



Spring in Our Step

A sense of meaning and purpose is essential to living a happy, fulfilling life. Along with friends, family and personal interests, gainful employment often plays a key role in fostering feelings of self-worth and the satisfaction of contributing to society — even if it's just within our small corner of the world.

Mission Project 2 recognizes meaningful employment as a critical component in enabling independent living and promoting self-esteem. This issue highlights some of the ways that MP2 participants have benefitted from employment and the knowledge that they're contributing members of the Kansas City community.



Mission Project 2 [MP2] enables capable adults with developmental or cognitive disabilities to live independently and safely in their own apartments, integrated into the general community with minimal support.

We work towards a comprehensive vision: To establish and maintain support structures for our participants, to enable them to live independently in a safe environment with the opportunity to engage in meaningful work, social interaction with peers, educational opportunities, physical fitness, training and recreation.

Purposeful Living

THE REWARDS OF EMPLOYMENT

Many factors must combine to make independent living a reality for adults with disabilities. Finding gainful employment is among the most important. While residing in their community of Mission, Kansas, the participants of Mission Project 2 work full-time and part-time at jobs across the Kansas City metropolitan area, performing such wide-ranging duties as child care, assisting teachers, clerical work, food service, stocking and custodial jobs, to name a few.

Simply finding job opportunities for adults with disabilities comes with many challenges. According to Janet Woodward, the Regional Director for Kansas Focus, it is often difficult to obtain employment due to the limited skill sets of some individuals, the absence of reliable transportation, or the lack of schedule flexibility with an employer. At times, employers are unable to “carve out” tasks that match an individual's particular abilities and levels of learning.

In addition to assistance from family members, some MP2 participants receive support from community-based service providers, such as Kansas Focus, to obtain work and enhance their job skills through ongoing training. Janet says some key ways to prepare these individuals for employment include volunteering in order to gain experience; developing social skills; understanding job expectations; and knowing the importance and value of having a job. Several participants praise Janet for her assistance in helping them prepare for job interviews. Josh, who works at a grocery store, says, “I worked with Janet [to find a job]. I told her what I was looking for and then we filled out the application online. She took me to the interview and made sure that I was dressed nice.” Elli, who works as a child care assistant, says, “Janet is amazing. I love her. She helped me get a job that is close to my apartment. When I first got my job, I was so amazed. I was so happy.”



Jack enjoys his job, co-workers and fun work events at a pharmaceutical firm.

continued on page 2

Employment continued from page 1

Getting hired is just the first hurdle, as staying employed can present its own set of challenges. There can be a variety of reasons why individuals may not do well in community-based employment positions. These may include changes in management or ownership at their workplaces, being unable to sustain irregular work schedules, the mismatch of a position to their available skills, or the need for more intensive on-the-job training.



Kelly being recognized as the "Employee of the Month."

Finding reliable work transportation can also be difficult for people with disabilities. To address this issue, Mission Project 2 offers individualized work-related transportation opportunities for the participants in conjunction with our sister organization, The Mission Project. This outstanding transportation service gets them to and from work safely and consistently with regular drivers, and is essential for their employment success.

Despite the challenges, finding and keeping a job is worth all the effort for the MP2 participants because it adds so much value to their daily lives and to the community in which they live. "Beyond the financial advantage, benefits of gainful employment include personal growth, pride in being part of a team, social interaction and developing friendships, and activities to maintain their skills and keep their minds busy," Janet says.

Kelly, who works as a dietary aide at a hospital, says, "Being out working is what I really would rather be doing. I am happy that I'm working full-time. People look forward to when I come in with a meal." "Having a job keeps you motivated," says Jacob, who works at a local pet store. "It's better than staying at home in your apartment all day. You can learn different things and meet different people, and it teaches you to be as active as possible."

Several MP2 participants have received workplace recognition awards for their exceptional service. In addition to being employed, many also volunteer at nursing homes, animal shelters, food pantries and the local Down Syndrome Guild.

What Having a Job Means to Me: MP2 Participant Quotes

"I like having a job because it keeps me busy. It makes you feel good to have a job and to help people out. I am proud to have a job."

"I really like having a job to go to. It makes me very happy to be working."

"Having a job means not staying at my apartment being completely bored all day."

"I like working because it feels good to be helping people."

"Having a job helps me learn to go with the flow, and learn new things. It's a nice way to socialize and get to know each other."

"Having a job gives me structure throughout the day."

"I really appreciate it when I get positive feedback. It feels good to hear 'thank you.' It makes me feel like I'm meant to be at this job."

"Having a job means I'm going somewhere, staying busy. I want something to do, so working makes me happy."

"It's not just about earning money; a job is good for your body, too."

"Having a job means staying busy, making friends, helping people, and is something I can feel good about."

ART Club

Picasso Exhibit



In March, the MP2 participants spent an afternoon at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art to tour the renowned exhibit "Through the Eyes of Picasso." Kansas City was the only booking in the United States for this limited tour.

After exploring part of the permanent collection of contemporary art in the Bloch Building, they entered the world of Pablo Picasso. The participants learned how African, Oceanic and American art styles inspired the modern paintings and sculptures of Picasso by seeing side-by-side pairings of the comparative artwork.



They continued into the "Dreams of the Kings: A Jade Suit for Eternity" exhibit, which featured a 2,000-year-old life-size jade and gold burial suit. In addition to learning about Chinese burial rituals, the participants viewed a number of related items from the museum's permanent collection.



The following Art Club session featured a project inspired by the artwork of Picasso. The instructor, Jessica Hays, gave the participants another taste of Cubism by asking them to sketch a guitar, then sketch it again from a different angle. The two pieces were cut out and arranged to form a multi-sided view, finished with watercolor paint.



Please join us on **October 5th for the 5th Annual MP2 Art Show** where you can view some of the participants' artwork, in addition to purchasing works donated by local professional artists!

For regular updates about MP2 Art Club activities, visit us at [facebook.com/missionproject2](https://www.facebook.com/missionproject2).

New Growth

Community Garden

After shaking off this year's late-season cold, the MP2 Garden Club will soon start working in their community garden for the fourth season.

The planting beds were cleaned up last fall, so only some minor preparation is necessary this spring. The fun part comes in May when it's time to purchase and plant their new flowers and vegetables. They will continue to improve the butterfly garden by adding more plants.



Participants were busy cleaning up the garden last October.

The participants naturally gravitate toward certain vegetables that they like to eat regularly from their garden, so their favorites will be grown in larger quantities this year. At each session of Garden Club, food harvested from the garden and prepared ahead of time is served. This is a popular way for the participants to learn healthy recipes and benefit from all their hard work.

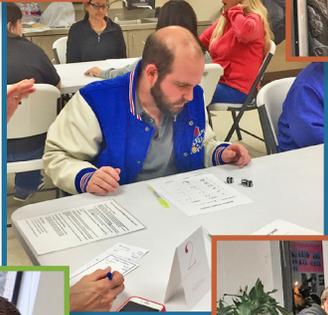
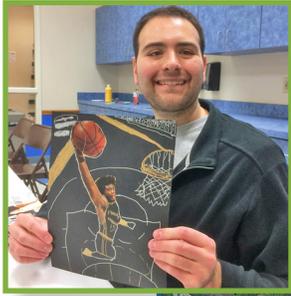


TRAVEL Club 2018

The MP2 Travel Club has chosen Branson, MO as their next destination in August 2018. The participants are excited for this trip and have been busy planning activities, which may include a scenic train ride around the hills of Branson, visiting Silver Dollar City recreation park and Titanic Museum, finding adventure at White River Water Park, and zip lining.



|| Snapshots ||



A Full House of Aces

5th Annual Mission Project 2 Texas Hold 'Em Tournament

Our 2018 Texas Hold 'Em Tournament, held on February 24th, was a roaring success, thanks to our supporters who gathered to enjoy a fierce card game for a great cause! We thank **Lucky Brewgrille** for donating the event space, the crew from **Wheeling 'n Dealing** for serving as Master of Ceremonies, and everyone who came out to support MP2.



We Thank Our 2018 Texas Hold 'Em Sponsors:

Mead O'Brien

McInnes Group

American Screw Products

St. Luke's Midwest Pulmonary Consultants

John P. O'Connor, Attorney

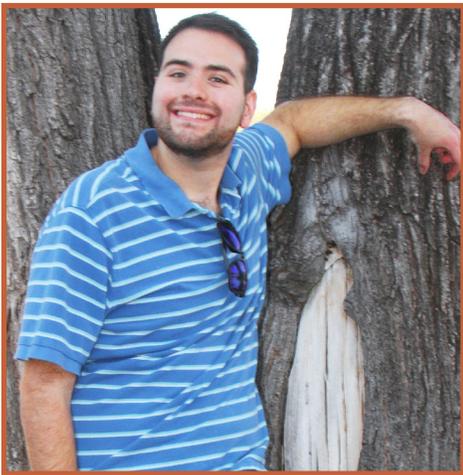
Blue Tape Estate Sales

Leela & Co.

Catalyst

Participant Profile

Oscar



Friendly, hard-working, good-humored, cat-loving and video-game-playing music enthusiast are all qualities that describe Oscar, who has been a Mission Project 2 participant since August of 2015. After two and a half years, he still loves the freedom of independent living as well as the many educational, recreational and social opportunities that MP2 provides.

After graduating from Shawnee Mission North in 2010, Oscar went on to the district's Post High Transition Services program and, like several other MP2 participants, he entered the two-year THRIVE program at the University of Central Missouri. Attending classes and living away from home could be stressful, but Oscar rose to the challenges and soon developed close friendships with his classmates. After completing THRIVE, he returned to his family's home in Roeland Park and

began to think seriously about joining Mission Project 2. By the next year, he was a full participant living in his own apartment.

From the time Oscar joined MP2, he has been an avid participant in the offered programs and activities. One of his favorites is World Dining Club, because he loves trying different dishes and discovering new foods that he likes. Other programs that he likes include Movie Club and also Art Club, depending on the project. Oscar says, *"Painting is best."*

Careful to maintain a healthy lifestyle, Oscar regularly attends the weekly MP Fitness classes and often works out or goes for walks on his own. When he's not busy with MP2 activities, Oscar likes listening to music, reading, surfing the internet, and constructing elaborate buildings in Minecraft. *"I'm very creative."*



Fresh vegetables are the reward for Oscar's hard work in the Community Garden.

As rewarding as his work and activities are, Oscar admits that socializing with friends is his favorite part of life in MP2. Like many others on the autism spectrum, he found it challenging to make friends during his school years. THRIVE helped Oscar learn to cultivate friendships, and MP2 has given him ongoing opportunities to socialize with others who share his interests. *"I like to go out to eat with friends," he says. "They like the same things I like—comedy movies, watching sports, working out...things like that."* If you ever see a lively crowd of Mission Project participants at a local restaurant on a Friday night, Oscar is almost sure to be among them.



One of Oscar's many expressive paintings during an Open Session at Art Club.

Oscar's energy and positive attitude have served him well in his part-time job at Global Art Materials, an art supply wholesaler in midtown Kansas City. A capable and dependable employee, he's held the same job for over three years. His duties include packaging pencil cases, shrink-wrapping watercolor paper, and other tasks to prepare items for shipment to retail stores. Oscar's employers especially value his independence on the job. He says, "I know what to do without having to be told." While he appreciates the steady paycheck and friendly work environment, Oscar is eager to find full-time work, perhaps as a custodian. "I'd especially like to find something within walking distance of my apartment," he says, "so I won't have to spend much of my day getting to work and back."



Oscar enjoying Japanese cuisine with his friends at World Dining Club.

News & Upcoming Events

Join our League of Heroes with an MP2 T-Shirt

Go to missionproject2.org/shop for Hero t-shirts and other special items that feature the artwork of MP2 participants for sale!



Save
The
Dates

Independence Walk - September 8th

MP2 Art Show - October 5th

**We welcome
your donations!**

missionproject2.org/donate
5960 Dearborn, Ste. 240, Mission, KS 66202



Follow MP2 Online

Please join our supporters
by Liking Us on Facebook!

missionproject2.org
Facebook.com/missionproject2

Mission Project 2 is a 501(c)(3)
not-for-profit organization.