



Dear Friends,

December 19, 2013

As another year comes to an end, I want to send greetings and our gratitude to all of the supporters of the Bob Brown House. There are days when the struggle of managing our place can be overwhelming...unforeseen maintenance repairs, outrageous electric bills, trying to keep 14 residents content and happy, fundraising...you get the picture. But just in the last week I have been reminded of the importance of our mission and of the real intention of my dad's dream in helping people. I have witnessed what I will call a "circle of life" moment at the Bob Brown House. I played the organ this week for the funeral of Jim Proctor who was a long-time resident at the BBH. He left just after Christmas two years ago when he was no longer able to care for himself at our home. Jim's sister shared with me her appreciation for the BBH and how much Jim loved his more than 13 years with us. They even requested all memorials to Jim be sent to us. Also in this last week we have a brand new resident at the BBH. Her name is Lauren and this is her first opportunity to move from her parents' home and live independently. I have been touched by the lives of these two people and the value of the BBH in their lives. It has encouraged me and given me hope for the new year. So instead of my usual recap of this last year at the BBH I have asked Lauren's dad to finish this letter. I know his words will give you new insight and hope for our future also.

When Amy Brown asked me to write this letter I felt honored and blessed to share our experiences. Although Lauren's been a resident for a short time, we felt a part of the family from our first visit. We were invited to come to the Thanksgiving Dinner even though Lauren was not yet a resident. The facility, the family atmosphere and the food was phenomenal. We felt welcomed from the first moment we got there. From personal experience working with special needs people, I know how easy it is to get caught up in the day to day. Life seems like we're on autopilot. Sometimes it's hard just to make it through a week. As a result, we unfortunately take what we have for granted. I want to stress how blessed we are to have the Bob Brown House.

I'm reminded of the Christmas classic, "It's a Wonderful Life", the story where George Bailey, played by James Stewart, finds out what life would be like without him. I began thinking what life for Lauren and other residents would be like without the Bob Brown House...

Because our children are higher functioning, they would fall through the cracks if not for the Bob Brown House. A lot of these adults would end up homeless, in prison or even worse. They couldn't receive SSI or the Medical Card because they have no address or checking account to send the money to. No way to get needed medical care much less the medication they need. No wonder they would become angry and sometimes violent. No one would care about them. They wouldn't feel wanted much less loved. There would be no advocates to help them navigate the confusing world we live in, much less help them get the services they're entitled to. Life is hard enough for those without special needs. Instead, at the Bob Brown House they have: their own private entrance to a spacious apartment, a walk in closet and a sink in their room, the freedom to access an open courtyard so they can be outside when they want, a great staff that love and care about them as people not labels, great food four times a day and a safe environment with help whenever they need it.

When I was a special needs counselor, and when my wife and I taught a home school drama group, I learned to relate to each client's personality. Once you make that connection, focus on their strengths and set goals for their special needs, positive changes are inevitable. I look at the Bob Brown House in the same way. The personality of the Bob Brown House is: loving, caring, friendly and respectful. The strengths: a place where each resident can be independent to the best of their abilities, a loving, attentive staff that work tirelessly to keep things going. Its special needs? It needs to be shown some love. We need to look at the facility through the eyes of the same love that we see our children. See it's potential. I know from personal experience, it's hard to maintain things when resources, time and man/woman power are limited. If we pull together and think of ways to increase funds, donations, improvements and maintenance the Bob Brown House will be even better in 2014! Improving the facility helps the staff help our family have the best possible environment to succeed. Facilities like the Bob Brown House are rare indeed. We are blessed to have the Bob Brown House and such a great family to share the experience with.

Seasons greetings,

Amy Brown and Rick Thompson

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