehman is now Twin Valley's Program Director and has seen enormous changes within the organization.

"When I first began there were two staffers and seven people. We have grown greatly. I've seen people grow from group homes to independent living. I've seen people grow from our sheltered workshop to jobs in the community. Some changes have been good and others not so good, but that all goes along with the territory," said Lehman.

These changes keep her job interesting and ensure that no two days will ever be the same.

"The joke is that we should have written a book!" said Lehman.

One of the most challenging aspects of her job as Twin Valley Program Director is working with the consumers' guardians or representatives to build a program that will be most beneficial to the consumer.

"They don't always agree or see what we see in their people. Sometimes we see the individual's potential or we have a good feel for what they want and then we and their guardian don't see eye to eye. This causes conflict," said Lehman.

Despite these differences of opinion, Lehman is sure of the value of the services the organization provides to the community.

"I think without Twin Valley, many people would never have been given the opportunity to grow and become who they are. One thing I believe is that every individual has the ability to fit in somewhere in society and are a valuable asset somewhere. It's Twin Valley's objective to help find that niche and provide the support," says Lehman.

This philosophy is exactly what makes Twin Valley's staff, especially Vicky Lehman, so extraordinary. Always willing to go the extra mile for someone in need, it is evident that Vicky is a caregiver that truly values the opportunity to improve someone's quality of life. For her, it is as simple as seeing the consumer for who they are.

"I've been here so long I see each person as an individual first, like you and me, and I see the disability second, and sometimes not at all."

A Note from the Author

I hope after reading these stories you have some idea of the incredible scope of Twin Valley. While this is but a brief glimpse into the lives of those involved with the organization, my goal is that it will leave you with some idea of how amazing they truly are.

Entering this project, I had virtually no experience with disability services or the people they help. This journey has opened my eyes to how courageous, strong, and absolutely inspiring these individuals are and I am so much better for the ride. To Ed Henry, Frances Richard, Brian Butters, Joann McCurley, and everyone whom I've been blessed enough to meet, thank you for continually renewing my faith in humanity and the power of compassion.

Stephanie Wing

For more information about Twin Valley Developmental Services, Inc., call or write:

Twin Valley Developmental Services, Inc.
427 Commercial
P.O. Box 42
Greenleaf, KS 66943
785-747-2251
1-800-748-7416

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Twin Valley Developmental Services, Inc.

25th

Anniversary Publication

Fall 2003

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