

Washington County's COVID-19 Website

See [Washington County's COVID-19 website](#) for vaccine updates.

New Resource List

Check out the [resource list](#) developed by the Washington County Community Services (WCCS) Person-Centered Best Practices committee.

Microgrants Still Available

The Minnesota Microgrant Partnership gives grants to people with

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14949 62nd Street N
Stillwater, MN 55082

[Intellectual and Developmental Website](#)

Washington County Corner

We hope this newsletter finds everyone well. It has been a rough year for most folks and things are starting to look a little brighter. The COVID-19 vaccine continues to be distributed based on the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) priority groupings and many businesses have been able to reopen with restrictions.

This would normally be our newsletter that focuses on summer camps and activities, but with COVID-19 and the ever changing restrictions, it is almost impossible to know what may be available for summer programming. Instead, we have provided a list of businesses below that typically host summer camps, classes, and activities. We've found most camps have been cancelled or are hosting a modified version of the activity either virtually or in-person.

- [21 Roots Farm](#)
- [AUSM \(Autism Society of Minnesota\)](#)
- [Camp of Champs MN](#)
- [The Company of Kids Performing Arts Center](#): Performing arts, dance, and music focus
- [Lundstrum Performing Arts](#): Performing arts and musical focus
- [Minnesota Independence College and Community \(MICC\)](#)
- [PACER Center](#)
- [True Friends](#)
- [West Metro Learning Connections \(WMLC\)](#)

New Housing Development Coming to Oakdale

Bethesda Cornerstone Village, Oakdale.

Development Overview

Cornerstone Village in Oakdale, Minnesota, will be a mixed-income, inclusive, multifamily community consisting of 65 apartment homes. Cornerstone Village aims to unite a rich tapestry of people—families, couples, and independent adults with developmental disabilities—in a rental community complete with modern amenities, the latest in smart home technology, and easy-to-access classes, activities, and more.

Integrated Community

Bethesda's vision for developing Cornerstone Village is to create an integrated community that supports an active, engaged lifestyle for families, couples, and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Diverse Incomes

Cornerstone Village—Oakdale features 50 affordable apartments and 15 market rate

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disabilities. Applicants must be 18 or older and receive waiver or personal care services, or be 16 or older with a level 3 or 4 Individual Education Program (receiving special education services for most of the day).

These grants help people reach goals around competitive employment, inclusive housing, and community integration. These goals should be important to and for the applicant.

Please apply before April 16, 2021. Grants must be awarded by June 30, 2021.

See [The Arc website](#) for more information.

Scholarship Opportunity

AuSM is pleased to partner with Twin Cities Autism Foundation, Inc. to offer additional scholarship opportunities to the Minnesota Autism community. Twin Cities Autism Foundation, Inc. provides financial aid to help families gain access to resources. Before applying for

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apartments. Within the affordable component, 10 apartments will be set-aside for adults with I/DD and four for adults who have experienced homelessness.

Consumer Choice for Supportive Services

Cornerstone Village provides independent rental housing, where each person or household will have an individual lease and participation in services is not a condition of residency. Cornerstone Village will not require licensure associated with group-home settings. Bethesda anticipates that residents may need supportive services to maintain their independence and pursue individual goals. Bethesda supports consumer choice and person-centered care. Residents will select their own service provider, which may be Bethesda Lutheran Communities in some cases.

Programming to Support Community Life

Staying active and social is key to living a happy, healthy life. Cornerstone Village will foster community life through both physical design and ongoing programming. The building will include ample common spaces – a multiple purpose community room with a kitchen, fitness center, reading and technology lounge, common patio, and an outdoor play area. To bring these spaces to life, a director of activities will be on staff to create and customize events and classes that appeal to the personality of the community. Events may include, but are not limited to, yoga and exercise classes, coffee hours, book clubs, bible studies, cooking demonstrations, education presentations, and group trips.

Site and building concept

Cornerstone Village–Oakdale will be a three-story, V-shaped building located at the southwest corner of 4th Street North and Helmo Avenue North, near the junction of Interstate Highways I-94 and I-694. The site is located in the Helmo Avenue Station of the METRO Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit (Gold Line BRT), which is slated to open in spring 2024. The Gold Line BRT will run 10 miles from downtown St. Paul to Woodbury. The station will be located immediately south and west of the Cornerstone Village site, providing residents with easy access to reliable public transportation. In addition to the new station, the redevelopment calls for a new multimodal bridge across Highway I-94 to Woodbury, improved pedestrian and bike routes, and new parks and usable open spaces.

Advocacy Opportunity

Minnesota leadership and advocacy skills training for parents of young children with developmental disabilities and adults with disabilities

[Partners in Policymaking](#)[®] program; comprehensive, confidence-building training in disability law and policies; no cost, applications available

Advocacy training to build confidence and knowledge, [Partners in Policymaking](#)[®] is now taking applications from parents of young children with developmental disabilities and adults with disabilities who are Minnesota residents. *There is no cost for this nationally recognized leadership training.* Starting in September and ending in May, eight sessions are presented over a period of nine months.

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“We aim for self-confidence and understanding of disability law and policies. This will help individuals be more effective in advocating for their needs,” said Dr. Colleen Wieck, executive director of the Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities. “As they gain experience in speaking up for people with disabilities, many have become leaders in their own communities.” The Minnesota-inspired program is also offered in most states and several foreign countries.

This carefully planned leadership training brings in national and state experts and uses group participation to emphasize learning. Over the 35-year history, more than 1,100 Minnesotans have become leaders in their own communities, many have described it as “life changing.” Participants become effective advocates for themselves, their children, and others with disabilities.

Training includes the history of disability and advocacy movements, inclusive education, supported living, and customized employment. Individuals consider how to influence county, state, and federal legislative processes. The monthly two-day sessions are held on Fridays and Saturdays, from September to May (with no session in December). The March session is on a Sunday and Monday, when participants prepare for and meet with their state legislators at the Capitol.

Costs for the Partners program are covered by a federal grant. *Childcare and respite allowances are given, and overnight accommodations are provided for those who travel from outside the metro area to attend. Mileage is reimbursed and meals are provided.* Sessions are held at the Crowne Plaza Aire, at 3 Appletree Square in Bloomington, near the Mall of America and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

Limited to 35 Minnesotans, participants are selected by a panel of Partners graduates and representatives of the Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities. The first weekend session for the 2021 to 2022 program year is September 17-18, 2021. Local experts and nationally recognized leaders in school inclusion, community organizing, governmental processes, and disability issues are among the presenters. [Applications are due by July 9, 2021.](#)

“This program is based on the belief that system change is best brought about through the efforts of those most affected by them, and we seek to arm these individuals with the tools needed to be successful in the public policy arena,” said Wieck.

Those selected to participate in the program must attend all sessions and complete homework assignments. For further information or to get an application, apply [online](#) or contact Brenton Rice via [email](#) or by calling 651-242-6589.

The Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities introduced the Partners in Policymaking program in 1987, and, through expansion to other states and countries, has trained more than 27,000 people worldwide.

For further information, contact:

- Brenton Rice: 651-242-6589 / [Email](#)
- Sherie Wallace, The Wallace Group: 877-832-4548 / [Email](#)

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a TCAF scholarship, you first must reserve a spot in your desired program.

Apply for a Twin Cities Autism Foundation, Inc. scholarship on the [Twin Cities Autism Foundation website](#).

Fun Activities



Check out Valley Friendship Club (VFC). We have moved our events online and have plenty of fun for all. Some special events we have coming up are:

- **Earth Day**
at 21 Roots Farm
April 24
- **Zoom Cinco de Mayo Party**
May 5
- **VFC's 11th Birthday Bash** (outdoor, socially-distant celebration)
May 15

We also have other exciting zoom events every day of the week. Visit the [Valley Friendship website](#) to see our full calendar.

A Day in the Life of Mighty Mitchell

Mitchell is a 3 year old living with spastic quadraplegia cerebral palsy, epilepsy, Gould syndrome, chronic lung disease, and a whole host of other complications. He is non-verbal and non-mobile. Despite all the challenges he faces, he is a very happy kid. He has the best smile. His smile can brighten anyone's day. You can't help but smile back. He lives with his mom, dad, and brother in Woodbury.

As told by Mitchell. Note: Mitchell has several other caretakers; this is his mom's view.

Early in the morning, I wake up and start missing mom. After a few cries, she hurries in to greet me. I am so excited to see her, I give her my biggest smile. She scoops me up and we head downstairs. She bounces down the steps, causing me to giggle.

Once downstairs, she starts doing my morning stretches. This helps my tight muscles loosen up and get ready for the day. I don't love these stretches and often try to resist mom, but I eventually let her do all my stretches. My arms and legs feel much better once she's done. Then it's time for meds. Boy, do I hate taking my meds. They just taste terrible. I try my best to outsmart mom. I try pocketing it in my cheek to hide the medicine, I try to dribble it out the sides of my lips, I try to rocket launch it between my clenched teeth, however, mom is on to me and knows all my tricks. Sometimes I get scared when I choke on the medicine and start crying, which sometimes even leads me to throwing everything back up. I know it's hard work for mom, so I give her one of my famous, heart-melting smiles. She smiles back at me and I know everything in my world is ok.

After medicine comes breakfast. Mom lifts me up and straps me into my chair. She gets my bib and towel wrapped around my neck as I'm often quite messy! I get quite a cocktail of foods and medicine in my breakfast. Mom makes me cream of wheat cereal and adds pureed prunes. To that mixture, she adds Benefiber, bran, Miralax and Culturelle probiotics. I think she's trying to get me to poop today! Before I even get to eat anything, she does my mouth exercises. This really gets my mouth ready to eat! Some mornings I'm really hungry and open my mouth like a little birdie, ready for my food. Other days, I am not as hungry and it takes mom a while to get me all my food.

She patiently puts the spoon on my tongue and waits for me to get the food off. It sometimes takes me a few chews to get everything off of the spoon. Once I'm done eating, mom cleans me up. She jokes with me that I eat by osmosis as my whole face, ears, neck, and sometimes back is covered in food. I don't know what that means, probably something to do with science.

Time to get dressed! Mom often tickles me while she's getting me dressed because I don't like laying on my back. Sometimes while she is changing my diapers, I cross my legs and hold them stiff to make it a little more challenging for her. Other times, I keep my arms pulled in tight so she can't get my arms into the sleeves. I always have to keep her on her toes!

Next comes my gear. She says to me, "Time to suit up Iron Man Mitchell." She puts my ankle braces on one by one, carefully making sure my feet are in the right spot. They have fun dinosaurs all over! She tells me that these help my calf muscles stay stretched out and relaxed. It doesn't feel great, so I sometimes try to push against them, but I'm getting used to them. After that she puts on my hand splints. Man is this a process. It's hard to get my fisted hands open enough, but she eventually wins and my fingers find their right spots. I have to leave these on 2-4 hours, 2 times a day every day for my muscles to relax and stretch. Since I have my gear on, it's a great time to go in the stander. I have fun in the stander as I get to stand high off the ground and see things from a different perspective. Once all the straps, Velcro, and hinges are in place, she gets me up at a 80-90 degree angle. I've improved over the last few months and have been strong enough to stand more vertical! I also keep getting taller and have to move the foot plates down. My hips are adducted about 15 degrees. Mom says this will help my hips grow into their socket and stay in the right spot. She brings me toys to play with. Sometimes it's blocks to knock down or a switch toy. I like the switch toys because they often play music or have pretty lights to look at. I also like that I can turn them on and off myself with special switches I can easily activate!

My tummy starts rumbling and it's time for my milk. Mom has to warm it up for me. She's tried cold bottles before and I just spit that out, giving her my look of disapproval. My bottle consists of a concoction of

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Pediasure, water, and almond milk. She sometimes tries to change the ratios of my bottle, however, she doesn't fool me! My brother Garrett will read me stories while we wait for the bottle to warm up. This is my favorite time of the day. It's just me and my big brother. I love hearing his stories. He's such a good reader. Sometimes he calls me "Interrupting Mitchell" because I get so excited I start squealing during the story.

I normally only let mom give me the bottle, and sometimes I still don't take it. I get some extra saliva in the back of my throat and start coughing when it runs down the wrong pipe. Then I don't feel like drinking anything. Off to nap I go! Mom gets my cushions tucked in around me to keep me in the proper position, my stuffy to snuggle with, my shusher noise maker, my sound machine, and my weighted blanket on top. Once I'm all situated, it doesn't take long for me to fall asleep on my own now.

I wake up and I'm ready for lunch! Mom does my mouth stretches again. She adds cereal to my pouches of baby food to make it the perfect consistency for me to swallow. She also uses this tool to help me move my tongue side-to-side instead of always front-to-back. It tickles my mouth and gets my tongue muscles ready. I can be a slow eater, it seems like everyone else is done with lunch by the time I'm halfway done. I love eating and love my food. I get excited to eat and start kicking my legs in my chair. I usually finish in about 45-60 mins.

After I'm cleaned up, it's time for therapy. Sometimes we meet with my therapists on the computer and they help me learn new exercises. I give them my biggest smiles as I'm so excited to see them! I usually put my gear on again to work with them. Some days, mom puts me in my gait trainer. While I like being able to work on walking, I don't like being in that contraption. Most days, I cry while I'm in it. Garrett works hard to help distract me while mom moves my legs to help my brain learn the walking pattern. I'm exhausted once we're done. If I don't go in the gait trainer, mom does my other exercises with me to help strengthen my muscles. She sings songs to help distract me while my body is working hard.

I love watching Garrett do school. I like to join in on the circle times to learn with him. It's fun to hear what they

are working on. Most of the time I'm a quiet listener, sometimes I get really excited and start squealing again. I just can't help it!

Now we're ready for dinner. Mom makes another concoction for me. She adds turmeric to my food. She says it helps promote cell growth. I'm not sure what that means, so I just go with it. She also mixes in my vitamins along with a lot of the other things she adds to my breakfast. There are a lot of flavors in my food. I don't mind, I just like eating. It's nice to have the whole family around the table and hear everyone's stories from the day. Sometimes my brother does something funny and I get into a giggling fit. I can't stop and just keep giggling away. Mom or dad has to get us back on track and focused on eating.

My other favorite time of day is after dinner when we can all play together as a family. Sometimes we go outside and go for a walk or play in the backyard, sometimes we do games, sometimes the boys wrestle, sometimes we have ninja fights, sometimes it's a dance party. I love it all! I squeal with excitement and kick my legs as fast as I can!

Bath time is another one of my favorite activities, as long as Garrett joins me. Mom has to put me in my splashy seat in the tub. The chair holds me upright in the tub, but not much of me is in the water. I can kick and splash the water. Sometimes Garrett and I have a splash fight and see who can kick up the biggest waves.

Evening meds are not my favorite. I'm usually so tired at this point I just want to go to bed. I often times choke and cough on my meds because I don't like how they taste and I don't want to swallow them. After battling with mom or dad, I eventually swallow most of the medication. Sometimes if I spit some out or throw some up, they will get more meds that I have to try to swallow again.

Once I've gotten all my meds in, it's another of my favorite times of the day, storytime! I love listening to stories and get so excited. After that, I get tucked in. I have special pillows to tuck in around me and a weighted blanket to snuggle under. I can't roll over so when I wake up with a sore spot, I cry out for mom at night. I know she's sleeping but I can't fall back asleep. Sometimes she snuggles with me to help me fall back asleep.

Rumi Success Story: Garry and Bret

Rumi connects people who have disabilities with compatible supportive roommates. Here is one of their success stories



Garry (left) and Bret (right)

a restaurant owner. Tragically, he lost his wife to a rare disease and his two daughters to Batten's disease – a rare and fatal disease that takes over the body's nervous system. A few years later, he was forced into selling the restaurant he owned for over 20 years.

Garry and Bret are still Rumis and have been for over a year. They are creating lasting memories and building an everlasting friendship. Rumi has brought Garry independence, choice, and freedom. Rumi has brought Bret a friend, independence, and an earned income. This has created an environment that allows both of them to be in a winning situation.

For more information, visit the [Rumi website](#).

Free to Explore Zoo Admission Program (ZAP)

Come in and discover "Where Amazing Lives. Every Day." All it takes is a curiosity and willingness to explore. We are committed to serving ALL Minnesotans and ensuring that economic circumstances are not obstacles to experiencing everything that the Minnesota Zoo has to offer.

Free to Explore provides free admission during regular Zoo hours for a qualifying guest and their dependents. Parking and fees for any special programs, events, or exhibits are not included. *Free to Explore tickets must be reserved ahead of time by [signing up on their website](#) one week in advance of your planned visit and are first come, first served. Parking is required for your visit and be can purchased online.* EBT cards are not accepted as payment for parking or fees at the Minnesota Zoo.

Be prepared to show your approved documentation and Minnesota photo identification upon arrival for your visit. If you need assistance completing a form, please call 952-431-9200. Check out the [Minnesota Zoo website](#) for more information on [ZAP](#) and the [virtual programs](#) they are hosting for young children this summer.

Parent Support Groups

On Track MN Parent & Child Development Services is a provider of early, intensive developmental and behavioral intervention who proudly serve children and families with Autism and related conditions in the Twin Cities and beyond! They offer online parent support groups in addition to many other services. Check out the [On Track MN website](#).

Contact Us for Article Submissions:

For questions or to submit article submissions, contact:

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