

# Marie Mills Center, Inc.



1800 Front Street, Tillamook, OR 97141

Fall 2019



## Talking with Two of Our Pioneers

We are celebrating our 50th year of serving those with disabilities in Tillamook County. When we started there was no roadmap on how to do what we were doing, but there was



a lot of community desire to create opportunities for those with disabilities.

In 1969 our first program site was a sheltered workshop located in a World War II mess

hall at the Port of Tillamook Bay. We made pallets in our woodshop and did subcontract work for Tektronix, among many other things. Our program started with nine developmentally disabled individuals and was staffed by volunteers. Prior to this, institutional settings were the primary source of service for disabled individuals. We interviewed two Marie Mills Center pioneers and they

had a lot to say about those early years.

**Linda Murray** was among the first individuals served. Today she is the only original participant left at Marie Mills Center. She truly is a pioneer and is a wealth of knowledge about our history. She has done a lot

different jobs over the years including

packaging Tektronix parts in the old workshop, and most

recently working on a crew at the Tillamook Country Smoker. Linda's parents, Joe and Ethel, helped start Marie Mills Center. When asked about her favorite thing over the years with Marie Mills Center she said with emphasis - "the parties!". When asked about other things she remembers she remarked "all of the people who were cordial and nice". For those who may not know, Linda loves Special Olympics with her favorite sport being bowling. When asked if there is anything else she wanted to say about her years with us she said, "they were golden years because I could be with all my friends and I like being around other people".

**Dr. Helen**

**Benscheidt** is another pioneer. She is a 97-year-old "ball of fire" and a founder of Marie Mills Center. She currently serves on the Marie Mills Foundation Board and has many memories about our formation 50 years ago. Back then, she was the director of special

education in the Tillamook School District. With passion she says "I decided that that we needed a program. The special education kids back then were graduating and had nothing after that". It was Helen's work with these "special needs kids" and her niece, Marie Mills, that was her inspiration for creating Marie Mills Center. Marie had a developmental disability and passed away at a young age because of a heart defect. ...continued page 2..



Linda Murray



Dr. Helen Benscheidt

## Continued... Talking with Two of Our Pioneers

"She was a sweet little thing and I live for her and Marie Mills Center everyday" said Helen. Those that know Helen know that she has a dogged determination and the first thing she asked herself was "what do I do to get something going for these kids?". "Back then I wasn't afraid to go out and see what was going on", said Helen. She knew from her involvement with the State Mental Health Board community, programs like ours were starting to form but were in their infancy. Helen garnered support from others in the community and her husband Carl and moved forward. "My husband Carl was the president of the Tillamook First Interstate Bank and he was able to get us a line of credit to help in the startup of Marie Mills Center". She adds with a laugh, "we also did a lot of barbecue chicken fundraisers". It



was these efforts and grants that led to our creation.

The Tillamook Association for Retarded Citizens was helpful through sales at their thrift store, the Kit and Caboodle. The "Kit" operates to this day. When asked about the most difficult thing in those early years Helen responded, "what we were trying to do was so new and different and there was a lack of understanding about the needs of developmentally disabled persons back then but with time we were able to overcome that". When asked if she had any final words Helen said, "Patience, understanding, and empathy are very important, and I would not change a thing and enjoyed every minute of it!" Because of that "seed" planted 50 years ago by our founders like Helen, original program participants like Linda, and the inspiration of Helen's niece, Marie, today we serve 82 individuals. What a legacy!

## Our Year in Review

In 2018/2019 we served 82 individuals with intellectual and development disabilities through a variety of programs including our Day Support Activity Program, our Employment Services Program, and our Residential Services Program. We also provided 73 days of respite services at our Madrona house group home. As individuals in our program age they encounter increased medical needs. Over the past several years we have seen an increase in this area. Last year we took individuals in our residential program to 520 medical appointments.



This past year we saw the elimination of sheltered employment. The State of Oregon ended that service in favor of emphasizing employment services for individuals with disabilities. It was a busy year in our Employment Services Program. We placed 13 individuals into competitive jobs. By the end of the year we were supporting 30 individuals in

competitive jobs in our community. It was also a busy year on the transportation front. This past year we traveled 96,168 miles in 10 Marie Mills Center vehicles serving those in our programs.

Like most employers in our area, it has been hard to find employees. The IDD field has been particularly hard-hit with annual turnover rates approaching 70%. Last year our agencies turnover rate was 8% but we faced challenges filling those positions. The state legislature, in addressing this problem in our field, granted increased funding to make working in our field more attractive. By the end of the



year we employed 64 staff which was an increase of six over the prior year. Our staff deserve much credit for the great work

they do. They are caring and conscientious individuals performing difficult jobs.

# Marie Mills Foundation Update

The **Marie Mills Foundation** continues to strive towards their goal of generating support and funding for the future of Marie Mills Center.

If you would like to find out more about the Marie Mills Foundation please **contact Ron Rush at 503-842-2539 x 1200 or visit our web site at [www.mariemills-center.com](http://www.mariemills-center.com)**. Also by remembering the Foundation in your estate planning you can help assure the future of Marie Mills Center and its services to the intellectually and developmentally disabled in Tillamook County.

The Marie Mills Foundation and the Marie Mills Center would like to express a heartfelt thank you to those who are helping them to continue to move forward in meeting their goals:

*Tanya Hobbs monthly contributions in Memory of Tom*

*Thompson, Tillamook F.O.E. Ladies Auxiliary #2144, Tillamook County Farm Bureau Mktg Assn Foundation, Linda Varner in Memory of Norm Lehman, Debbie Kelly (monthly donations), Tillamook Education Association in Memory of Norm Lehman, William Mah, Tom & Betty Waud, Sharon Lighthill in Memory of Mollie Nuppenau, William & Virgie Lorenz, Ed & Wilma Myers, Gloria Remington, Rob Trost Realty, Tillamook County United Way, Norma Anderson in Memory of Tom Thompson, Pam & Ted Mendenhall in Honor of Gregg Carter, Steve & Linda Darling in Memory of Mollie Nuppenau, Ruth & Rudy Fenk, Albright & Kittell, Jack & Elaine Streeter, Mahlon & Pat Wirfs, John Wassmer, ARC of Tillamook County, Tillamook Kiwanis Club ~Thank You All For Your Kindness~*

# Richard Biggs Retirement

July brought on **retirement for Richard Biggs**. He had worked with Marie Mills Center for **over 24 years**. Richard had spent many years supervising crews at the Tillamook Country Smoker and then more recently was an Employment Specialist helping individuals with their competitive employment in the community. Richard's smile and sense of humor will be missed by all who worked with him since 1995!





# Summer Time Fun Picnic



On August 17th we all gathered at Kilchis Park to enjoy the sunshine and each other's company and celebrating the conclusion of our busy summer season.

While some came to enjoy the hamburgers and hotdogs, others came ready to try their hand at winning one of our many games. Again we would like to express our appreciation to the Widmer family for their support with the BBQ and grilling!

This year was full of helpers from across the program as well as their spouses lending a hand. Thank you to each and every one of you who helped make this year an enjoyable event!



## YMCA - A Great Community Partner

Did you know that our local YMCA has been donating membership to those served by Marie Mills Center for nearly 30 years? This is another example of local partnerships in our community that help to make the lives of others better. A big shout out of thanks goes to our YMCA!



## Employees of the Month



June 2019  
Jeff Guidos



July 2019  
Mary Armstrong



August 2019  
Sandy Harms



September 2019  
Whitney McCraw

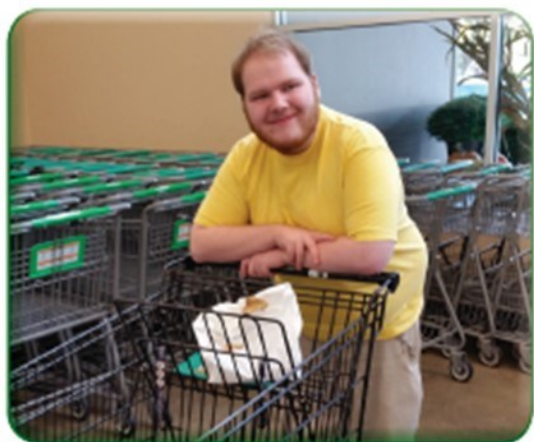


## Transportation Grant

In the spring we successfully applied for funds from the Public Transit Division grant program to help support our transportation services. This grant will fund \$96,234 in transportation projects during the 2019/21 biennium. It will fund purchasing services from our transportation district, vehicle preventive maintenance, and the acquisition of a new and much needed bus. We are targeting the summer or fall of 2020 for putting this new bus into service. This grant allows us to

partner with the Tillamook County Transportation District for providing supplemental transportation for those in our program. Even with all our vehicles and the miles we drive, it is not enough to meet all our participant's needs. Another piece of this grant is that we are able to share our discounted rates for purchasing services through TCTD with CARE Inc., our communities homegrown social service agency who's mission is to ease the effects of poverty in Tillamook County.

## Competitive Employment Placements



doing his best on the job. In his free time, Gauge enjoys all types of video games!

Gauge Casens was hired at Fred Meyer as a Front End Parcel. He is a team player and is very helpful to his co-workers and the customers he serves. Gauge is focused on

Cheyenne Traxler was hired at Fred Meyer as a Grocery Parcel. She has an outgoing personality and likes to help people. Her organizing skills will be a great asset to Fred Meyer as she maintains the grocery aisles. Cheyenne likes to go rock hounding with her dad and travel around Oregon.



# Out Having Fun



## Mark Your Calendar

Open House  
Marie Mills Center  
October 18th  
5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Halloween Party & Dance  
October 26th  
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm  
Swiss Hall

Christmas Dinner  
December 13th  
12:00 - 1:30 PM  
Swiss Hall

## Visit Marie Mills Center

We invite you to tour Marie Mills Center.  
Call Ron Rush at (503)842-2539 ext. 1200 or visit us on the web at  
[www.mariemillscenter.com](http://www.mariemillscenter.com)

**Executive Director**  
Ron Rush

**Assistant Director**  
Cindy Green

**Residential Director**  
Barb McDonald

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