Medina residents Joe and Kathy Reis began volunteering for Hammer Residences more than 25 years ago through their church, Holy Name of Jesus in Medina. In 2010, Joe, CEO of Coldwell Banker Burnet, joined Hammer’s Board of Directors building on the relationships he developed with the people served by Hammer who he drove to church so many Sunday mornings. Those precious relationships deepened during worship and fellowship, guiding he and Kathy’s commitment to Hammer.

“We believe in Hammer’s mission to help those we serve live life to the fullest, respecting their abilities,” says Joe and Kathy.

One special friend was Don Rudd, who came to live at Hammer as a child and was supported for 41 years before he passed away at the age of 55. “Our family learned from Don’s positive attitude, the way he approached people with such exuberance. After mass, Don greeted many with, ‘Good to see you; how are you?’ Whatever their response, he always responded, ‘I AGREE.’ He was such a joy to be around. At Don’s memorial service, his sister Mindy remembered the gifts he brought to her life. She said that for so many years, she thought she was helping and teaching Don. In the end, she realized it was he who was teaching her and so many others. As I listened to her, I thought, ‘I AGREE!’”

Another special friend is Karen Thorud, a talented singer and performer who has appeared in numerous productions at the Medina Living. June 2016

Hammer

Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts. She lives in a Hammer apartment in Crystal.

Karen always dreamed of traveling to New York City. Joe and Kathy learned about Karen’s dreams, and made a personal commitment to make her dream come true. “During her trip to NYC, she had a chance to try out at the Apollo Theater, attend Mama Mia on Broadway, and do lots of sightseeing. Karen shared the details of her trip with us with such infectious joy. She definitely made us feel like we had made a big difference in her life.”

Founded in 1923, Wayzata-based Hammer Residences provides residential and customized support services to more than 1,500 people with developmental disabilities throughout the Twin Cities. Hammer has 36 group homes and 10 apartment programs located throughout the western suburbs, including Plymouth, Wayzata, Maple Grove and Eden Prairie.

As Joe concludes to the end of his Hammer board service, he reflects with gratitude, “I truly believe I have received more than I have given and that my involvement at Hammer has strengthened my faith.”

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