

# A Closer Look

2016 Donor Impact Report



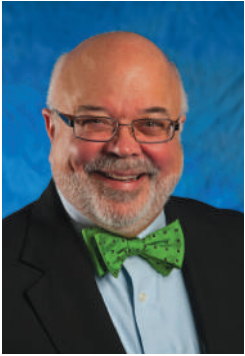
**MSS**  
Midwest Special Services, Inc.



## **Our Mission**

**Through advocacy and person-centered services, we support people in achieving their full potential and ensure that they are full, vital, and contributing members of their communities.**

## Friends of MSS



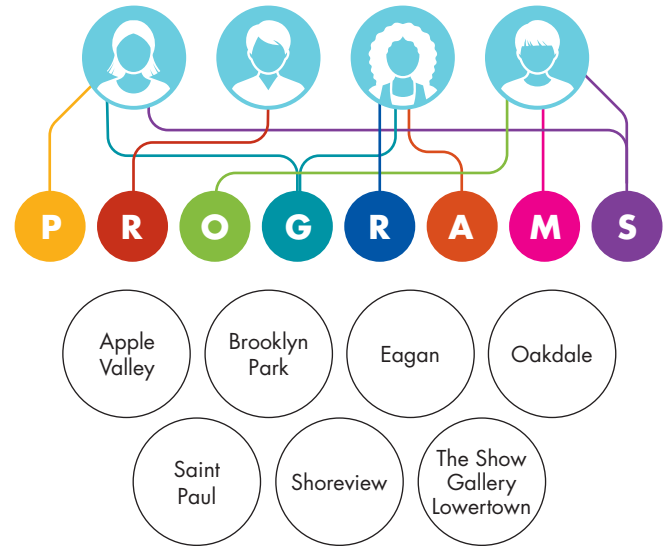
Because of you, more than 600 people at MSS are able to participate in programs that support their aspirations, passions, and needs. Some of our valued partners include the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Ramsey, Dakota, Hennepin, and Washington counties, The St. Paul Foundation, the F.R. Bigelow Foundation, and employment

partners like Spectrum Plastics and the University of St. Thomas. We are grateful to the many individual supporters who also help individuals experience new and meaningful connections. This report provides “A Closer Look” at a few program opportunities that enable the people we serve to make their own choices and use their own voice to share what is important to them.

**Lyth J. Hartz**

President

MSS provides **individualized programs** and **supports to adults with intellectual and physical disabilities** at six locations in the Twin Cities metro area as well as an art gallery.



“ Screen printing is my favorite way to create art and it’s even better when we can make t-shirts for other people. ”  
—Tatiana



We offer **visual and digital art opportunities:** print making, painting, drawing, weaving, ceramics, and photography.



**Previous partner projects** have included puppetry with **Z Puppets Rosenschnoz**, intergenerational dance with **Kairos Alive** and **Art of Relationships** with **Upstream Arts**, a program which explores self-advocacy and positive relationships.



**MSS artists have the opportunity to participate in exhibitions** and take complimentary classes taught by practicing artists at **The Show Gallery Lowertown.**

## Bridging the gap between fine art and vocation

In 2016, we expanded our screen printing studios at our Oakdale and St. Paul locations. We had previously been using amateur equipment that served the purpose, but we believed it was time to take it to the next level. So, we held an event at our Oakdale center to raise funds for new screen printing equipment. The event was a huge success! We raised enough money to not only purchase new printing equipment, but also a state-of-the-art exposing unit and t-shirt press. Having new equipment in Oakdale allowed us to expand our screen printing production to our St. Paul center studio. We have been busy working on collaborative artwork, printing t-shirts and tote bags to sell, and even small printing jobs for our partners at Upstream Arts. We are grateful for all the support we received and excited to continue exploring this versatile art form.

# Screen Printing





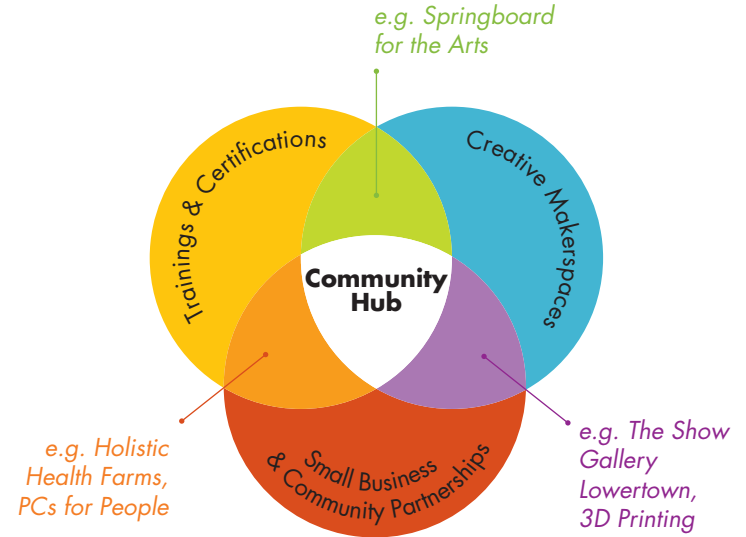
# Community Hub

## Trailblazing paths into the community

With generous support from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, F.R. Bigelow Foundation, and the St. Paul Foundation, we have begun transforming our former production space in St. Paul into a vibrant Community Hub. Here we provide both traditional and non-traditional pathways to employment via training and certifications. Certifications include eTrac®, our online job skills training course, janitorial, and Direct Support Professional, all are certified by Century College. We also offer educational instruction in urban farming, hydroponics, and beekeeping.

In conjunction with our training and certifications, we have developed dedicated spaces for 3D printing, screen printing, woodworking, as well as a workspace for digital arts.

We also partnered with area businesses to share our space. This mutually beneficial relationship provides space for the businesses to expand their operations while providing competitive employment opportunities to the people we support. Currently, three businesses share our space, but we look forward to growing this innovative concept.



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“ I’ve never done hydroponics before, so it has been really cool to watch the plants grow little by little. I helped create something from the Earth! ”

—Jane

“ For me, **assistive technology is equal to independence!**

At work, without assistive technology I would not be able to access my computer, print documents or even access all the features of my menu-based office phone. At home, I would not be able to identify my shirt and pant color without assistive technology nor would I be able to use my Apple iPhone without its built-in assistive technology. And, at the theater I would not be able to fully understand what is going on visually on stage without the use of assistive technology. ”

– Ken Rodgers, MSS Board Member

## Making technology accessible for everyone

This past year MSS has seen exciting changes in how we use technology. Many of our centers are now using Epson interactive projectors which provide people with a user-friendly tool to access the internet, use switch accessible websites, and to use art software that simulates real brushstrokes. The projectors also make iPads accessible for those unable to use the iPad's small touchscreen. Our new 3D printer allows people to try their hand at using computer files and 3D images to create projects that are both fun and functional. Our green screen provides a backdrop for a variety of videography productions and photo manipulations. We are producing cooking segments, mock commercials, greeting cards, and more. We also worked with a fellow artist; using a drone to film an art piece that was part of the Co-Lab exhibit at The Show Gallery Lowertown. With support from a grant from the Shavlik Family Foundation, we look forward to creating our new computer lab, and the opportunity to experience the power of even more cutting edge technology in 2017!





# Assistive Technology

# Community Groups



## Connecting with others

In 2016, our Brooklyn Park, Apple Valley, Shoreview, and Eagan centers expanded services to include a new model of community engagement — small groups that spend all or most of their day exploring opportunities and connections in the larger community.

Meetings are held monthly to discuss new ideas for activities and to share new experiences. Groups tour local businesses and form relationships with managers — hopefully leading to new employment opportunities. They also volunteer at local nature centers and parks as well as Meals on Wheels, and attend events around the Twin Cities including the Walker Art Center, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and Twins and Lynx games.

Community groups have proven to be a powerful inspiration driven by which new endeavors each choose to pursue. Those participating state they have expanded their comfort zone by developing new relationships, by having an opportunity to give back to the community, and a way to enrich theirs and others lives.

Plans are underway to add a group at our Oakdale location this summer.



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“ When we go out, I like that I get to hang out with my friends and meet new people. ”

—Sarah

In a national survey of 3,351  
adults commissioned by UnitedHealth Group:

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The overwhelming majority of participants reported feeling **mentally and physically healthier** after a volunteer experience.



**78%**  
said that **volunteering lowered their stress levels**



**96%**  
reported that **volunteering enriched their sense of purpose** in life.

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“ Tony loves to engage with people in the community and to help out those in need of assistance. Feed My Starving Children affords him the opportunity to do both in a friendly and energetic environment. He inspires others to overcome their fears—as he has learned to do—and participate in their community to the best of their ability. ”

—Heath Shima, Designated Coordinator

## Giving back to the community

The intangible benefits of volunteering — such as pride, satisfaction, and accomplishment — alone are worthwhile reasons for people to share their time and talents with local organizations. In addition, when individuals decide to volunteer they are also choosing to improve the lives of others, strengthen communities, make connections, expand their skill set, and gain confidence by challenging themselves to try something new.

Individuals at our Apple Valley center volunteered at several organizations in 2016. They stocked shelves at Treasures Galore and Salvation Army, cleaned animal cages and did landscaping work at Windmill Animal Shelter, packaged food at Open Door Pantry and Feed My Starving Children, assisted seniors in their homes by doing outdoor chores at DARTS, measured food for distribution at Dakota Woodlands and cleaned Farquar Park in Apple Valley.

During the past year, more than 30 individuals from Apple Valley volunteered at least one time, and most participated at least once each week.



# Volunteering



Theater

## Exploring new horizons

In 2016, our Shoreview center theater troupe debuted their first theatrical production. The actors spent well over a year prepping for the play by participating in improvisational exercises to create the story and develop the characters. They also built the props, designed the costumes, and wrote the original songs and dialogue. Each actor learned valuable skills for both on and off the stage. Patience, memory, independence, and cooperation were all part of making the production successful and will continue to be beneficial in daily life.

In December, the actor's hard work culminated in a performance that people are still talking about. "A Fishy Story" premiered at North Heights Lutheran Church in Arden Hills to an audience of over 100 people, including many people from the local community. The experience was invaluable to the performers and is one we are all anxious for them to repeat.



people with intellectual and physical disabilities accessed our **Day Training and Habilitation (DT&H) program** in 2016 for ongoing support, physical care, self-care, independent living skills training, employment assessments, creative arts, social opportunities, training in self-advocacy, communication and interpersonal skills.

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“ I loved performing [as a shark] and eating everybody. I'd like to do it again because everybody's in it together. Everbody had fun and everbody here at MSS liked it. ”  
—Lorrie



64

people we support gained competitive employment in 2016, nearly doubling the amount from the previous year.

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“ I wanted to work in the community,  
so MSS helped me apply online for the perfect job  
and then prepared me for the interview.  
I was hired! ”

—Kenisha

## Opening doors to opportunities

2016 was a busy year for our vocational services program. Our continued commitment to helping people gain access to the community found us assisting a record number of people in obtaining competitively paying jobs. Using a person-centered approach we helped people find employment based on their skills, interests, and long-term goals. As a result, we can proudly say that over 60 people were able to find meaningful work in an industry of their choosing.

We were also pleased to be selected as the employment service provider of Project Search MN, an organization whose primary objective is to help secure employment for youth with disabilities transitioning from high school to the work world. And we are further delighted to report that all seven participants in the project were able to find community jobs of their choice, at a competitive wage, and they continue to be successful in their careers.



# Job Placement



**Scooter's**

# Mobile Work Crew



## Preparing for employment success

Our relationships with our business partners are paramount to the success of our Mobile Work Crews. This mutually beneficial association gives our work crew members an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in a variety of settings and meet the needs of the employer. We provide on-site supervisors who ensure productivity and quality control standards are met, while at the same time allowing for our crews to develop the skills and relationships to be successful on the job.

In 2016, MSS Mobile Work Crews served 26 business partners in the manufacturing, food service, and janitorial industries. We were fortunate to be able to add Spectrum Plastics Group, PCs for People, and Maplewood Community Center to our partner list, and to add additional production positions at SICK, Inc. At the University of St. Thomas, we doubled the number of positions at the main campus dining center as well as added an additional position at the student dining center.

Thank you to all of our business partners for their on-going support and trust in our Mobile Work Crews, and for the opportunity to help make their businesses stronger.



36,902

The number of **hours worked**  
by MSS Mobile Work Crew  
participants in 2016.



\$307,760

The **amount earned**  
by MSS Mobile Work Crew  
participants in 2016.

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“ I’ve been working at St. Thomas for about 2 months. I have a lot of friends that go to school there so I like it a lot because it lets me be social at work while always staying busy. The staff who work at St. Thomas are very nice and helpful and the food is great! ”

— Sam

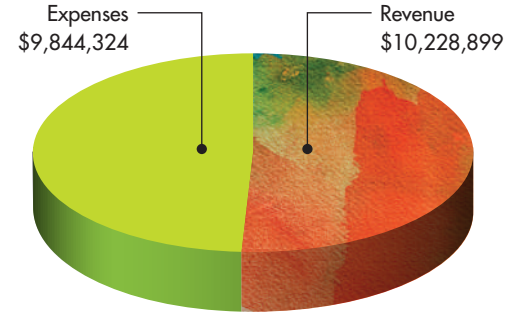
# 2016 Financial Highlights

## Statement of Financial Position

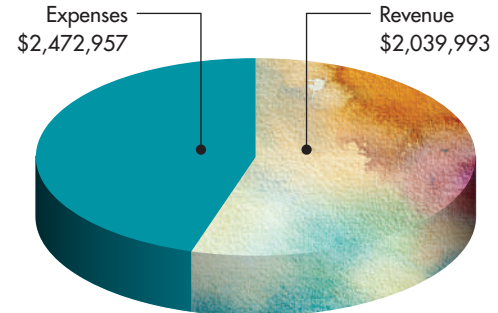
Year ending December 31, 2016

Assets	2016
Cash & investments	\$ 691,117
Accounts receivable & prepaid expenses	1,083,393
Land, building & equipment, net of depreciation	2,526,423
Intangible assets	266,672
O'Neil Endowment Fund	1,173,756
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$ 5,741,361</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Current liabilities	\$1,046,775
Long-term liabilities	274,987
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 1,321,762</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	
Unrestricted: Undesignated	\$3,109,966
Board designated for O'Neil Endowment Fund	-
Temporarily restricted	513,279
Permanently restricted	796,354
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>\$ 4,419,599</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$ 5,741,361</b>

## Day Training & Habilitation (DT&H) Program



## Employment Program



## Statement of Unrestricted Activities

Year ending December 31, 2016

Revenue	Employment Program	DT&H Program	2016 Agency
Training fees, county	\$ 806,642	\$ 9,761,349	\$ 10,567,991
Production contract sales	700,082	94,693	794,775
RSB extended employment & case service	325,720		325,720
United Way contributions	106,030	-	106,030
Other contributions & investment income	58,722	168,200	226,922
Released from restriction	16,927	153,108	170,035
Interest & miscellaneous income	25,870	51,549	77,419
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$ 2,039,993</b>	<b>\$ 10,228,899</b>	<b>\$ 12,268,892</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Personnel	\$ 1,245,469	\$ 4,886,900	\$ 6,132,369
Participant wages, taxes & benefits	389,054	122,836	511,890
Transportation	110,542	1,505,907	1,616,359
Operating expenses	234,132	739,212	973,344
Management & general	209,734	1,165,553	1,375,287
Other program expenses	284,116	1,423,916	1,708,032
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$ 2,472,957</b>	<b>\$ 9,844,324</b>	<b>\$ 12,317,281</b>
<b>Net Operating</b>	<b>\$ (432,964)</b>	<b>\$ 384,575</b>	<b>\$ (48,389)</b>
<b>Unrestricted – Non-Operating</b>			
Impairment of asset held for investment			61,229
Other contributions (special event)			11,764
Trust & endowment investment income (loss)			760
<b>Net non-operating</b>			<b>72,993</b>

## 2016 Donors

Midwest Special Services  
would like to thank  
everyone – the people we  
support, staff, volunteers,  
donors and business  
partners – who contributed  
to our success in 2016.

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**Thank you** for believing in the mission of MSS. Please continue to support those who share the same passions as you and those who help others succeed — those who make an **impact**.

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