

Celebrating 45 Years of Jubilee

Reflecting on the Past as We Plan for Greater Inclusion Ahead

“Violence besets home” read a 1978 Washington Post headline after Jubilee opened its first group home. Gunshots were fired through the window. A burning rag was thrown into the garage.

Yet Jubilee’s founders persisted. They were motivated by the growing civil rights movement for people with disabilities and a better understanding of inhumane conditions in institutions.

Committed volunteers from Hyattsville Mennonite Church and a small staff learned on the job the challenges and rewards of helping adults with disabilities live with independence and dignity. What started as one group home grew to eight locations where Jubilee helped people in the organization’s first decade.

Vicki Geiger joined Jubilee as a direct support professional in 1988, helping to open a home for three women with disabilities. “One thing that has always stayed with me from that time is the support and love from the families,” shared Vicki, one of Jubilee’s 11 staff members whose service spans more than 20 years. “The faith-based aspect of is one of the reasons I’ve stayed so long. I fell in love with Jubilee.”



Jubilee's first group home opened in 1978 as an alternative to institutional living.

The ensuing decades brought stability as Jubilee grew and evolved with the times. In 2007 Jubilee pivoted to focusing on supporting people where they want to live. The decision to no longer purchase group homes was the first step in our innovative housing model that emphasizes greater flexibility and choice. Jubilee’s housing work has now expanded to help 155 people navigate the complex housing market through our Housing Support Services.

“Jubilee’s been helping me since 1980,” shared Laura Jeanne Kuster. “I lived in houses with roommates for a long time. **When I told Jubilee a few years ago I really wanted to live in my own apartment they made it happen.**”

Fast forward to 2023 and the recent rededication of a Jubilee owned home in Rockville. The housewarming party for Linda Hanna, the first resident of this newly renovated house, included neighbors eager to meet Linda and elected officials lauding Jubilee’s work.

What a difference four and a half decades of inclusion makes in the embrace of Jubilee’s mission by the community.

“We keep walking faithfully in the footsteps of those who started Jubilee,” reflected Steve Keener, Jubilee’s executive director. “The values that drove Jubilee’s founders continue to inspire our work today. Beautiful people living beautiful lives in their communities is the result.”



A recent housewarming for Linda Hanna included neighbors, friends, and elected officials.

Four Decades of Home with Jubilee for Brian

As shared by Brian's siblings Chris Lyman and Nancy Ensor, on behalf of the Lyman family.

Growing up with 10 brothers and sisters made us a tight-knit family. Brian is the youngest sibling, and we all looked out for him. We were lucky to live near the Ann J. Kellogg school in Michigan, one of the first schools in the country to mainstream children with special needs in traditional classrooms. Brian loved school, and he would actually sneak out of the house to try to go to school on weekends!

Our family moved to Maryland and Brian saw his older siblings get married and build our own lives. He wanted his own home too. Brian's not a big talker but he makes his thoughts known. He would say "my home" – wanting to know when it would happen for him.

As our folks got older we realized our capabilities were limited to care for Brian on our own. We had a lot of mixed emotions about getting help. When we found Jubilee, back in 1979, we were thrilled that he'd be living in a home setting. Brian moved into Jubilee's first group home, where he still lives. He was so happy. He'd now say "my house" with pride when we came to visit him.



Brian enjoys living independently with help from Jubilee.

We've seen Jubilee grow a lot from those early days. The administrative staff worked out of the basement of Brian's house back then. We've seen Brian grow too. He's happy and settled. When we get together for Christmas the family has a little joke about how long it will be before Brian tells us he's ready to get back to his own house.

We're very grateful for everything Jubilee has done for Brian. He loves living in his own home; to us, that speaks for itself.

Visit the New Jubilee Timeline to See How We've Grown

Strides in Acceptance and Inclusion Mark Jubilee's First 45 Years

The disability community has made great strides in the 45 years since Jubilee began helping adults with disabilities to live independently.

Jubilee's founders were part of the civil rights movement for people with disabilities. Their daily work revealed the humanity in all people and was inspired by their faith. Please visit the new Jubilee timeline at jubileemd.org to reflect on highlights from the last 45 years.



Scan the QR code to view our timeline.

Jubilee Association of Maryland

10408 Montgomery Avenue
Kensington, MD 20895

(301) 949-8626
info@jubileemd.org

www.jubileemd.org

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