

Family journeys

Susan's family

Her father was a true gentleman, a man of deep family values, with a soft voice and welcoming smile. That was one side of John W. Pratt. Do something that might hurt a member of his family, however, and there would be the other side to John Pratt, the father of four daughters – Ann (Schulte) Mary Ann (Shulz), Cathy (Paine) and Susan – Susan born with developmental disabilities. Tell him that there was no place for her in her own community to learn, to work, to go to a restaurant without being singled out – tell him anything like that and there would be that other side to John Pratt and things happened, things changed because of that side of him – Susan's father.

Resident Home Association (RHA) happened. It happened because of families like the Pratts, Cromers, Gmeiners, O'Learys and so many others worthy of recognition for their dogged determination, sacrifices and pioneering work. They came together as families so there would be a community alternative to state institutions. They came together with hopes and dreams of what it could be like to have their family members have homes, to be a part of a caring, supportive family even after they were gone. John and those mothers and fathers, friends and advocates founded Resident Home so that there would always be a home for Susan and for all the other sons and daughters, family members and friends.

Knowing what he knew about RHA and its focus on family, he shared his own struggle in letting go when it was time for Susan to leave his home and move into her RHA home, recalling it as the most emotional and most difficult decision he ever made – the letting go – how it broke his heart as her father. As he watched her grow into her new home and extended family, he also knew it was the right decision for her, for him and for his family.



It has always been the strength and depth of family ties that has given joy and support to Susan Pratt, including visits with her sister and brother-in-law, Ann and Steve Schulte.

He remained one of RHA's strongest and most loyal advocates until his death. He instilled that same sense of loyalty and advocacy in his daughters and their families. For many years Susan's sisters planned and coordinated a family picnic for all of RHA. For 23 years now Steve Schulte, Susan's brother-in-law, has served as a member of the RHA board. "I wanted to continue John's legacy of bettering the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities," he says humbly of his service.

Susan, from her Springmill home, doesn't think too much about the important decisions Steve has made and will continue to make as a member of the Board. She doesn't think too much about how much work it is for her sisters to coordinate a picnic for residents and staff. What matters to her is the many visits with her sisters. What puts the biggest smile of her face is seeing Santa come to Springmill to visit her and the other ladies at Christmas time. After all, the Santa who comes to share the holiday spirit with her in her forever home is even more important than the Santa in a sleigh. This Santa, her Santa, is one she knows by another name. He is Steve ... her brother-in-law Steve ... her family ... just like her father hoped for her.

Resident Spotlight



Few things can lift our spirits like a family getaway, like the trip last summer that Darlene Hobbs took with Lori Singer. The two ladies have known each other since Lori's time working with Darlene when she lived in our Third Street women's home.

There's sure to be fun when the two of them take off on an adventure, this time to see Lake Superior and the sights near Mackinac Island. One of Darlene's favorite things on this trip ... the sea gulls.

Some of Darlene Hobbs' favorite conversations center around her family. She speaks of memories of her father and the things they liked to do together. She smiles remembering her sister Jennifer. They are with her always. The family that surrounds her now makes sure she has a safe and nurturing place to keep those memories alive, while making new ones each day.

It was 35 years ago in 1988 when Darlene found what would be her extended forever family at RHA, moving into our Third Street women's home. Now 69 years old, she left that home to move to a new RHA home, our McSmith home, which was more accessible for our

(continued on page 4)

We are family

by Rhonda Rich, Director of Administration, Community Relations, Human Resources & Chief Financial Officer

Resident Home Association is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization founded in 1967 providing community-based, person-centered residential and other services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These are the words we use to describe who we are when we print our brochures, prepare and submit grants, identify ourselves on our Facebook page, social media, and required documentation and reporting. These words serve a purpose. They help identify what we do to those who don't know about us in a direct and succinct 'professional' way.

These words may be necessary to help to describe us, but they do not define us. I know of one word that defines us, and that word is family. Of all the ways to define the word family, this one definition seems to best speak to not what we are, but who we are ... "Family is the people in your life who want you in theirs; the ones who accept you for who you are; the ones who would do anything to see you smile; the ones who love you no matter what."

It is my hope that within these few pages of our first newsletter of 2023, we can in some measure share with you who we are beyond that nonprofit organization, to help you see us and know us as the extended family that began with our first homes and first residents in 1967. Those first mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, friends and advocates laid the foundation of who we are and who we are yet to be. We walk humbly and gratefully in their footsteps, those like John Pratt who was instrumental in the founding of RHA and Betty Gmeiner who was one of our first Board members.

There is not enough space in these few pages – there really could never be enough space – to fully embrace what it means to be a part of the RHA family. We will take this space, small that it may be, to introduce you to some of our family ... the ones who accept their colleagues and those they serve as people that they want in their lives, who accept each other for who they are; who would do anything to see each other smile, who love each other, no matter what – members of the Pratt and Gmeiner families still leading us as members of our Board; new members of our Board standing beside their family members; mothers, fathers and their children, brothers and sisters, serving together as part of our amazing team of professionals. I want you to see their names, read their stories, feel their commitment to what defines us using that most empowering word – family.

I share these words from Vicki Servais, our Director of Operations, "a person's health may decline, friends and family pass on, day programs change, but RHA (the family RHA) is there for every transition. Sitting there holding someone's hand when they hear a cancer diagnosis, taking someone to their parent's funeral, sharing day to day things ... we believe in being there for everything, no matter how small or how big." We are there for each other, for everything, no matter how small or how big. After all, isn't that what families do!

Family journeys ... continued

Robert's family

Donna Swingley became a member of the RHA Board in January 2022, serving as a family representative. She shares the journey to RHA for her and her brother Robert West.

Robert and I are siblings, 16 months apart, with Robert being the older of the two of us. We shared everything growing up, including a bedroom with bunk beds until age 13. We were inseparable. Where Donna went, Robert went. We are still very close and are best friends. We talk every night at 7:00.



Filled with hope and finding happiness ... that's what being a part of the RHA family means to Robert West and his sister Donna Swingley.

Robert had an older brother, Bill, who passed away in April 2022. He has a big sister Jackie. She and her family live in New Mexico. Robert loves to save his paychecks so he can take trips out to see them. My friends are his friends. He does not know a stranger, perhaps because I also talk to everyone.

Robert and I came to RHA in 2017 when our parents passed away within four months of each other. I needed to find some place, a home, for Robert to go after our mom fell and broke two bones in her back the same day we buried our father. He first went to the Montgomery County Emergency Shelter and then found his home at RHA within three weeks. Robert lived in Huber Heights for 58 years, in the same house, with the same bedroom, the same neighbors. When our parents died, he lost all of that.

His transition to RHA was not easy, but everyone at RHA circled around him. At first, he moved into a home with seven other men. Being in a home with that many people was too stimulating for him. Within a week he was in another home with two other men, where he is now thriving.

I became a member of the RHA board so that I could advocate and support residents and families. Being on the Board has been an enlightening experience. There are so many people involved with the day-to-day activities. It's incredible! Everyone is willing to go above and beyond.

I thank God every day for RHA, especially for the DSPs (Direct Support Professionals.) If not for them and their undeniable concern and dedication for every resident, RHA would not be a home away from home. Robert is being taken care of 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That gives me hope. That makes me happy. Robert is living his best life!

Rusty's family

Mike Weaver is new to his volunteer role as a member of our Board of Trustees. He and his family have been part of our extended RHA family for more than 40 years, when his uncle Rusty came to live at our Greenhill home. Mike shares a part of Rusty and his family's journey of transitions, changes and leaving home to find home.

Rusty is my uncle. We share the same birthday, November 5. He turned 18 the day I was born. I was very young when Russ left his parents (my grandparents) home and moved to RHA's Greenhill home. I think he was around 28 years old.

I think the decision for him to leave home and find a new home was based on the proximity to my grandparents home, as they lived only five miles from the Greenhill home. More importantly for them was that feeling of safety they had with him leaving them and the only home he had ever known. This was new for my grandparents and Rusty. He did not want to leave his home and parents. It was a tough transition for a few months until he settled in. He called Greenhill his 'new home' for a long time, but over time it became his home.

RHA means independence and that goes not only for Rusty, but also for his family. After having five kids, my grandparents wanted some of their own independence and a place where Rusty would be taken care of once they were gone. They also did not want to have their children and grandchildren be responsible for the care he would need on a daily basis.

He and I have been buddies since I was a kid. We would ride bikes together, take walks, and he was actually very good

at hitting a baseball! I have fond memories of going bowling with Rusty and my grandparents at Bowlero Lanes.

I've only been on the board

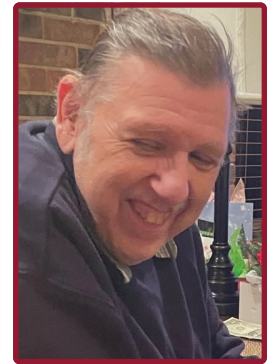
a few months now. I never knew about the operations and structure of RHA, but always felt Russ was well taken care of. My interactions with the Board have reinforced that for me.

The focus of our Board is on truly providing a safe and independent life for residents with developmental disabilities. I see that lived out as a board member and as a family member. Rusty has that safe and independent life. He likes getting out of the house and seems to enjoy running errands, seeing his family members and, for sure, getting his pop and snack! I'm not sure what he enjoys more. He is a pleasure to be around and is always happy to see us, as we are him.

At 69 years old Rusty has a good home, the same caring home for more than 40 years now. My grandparents would be very happy to know that their very difficult decision of letting him go all those years ago was the right decision for Rusty and for our family. I know they would be happy and grateful, as we all are as his family.



Mike Weaver



Rusty Weaver

Editor's Note: Steve, Donna, and Mike serve on our volunteer Board of Trustees as family representatives. Tom Gmeiner's service on the Board is the bond between those challenging years that resulted in the founding of RHA to where we are today as one of Ohio's most respected organizations serving people with developmental disabilities. His mother Betty Gmeiner and father Ed Gmeiner were instrumental in the founding of RHA, with Betty serving as one of our first board members.

We are also honored to have one of our residents, Becky Carles, representing residents on our Board. Our community representatives include Gary Newton, who leads us as Chair, along with David Andrick, Dick Knostman, and Catherine Rabe.



Lori and her dad

There will always be laughter and fun when Lori and her father Brad Rice are together. Following is Lori Singer's family story.

I started working at RHA as a DSP (*Direct Support Professional*) in 1998 at our Kenbrook home in Vandalia. From there, I went on to serve as manager for our Third Street Women's home from 1999-2012. That home was closed when we moved the ladies to a more accessible home, our McSmith home. I left RHA in 2013. By 2018 I was ready to come back home to RHA, taking on the role of Staff Trainer. I am currently Director of Staff Development and Training. I have combined service of 23 years.

My dad retired from GM in 2013 and needed something to occupy his time. I contacted Pete (*Executive Director Pete Roll*) to see if there was anything my dad could do at RHA. He was hired as a part-time driver for our Non-Medical Transportation service. Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that my dad and I would

share the same career and be a part of the same RHA family.

He loved working with the men at our Woodbury home and with residents at other homes. He still asks about them to this day. He retired from RHA after six years of service in 2019. He will tell you his time with RHA was his favorite job over the years, and he had many. I will always be grateful that I got to work with my daddy.

Resident Spotlight: Darlene Hobbs ... continued from page 1

ladies as they were aging. Darlene has the distinction of being the longest living resident from our women's home.

Darlene's childhood bonds were strengthened when her sister Jennifer also became a member of our RHA family. She joined Darlene at our McSmith home in 2016. The two of them had two happy years together until Jennifer's death in 2018. It was in that home and with her extended family of housemates and staff that Darlene found support as she faced that most difficult of life's transitions, grieving the loss of family.

The cold of winter and recovery from a recent fall makes Darlene's favorite spot for the time being a big comfortable recliner in the living room of her home, where she can watch a favorite television show at the same time she picks out pieces from a jewelry kit to make a bracelet. That's one part of her. The other part is the Darlene that has the heart and spirit of an adventurer. Her RHA family has been with her over the years, helping her identify places she would like to go and then going with her on many cruises and trips, like the one with Lori last summer. Traveling with Lori is one of her favorite things to do. Those who know Lori understand why.

Darlene's current focus centers around being a college student. With support of staff, she previously attended art classes at Sinclair Community College until those classes

stopped. Staff member Nathan Stevens is also one of her favorite people, especially since he is a big supporter of her college dream. He was the one who helped her get enrolled and get her college ID. He recently took her back to campus where she went shopping in the college store and came home with some swag. She and Nathan are planning more trips to campus to support her dream of being an art student.

Art is her passion. She enjoys different materials and styles. She attends adult day services at Viaquest. They help foster her love of art as well. They have selected some of her work for their yearly calendars. She enjoys her more serious art forms, but also expresses her creativity in various arts and crafts, including ones she can do while sitting comfortably in that big recliner at home on a cold winter's day. She enjoys doing puzzles and coloring as a way of letting go of stress and relaxing.

There are all the challenges and transitions that Darlene has known over the years – leaving her own home – losing her family members, especially her sister Jennifer – but there are all those other things as well – moments on a getaway with someone who knows your dreams, respects your creativity, encourages your adventures, someone by your side as you discover the joy of sea gulls.

When our family members serve our family members

All of our 89 employees come together in service to our residents and families as part of one extended RHA family, bound together by our mission and family values. For many, that sense of family runs even deeper, as they work together with their family members. Following is a brief introduction to some of our dedicated team of employees who work or who have worked alongside members of their families.

*from Karen Gabbard –
Springmill Home Manager*

Katie Hardyman is my middle son's significant other. It feels like Katie has been family forever. They will be presenting me with a new grandchild in July. I'm very excited as it has been awhile since our family has enjoyed a new little life. Can't wait!

When I met Katie she asked questions about what I did. She was very interested. I had come to know her well enough to give her a reference when she decided to apply to RHA. I had hopes she might join me at Springmill. She works at Woodbury, which is perfect for her. She loves working with the men there. It's worked out great!

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*from Frawnsbay Billingsley –
Adult Day Services Supervisor/Senior
Training and Development Coordinator*

I am the middle daughter of my late mother Claudia Dyer. My sister, Shannon Barnes, is the oldest daughter.

Shannon first came to RHA in 2004 due an in-law. On her recommendation, Shannon applied and began working at our Hemphill home. We were new to Dayton, coming here from Cleveland. About five months after Shannon started working here, I applied. I was hired and started to work at the Third Street women's home, which is now our McSmith home.

In 2005 our mother Claudia Dyer moved to Dayton to be close to us. She followed our lead, applied, and started working at our Third Street men's home, which is now our Garber home. The three of us all enjoyed our work as DSPs.

In 2009 I was promoted to manager at our Woodbury home, where I worked for four years before going back to being a DSP at Woodbury and then third shift at our Piedmont home. By 2014 our mom's health began to decline and she retired from Garber. Shannon and I continued as part of the

RHA family until June 2015 when we moved back to Cleveland.

My mother stayed in Dayton and sometimes would go to Garber to just sit and visit with the men and staff. She passed away in 2015.

Shannon and I came back to Dayton in 2018. Again I found myself 'home' at RHA when I took on the role of Adult Day Services Supervisor, while Shannon returned as manager at our Riverbend/Joyce Ann homes. In addition to my Adult Day Services job, I was recently promoted to Senior Training and Development Coordinator. Our mother loved working here. It was here where my sister, my mother and I became members of this other family, our RHA family. We are so thankful!

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*from Brittany Tompkins – Fiscal and
Benefits Administrative Assistant*

Many know my mom Pam (Tompkins) from her nine years working as the office receptionist. (continued on page 5)

Our giving family – honoring you for your 2022 gifts

With your caring gifts, you carry on the legacy of those who were there to give in the first struggling days of RHA, before there were Medicaid Waivers and other funding. Pioneers like John Pratt and Betty Gmeiner gave in ways that changed lives ... coming together to paint and repair homes, to fill cupboards with food when they were empty, to give money so that the lights could stay on, to go to the community for support in activities like our Hike for the Handicapped and Fish Fry. Those are the things you do for family.

John and Betty's legacies continue in the service and giving of their families, as your legacy continues with your gifts that change lives, make wishes come true, provide holiday gifts, clothing, support for vans, furniture, recreation and so much more that adds to the quality of life for those we serve. **Thank you!**

Amy Brandl	Lisa Glandon	Lori Lyons	Carmen & Ann Riazzi
Joel Carson	Mary Sue Gmeiner	Terence & Linda Mambort	Ryne & Megan Rich
Art & Linda Corral	Tom & Jayne Gmeiner	Marathon Petroleum	Steve & Ann Schulte
Doug & Karen Durant	Helene Gordon	Jane Marquette	Nathan Stevens
Mark & Carol Edelman	Larry & Jennifer Hamblin	Carole McCabe	John & Carol Stinson
Roger & Brenda Ferry	John Hale	Barbara Mendelson	Eunice Stueve
Jim & Diana Foreman	Deborah Hood	David & Bobbie Murphy	Brian & Pam Tompkins
Carol Frank	Mark & Clara Landes	Sandra Pfennig	Barbara & Jim Weprin
Edith Fuson	Stephen & Betty Leve	Larry & Julie Pollock	Zachary & Karen Wiley
Tom & Sherri Giver	Jerry Levin	Doug & Linda Probst	Lee Ziskin

When our family members ... continued

She retired in 2019 to travel with my father and to help out with her grandchildren. I joined the RHA family in November 2021. It is a constant learning process, but I like it and look forward to learning more.

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Michael Badgett – Direct Support Professional at Kenbrook home

My sister is Tia 'Ja Herring. She and I are both happy to be part of the RHA family. I joined RHA in 2018 at our Woodbury home, left in 2019, and then decided it was time to come back in 2021. I'm happy to be at Kenbrook now. My sister joined me as an RHA employee this year. She works with the ladies at our McSmith home.

I encouraged my sister to apply because she needed a job to help support her two young toddler children, a two-year-old and a one-year-old. I knew this would be a good place for her and a job she would like. I even drove her to the office for her to fill out her application. Although we don't work in the same house, it's still a great feeling knowing that your own blood is right there in the same field as you, doing the same hard dedicated work and experiencing

the benefits from the hard efforts and investment you put into what you do.

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Nathan Stevens – Activity and Community DSP Coordinator

Our family ties with RHA go all the way back to when I was ten years old, and my mother Shannon Nelson worked at the Third Street men's home. This was when the concept of 'group homes' was first starting and everyone was trying to figure it all out. Not only would she work at the home, she would frequently take her residents and friends out to eat with us in her spare time. They would stop by our house. It was these early interactions that helped me see past their 'differences' and view them with the same merit I did anyone else.

Twenty years later, I had a house fire and lost all of my possessions. At the time I had a full-time job in real estate, but I couldn't sign a lease for a new home without paychecks from a job with consistent pay. I found that at RHA and so much more. I now have a position that is similar to my first position, assisting people with developmental disabilities with community integration, interactions,

person-centered activities, while educating the public that they belong in the community.

After my mom's passing, my younger brother Dylan Nelson moved back home from New Orleans to be closer to family. He needed a job and jumped at the chance to work with the men at our Garber Road home. Although he was only there for a short time before going back to school, he made enough of an impression that one of the men at the home asks me about him every time we do something together.

All be it through some tragedy for us, RHA and our residents have created opportunities for me and my family that I'm happy to reciprocate through my work.

Other employees with family ties who are currently working or who have worked for RHA:

Rose Abraham and Mary Obonoidem
Ebony Chancellor and Tonisa Woodard
Lashun Davis and Donika Fritz
Antoinette Frost and Korrian Frost
Tara Hatch and Tracie Hatch
Charnelle Posey, Caitlin Posey, Judy Shepard (*deceased*)



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RHA is guided by a policy-making board of volunteers representing families, DD organizations, businesses, and the community.

Gary Newton, *Chair*

David Andrick

Brenda Carles/Cynthia Sagraves

Tom Gmeiner

Dick Knostman

Catherine Rahe

Steve Schulte

Donna Swingley

Mike Weaver



Welcome to the family

We celebrate the newest addition to our RHA family with our Drowfield home in Trotwood and welcomed two new members of our extended family, Greg McNair and Larry Figures. They are building bonds with their staff and with other residents in our other nine homes. They like everything about their home, including easy access to shopping, recreation, and medical care. Going to their nearby McDonald's for coffee ranks high on their list of favorite things.



One of the best parts of being family is the time spent together on special occasions, like our annual Christmas party where residents and staff celebrate together. And there is no one at RHA who celebrates happy times with as much enthusiasm and joy as Kent Cruea, especially when he gets a few moments to spend with the featured performer at this year's party, none other than one of Kent's favorites, Elvis himself (Jay Freeman.)

Did you know you can support our RHA family when you shop? Resident Home partners with Kroger in their Kroger Community Rewards program. It's easy to register and to have RHA benefit from your participation with up to \$5,000 each year. Register at www.krogercommunityrewards.com and enter code number 83245 to list RHA as your nonprofit organization. When you use your Rewards card every time you shop, we then receive proceeds.

Remember, there's no cost to you to register and participating in the Rewards Program does not cost you anything and does not affect fuel points or any other discounts or coupons. Look at the bottom of your store receipt to confirm that you have successfully registered and that Resident Home is your nonprofit organization.



To update your mailing address, email address, to add new names to our mailing list or to delete your name from our mailing list, please contact Alex Shaw at Resident Home Association at 937-278-0791 or email him at ashaw@rhadayton.com. *Judy Leasure, Editor*