



### Finding her confidence is only the beginning of what one mom aims to accomplish

Eric Swenson, mayor of Woodburn, hustles around the crowded second-floor ballroom of the city’s historic Metropolis building. His demeanor is informal but full of energy as he bounces from guest to guest, greeting everyone who has accepted his invitation to the Woodburn State of the City address held on February 7, 2020.

One of the people he plans to recognize for her contributions to the Woodburn community is Mary Ann Contreras, an employee at the Marion Polk Food Share’s All Woodburn Area Resources Enlisted (AWARE) Food Bank.

*“I want to have that education. I want to show my kids to never give up no matter how old you are.”  
- Mary Ann*

Mary is also a former participant in Shangri-La’s Youth and Family Services (YFS), a program designed to help individuals overcome barriers to employment and lessen their reliance on public assistance.

If you had met Mary Ann at the event, she would have looked you in the eye and spoke to you with confidence. She would give you no indication that only



*Mary Ann Contreras, a former Shangri-La Youth and Family Services Program participant, holds a bin of food that will benefit the Marion Polk Food Share’s AWARE Food Bank in Woodburn, where she now works.*

a few years ago, she would barely make eye contact, much less talk to people.

After being a stay-at-home mom of five children for 24 years, a divorce left her a single mother with no work experience and an incomplete education.

“I’ve been through a lot and suffered from depression. During all those years, due to circumstances, I really couldn’t follow my interests or passions,” Mary Ann explains. “I was always told ‘no.’”

As a result, she described herself as someone who was always ducking her head and never speaking up for herself.

*continued on page 5*

#### page 2

My25 nutrition and menu planning software pilot off to a positive start.

#### page 3

Shoes, jackets, books, and board games make holidays merry and bright.

#### page 4

Student explores the concept of happiness for individuals with disabilities.



## Nutrition and menu-planning pilot launches at six locations with support from donors

Six-month pilot projects of the My25 nutrition and menu-planning software are underway at six Shangri-La homes serving individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Made possible by donor contributions, the My25 program pilot provides custom nutrition and menu planning supports for individuals with complex dietary needs.

At the 3-month mark, Jennifer Gray, an I/DD program manager, reported that the focused shopping lists have already reduced food budgets by \$50-\$100 at some locations and that employees appreciate the automatically-generated shopping lists the most.

With My25's diverse menu offerings, individuals-served and employees are being introduced to many different types of foods. Another big win is the reduced time it takes to get new menus generated after an individual's doctor issues new or modified food orders.

While it is too early to tell if the program is positively affecting health indicators and some programs are still figuring out menus that honor each individual's choices, house managers are optimistic about the long term benefits of utilizing the software.

*Pictured above (at left) Employees show off the chef hats they received after completing their My25 training. (At right) Each home in the pilot received a crockpot that is used with several of the menu items to help minimize the time spent in the kitchen.*



## Local shopping center hosts Accessible Hour with Santa

On Dec. 14, individuals served by Shangri-La enjoyed some quality time with Santa during an 'Accessible Hour with Santa' hosted by the **Willamette Town Center**.

Taking the lead from Caesar the Llama's 'Birthday Party Accessible Hour', the event offered minor modifications to the classic Santa meet-and-greet experience, which made the experience more accessible and inclusive for individuals with disabilities.

Adjustments included a space with less sensory stimulation, and that was easier to navigate for individuals with mobility devices.

*Jason receives a candy cane from Santa after getting some one-on-one time with Father Christmas during Accessible Hour with Santa.*





## Shoes, jackets, books and board games among the 150 gift wishes donors fulfill during holiday season

Shangri-La's seventh annual Holiday Wishes Project provided gifts to nearly 100 individuals with disabilities and eight families with disadvantages served by Shangri-La. All-in-all, approximately 150 gift wishes – valued at over \$2,000 – were donated by Shangri-La supporters.

Through the project, gifts are provided to individuals and families that have no or limited income or no or limited support from family.

In October, Shangri-La starts collecting these gift wishes from individuals served. To keep in line with Shangri-La's person-centered focus, each individual that qualifies is asked specifically what they'd like to submit as their wishes.

These wishes are then put on ornaments – this year created by employees at **Philadelphia Insurance** – and make their way onto trees in mid-November. These trees are hosted by local businesses that engage their employees and customers in fulfilling the wishes.

“Our firm partnered with Shangri-La about four years ago to help with their Holiday Wishes Project. Each year we place a Holiday Wishes tree in our lobby. Our staff -- even some of our clients -- have found tremendous joy giving back to others in our local community that can use a little something extra during the holidays,” said Jenny Hudson, Director of Administration and Facilities at **Aldrich CPA's and Advisors**.

This year, gifts ranged from pots and pans to throw blankets, and jackets to gift cards. Board games and warm winter clothing were also among some of the most requested items.

Kathleen, just one of the many gift recipients, appreciated having her wishes for pajamas and socks fulfilled.

“Thank you so much for my Christmas gifts. So sweet. So kind,” said Kathleen.



*Thank You Tree Hosts*  
 Aldrich CPAs and Advisors - Salem  
 Citizens Bank - Salem  
 Columbia Bank - Newport  
 Eagles Club - Newport  
 Washington Federal - Florence



# Willamette University student explores the concept of happiness for individuals with disabilities

Dani Abraham, a student at Willamette University, is currently spending 10-weeks with Shangri-La's Life Enrichment Activities Program (LEAP) to gather information for her senior anthropology thesis. Her research project aims to help her gain a greater insight into the concept of what happiness means for

people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

*"[Shangri-La] is honestly a really magical place that is doing good for so many people, and it's an honor to get to do this project here."  
- Dani*

"First and foremost, I'm here to connect with LEAP participants and staff, and engage in their daily activities to learn more about who they are as people," stated Dani.

This research project is not the first time Dani has worked with

individuals with IDD. Dani has been part of the Best Buddies program – a volunteer organization that provides companionship for adults with disabilities – and was the president of Willamette's Best Buddy program for two years. She has also spent a fair amount of time volunteering for the Special Olympics and has volunteered at Shangri-La as well.

Dani's primary method of research is participant observation, which means she will be learning from taking part in the daily activities at LEAP and observing the individuals that attend the program.

"I am observing relationship dynamics, personal well-being of the participants (what makes them happy, what makes them frustrated, etc.), and just how a typical day goes at LEAP," explained Dani.

In addition to participant observation, Dani will also be asking LEAP staff questions about the program, how it has changed over the years and how they think the program benefits the participants, as well



*Dani shares a laugh with Jason while at Shangri-La's Life Enrichment Activities Program, where Dani is completing research for her senior anthropology thesis.*

as how they have personally benefited from working with the participants. Occasionally she will be asking participants about what makes them happy or what they enjoy about coming to LEAP to help round out her research.

After Dani completes her time with LEAP, she will then combine the data she collected with analysis and scholarly literature that she has found on a variety of topics that helped lead to her current study.

Her research and analysis will accumulate into her final anthropology thesis for her senior seminar. She will present her research in a presentation at the end of the semester in May to her classmates, peers, and anyone from Shangri-La who would like to attend.

"As an anthropology major, I hope to use the skills I have acquired in school to study and learn about different populations of people all around the world. I am

interested in traveling and learning and assimilating into different cultures and hope to someday go to graduate school, either getting a master's in cultural anthropology or a master's in social work," Dani said when asked about her goals for the future.

*"I love working with people, and this project is allowing me to practice my skills and find my confidence as a professional people-person."  
- Dani*



## New office location in Eugene

In early January, Shangri-La's Eugene office moved to a new location at 398 High Street. The new location sits about a block and a half north of the well-trafficked 5th Street Public Market.

"The building itself is smaller, but it offers more efficient use of space," explained Nathan Mart, Shangri-La's mental health program director. "Staff will be closer, which provides more opportunities for collaboration and team building, ultimately leading to better services."

The Eugene team also hopes that the more prominent location will lead to more exposure of Shangri-La's Lane County outpatient mental health clinic.



*Shangri-La's new Eugene office location houses operations for Shangri-La's Lane County outpatient mental health program as well as administrative support for the mental health housing program.*



*Mary Ann poses for a photo at the 2020 Woodburn State of the City celebration on February 7, 2020. Mary Ann was just one of the many citizens recognized for their positive contributions to the city at the event.*

## Mary Ann's journey *continued from page 1*

Mary Ann got involved with Shangri-La's YFS program to gain work experience and to tackle getting her GED, but a complete transformation of self is what she achieved.

"At first, she would come into YFS and sit in the office in the dark, preferring not to even turn the light on," Andrea Smith, YFS Career Coach, remembers. "Over time, she started walking differently, more confident, and now says she enjoys her life."

Following her passion for helping people, Shangri-La found a volunteer position for Mary Ann at the Woodburn AWARE Food Bank, where she could gain some work experience. After volunteering for a while, AWARE hired Mary Ann.

"Mary Ann has grown tremendously since she has started here," shared Gabriella Peña, Mary Ann's supervisor at AWARE. "She has a confidence now that I didn't see when she first began her journey with us. She is bilingual, which is an incredible asset for the community she serves. She helps to keep a professional, friendly, and welcoming environment for all."

When Mary Ann looks to the future, she still has plans to obtain her GED. "I want to have that education," she said, balling up both hands into fists. "I want to show my kids to never give up no matter how old you are."

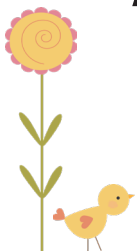
## ACCESSIBLE EGG HUNT *for individuals with disabilities*

Saturday, April 11, 2020 10-12 p.m.

Log House Garden in Keizer

Egg hunt, games, photo booth, and more!

See details at: [www.ShangriLaOregon.org](http://www.ShangriLaOregon.org)



presented by:

- Salem Electric
- Willamette Valley Wedding Professionals
- Log House Gardens
- Shangri-La



# better together

Thank you to these donors and volunteers whose contributions helped people with disabilities and families with disadvantages thrive at home, at work, and in our community.

*We truly are, better together.*

## Better Together Giving Community Members

Members of **Shangri-La's Better Together Giving Community** understand that helping individuals reach their full potential and building inclusive communities takes consistent and on-going support. Join the community. Visit [www.ShangriLaOregon.org](http://www.ShangriLaOregon.org) to become a Better Together Giving Community member at just \$10 per month.

Alan Apodaca	Theresa Kies
Katharine Army	Amy Korkowski
Nick Bender	Elizabeth Larson
David Briggs	Diego Lugli
Vicki Caldwell	Teri Marsh
Ronald and Marlene Carpani	Jeanette Merrick
Andrea and Chuck Cogburn	Lisa Miller
Donna Cote-Welch	Madeline Mulhern
Greg and Holly Crawford	Allison Myers
Britni and Nick Cruickshank	Tiffani Olsen
Megan Denison	Holly Pharms
Aalicea Dominguez	Laurie Phelps
Fred Duckwall	Roger and Colleen Plott
Ashley Erb	Rachenda Reynosa
Callie Evonuk	Kelli Rogers
Jan Frank	Kathy Sewell
Heidi Frederick	David Sloves
Julia Frisbie	Yvonne Stewart
Dan and LeeAnne Gilmour	Ron and Joanna Stout
Jennifer Gray	Ross Stout
Brittney Hall	Nicole Titus
Beth Hill	Amanda Valerio
Howard Hinsdale	Rose Wilgus
Tami Ju	Dan and Robin Winkle
Winifred Ju	Janet and Ben Yousey

## My25 Nutrition+Meal Software Pilot Supporters

*see story on page 2*

Dan and Cynthia Arnold	Dona Kruse
Tracy Beck	Sarah Lockwood
Gerry Blakney	Michael and Susan Mahoney
Daryl Calfee	Dennis and Darlene McCrea
Philip and Susan Coleman	Fraternal Order of Eagles - Newport
Caroline Cummins	Tammie Montgomery
Jennifer Dominguez	Tiffani Olsen
Joanna Edwards	Roger and Colleen Plott
Ashley Erb	Karen Rutledge
Lorilynn Espinoza	Mary Schmid Carter
Michael Fiala	Larry and Denise Seith
Douglas Golden	Kathy Sewell
Lynne Heroux	Sue Stalnaker
Melanie Hooper	Judith and Michael Tallan
Daylee Howard	Wells Fargo Call Center
Jimmy and Patricia Jackson	JD Welch
Winifred Ju	Dan and Robin Winkle
Jason Kelly	Erica Woodcock
Kennedy Living Trust	
Lonnie and Patricia Kennell	
William Kinane	
Jeff Kirk	

## Greatest Need Givers + Wish List Responders

Chris Fox	Betty Benson
Amanda Weeks	Erica Woodard
Erica Woodcock	Paul Reno
Virgina Stensland	Dean Costales
Kristin Ottele	Figaro's Pizza - Stayton

## Harms Home Repair Fund Supporters

Bruce Carpani

## Endowment Fund Supporters

Lowell and Grace Herr



Ashley Erb, Shangri-La's Director of Community Engagement, holds a check from the Siletz Tribal Charitable Contribution Fund at the spring grant reception on Feb. 7 at the Chinook Winds Casino in Lincoln City.

## Grant awards will fund basic needs, home remodels, and lift purchases

In December 2020, Shangri-La received a \$10,000 grant from the **Barbara Emily Knudson Foundation**. A portion of the grant will help individuals served by Shangri-La's outpatient mental health clinic that need assistance with medical, dental, personal hygiene, transportation, work-readiness, and other basic need costs. The remainder of the grant will kick-start a year-long campaign to raise funds to complete barrier-free remodel projects to a handful of Shangri-La homes.

A \$3,078 grant from the **Siletz Tribal Charitable Contribution Fund** will purchase two portable Hoyer lifts that will allow individuals with significant mobility challenges to continue to participate in their day programs while maintaining their privacy and dignity, and reducing the risk of employee injury.

### Holiday Wishes Project Supporters and Gift Wrapping Volunteers

*see story on page 3*

Crystal Arzdo	Sarah Hohstadt
Vicki Caldwell	Randi McKinney
Donna Cote-Welch	Tiffani Olsen
Caroline Cummins	Martha Russell
Jennifer Dominguez	Hannah Shuholm
Ashley Erb	Claudia Sparrow
Kristan Ezziddine	Cyndi White
Steve and Stacy Erb	Shana Winn
Stephanie Fournier	Janet and Ben
Elizabeth Fraumeni	Yousey

plus, many, many anonymous gift givers!

### Practium/Intern Student Volunteers

Kimberly Castro	Kory Robinson
Monroy	Andee Kahler
Danielle Abraham	

### Awareness Month Prep Volunteers from Willamette University

Mackenzie Johnson	Shirley Ley
Annie Fritz	Jensine Rasmussen
Grace Sheehan	Britt Shunn-Mitchell
Anna Jones	Claire Johnson
Heather Canby	Surya Lee
Sally Burns	Gwynneth Fritz

### Accessible Egg Hunt Friendship Bracelet Prep Volunteers from Willamette University



Claire Verstrate	Stephanie Hayes
Noa Landau-Camarillo	Isabella Ponteconco
Katrina Thomas	Sarah Diamond
	Landry Ferguson

## get in touch

Salem Office  
4080 Reed Road SE #150  
Salem, OR 97302  
503-581-1732

Eugene Office  
398 High St.  
Eugene, OR 97401  
541-344-1121

Newport Office  
141 NW 11th St.  
Newport, OR 97365  
541-265-4015

[www.ShangriLaOregon.org](http://www.ShangriLaOregon.org)  
[facebook.com/ShangriLaCorp](https://facebook.com/ShangriLaCorp)  
[instagram: @ShangriLaOregon](https://instagram.com/ShangriLaOregon)



# missionmoments



## Pancakes for People

In partnership with **Applebee's - South Salem**, the Pancakes for People fundraiser raised over \$1,000 for Shangri-La.



## #workgoals

Wesley recently volunteered to learn new tasks using the large drying machine at his job with **Salishan Spa and Golf Resort**.



## Brotherly Love

Scott enjoyed some quality time with his brothers during a recent family vacation in Denver.



## Lookin' Sharp

Fred had a great time at Night to Shine, a prom event for individuals with disabilities, hosted by **Salem Alliance Church**.



## #inclusionworks

Congrats to Ryan on his new job at **Marian Estates Retirement Living** in Sublimity.



## All Wrapped Up

Thank you to the group of volunteers who wrapped over 150 gifts for the Holiday Wishes Project.



## Career Connections

About 80 people attended a career expo at **Stayton High School** hosted by Shangri-La's Youth and Family Services program.



## Tinsel in the Tropics

A little vitamin sea, good food, and friends were all part of the 'Tinsel in the Tropics' cook-off competition held in Salem.

## At Our Core

Mission: Serve individuals with disabilities or disadvantages so they may recognize and achieve their full potential.

Vision: Communities where all people are accepted for their abilities and celebrated for their successes.

## Become Better Together

Visit Shangri-La's website to learn more, donate, volunteer or see current job openings.

[www.Shangri-LaOregon.org](http://www.Shangri-LaOregon.org)

If you no longer wish to receive the Shangri-La quarterly newsletter or have questions about this publication, email: [community@shangri-la-or.org](mailto:community@shangri-la-or.org) or call 503-581-1732, x318.

## Board of Directors

President: Nick Bender  
*IT Project Manager -  
Bonneville Power*

Vice President: Michael Kemry  
*Realtor - Bledsoe Santana*

Secretary: Winifred Ju  
*Licensed psychologist*

Treasurer: Allison Myers  
*Director, OSU Center for  
Health Innovation*

Shangri-La is a 501c3 non-profit human services organization, tax identification #: 93-0509414.

LeeAnne Gilmour  
*Business Development  
Officer - Citizens Bank*

Jake French  
*Motivational speaker and  
author - Jake French Inspires*