

40th Anniversary Celebration!

Forty years ago, Southwest Community Services, Inc., began as a dream to serve adults in the community with disabilities. It started with ten pioneers who believed in taking a risk to help people. Today, SCS provides services to approximately 350 people in several programs. The 40th anniversary event in November honors one of the agency's founders, Charley Smith, for his 40 years of dedicated service to SCS. Please join SCS in celebrating the past 40 years and the people who created the agency and its mission.

A 1940s big band-themed celebration takes place on Saturday, November 12, 2011, at The Odyssey Country Club in Tinley Park, at 5:00 p.m. Richard Roeper, the famous film critic, Chicago Sun-Times columnist, and co-host of the WLS-AM Roe & Roeper radio show, is the master of ceremonies.

Tickets for the event are \$70 and include cocktails, appetizers, dinner, and dancing to the big band sounds of the 1940s from the 17-piece Outcast Jazz Band. Themed 1940s dress is encouraged, but not required.

Raffle tickets are available to purchase through the night of the event for two round trip airline tickets and \$1,000

spending money. The tickets were donated by Southwest Airlines and the spending money was donated by event sponsors. The raffle tickets are priced at \$10 each or six for \$50. The drawing will take place the night of the event but winners do not have to be present. At the event, raffle tickets may also be purchased for several themed gift baskets. Please contact Sandy Sorrentino-Bookhout at (708) 429-1260, x1243, to purchase tickets for the event or the airline tickets and cash raffle.

SCS has reserved a block of hotel rooms for visitors attending the event from out of town. Please contact the Wingate Hotel at 800-363-2297 by November 5. The hotel is located at 18421 North Creek Drive (183rd St. and Harlem Ave.) in Tinley Park. The group name is Southwest Community Services with a confirmation number of 51340154.

SCS would like to thank its anniversary celebration benefactor, Community Services Foundation. Their support and that of the other generous sponsors has made this event possible. The agency would also like to thank committee chairpersons and volunteers whose hard work and dedication make the event possible. This is a celebration of the many consumers and their families and guardians, volunteers, employees, board members past and present, and numerous supporters over the years. Collectively, you have made Southwest Community Services special.



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40 Year History of Serving People

In 1971, a group of forward-thinking volunteers from two churches joined together to form the Markham Sheltered Care Workshop, Inc. It was the early days of de-institutionalization and they saw a growing need for community-based services. Charley Smith, one of the founders, former Executive Director, and President/CEO of Community Services Foundation, said the workshop was started to serve people with mental illness living in the community. The Workshop was also the first community organization in the State of

Illinois to serve people that were still living in state-run institutions.

The Markham workshop focused on teaching vocational skills to people so they could earn money from the agency's newly available contract work. A few years later, Community House was created to assist people in learning social and independent living skills. In 1975, Tinley Park Workshop was developed to better serve the needs of adults with developmental disabilities. Other programs were introduced as needed in the early years. Community

40 Year History of Serving People

— continued from front cover

Employment Services was added to assist people with any type of disability seek employment within the community. In the early days, the staff worked hard educating future employers about the benefit of hiring people with disabilities. Although much has changed since, public discrimination still remains towards people with disabilities.

In 1980, the agency changed its name to Southwest Community Services, Inc. to reflect the larger geographical area served. In 1989, SCS consolidated programs serving people with mental illness by creating Community Enterprises at a separate location. By this point, SCS enjoyed strong, long-term relationships with many businesses in the southwest suburbs. As a result, consumers who were able earned an income from the jobs brought in to the work floor.

An Illinois consent decree in the early 1990s led to the formation of the SCS Bogard program, which serves class action individuals in long-term care facilities. Around the same time, in response to changes in funding, the Home Based Support Services program was started for adults and children in private homes. Government program funding began to shift from full-time to part-time programs partly to encourage people to live and work out in the community.

The Phoenix Center was created in the early 2000s to provide services to adults and children with neuromuscular disorders. The Phoenix Center is unique in that it is one of the few places in the U.S. offering Intensive Suit Therapy. Community counseling services as well as traditional physical, occupational, and speech therapy services were also made available. The Phoenix Center became so successful that it moved to a dedicated facility in Mokena by its tenth anniversary.

In the mid-2000s, THISAbility Enterprises was established to formalize and strengthen the vocational training program. The businesses under the THISAbility Enterprises umbrella provide vocation specific training and employment opportunities. Thanks to the hard work of everyone in prior decades, people with disabilities are much more accepted living and working in the community. The shift toward skilled employment began so that adults with disabilities would have jobs that pay well enough to live on their own. Recently, THISAbility Enterprises became a bridge for adults with disabilities leaving the public school system at the age of 21 and gaining a skilled job in the community.

The developmental training program evolved with changes in demand and funding. It became two programs serving people with different needs and abilities. Opportunities Unlimited provides vocational, work training, life skills, case management, and leisure activities for adults with developmental disabilities. Its goal is to encourage consumers to live, work, and socially engage in the community. The staff is encouraging and supportive as many of the consumers find being out in the community exciting but challenging. The TAP (talents, abilities, possibilities) program was created for adults with severe and profound disabilities. The program focuses on daily living skills, recreational skills, and community outings. The consumers in this program will probably never work in the community, but the staff works with them to make sure they feel included through outings and experiences.

In 2009, the SCS Community Employment Services program became certified as a Ticket To Work provider. TTW is a voluntary employment program administered by the Social Security Administration for people with disabilities receiving social security or disability income. CES provides employment training and placement services. The program is an excellent opportunity for the participants and is another example of SCS meeting community needs.

Community-based programs are now accepted by the public as preferential for adults with disabilities. At the same time, program funding has decreased significantly and disappeared entirely for many day training programs. SCS has worked diligently to replace lost government funding with corporate and foundation grants as well as fundraising aimed at corporate and private donors. The agency continues to adapt to changes without sacrificing program quality. Today, thanks to the grass roots efforts of many people in the early days and everyone working hard since, SCS has grown to serve 350 people in 37 communities.



Successful Golf Outing

Thanks to the support of sponsors and business partners, the Southwest Community Services second annual golf outing on July 18, 2011 at Silver Lake Country Club in Orland Park was extremely successful. \$17,400 was raised for SCS programs and services. A rainy day required changing the event from May 26 to July 18. Since spring weather is unpredictable, the golf outing has been permanently moved to summer. Mark your calendar for the third annual golf outing on July 16, 2012.

At this year's golf outing, SCS paid tribute to SIGNODE and local businessman, Jerry Meyer. As part of the agency's 40 year anniversary celebration, SCS created the Jerry Meyer Business Leadership Award named after the prominent Tinley Park businessman whose support of SCS forty years ago was essential to its success. Mr. Meyer continued his support by serving on the boards of SCS and Community Services Foundation for over 35 years.

The first recipient of the annual Jerry Meyer Business Leadership Award was SIGNODE, an ITW Company located in Bridgeview. SIGNODE was honored for their ongoing support of SCS and individuals with disabilities. SIGNODE employs SCS consumers in fulfillment of the agency's mission: To empower individuals with diverse disabilities to maximize their development and independence.



Charley Smith (left) and Jerry Meyer

Compassionate Stewardship

Southwest Community Services began in April of 1971 as a grassroots effort by dedicated pioneers. It was a cooperative effort, first between two sheltered workshops and later, between two churches. Charley Smith was a high school teacher who ran a vocational training program. During the summer when school was not in session, the workshop was run jointly by the Markham Mennonite Church and Trinity Church of Christ. Pastor Lawrence Voth obtained a grant to expand the church project to create the Markham Sheltered Workshop and recruited Charley to run the program that later became Southwest Community Services.

Pastor Voth formed a Board of Directors and recruited Earl Erickson, Dave Ewert, Raymond Freckelton, Louis G. Freeman, Paul Leschuck, Rudy Steiner, Lester Stifle, Dave Suter, and Harold Thomkins. The original board members were volunteers motivated by helping people in the community with disabilities.

The first board's vision was passed on to many dedicated SCS board members over the years. While they have come and gone, each volunteer board member helped shape the agency's growth and direction to meet the needs of people being served. The present day board of directors is just as committed to the mission. Today, they are professionals from the human services field, business leaders, and a parent of an individual receiving service at SCS.

The current Chairperson of the Board, Dr. Christopher Higgins, is a licensed clinical psychologist and director of Palos Behavioral Health. Dr. Higgins has dedicated his career to helping people and volunteering on the SCS board is a natural extension of his professional career.

The Vice Chairperson of the Board, Gregg Jarman, is an attorney and business leader practicing in Tinley Park. In his legal practice, Mr. Jarman provides services to many local businesses and brings a network of business partners to SCS.

Secretary/Treasurer of the Board, Joan Nowak, is a parent of an individual who has received services for many years at SCS. Mrs. Nowak has been a dedicated parent volunteer for many years. She understands the impact of board decisions on people receiving services.

Director Bruce Flowers is the Director for Regional Decision Support & Performance Improvement for Sisters of St. Francis Health Services. Mr. Flowers was originally asked to join the SCS Audit Committee because of his strong financial background. He later accepted a board position and is committed to the agency's success.

Director Jason Helfert is a sales representative for The Horton Group in Orland Park. The Horton Group is leader in the commercial insurance and risk management industry. Mr. Helfert is motivated by the same sense of community involvement that was present in the founding board members.

Director Renee Thornton is the Chairperson of the Housing and Human Relations Commission for the Village of Matteson. Ms. Thornton has dedicated her career to helping people through her work in the health administration and rehabilitation fields.

Throughout its history, SCS has been guided by caring, compassionate board members who truly believe in the agency's mission. Their guidance has been one of the keys to its success.

Business Partnerships

Almost forty years ago, when Southwest Community Services was still a small workshop in a church basement, the original founders recognized the value of partnering with businesses to increase consumer opportunities. The very first contract acquired was with Dial to wrap packages of travel-sized soap.

For many years, SCS consumers packaged eating utensils for United Airlines. They had a contract with Illinois Bell to remove wiring from the plastic block that housed telephone wires. In the 1980s and 1990s, SCS consumers packaged rolled blue camping pads for PSC Fabricating and educational kits for Urban Ministries.

As consumers gained new skills and earned a paycheck from completing sub-contract jobs, they achieved a greater sense of self-worth and pride. Although no longer in business today, Continental Can was one of the many companies that recognized the value of putting people with disabilities to work. A long-term contract for processing lighter fluid cans allowed SCS to purchase a shrink tunnel machine that is still in use today. It has been used for many shrink wrap jobs, such as the ones for Bemis-Jason and Goodheart-Willcox.

Many partnerships have come and gone over the years and others, such as the one with Bruske Products, have been in place for over 30 years. Mi-Jack Products has contracted SCS for an annual holiday mailing for the past 25 years. Often, business owners become personally committed to SCS con-

sumers' success. When Midland Chemicals sold, the sales contract stipulated that the new owner keep its commitment to SCS for consumers to continue their work packaging white felt pads. SCS had a contract with Rhodes American for packaging steel wool pads when the company was sold to Global Material Technologies; the partnership continues to this day.

Over the past decade, SCS has forged strong relationships with newer partners. SIGNODE, an ITW Company from

Bridgeview, created a work program for SCS consumers. They work at the SIGNODE facility, side-by-side with other SIGNODE employees. Consumers that have gone to work for SIGNODE have gained job skills, social skills, and a great deal of self-confidence. Individuals have even graduated from SCS programs and now live on their own in the community. This is the ultimate goal of a successful partnership. SIGNODE was recently awarded the Jerry Meyer Business Leadership Award for their commitment to SCS consumers.

Newer partnerships are growing as well. SCS consumers handle labeling jobs for Containers Plus in Mokena and Bottle Drop Games in Tinley Park. Hopefully, forty years from now, these companies will be cited as long-term partners. All SCS partnerships provide consumers with job skills and income. More importantly, however, they provide the opportunity for adults with disabilities to have an active role in society.

*"Judge each day not by
the harvest you reap but
by the seeds you sow."*

— Robert Louis Stevenson

People Make A Difference!

Southwest Community Services is a successful agency thanks to the hard work and dedication of its staff and countless hours volunteered by consumer family members and friends.

People who work in the human services field do so to improve the quality of life for the people they serve. While the paychecks will never make anyone wealthy, the pride they feel in watching someone learn a new skill, or the big smiles they receive from a consumer excited to see them are riches beyond compare. SCS would like to thank all its staff members over the years for working so hard on behalf of the people they serve. The staff members below have dedicated their careers to SCS for over 25 years:

32 years: **Lynn Zona**, Director of Program Services

31 years: **Marcia Daniels**, Work Services Trainer (DSP)

30 years: **Maureen Schmitz**, Case Manager (QSP)

29 years: **Lorraine Barnes**, Director of Operations

26 years: **Edward Gronowski**, Transportation Manager

SCS exists because of the people they serve. The agency would like to thank consumers that have been with SCS for over 25 years:

Janice Anderson
David Baran
Don Gamperl

Janice Hughes
Steve Jordan
Butch Keegan

Noreen Leahy
Delcine Lidy
Charlene Mason

John May
Dan Nicholas
Bob O'Connor

Dale Parks
Ken Robles
Andrea Woods

A committed group of volunteers is essential. It is impossible to thank all the families that have given their time over the years. A group of volunteers officially organized several years ago under the name Friends and Family of SCS. They work on behalf of SCS consumers to fund and organize social events and parties. SCS would like to thank all the members of Friends and Family of SCS for supporting the agency. These are just a few of the dedicated volunteers:

Jean Anderson
Diava Baksys
Sandra Bibbs
Robert & Lynn Burke
Virginia Dobson

Diane Edgar
Jackie Frigo
Seldon & Mimi Gordon
Mary Johnson
Claudia Kuchay

Joe & Sue Lamy
Marilyn McGannon
Joan Nowak
Vi Nugent
Mary Pisano

Garnett Stout
Doris Sweeney
Marilyn Viskocil
Bruce & Amy Zumstein

Southwest Community Services, Inc.

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Gregg Jarman *Vice Chairperson*
Joan Nowak *Secretary/Treasurer*

Directors:

Bruce Flowers
Jason Helfert
Renee Thornton

Honorary Board:

Dr. Michael Corcoran *OAK Orthopedics*
Kevin McCarthy *Illinois Representative*
Richard Roeper *Chicago Sun-Times*
Roe & Roeper

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SCS **SCS Programs and Services**

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*If you have any comments or questions about our services,
please call 708-429-1260 or visit www.swcsinc.org.*

Communique is a publication of Southwest Community Services, Inc., a not-for-profit agency that provides services to empower individuals with diverse disabilities to maximize their development and independence.



SAVE THE DATE!

**Every Tuesday
Bingo-Raffle**

Southwest Community Services

**November 12
40 Year Celebration
Event**

Odyssey Country Club

**November 22
Thanksgiving Raffle
\$5,000 in payouts**

Southwest Community Services

**March 4
Bowl-A-Thon**

Tinley Park Bowl

**July 16
Golf Outing**

Silver Lake Country Club

**Making A Difference . . .
Making A Match**

Southwest Community Services is very excited to participate in this year's Community Services Foundation **Making A Difference . . . Making A Match** fundraising program. Now through December 31, 2011, Community Services Foundation will match, dollar for dollar, your donations to SCS*. This fundraiser has helped us raise thousands of extra dollars from your donations. Last year we used the money we received towards the purchase of vocational training program equipment. We really need your support!

Your check must be made payable to Community Services Foundation. For your convenience, we have included an envelope in this newsletter. You may also make an online donation by visiting www.csfil.org. Click on the Network for Good logo to make your donation by credit card. Please be sure to designate SCS as the recipient of your donation.

Your donations are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law under Sec. 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

*Program Rules: There is no dollar limit for individual donations. However, there is a \$500 limit per business donation. There is no limit on the number of donations an individual or business can make. Donations from non-profit organizations are not eligible for matching dollars.