

Relating Well Together

Companionship, camaraderie, care. Meaningful relationships are a core component for a meaningful life—for all of us—including those who live with persistent and serious mental illnesses. At The Well Community our members are able to engage with people who understand their social, emotional and mental health challenges.

It is here they find other members, staff and volunteers who enjoy their company and come alongside them to help them achieve the most productive lives possible. As our members learn to relate well together, they begin to understand their value as those loved by God and their worth as those who matter to the people around them.

In this update we share three stories of relationships. They represent hundreds of stories we could have shared, stories I have the privilege to see every day. And with each one I am reminded that these relationships, these opportunities for friendship and growth, are only possible because the supporters of The Well Community have also formed a relationship with our members by helping to make The Well successful. Thank you for the critical role you have in building life-giving relationships for our members.

Alice Zaccarelo, Executive Director

The Well Community is the only faith-based nonprofit in the Dallas Metroplex working exclusively with those who suffer from **MENTAL ILLNESSES.**

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At Home at Jacob's House

More than anything, Matthew wanted to feel independent. But mental illness made it difficult for him to live on his own. He'd tried staying in a supported housing program, and for a while, he'd been homeless; but after every attempt to gain independence he eventually wound up back at his mother's home. Finally, his mother, Shelley, learned about Jacob's House. "We certainly didn't know if it was going to work," says Shelley. "We just thought, 'let's give this a chance.'"

Jacob's House ended up being exactly what Matthew, who deals with a dual diagnosis of alcoholism and bipolar disorder, needed. Jacob's House offers Matthew a community he's never had before. "I don't doubt the power of my diagnosis," says Matthew, who works hard to maintain this level of mental health recovery. Mental illness can be isolating, making it difficult for individuals to reach out to others without being stigmatized or simply misunderstood.

Founded in Oak Cliff in 2007, Jacob's House is a City of Dallas licensed boarding house. It offers a safe haven for up to eight men to share meals, friendship and encouragement. They live with others who struggle with similar problems and can relate on similar levels.

In Oak Cliff, Matthew can purchase snacks, buy clothes and take public transportation, all within walking distance of the house. Oak Cliff has a high measure of empathy for people who are marginalized, says Shelley. That means Matthew can walk down the street or go into a store without people thinking he's a threat simply because he looks different or may be talking to himself. For Matthew, Jacob's House also provides the sense of independence he craved.

Pets as Companions

Pets can bring joy and comfort into any home, and this is especially true for men and women who struggle with severe mental illnesses, who often find themselves alienated from other people. They tend to spend a lot of time alone because their mental health challenges make it difficult for them to have intricate conversations and maintain healthy relationships. Animals, however, don't require complex communication and they offer a kind of affection and love amid the isolation. As a result, pets can help those living with mental illnesses combat the pain and loneliness of their disorders.

"He goes everywhere I go," says Angel when sharing about her Chihuahua, Peppy. Angel, who has been a member of The Well for several years, describes her constant companion as "cute and affectionate." Peppy likes to sleep in her lap, and she sees him enjoy the treats and toys she gives him. He's a



friend to Angel when many of her other relationships are hard to maintain.

Pets help Well members by providing relief from isolation, assisting their owners in developing and maintaining healthy routines and offering a sense of purpose, especially for those who aren't able to hold a job due to their illness. Pets also distract their owners from disturbing symptoms such as hearing voices or obsessive thoughts, as well as lift their owners' moods and lower their stress.

Well member Lyndon smiles widely when he talks about his new puppy, another Chihuahua named Bowser. He's ecstatic and eager to share. He opens his phone and scrolls through photos of the puppy chewing on a raggedy toy in his apartment. Bowser is three months old, with floppy ears and tiny paws. "He plays too much," laughs Lyndon. "He chews on my pillow. He sleeps on my shoulder."

Cultivating Community

Every Wednesday morning, a van pulls up in front of Better Block's Learning Garden in Oak Cliff and a group of volunteers climbs out. They are members of The Well Community who go weekly to work in the garden: pulling weeds, watering flowers, making compost and more. It's a small commitment with a big impact on The Well members who live with mental illnesses and, because of stigma, have limited opportunities to be a part of the larger community.

However, at the Learning Garden, their efforts are not only welcomed, but are enjoyed. "I want Well members to feel embraced when they come here," says Victoria, who oversees the garden and manages the volunteers, "so I love getting to know them and listening to their stories."

"I love going to the garden," says Delores, who has been a member of The Well for many years and frequently volunteers with Better Block. "I love plants and flowers and things like that. I'm an outdoors person."

Volunteering in the garden matters. "Meaningful use of time is actually a therapeutic experience for our members, who are limited in opportunities to engage with people in the area and do something positive for others," says Executive Director Alice Zaccarelo.

"There are many health benefits associated with gardening, whether it be physical, mental or emotional," Victoria explains. "It's an easy form of exercise and just nice to be outside sweating." Plus, it's an opportunity for healthy social interaction, she says. The members chat with one another while they work, laughing and sharing in each other's lives. The volunteer work doesn't just benefit Well members, though. It's also helpful to Better Block and the neighborhood of Oak Cliff. By giving their time in the garden, Well members are participating in a beautification project that benefits everyone who drives by the garden or stops in for a visit.



The Well Community is the only faith-based nonprofit in the Dallas Metroplex working exclusively with those who live with severe and persistent mental illnesses. Using a holistic approach, The Well addresses the profound physical, emotional and spiritual needs that are so prevalent when dealing with mental health disorders. Through compassionate programs and services, those who are often stigmatized and forgotten by society find meaningful relationships and a place to belong.

2017 Review

Community Members: 266 Adults

White	46%
Black	33%
Hispanic	21%
18 to 29	9%
30 to 49	32%
50 to 64	44%
65 and over	15%
Female	38%
Male	62%

Members served:

64% of our members regularly participated in programing and activities.

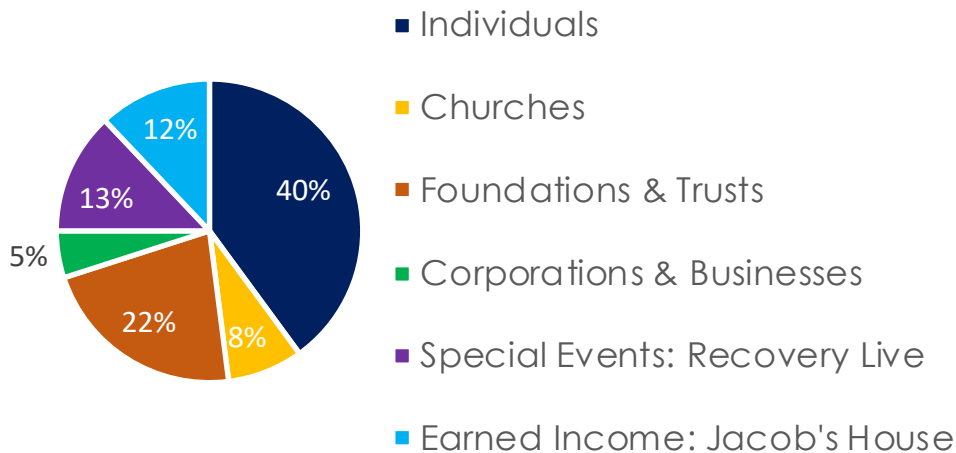
Member Engagement

Direct Service Hours	18,418
Case Management Hours	1,204

Nutritious Meals Served 12,378

Volunteers	277
Number of Volunteer Hours	2,880
Volunteer Investment (Per Independent Sector)	\$70,963

Revenue: \$321,670



Expenses: \$315,846



Thanks to Individual Donors!

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Morning Star Family Foundation
Hawn Foundation
Carpenter-Smith Southwest, Inc.
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Cliff Temple Baptist Church
The Galli Group P.S.
St. Jude Oak Cliff
Kessler Park Baptist Church
Christian Firefighters Association Dallas
Pathway to Life Center of Hope Church
The Mixing Bowl Bakery
Starbucks Coffee Company
Maplewood Cottage

2017 Church & Community Volunteer Groups:

All Saints Church Dallas
Arbuckle Family and Friends
Christ Episcopal Church
Cliff Temple Baptist Church
First Baptist Church Frisco
HEB/Central Market
Jennifer Snow Family and Friends
Joel Pulis and Friends
Kate Thacker and Friends
Kessler Park United Methodist Church
Life Temple Family Church
Mesquite Seventh Day Adventists
Methodist Health System
Oak Cliff Christian Church
Park Cities Baptist Church
Pathway to Life Center of Hope Church
St. Jude Oak Cliff
Sunset High School Class of '69
The Well Auxiliary
Trinity Church
Tyler Street Methodist Church

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