



## The Communities of Don Guanella and Divine Providence

Programs Serving Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities  
A Division of Catholic Social Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

### GROWING UP WITH DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Moving Towards Independence Together

In April 2017, Abby and Nitza celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> birthdays. The twin sisters were surrounded by family and friends in the Life Sharing home they have shared with Tanya and Ron Barrett since November 2016. Abby and Nitza each have an intellectual disability and autism; they share similarities, but also have very distinct personalities and interests.

For almost 30 years, *Divine Providence Village* (DPV) has provided a continuum of services and supports for them, as these sisters together moved towards greater independence.

Abby and Nitza began living at the DPV campus when they were just ten years old. They attended the Intermediate Unit educational programs at *Don Guanella School* (DGS) and graduated from Marple-Newtown High School. After graduation, they began working at the *DPV Work Activity Center*, first on the DGV campus, and now at *Our Lady of Fatima* in Secane. With compassionate guidance they blossomed into responsible, healthy, joyful, and fulfilled women. The fun-loving, easy-going sisters enjoy a variety of activities, including computer time, going out to eat, dancing, and traveling. They especially like the sand and ocean at the beach.

"ABBY AND NITZA HAVE BEEN VERY HAPPY IN THEIR NEW HOME. THEY REALLY ARE A JOY TO HAVE. YOU CAN TELL BY THEIR SMILES THAT THEY FEEL LOVED BY OUR ENTIRE FAMILY."

- Tanya Barrett

Susan O'Connell first met the twin sisters when she worked in their DGS classroom. Susan then became a

part-time DPV employee and has worked with Abby and Nitza ever since. In 1999, when the twins moved into the first *Community Living Arrangement* (CLA) comprised of former DPV campus residents, Susan moved to the CLA program with them. She followed them again when the sisters moved to a larger group home in Drexel Hill.





## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

### Transforming Lives: Promoting Individual Growth Through our Continuum of Care

It was our privilege to share with you in our last newsletter the resilient journey of a mother and her son through his youth and adulthood, the latter marked by the onset of Alzheimer's Dementia and its considerable challenges. Mimi's parental devotion and the unconditional love between her and Denis was augmented by our programs, which provide the "compassionate cement," if you will, to the collaborative caregiving process.

Our lead story in this edition offers another insightful example of how we fulfill our mission to "transform lives" and offer "hope." This narrative about twin sisters and their particular circumstances differs significantly from the one in the preceding newsletter, but it is no less inspiring. Clearly, it gives testimony to the inner strength of individuals with intellectual disabilities and is indicative of DPV and DGV's enduring commitment to serve them through our individualized continuum of care.

Abby and Nitza came to *Divine Providence Village* at the age of ten, a time in DPV history when children lived there. Case notes reveal that they arrived feeling vulnerable and anxious about an uncertain future. Abby and Nitza overcame those obstacles and resided on the DPV campus for eleven years, maturing nicely into adulthood, and then entered a three-person group home in our *Community Living Arrangement* (CLA) program. After almost eighteen years there, ably realizing their potential for growth, Abby and Nitza moved together

into the *Life Sharing through Family Living Program* - our least restrictive residential program - in 2016 at the age of 39.

Over 30 years, the twins learned valuable life skills and have become increasingly independent. With progressive transition through our programs, the twins quickly blossomed, and are now thriving with a committed Life Sharing family. Their spirits are clearly uplifted by the intimacy and love of family life, while they continue to have their intellectual disability needs met through Divine Providence's professional guidance. Indeed, DPV's impactful presence has been especially crucial, because Abby and Nitza's own family could not be directly involved in their care due to complicated circumstances.

Whether it's being a critical link in support of families engaged in caregiving as in the case of Mimi and Denis, or when we, in effect, become the primary family as in Abby and Nitza's situation, we are prepared to serve others with our program continuum. We hope that these narratives aptly describe and humanize those for whom we care, and demonstrate how effectively we do so. Through our newsletter, we appreciate the opportunity to spread such hopeful good news, and trust that you will find our efforts worthy of your interest and ongoing support.

*Fran Swiacki*

Fran Swiacki  
Executive Director

Continued from cover

As Abby and Nitza matured, they were ready for more independent living in the community with a family. Susan was there for them again, offering reassurance when the sisters saw their new home for the first time. She knew that they would be happy there. After a short adjustment period, Abby and Nitza felt "right at home." The Barretts welcomed the twins they had always wanted, and the sisters are now in a loving family home environment, while remaining connected to their larger DPV community.

With compassionate care, Abby and Nitza have grown and progressed to a more independent setting supported by dedicated and caring staff that have walked with them every step of the way. The sisters always have each other, and they also know that they will always have Divine Providence by their side.



## DIVINE PROVIDENCE VILLAGE HISTORY



1983 DPV ground breaking



Bell Choir in original DPV chapel

- 1881: Saint Luigi Guanella founded the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, whose primary mission is to minister to persons with intellectual disabilities.
- 1948: The Daughters of St. Mary of Providence opened a home for girls and young women with intellectual disabilities in Elverson, PA.
- 1984: Residents from Elverson moved to a new Divine Providence Village (DPV) campus in Springfield, PA.
- 1996: DPV opened its first Community Living Arrangement (CLA), a three-person group home.
- 2014: Sixteen men were transferred from DGV to DPV, the first time men would live on that campus.

## *Fatima Day Programs* **INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES** *Resources for Enrichment*

The Day Programs at Our Lady at Fatima offer a range of enhancements based on each person's needs and interests. Individuals have access to a variety of supplemental supports including Physical, Occupational, and Speech Therapy as prescribed by their physicians.



**Horticulture** is offered at the *Sean Joseph Casey, Jr.\* Memorial Greenhouse*. Activities include seed planting and plant maintenance as well as flower arranging. Volunteers Linda and Hope (pictured) from **Penn State Extension Master Gardeners**, work with staff for skill transfer so that the program can be expanded.  
\*Chris Kates (pictured, left) is Sean's uncle.



Jerry (pictured with guitar) from **Music Works** provides personalized attention to **Music Therapy** participants throughout each session. Individuals are offered a variety of instruments and get to experience many different genres of music.



The **Day Program Sensory Room** is available for all throughout the day and provides a multi-sensory experience for our individuals. Specialized sensory equipment in the room offers visual, tactile, auditory, and vestibular input.



Our **Mobile Sensory Cart** can be used in any location/classroom area, and provides a variety of tactile, visual, and auditory activities.



**Pals for Life Pet Therapy** participants interact with various certified animals. Golden Retriever "Uno" (pictured) and rabbits "Bubbles" and "Marbles" are regular visitors.



For more information about Day Programs, contact:  
Paul Holmes, Administrator  
**484-472-5011**  
pholmes@chs-adphila.org

DESIGNED FOR AUTISM SUPPORT  
A New Community Home

Matt, Kenny and Michael are flourishing in their beautiful home on War Admiral Lane in Media. The quiet, serene setting, featuring a pond in the backyard, has been specially designed to accommodate the sensory needs of these intellectually disabled, autistic young men.

Holistic, person-centered planning, including customized day programming, has resulted in a significant



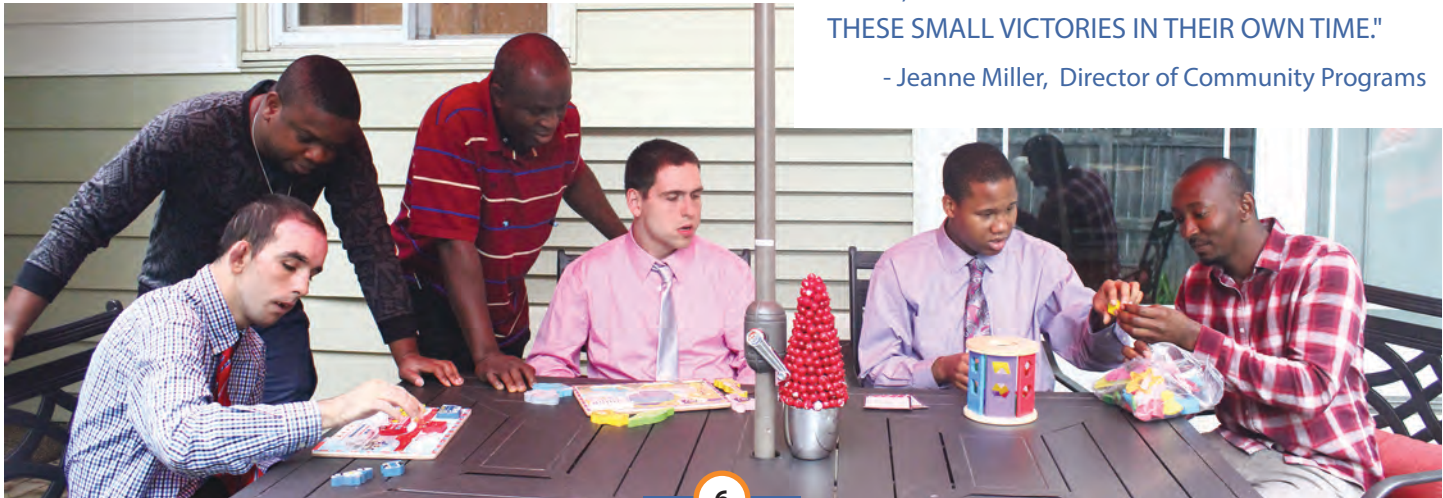
increase in positive behaviors. Successful strategies have been creatively developed using additional staff, consultants, and specialized adaptive equipment such as weighted blankets - which provide calming support.

Matt likes tactile sensory activities. Kenny enjoys using his IPAD in the recreation room. Mikey no longer needs to wear headphones to help him cope with too much stimulation. Adept attention is focused on the men's unique social, emotional, and communication needs. With patience and consistent positive reinforcement, the men interact more with each other, and have increased their tolerance for newly introduced social situations. The men enjoy participating in community outings, but it's always nice to come home, especially to the transformative sanctuary that has been created for them.



"OUR INDIVIDUALS IN THE AUTISM SUPPORT HOME HIT DEVELOPMENTAL AND SOCIETAL MILESTONES IN A DIFFERENT ORDER THAN THEIR PEERS, BUT THEY ARE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THESE SMALL VICTORIES IN THEIR OWN TIME."

- Jeanne Miller, Director of Community Programs



start  
with why

After reading *START WITH WHY: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, my mind and heart gravitated to a special man whose "WHY" continues to inspire *The Communities of Don Guanella and Divine Providence*. Don Guanella was a humble diocesan priest who pioneered programs for boys and girls rejected by 19th century Italian society because of their disabilities. Father Guanella called them "good children" and his "treasures," challenging people to accept individuals with intellectual disabilities as blessings from God, and founding religious communities of men and women to carry on his work. In 2011, the Church canonized Saint Luigi Guanella, whose compassionate spirit continues to be the charisma that fuels our Mission today.

The "Guanellian spirit of love" has become our "WHY" as we provide a continuum of care that nourishes and transforms the lives of people with intellectual and physical disabilities. Faith-filled inspiring "WHY" stories abound in our newsletters and on our website ([www.dgvdvp.org](http://www.dgvdvp.org)), flowing from the hearts of a caring, mission-driven workforce and extended family of supporters. Please visit our website, enjoy the pictures, review our [Services](#), [News](#) and [Events](#), and consider how you can support us. We hope each story will help you better understand our Mission - our "WHY" - and encourage you to ask: **What's your "WHY?"**



"It is always a matter of love: there is no other path."  
*Pope Francis to individuals with disabilities and their families.*

Our heart-centered, faith-filled stories reflect the beauty and challenge of our mission - our "WHY." To continue to provide the complex range of services that "God's Good Children" require, particularly as they age into later adulthood, we need your help. Current funding sources will not suffice to sustain our Mission in the years ahead, so planned or deferred gifts are critical for our legacy of love to continue.

PLANNED GIVING  
The Saint Luigi Guanella Legacy Society

Our "WHY" is at the heart of our plan to launch *The Saint Luigi Guanella Legacy Society*. The mission of Father Guanella was sustained by his deep, abiding trust in Divine Providence. We follow his lead as we trust that our extended family and friends will open their hearts to ask **What's my "WHY?"** and explore the possibility of leaving a mission-sustaining "legacy of love" by participating in this inspiring society.

*Kevin Barr*  
For more information, contact:  
Kevin Barr, Director of Development  
484-472-5099  
[kbarr@chs-adphila.org](mailto:kbarr@chs-adphila.org)



In Memoriam

We prayerfully remember those we have served who have passed away since July 2016

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| John White            | November 3, 2016  |
| Lee Blumenthal        | November 16, 2016 |
| Jacqueline McAllister | November 26, 2016 |
| Peter Pohren          | December 31, 2016 |
| Morton Grossman       | January 21, 2017  |
| Samuel Catrambone     | May 8, 2017       |
| Joseph Funk           | June 7, 2017      |
| Brian Souder          | June 22, 2017     |

A Memorial Service is planned for  
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2017  
at 2:00 p.m. in the DPV Chapel



## The Communities of Don Guanella and Divine Providence

**Don Guanella and Community Programs**  
Administrative Offices  
20 East Cleveland Avenue  
Norwood, PA 19074  
610-543-3380

**Divine Providence Village**  
686 Old Marple Road  
Springfield, PA 19064  
610-328-7730

**Day Programs at Our Lady of Fatima**  
10 Fatima Drive  
Secane, PA 19018  
215-578-8204

[www.dgvdpv.org](http://www.dgvdpv.org)

**Editor:** Barbara Jenkins

**Editorial Consultant:** Ed Lis

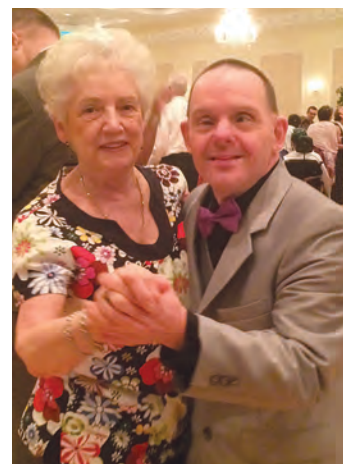
**Graphic Design:** Tina Colvin

**Contributors:** Fran Swiacki, Kevin Barr



The men and women from DGV and DPV were grateful to use the Cardinal O'Hara High School gym for their Challenger League games this spring. Whiffle balls, hugs, high fives, water ice and soft pretzels made for a FUN TIME at this beautiful "ballpark."

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
UPPER DARBY, PA  
PERMIT NO. 34



### DPV and DGV Annual Spring Formal at Drexelbrook Hall

**SAVE THE DATE:**  
**Family Town Hall Meeting**  
**September 20, 2017**  
**7:00 p.m.**

Divine Providence Village  
Multi-Purpose Building

