

**SPRING 2025**

Faith-based support  
and services for  
individuals with autism  
and intellectual disabilities



# Giving Back

"Consider how to stir up one another to love and good works...  
encouraging one another..." Hebrews 10:24-25



## A MESSAGE FROM Jane Merolla, CEO

After a long winter, we joyfully welcome spring, the season of renewal. This year, Jessica & Friends Community embraces Hebrews 10:24-25 as our guiding verse:

*“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

Reflecting on this wisdom, we recommit to our mission: affirming the worth of all people, supporting personal growth and wholeness, advocating for community and church inclusion, and providing those we serve opportunities for spiritual growth and service.

This spring, we focus on the theme of “Giving Back,” inspiring one another to love, good works, and encouragement. Together, let’s hold this message in our hearts as we continue serving and supporting our community.

Thank you for your ongoing investment in the mission and vision of Jessica & Friends Community as we persevere in God’s work.

With many blessings and kind regards,

**Jane**



Jessica enjoys the Gala with her friend, Aaron.

## One Life that Birthed a Ministry to Glorify God

Spring always brings us to a date which changed our lives forever—March 22, 1981, the day our third child, Jessica came into the world. At her birth, all seemed well, and we were thankful that God blessed us with a healthy baby girl. However, developmental delays in her first year led to a diagnosis at Johns Hopkins that shattered us—Jessica would never live a “normal” life and would require lifelong care.

Initially, we struggled to understand why God had allowed this. But comfort came from John 9:1-3, where Jesus explained a man’s blindness was not due to sin but so “the work of God might be displayed in him.” This transformed our “why God” into “how will You use Jessica to display Your work and bring glory to Yourself?” That perspective gave us peace, even as we faced daily challenges.

We could never have imagined all God would accomplish through Jessica. Today, her life has inspired a ministry employing 150 staff, serving 140 individuals and families with homes, respite care, day programs, community services, and a retreat center, along with a church disability ministry. Our book, **Jessica’s Story, But God**, continues to touch lives globally, with eternal impact.

**Would you consider honoring Jessica’s 44th birthday this month with a gift? Thank you for your prayers and generosity as God uses Jessica’s life for His glory.**

**Peter and Paulette Teague  
Co-Founders**

## A Rewarding Volunteer Experience in Boone, NC

BY GRETCHEN RHODES, SENIOR HOUSE MANAGER

The week after Thanksgiving, my husband Kirby and I volunteered with Samaritan's Purse, a branch of the Billy Graham Ministries, in Boone, NC, helping with Hurricane Helene cleanup. Over three days, our team worked at four homes, handling tasks like mud removal, demolition, and debris clearing.

Each day began with a devotional and prayer, and we prayed again with the homeowners before starting work. Despite freezing temperatures, the camaraderie and shared purpose kept us motivated. Our team, with volunteers aged 17 to senior citizens, tackled the physically demanding tasks with enthusiasm.

At the end of each project, we prayed with the homeowner and gifted them a signed Bible from the Billy Graham Ministries—a powerful and emotional moment. The experience was deeply fulfilling, and Kirby and I are eager to volunteer again, inspired by the chance to serve others and share God's love.



## Blessed by Teddy Bears

BY RENEE ABEL, OLD COLONY MANAGER



On September 27, 2024, Hurricane Helene devastated western North Carolina, displacing families and filling shelters. Wanting to help, I prayed for guidance and felt called to use my vacation to make a difference. I collected 100 teddy bears from the community and my church to bring comfort to children in shelters.

After delivering the bears to Helping Hands Mission, I was warmly welcomed, toured their donation center, and received an Angel Award. The next day, I visited a shelter and connected with those in need. My mission to put a smile on a child's face became the blessing the Lord knew I needed.

# Rock On

For several years, our friends have been actively involved in the J. Patrick Peters Memorial Rock On event, raising essential funds for our organization by rocking in chairs at different venues. This event has proven to be more than just a fun activity for the participants; it has also spread tremendous joy to those attending the venues, fostering a ripple of happiness and community connection.



# Blossoms to Blessings

For many years, Blossoms to Blessings has been an integral part of Jessica & Friends Community day programs, offering our individuals a chance to give back to the community. Our friends take great pride in visiting Jeremy's Garden, where they create beautiful bouquets that bring joy and brighten the day of others in the community.



# Tidal Wave Fundraiser

On a sunny September day, our Hanover Pathway Person Centered Day Program teamed up with Tidal Wave Auto Spa to fundraise for J&FC. It was heartwarming to see the Tidal Wave staff engage with our friends throughout the event.

One of the most touching moments came when Angie took it upon herself to raise extra funds for J&FC. Before customers received their car wash, she would stop them, gather the staff, and ask for their support. Each time she received a donation, she would turn around, flash a big smile, and give a high-five to the staff.

It was a true blessing to witness the joy of everyone involved as they were able to give back to J&FC in such a meaningful way.



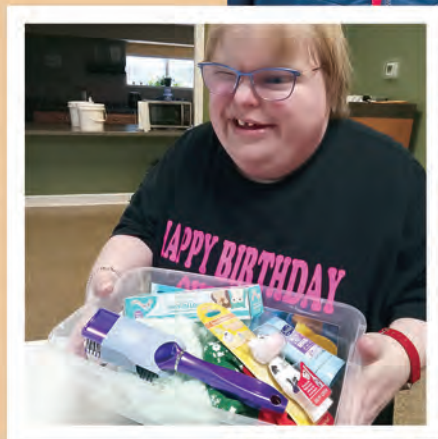
# Chapel Service and Christmas Program

Along with the numerous ways our individuals contribute to the community, the Lancaster Bible College Chapel service and the Church of the Open Door Christmas Program have been a tremendous blessing. They have helped raise awareness of the unique gifts and talents of individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities.



# Christmas Shoeboxes

Our dear friends were filled with joy as they packed 71 Christmas gift shoeboxes and delivered them to the Salvation Army and Hanover Safe Home. Their pride and happiness shone brightly, knowing they were helping make Christmas memorable for others.





## Remembering Troy

On November 2, 2024, we lost our dear friend, Troy Hoenstine, who was a resident at our Scarboro home. Troy was known for his sharp wit, love of sports, and passion for drawing and creating posters. He is deeply missed by everyone who had the privilege of knowing him and will always hold a special place in our J&FC family. Troy is now in the care of his Lord and Savior, and we take comfort in knowing that we will be reunited with him one day.



## IN MEMORY OF Buddy King

On January 7, 2025, Buddy King, a retired ten-year employee of Jessica & Friends Community, passed away. A former music legend with "The Magnificent Men," Buddy's early career as a soul musician paved the way for his impactful later years.

After leaving professional music, Buddy brought his extraordinary talents to J&FC, becoming a beloved presence across the ministry. Whether leading music classes, directing the Hosanna Ringers, or accompanying individuals on community outings, Buddy had a remarkable ability to connect with our special friends.

He once shared that his early musical success was merely a prelude to the meaningful work he accomplished later, touching countless lives with his passion for music.

Buddy's kindness, dedication, and love for others left an immeasurable legacy. He will be dearly missed, but we take comfort knowing he is safely Home and that we will see him again.

# Heaven

BY SHANOMAR OGILVIE, A 12-YEAR STAFF MEMBER

My Lord, great is Your presence. Everything filled with Your essence. Sounds of laughter fill the air. The smell of wildflowers dances around the atmosphere. Joy is the floor upon which I stand. Even the angels are rejoicing at the expression of service given to man. The seasons of difficulty are forgotten, Replaced by the peace of the moment. The splendor of God's children speaks, As the door of heaven is opened. I have arrived at my forever, Destiny written down but now spoken. The sound of applause from a job well done. How great is the Lord's work, The Potter creating and shaping clays of honor from dirt. The greatest park couldn't create this much fun. Where are the disabled and broken? Nowhere in sight. Before my face are the strong in spirit, Souls that take flight. Gift of love, Works of obedience, Children gathered by the spirit in agreement. Yes, Heaven is here, and it's free, But only the ones birthed by the blood of the Lamb and in the oil of joy can see. Brothers and sisters rejoicing, as in heaven but in an earthly residency. Here is Holy ground, so remove the worldly from your feet. You have arrived at Jessica & Friends, God's loving community.

## Congratulations on Promotions

Under the guidance of Tammy Gelsing, J&FC's Director of Home and Community, Jodi Abbott and Carlos Richardson have stepped into their roles as Lead Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). In addition to being DSPs, they assist with critical administrative tasks.



### Jodi Abbott: A Heart for Service

Jodi Abbott has dedicated her life to serving others. Her personal experiences caring for her parents and husband during their final years ignited her passion for supporting individuals in her community, especially those with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities. Jodi finds it both an honor and a privilege to work with the individuals at J&FC. As the newly promoted Lead DSP for York and Adams Counties, she is eager to continue growing with her team.



### Carlos Richardson: A Mission-Driven Leader

Carlos Richardson, the Lead DSP for Franklin and Fulton Counties, brings a background in exercise science and a deep commitment to helping others. Previously employed in a warehouse, Carlos sought a more meaningful path and found it at Jessica & Friends Community, drawn to its faith-based mission. He values the supportive environment where team members uplift and empower one another.

### Celebrating Leadership

Join us in welcoming Jodi and Carlos as they take on their new roles. Their dedication and leadership are sure to enhance the work and mission of Jessica & Friends Community.

## Welcome Cory Rosen

BELL CHOIR DIRECTOR

Jessica & Friends Community is delighted to introduce Cory Rosen as our new Bell Choir Director. A native of Delmar, Maryland, Cory is a talented and accomplished individual, known as an award-winning film composer, podcast host, and children's book author. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Music Composition and Biblical Studies from Lancaster Bible College in 2021.

Cory recently directed the Hosanna Ringers during the Christmas Program and is thrilled to continue leading the group into 2025. With plans to compose original music and arrange beloved hymns, Cory aims to create a CD that captures the joy and inspiration the Ringers bring to the community.

Learn more about Cory and his work at [CoryRosenProductions.com](http://CoryRosenProductions.com).





# Prayer Closet

- 1) We are thankful for our visionary investors who helped us exceed our giving goal of \$125,000. We praise God that we received \$143,498.
- 2) We are thankful for our new staff that has joined us, and pray that God will continue to send those who will embrace the mission of J&FC.
- 3) Pray for the health and safety of our staff and for the Individuals they serve in our homes and programs.
- 4) Pray for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one.
- 5) Pray for wisdom and discernment as we explore additional ways to meet the needs of those needing support and services.

## Upcoming Events

### LBC Chapel Service

Wednesday, March 26, 2025 at 9:10 am  
All are invited to attend.

### Give Local York

May 1-2, 2025

### Gala

Saturday, October 4, 2025  
Wyndham Garden York

## From Seed to Blossom:

BUILDING A CHURCH DISABILITY MINISTRY

BY ANNE FRITTS

In 2022, God planted a seed in the hearts of two women in the Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania. One was a member of Advent Moravian Church and a staff member at Jessica & Friends Community (J&FC), while the other was a mother of an adult daughter with intellectual disabilities. Through J&FC, they connected, and the mother shared her sadness that no local Bible studies accommodated individuals with special needs. This conversation sparked the idea of starting a ministry at Advent Moravian Church.

After much research, Bethesda Disability Ministries was discovered. Bethesda offers a curriculum designed by Jill Miller, whose daughter is affected by multiple disabilities. Recognizing that traditional Sunday Schools often overlooked the needs of adults with intellectual disabilities, Jill developed lessons and training to create inclusive and meaningful Bible studies.

Advent Moravian Church embraced the vision, forming a leadership team of nine. They launched a Bible study named "Jacksonville Crew," inspired by the church's location. In October 2023, a kick-off dinner welcomed over forty attendees, including families, caregivers, and representatives from Bethesda. The event marked the start of a thriving ministry.

The Jacksonville Crew now offers lively and inclusive Bible study sessions, fostering joy, creativity, and a sense of belonging. What began as a small seed planted by God has flourished into a vibrant ministry, providing a safe space where individuals with intellectual disabilities, their families, caregivers and friends can experience God's love and build a deeper relationship with Jesus.



## Thank You for Giving

Our December giving goal was set at \$125,000, a bold number requiring bold faith. We are so thankful for the outpouring of your gifts amounting to \$143,498, a milestone we have never reached before! To God be the glory for this overflowing generosity which is a testament to His work in and through each of you. Thank you to each one for reflecting the Lord's generosity. We are forever grateful!



1625 East Market Street  
 York, PA 17403  
 Phone 717.747.9000  
 Fax 888.509.2320  
 jandfcommunity.org

Equal Opportunity Employer

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Mr. Thomas Brown  
President
- Mrs. Diane Sargeant  
Vice President
- Mr. Robert Teague  
Treasurer
- Mrs. Alex Ahlbrandt  
Secretary
- Mr. Dale Bubb
- Dr. Jack Kline
- Mr. Stuart Levey
- Mr. Doug Royer
- Dr. James Srour
- Mr. Douglas Swartz
- Mrs. Paulette Teague
- Dr. Peter Teague
- Mr. Lee Stare (Honorary)

## ADMINISTRATION

- Jane Merolla**  
CEO
- Neil Sunkel**  
CFO
- Susanne Reynold**  
Director of Human Services
- Kimberly Gockley**  
Director of Programs, York/Adams
- Beth Freeman**  
Director of Programs, Franklin/Fulton
- Tammy Gelsinger**  
Director of Community Services
- Sally Janora**  
Ministry Support Coordinator
- Gretchen Rhodes**  
Senior House Manager
- Renee Abel, Kim Kennedy,  
Kathy Miller, Tamika Lamon  
& Devin Sevret**  
Managers, Residential Services
- Glenn & Millie Martin**  
Innkeepers, Indian Rock Acres
- Scott Reynold**  
Facility Manager

**Jessica & Friends Community News**  
 is published quarterly to provide relevant updates and current issues of importance consistent with our mission to the families we serve, churches, friends and supporters.

Please send all correspondence including address corrections to:

Jessica & Friends Community  
 Attention: Kara Geib  
 1625 East Market Street, York, PA 17403

## Memorial and Honor Gifts

September 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024

### IN HONOR OF/GIVEN BY:

- Dru and Seth Almoney**  
Mr. & Mrs. Bradley Clabaugh
- Naomi Bloom on behalf of her work with Jeremy's Garden**  
Sandy Guerrieri and Kay Walker
- John Brown**  
Mrs. Lucy Wolford
- Mark Brown**  
Mrs. Lucy Wolford
- Pastor Merle Brown**  
Mrs. Lucy Wolford
- Connie Ensor**  
Mrs. Lucy Wolford
- Bethany Godfrey**  
Mr. & Mrs. Chip Godfrey  
Mrs. Miriam Leaman
- Pam Graf**  
Mrs. Lucy Wolford
- Ellen Hartman's Birthday**  
Mrs. RuthAnn Bailets
- Jayne Janora**  
Mr. & Mrs. Christopher Hanley
- Sally Janora**  
Duane and Judy Ahlbrandt
- Jessica & Friends Community Staff**  
Mrs. Sally Janora
- Sarah Keeney's Birthday**  
Ms. Anita Brenneman
- Stu Levey**  
Mrs. Della Dartt
- Sally Morales**  
Drs. Robert & Lisa Fritz
- Diane Sargeant**  
Ms. Kathleen Walsh
- Lorie Schildt**  
Mrs. Lucy Wolford
- Scott Smith's Birthday**  
Mrs. RuthAnn Bailets

- Jonathon and Claire Srour**  
Matthew 6:21 Project
- Jessica Teague**  
Mr. Wesley Martin
- Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague**  
Mr. & Mrs. Joshua Beers  
Rev. & Mrs. Greg Funk
- Teague Family**  
Mr. & Mrs. Mike Van Belle
- Eddie Weaver**  
Mr. & Mrs. Chris Lenhart

### IN MEMORY OF/GIVEN BY:

- John B. Allshouse**  
Mrs. Anna Allshouse
- Richard Bates**  
Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague
- Joan M. Blest**  
Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague
- Elsie Clark**  
Mrs. Sally Janora
- Susan Drenning**  
Mr. Fred Drenning
- John E. Gearhart**  
Mrs. Joyce Gearhart
- Matthew Grove**  
Mr. Ted Grove
- Harold Gelsinger**  
Mrs. Sally Janora  
Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague
- June and Kim Handwerker**  
Mr. Robert Handwerker
- Franklin David Harpel**  
Matt and Krista Kae Hazen  
Kiwanis Club of Lititz Area  
Mr. & Mrs. Steve Knaub  
Ms. Marie Weber
- Terri Herr**  
Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague
- Mary Hildebrand**  
Ms. Tami Sue Hildebrand

- Troy Hoenstine**  
Mrs. RuthAnn Bailets  
Mrs. Sally Janora  
Mr. David Kline  
Dr. & Mrs. Jack Kline  
Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague  
Mr. & Mrs. Rodney Wolford
- Julia M. Kinard**  
Mr. Alan Flinchbaugh  
Sally and Jayme Janora  
Mr. & Mrs. David McDowell  
Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague
- Tim Lease**  
Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague
- Peg Lowrie**  
Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague
- Judy Martys**  
Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague
- Sarah Myers**  
Mr. & Mrs. Harold Fisher
- Lester and Stella Neymeyer**  
Mr. & Mrs. Russell Jungling
- Stella Neymeyer**  
Mrs. Diana Hurst
- Carla Norris**  
Rev. Phillip Norris
- Carol Rogers**  
Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague
- Dr. John Smucker**  
Dr. & Mrs. Peter Teague
- Scott Snyder**  
Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Barshinger  
Sally and Jayme Janora
- Norma P. Stotler**  
Mr. & Mrs. Darrell Kopp
- James Sullivan**  
Mrs. Sally Janora
- Paul Van Noord**  
Mrs. Deborah Van Noord