

BROTHER'S *Keeper* NEWSLETTER

WINTER
2020

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

So many of the stories we love have that moment of peril. The main characters encounter an obstacle or a situation that seems insurmountable – they are at the precipice of certain doom. All seems lost, and then... everything changes. A light pierces the darkness which ushers in the hope of rescue or a new beginning and all is well again. J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, and C.S. Lewis, author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, are two of the greatest storytellers. Their stories teach us how we should respond when we come up against our own obstacles and to have hope in even the darkest of times. Their theme of hope can spill over into real life and can change everything.

While we may never actually slay a dragon or defeat a super-villain, we will encounter our own situations which will seem just as terrifying and impossible. When we are on the precipice of a crisis or uncertainty, we long for hope in the midst of our struggles. We long for a light to pierce the darkness and for a new beginning to come.

Years ago, my husband and I were approaching a precipice of uncertainty as the eldest of our two sons with Down syndrome faced graduation from high school. It is usually around age 21 when public education services end for special education students. Graduating from high school means leaving behind their friends, a full schedule to keep them busy, and the supervision of teachers who are there to help. The horizon appeared very dark with nowhere to go as we approached what seemed like the edge of a cliff. There is no graduation from a disability.

This cliff-edge is what inspired the formation of Brother's Keeper. We offer services after graduation from high school to provide a new beginning for these young adults. Many families in our community share the same concerns we had at the cliff's edge – their adult children with special needs also have

few opportunities for continuing their education and engaging in the community. They are at home with nothing to do and are leading unproductive and unfulfilling lives.

For those families that face this cliff-edge full of uncertainty, Brother's Keeper has the privilege to enter in and provide a light in the darkness - a surprising safety net, and a fresh new alternative for families. We can offer the hope of a new beginning, a new community, a new place to belong, and a new sense of purpose. People with intellectual disabilities have a desire to continue to learn and grow, enjoy friendships, and contribute to life in a productive, and meaningful way. Like everyone else, they want to have a reason to get up every day with something to look forward to. Brother's Keeper provides all of this for them.

As C.S. Lewis wisely said, "There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind." At the close of this wild year and the dawn of the new year, I am thankful for what has already passed, and I am filled with enthusiasm for what is to come, because of the light and hope I see from Brother's Keeper and our community of supporters. I pray that we will keep our focus where it needs to be this year, and that we will all have a year filled with joy, hope, and love.

As we anticipate the new year, would you consider being part of that light in the darkness for these families? Will you invest in more new beginnings with us? I know there will be more families every year facing the cliff-edge we faced, and we would love to be able to meet them there to offer hope and a new beginning.

Here's to the better things ahead!



Cecile Huddleston

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*Merry Christmas
from our  to yours!*



FEATURED ARTICLE

During her time as a student at ETSU, Becky took a job nannying for a family with two boys who would impact her life in a very real and beautiful way. Thomas and Stewart's outlook on the world, on humanity and kindness, and on the good that is always there but is easily overlooked, shifted her perspective on the way we, as neuro-typicals, tend to over-complicate things and dwell on our challenges. Witnessing Thomas and Stewart live to love and be loved—simple as that—despite their disabilities, or “different abilities,” moved Becky to make a shift after earning her Bachelors in Digital Media and Interior Design to getting her Masters in Special Education.

Becky now works alongside Brother's Keeper as their graphic designer. Thomas and Stewart, as adults, are involved with the organization as well making everything come full circle for Becky.

“Working with kids with different abilities impacted me in ways I wasn't expecting. They have this superhuman ability to discover and celebrate the kind of love and beauty in this world I have to work so much harder to see. People tell me that I have done some amazing things for these kids, but honestly, the kids have done more for me. Their goodness and ability to love so unconditionally has changed me and made me strive to pursue those gifts as my own.”



2005



2005



Becky O'Hatnick

Testimonials

“Our daughter Andrea joined Brother's Keeper in 2018. Since then, we have seen her continue to mature and develop a willingness to try exciting new things. Thanks to the program and staff, Brother's Keeper not only expands the participant's educationally, but also expands their horizons in trying things that they may otherwise not have the opportunity to experience.”



Shortly after she became a participant, Brother's Keeper visited Doe River Gorge where Andrea got to experience something that we never would have thought about letting her try – a climbing wall. She got harnessed up, got hooked to a belay rope, put on a helmet, and began working her way up the wall. She was so excited to tell us about her adventures later that evening. Just to hear the excitement in her voice as she told us of her day and of all the new experiences she had. It just reinforced our belief that Brother's Keeper was the program that we needed to continue her educational growth and to also help build upon her self-esteem and willingness to try new experiences.

During the “stay at home” time this spring, Andrea prayed daily for both the staff and her friends at Brother's Keeper; not only that God would keep them all safe, but that she missed them and that He would let her see her friends soon. This reinforced what we already knew, Andrea and the other participants need each other. The friendships that they have fostered and the close relational bond that has developed between all of them, well, that's what makes Brother's Keeper so special. It has been something amazing to witness.”

BK Participant's Parents

Engage With Us

Will you remember Brother's Keeper in your year-end giving and consider being part of that light in the darkness for these families? Your gift will help us meet the needs of this community of people that face an uncertain future without opportunities for continued education and personal growth. You can help make it possible to continue our work and create a brighter future for these individuals.

The following a few of the ways in which you can join our mission to serve these special adults and make an impact on their lives.



Become A Donor

Consider becoming a Friend of Brother's Keeper and sign up to become a regular monthly donor.



Gifting

Donate Appreciable Assets, Gifts of Stock, Gifts In-Kind, or include Brother's Keeper in your Estate Planning.



Gift Matching

See if your employer has a Matching Gift Plan in which they will match employee's contributions to charitable organizations.

Please contact us at chuddleston@BrothersKeeperTN.org if you would like to discuss the above contribution opportunities.

To donate by credit card or PayPal, please visit our website at www.BrothersKeeperTN.org/donate.

Or mail donations to:

Brother's Keeper
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