

spring 2019

ECHOES

UNDER THE RIMS

COLLABORATION



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ABIDING & ADAPTING

NEW NAME, SAME MISSION



ON MARCH 5, ST. JOHN'S publicly revealed a new name, logo, and tagline. These are displayed in full color within this issue, including an explanation of the design. Also on display is a new look and layout for Echoes.

The name, **St. John's United**, was selected in response to a growing challenge of telling the story of who St. John's is and what it provides for people of all ages. Following nearly three decades of expanding human services, expanding locations, and the spawning of twelve separate organizational logos, people became confused about how St. John's all fit together.

The new name seeks to express that the array of services provided are united within the same organization and mission. The name also expresses the truth of unity and collaboration that

St. John's experiences among its employees, volunteers, partners, donors, those who are served, and their families. The name embraces the spirit of St. John's 25 ownership congregations which, although they are distinguished in name and location, are united in support and governance of St. John's and its mission.

Accompanying this new name and logo is a tag line, **SO MUCH LIFE TO LIVE**. The tagline serves as a mantra and not as a mission statement. The tagline expresses St. John's aspirational approach to providing human services. The mission of St. John's remains the same, **to provide living opportunities within nurturing environments of hope, dignity, and love**. The mission reflects the soul of St. John's and its calling in the world.

The year-long process of considering a new name and look was executed with care, collaboration and, honestly, a good measure of anxiety. Change creates anxiety, even when crafted thoughtfully. Although consultation with all St. John's stakeholders was not possible, there were many formal and informal consultations and conversations among board leaders, management, ownership

congregation delegates, clergy, community partners, counterpart Lutheran social ministry organizations, and the Montana Synod Bishop, ELCA.

In addition to the enclosed article about the embrace of a new brand, you will also find stories that provide examples of how, for 55 years, St. John's continues to value collaboration and partnership. These stories give witness that at St. John's there truly is **SO MUCH LIFE TO LIVE!**

Tom Schlotterback
VP of Mission Advancement

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ON HOLY GROUND

THROUGHOUT 2018, MISSION RIDGE celebrated its 20th anniversary as Montana's first full service, Continuing Care Retirement Community (a.k.a. Life Plan Community). The series of celebrations stirred memories of how this concept was conceived and born into reality.

Similar as to when in 1958 a group of area Lutheran church leaders considered how to respond to the emerging needs of older adults in Yellowstone County by constructing the original St. John's Lutheran Home, four decades later a group of leaders considered how to respond to added needs. This 1990's response led to formation of a joint venture partnership between St. Vincent Healthcare (a.k.a. SCL Health—St. Vincent) and St. John's, founded as Missions United.

The first housing project for Missions United was named Mission Ridge, located adjacent to the original St. John's Lutheran Home. A second project, WyndStone, was completed in 2016 and opened in the Billings Heights. Both communities provide independent and assisted living options, inclusive of supportive services. WyndStone also includes space for memory care living.

Current President and CEO of SCL Health—St. Vincent, Steve Loveless, observes, "Missions United is a special relationship. It is aptly named with two organizations committed to working together. It



Groundbreaking at Mission Ridge

is a relationship that has matured over time and is still maturing. I hearken back to the stories of beginning that I was not present to witness, but which have come to me through the two organizations speaking about the birth and of the significant players involved in bringing that to pass."

Kevin Sider, Executive Director of Mission Ridge, adds, "It's neat to see when two separate, large organizations join together for the sake of the common good in our community. One of the lesser known realities at Mission Ridge has to do with the two stained glass windows now set within the building's Kathy Lillis chapel. These historic windows were first crafted for the original public chapel at St. Vincent Hospital. The presence of these St. Vincent windows within Mission Ridge is a visible expression of togetherness between our two organizations."

Archives of the groundbreaking ceremony for Mission Ridge in 1996 include a photo of six men with shovels in hand. The third man from the right is Montana Governor, Mark Racicot. The third man from the left is St. John's former President and CEO for 25 years, Kent Burgess. When asked to offer thoughts about

the beginnings, challenges, and good work related to launching Mission Ridge, Burgess smiled and said, "You are treading on Holy Ground, my friend." He goes on to say, "When I first met with St. Vincent leadership to discuss partnering on a state-of-the-art senior living community, they suggested I bring St. John's mission statement to the meeting. We started by comparing their mission with ours. It became readily apparent that we had much in common, and thus the name of the new partnership, Missions United."

Missional synergy was a springboard for subsequent collaboration. Loveless suggests, "This ongoing collaborative work furthers the missions of both organizations, which for St. Vincent Healthcare is very important, as I know it is for St. John's. At St. Vincent Healthcare our mission is to reveal and foster God's healing love by improving the health of the people and communities we serve, especially those who are poor and vulnerable. Mission Ridge is a vehicle that accomplishes that in its own right, but it also allows us to further our mission as a result of what comes out of the collaborative venture."

Current President and CEO of St. John's United, David Trost, points to the innovative nature of Missions United at the time of formation. "Affiliations and collaborative partnerships are the buzz today for nonprofit organizations. The Missions United partnership envisioned 25 years ago was light years ahead of the buzz." Although collaborative ventures do require nurturing, as Loveless stated, Trost adds, "Collaborations allow St. John's to take risks that we might not take alone. We are humbled by the trust from SCL Health to manage this purpose driven venture."

The Missions United Board of Directors is comprised of four members from SCL Health—St. Vincent and four members from St. John's United, including the President and CEO of each organization. Loveless says, "Even in the time that I have been part of Missions United, I have seen a different level of engagement on the part of both members. I see real passion for this work and I see a real spirit of innovation. Creativity, innovation, and collaboration are challenging, but the hope is that we can make use of what has been built and generatively create from within, versus needing to draw more from the individual members to get where we are going. I think there is a bright future for us and that will continue to evolve. I also see great sensitivity for those who are served."

While holding the photograph of Mission Ridge groundbreaking in hand, Kent Burgess was asked what Governor Racicot said to those gathered on that historic day. "What I remember most, in his closing comments, was the reference that 'this day we are standing on Holy Ground'." ♦

Lee Ruprecht with Pastor Karl Guhn, St. John's United Director of Pastoral Care

CHAPEL COURT APARTMENTS



THE ST. JOHN'S BILLINGS campus is about to experience the sounds of deconstruction and construction. A portion of the original St. John's Lutheran Home building is scheduled to undergo demolition by summer 2019. New construction of an attached, four-

story affordable housing project will follow. Relocation of current residents living within wing 2 of Chapel Court is underway. Resident entry into new apartment units is anticipated by year-end 2020. Current Chapel Court residents are excited about living improvements to be provided within these 54 new apartment units, including a doubling of living space within each apartment.

Montana Board of Housing
In November 2019, the Montana Board of Housing awarded St. John's \$8,023,000 in low income housing tax credit (LIHTC) funding for purpose of completing this \$10.5 million project. The gap between tax credit funding

and project cost will be bridged by a combination of grants, fundraising, and financing provided by the St. John's Foundation. "We are honored to receive tax credits," says St. John's United President and CEO, David Trost. "The need for affordable housing across the state is immense and the federal allocation for Montana is small."

Mountain Plains Equity Group

The application process for LIHTC was lengthy and complicated, requiring collaborative assistance from Mountain Plains Equity Group (MPEG) of Billings. As a nonprofit tax credit syndicator, MPEG pursues its mission by creating and managing private equity funds. Institutional and

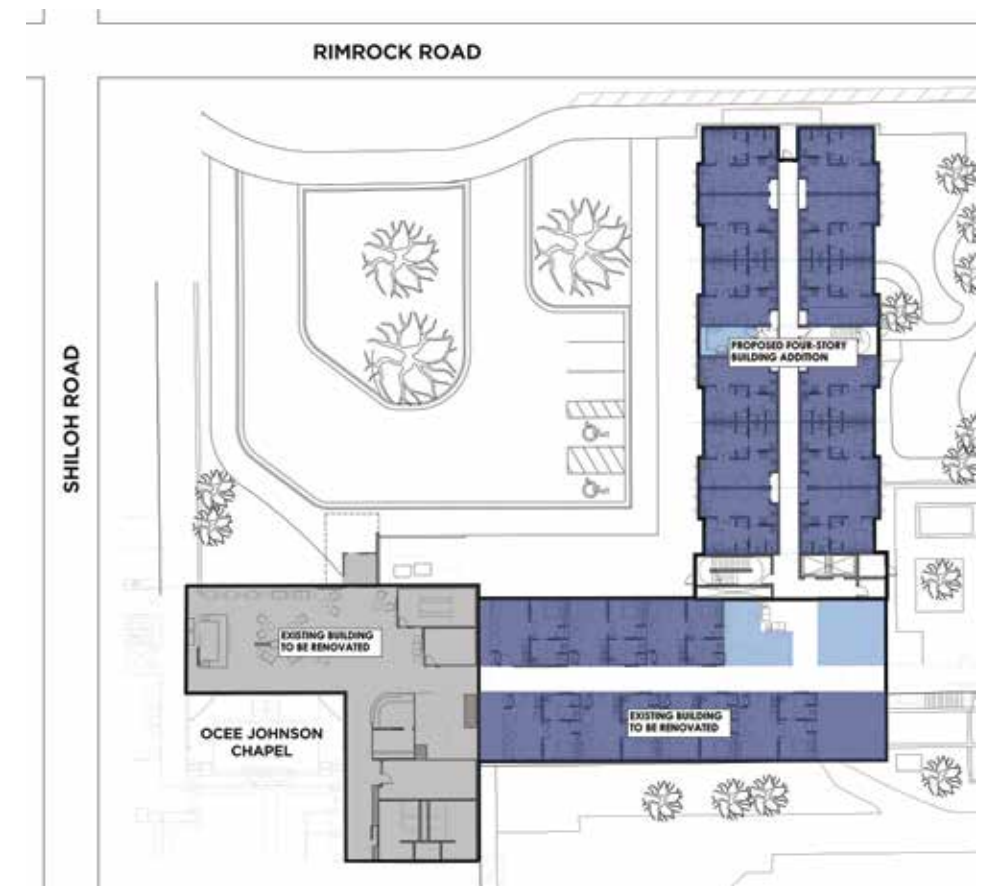
corporate investors contribute to these funds and serve as the source of equity investment capital. MPEG, in turn, makes this capital available to developers of low income housing tax credit projects. This method of financing is available for the construction of new projects as well as acquisition and upgrade of existing facilities. A relatively high proportion of equity-to-debt results from these investments, which creates a capital structure that allows the project owner to offer below-market rents for income-qualified tenants.

Trost speaks appreciatively of the working experience shared between St. John's and MPEG. "Mountain Plains' enthusiasm to partner with St. John's on this project generated an aspirational experience that became infectious for all. We are light years ahead in the advancement of our strategic goals because of the partnership with the Mountain Plains Equity Group."

Collaboration is the key word.

- Don Sterhan,
PRESIDENT AND CEO FOR MPEG

Don Sterhan, President and CEO for MPEG, recalls first visiting with Trost about the possibility of teaming up to blend capacities and resources. "The conversations go back a ways, but it really came down to St. John's saying to Mountain Plains that it was time to update the campus and Mountain Plains considering whether or not we could add value. Collaboration is the key word. It's key with partners



to have an understanding of who is going to do what so that you are not stepping on each other, but rather, are utilizing each other's expertise. We were in sync with each other from day one."

Passions Aligned

Sterhan points to affordable housing as a passion for Mountain Plains. "People often think of affordable housing as being something that is a little bit sub-par or below quality. This is just not the case. We see affordable housing as a critical part of what constitutes a healthy community. There is need for quality living and quality lifestyle while still doing so at an affordable price. St. John's has the same type of mission we do. Our passions aligned on this project. Both organizations want to help lift people's lives."

Acquisitions Manager at MPEG, Shane Walk, agrees with Trost and Sterhan. "My experience working with St. John's on this project was extremely positive. Everybody on St. John's staff was super helpful. Mountain Plains is glad to offer expertise and experience with nonprofit organizations that are mission driven like St. John's. We enjoy contributing to the well-being of Montana communities."

To be eligible for living within the new Chapel Court Apartments, certain income thresholds will apply to prospective residents. Based on the Area Median Income (AMI) of Yellowstone County, the apartment units will be reserved for applicants with income levels at or below 60% of AMI. Residents must also be 62 years of age or older. ♦



ST. JOHN'S UNITED:

EMBRACING A NEW BRAND

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY changes at St. John's since we opened the doors of our first senior retirement community more than 55 years ago.

Today we provide residential living options in communities across Montana and the services we provide have been greatly expanded to meet our ever-evolving mission.

There was recognition that we must be united under one brand, with one mission. So, we have rebranded our organization – St. John's United.

"Over time, St. John's United – the name, look and meaning – will represent our powerful vision that there is healing, meaning and purpose every day for every age, from childhood through older adulthood and even end of life," Trost says, adding that the rebranding "embodies the trust that comes with serving our neighbor."

The new "So Much Life to Live" tagline expresses our aspirational approach to human services. "There truly is much life to live in every beautiful moment in the lives

of the people we serve," he says.

Back in 1963, St. John's welcomed the first residents to our HUD-financed senior retirement community. How our campus and organization has changed since then.

Our community at the corner of Rimrock and Shiloh has grown to include the senior living communities of Mission Ridge and The Vista, a nursing home, memory care cottages and skilled nursing cottages.

WyndStone, our senior living community in Billings Heights, opened in 2016. We also operate The Crossings in Laurel, The Willows in Red Lodge, and home health and hospice services. Partners such as SCL Health, Billings Clinic, Big Sky Senior Services and dozens of other agencies helped us grow.


We also manage Sapphire Lutheran Homes, a retirement community in Hamilton, Mont., and Lutheran Social Services of Montana, which has offices in Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Kalispell and Missoula.

The services we provide include child daycare, physical rehabilitation, counseling and adoption services.

Our growth will continue. This year we plan to break ground on a \$10.5 million residential complex with 54 units for older adults on our main campus. Other initiatives are under discussion.

With the new name, logo and tagline comes an intensified focus on three primary areas: Home, Health and Family.

"Going forward as St. John's United, we will continue to serve people of all ages in their homes or on our campuses, offering a range of support from simple convenience to intensive or full care," Trost says.

Our rebranding embraces the spirit of our 25 ownership congregations that recognize "God's Work, Our Hands." It holds true to our core values, our faith in our Lutheran heritage and our commitment to provide meaningful experiences people expect from St. John's. 



St. John's United

SO MUCH LIFE TO LIVE

IN THE DESIGN OF THE LOGO FOR ST. JOHN'S UNITED, there are three interlocking diamonds. The colorful icons represent many facets of our dynamic organization. HOPE, DIGNITY AND LOVE are three foundations on which we are built. We also see our vision, where every day for every age, there is HEALING, MEANING AND PURPOSE. We are committed to serving others in three major areas of life – HOME, HEALTH AND FAMILY – with FAITH always at the center of what we do. We also have many valuable partners who link up with us to serve people of all ages in many communities.



THIS FIRST AREA OF FOCUS includes several on-campus residential living choices, from independent living to nursing home. Our at-home services include many kinds of support, from lawn care and snow removal to home maintenance and cleaning.



THIS SECOND AREA OF FOCUS includes personal care, post-hospital transitional care, hospice, mental health counseling, etc. A range of services for rehabilitation, therapies, dementia, nursing and hospice care are offered.



THIS THIRD PRIMARY AREA OF FOCUS includes childcare, adult daycare and general counseling to support people of all ages. We provide social services that are important to many lives – from infants to older adults.

SO MANY SMILES

ST. JOHN'S SERVICES SPAN the arc of life in an environment where every day for every age there is healing, meaning, and purpose. We believe that not only does it "take a village to raise a child," it also takes a village to care for our elders. One important way this is accomplished is through formal collaborations with educational institutions in Billings. These collaborations build bridges between the young people in our community and the elders who reside at St. John's.

Skyview Career Class

In early 2017, Special Education teacher at Skyview High School, Sara Ness, connected with WyndStone administrator Megan Brinton to brainstorm creative ways for the students in the Life Skills Class to practice skills on their Individual Education Plans (IEPs), while giving back to their community. For many of the students enrolled in the special education class, the primary objective after graduation is employment. Typical IEP goals include skills such as making eye contact and asking questions, to more complex goals such as following a checklist or verbal directions, keeping track of time, and making connections with supervisors and peers.

During the first semester of the partnership, students were introduced to the dining room. They learned how to set up the dining room using pictures and rulers. During the second semester,

students forayed into learning infection control procedures, adding a second layer of complexity with a larger scope of work and changing geography.

At the time of this publication, well into the second semester of the second year, students have the additional initiatives and responsibilities of the hydration cart. Students must utilize the skills they learned in the first two semesters as they independently stock the hydration cart and distribute refreshments to residents while adding a social aspect to the mix as students assist the residents with their drink preferences. Students also have the option to play games with the residents in the dementia care cottage, further deepening their social interactions while introducing critical thinking and problem solving skills.

"Students are presented with unique opportunities to use patience, understanding, and empathy when working in the dementia care cottage," says Sara. One standout moment for Sara took place when a resident didn't understand how to use a straw. Showing great kindness and compassion, the student was able to demonstrate how, and helped the resident to enjoy the drink. Feedback has been positive on both sides. WyndStone has hired one senior from the first year as a server and many of the current students aspire for same. "I love it here," says senior Kate Bosch,



Arrowhead students playing chess with Norton Moses

"I want to work at WyndStone." Sara attributes it to the tone of the community, "Everyone is so friendly and wonderful. We really feel like we are a part of life here." Megan asserts, "This helps our residents and they absolutely love the kids... It's the little things that matter most. A resident may be having a bad day and the kids come in, prepare a root beer float and set it by him. They smile at him, and then he smiles back." There are a lot of smiles."

Partners in Education, Arrowhead Elementary

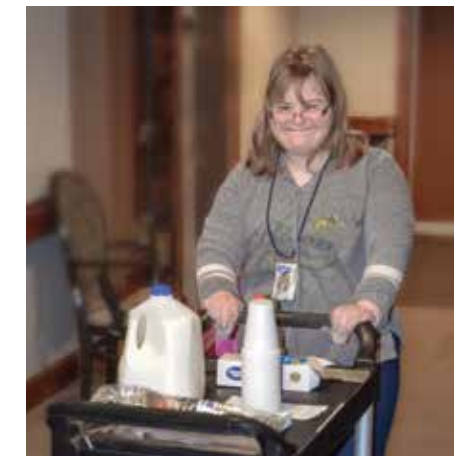
Mr. Jacob Pertuit, physical education teacher, has been leading the PEAK program at Arrowhead Elementary for six years in partnership with Mission Ridge. The program is for 4th and 5th grade students who have the opportunity to earn an "Iron Eagle," a distinction as a leader amongst their peers. To be considered, students must earn good grades, be physically active, and demonstrate leadership skills, including ten hours of community service.

Students in the PEAK program connect with residents of Mission Ridge and St. John's, playing games, visiting, and caroling during the holidays. Some of the kids visiting Mission Ridge have begun developing relationships with residents, others reconnect with grandparents who are now residents. Opportunities to visit fill up fast; visiting is a favorite project of students.

Residents of Mission Ridge return the volunteer service as reading buddies and math tutors to students at Arrowhead. These volunteers pair with students regularly throughout the school year to help them practice their reading and math skills. "I like to be helpful," says resident Jane Myhre, "and I really enjoy the children." It comes full circle, "Some of the children I worked [with when they were younger] recognize me and come to sit at my table when we play games."

Certified Nursing Assistant Class at the Billings Career Center

The Career Center in Billings allows high school sophomores,



Skyview student



Arrowhead students playing UNO with Jane Myhre

juniors, and seniors in good academic standing to receive technical and college preparatory classes for credit. In September 2018, St. John's nursing supervisor, Mike Weber, taught his first Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) class for Career Center students. The CNA track is a common way for those interested in the medical field to gain experience and learn about the industry. Donors helped to stock the classroom with everything needed to simulate three resident rooms similar to what would be found in

the nursing home at St. John's: wheelchairs, beds, mannequins, linens, vital sign equipment and so forth. Students who successfully complete the classroom portion of the course then go on to complete 20 hours of clinical training at St. John's. Sophomore Annabelle Keever, who completed the course, says, "It is hard but also super rewarding. The residents talk to you a lot and seeing them smile makes me smile." ♦

BY INVITATION ONLY

WITH SOME REGULARITY, St. John's United President and CEO David Trost answers his phone and the caller on the other end poses a familiar question: "What does it take to get St. John's to come to our community?" The caller has recognized a gap in a community's senior living options and is turning to a proven regional leader in compassionate senior care. Many have called, few have been chosen.

What does it take to be chosen? It takes collaboration and alignment with St. John's missional calling to provide living opportunities within nurturing environments of hope, dignity and love. When the conversation is centered on serving others, projects easily fall into place. This is the case in the three communities where St. John's has been invited.

KEEPING NEIGHBORS CLOSER TO HOME

Cleo Koefeldt saw numerous neighbors and friends leaving the Laurel, Montana, area when time

came to relocate due to advancing age. Few options for independent senior living existed in rural towns such as Laurel, leading Koefeldt to wonder, "How can we keep people right here in Laurel, closer to home, family and community connections?" As an active volunteer on the St. John's campus in Billings, Cleo recognized opportunity in the addition of Mission Ridge to St. John's residential offerings. What might it take to do something similar in Laurel?

Passionate, enthusiastic persistence from a group of parishioners at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, including Koefeldt and Pastor Marty Dreyer, along with longtime Laurel physician Lee "Doc" Richardson, persuaded former St. John's President and CEO, Kent Burgess, to see the vision. A housing project that came to be named The Crossings began to take shape.

Turning the idea into reality would first hinge on land acquisition. Len Bestrom, a member of the original steering committee recalls that land was obtained in two phases. First, through a shared purchase/donation with developer Marv Brown. Second, through the raising of funds to ensure that an adjacent parcel of land didn't "get away."

Additionally, a high level of support was needed from the congregation. According to Burgess, "The key to any successful collaboration of this kind was strong congregational support. When the pastor was the champion, the members jumped on board." In the case of Our Savior's, Pastor Dreyer had strong family connections to St. John's and was a fervent supporter of the mission, thus his congregants became co-champions in the cause.

A CONGREGATION'S GREATER VISION

Similarly, members of Atonement Lutheran Church in the Billings

Heights made the phone call in the early 2000's. Atonement had purchased land for a new church building, but they wanted to be more than merely a congregation. They had a greater vision. Burgess added, "Pastor Dave Peters had instilled in the growing congregation that "church" is not a building; church is ministry; church is about serving the world around you." Early dialogue between church members and St. John's leadership had no vision for a retirement community. Slowly, the idea took root that senior living opportunities could embody the ministry outreach sought by Atonement. The church donated the land to St. John's and in return, St. John's provided financial assistance for the infrastructure required to build the new church. Along the way, Missions United, St. John's joint venture partnership with St. Vincent Healthcare, joined the project to ensure financial capacity to build what would eventually become WyndStone.

More than a decade elapsed from that first call to St. John's to the dedications of the new church building (2013) and WyndStone (2016). In between, a financial crisis threatened to doom the project, but perseverance, cooperation, and missional focus won the day.

A NEW MODEL FOR ELDER CARE

The nature of invitation was somewhat different for a project in Red Lodge that would eventually be named The Willows. St. John's was initially invited to assume responsibility for the nursing home in Red Lodge. Beartooth Hospital, in conjunction with the Billings Clinic, had begun the process of building a new hospital and had no plans to continue to offer skilled care services. With The Crossings in Lau-



The Crossings in Laurel, MT

rel fully developed and operating successfully, St. John's President and CEO Kent Burgess suggested an alternative to institutional skilled care. Collaboration between the partners led to construction of two assisted living and skilled care cottages situated next to the new hospital. In return for a minimal lease of the land, St. John's agreed to develop, own, and operate the cottages while providing house-keeping and nutrition services for the hospital.

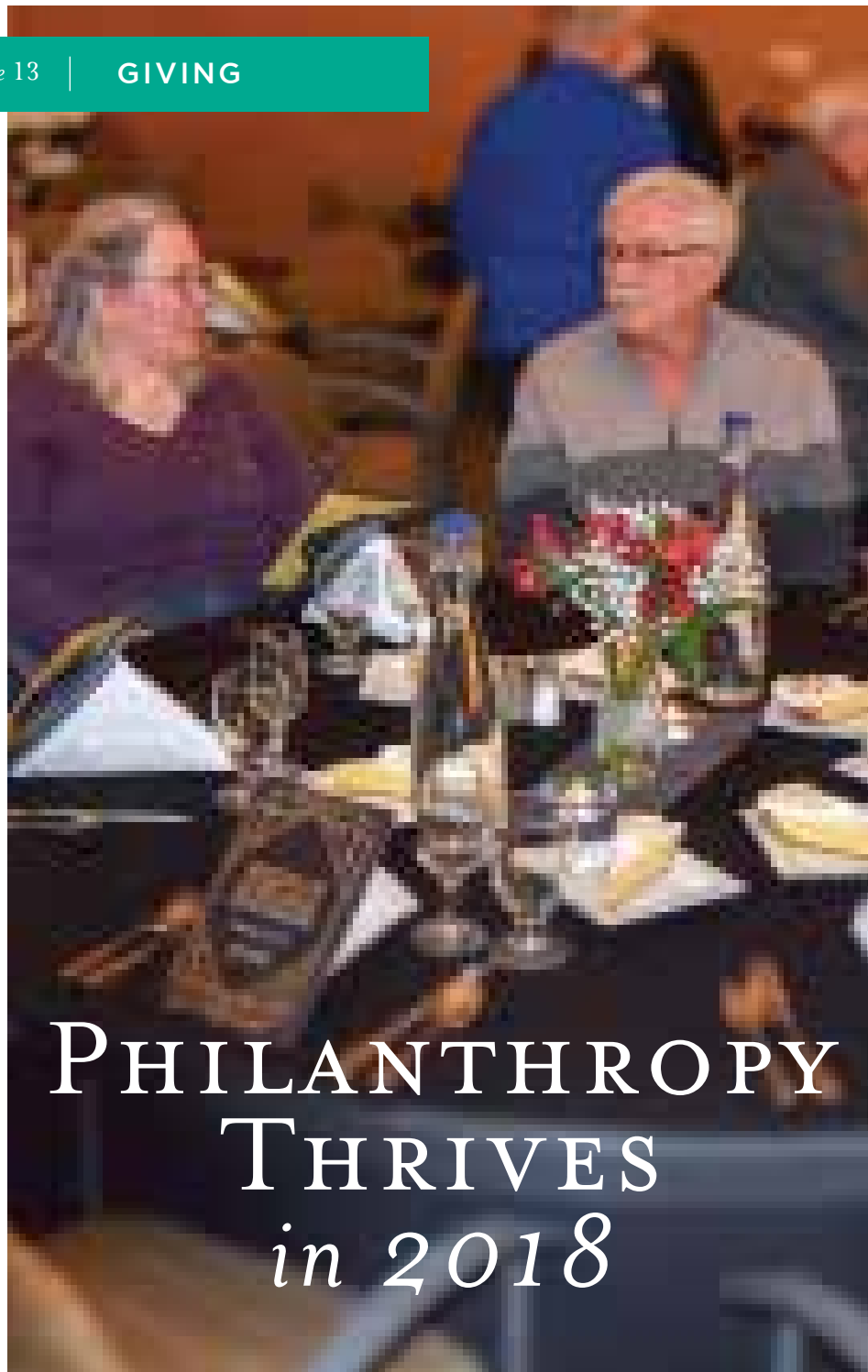
Again, congregational support and endorsement was part of the collaboration. Pastor Kim Wilker of Messiah Lutheran in Red Lodge, another passionate advocate for the mission of St. John's, engaged his congregation in expanding their

ministry opportunities. Volunteer and pastoral support provided by Messiah Lutheran anchors The Willows to St. John's mission.

Collaboration is different than partnership, wherein both parties stand to gain financially. The process for developing what would eventually become The Crossings, The Willows, and WyndStone was driven by a collaborative approach with commitment to a shared missional calling to serve others. St. John's United is in the business of ministry—providing hope, dignity and love wherever invited. The message to anyone wanting to walk a similar collaborative journey is this: pick up the phone and call. ♦

WyndStone residents enjoy the grounds






OVER 300 ST. JOHN'S employees went the extra mile by offering gift intent total of over \$58,000 to the 2019 Seeds of Kindness annual employee giving campaign, a remarkable 18% increase over the previous year's total. Each October, employees are encouraged to use payroll deductions to plant Seeds of Kindness for the coming year in four program areas:

Resident Need Funds, supporting residents who have exhausted their financial resources; Employee Help Funds, supporting fellow employees who find themselves with a temporary financial crisis; Center for Generations, supporting childcare subsidies for employees; and Lutheran Social Services of Montana, supporting birthparent counseling, adoption,

and mental health services. The public is also invited to participate in Seeds of Kindness throughout the year and donors offering gifts of \$250 or more are recognized at the annual Seeds of Kindness Donor Appreciation event. Gratitude was extended to 2018's donors on February 28, 2019. Attendees enjoyed an evening of elegant dining, fine spirits and entertainment by the Rimrock Hot Club featuring the sounds of gypsy jazz.



Legacy Circle

A record 13 donors were added to the St. John's Legacy Circle in 2018 and recognized during the February 28 annual Seeds of Kindness Donor Appreciation event. The Legacy Circle honors generous people who have offered planned gifts to the St. John's Foundation Endowment in any of the following ways: a one-time gift of \$10,000 or more; included the St. John's Foundation as a beneficiary of an estate gift; or named the St. John's Foundation as a beneficiary or owner of a life insurance policy. In just three short years, the Legacy Circle has grown to over 40 members. We offer our humble gratitude to these donors who support St. John's United where every day, for every age, there is healing, meaning and purpose. 

COMMEMORATIVE BRICKS

Want to leave a family legacy?

Want to honor a loved one?

Want to remember a special occasion or achievement?

For a tax deductible donation, an inscription of your choosing will be engraved on a granite brick to be placed in the Fred & Marie Miller Pavilion on the Townsquare. The Townsquare is the location for the Summer Concert Series, weddings and other special events throughout the year. Proceeds from the sale of the bricks will benefit St. John's United.

For more information please contact
Mara Flynn at mflynn@sjlm.org or go to our website
www.stjohnsunited.org/foundation/bricks/
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WAYS TO GIVE

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Make an immediate, outright charitable gift using cash or other appropriate assets. This allows the donors to see the results of the gift during their lifetime.

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