

Building Hope Girls' Home

There has been a considerable amount of chatter about the newly established girls' home in Monticello, Minnesota. It has been positive and exciting! God answered many prayers and provided the necessary gifts to make this happen. The Building Hope home is not an LLC project, but it certainly captures the interest of many, including the LLC's Home and Family committee. What a beautiful blessing. Betsy Simonson, Jessica Kallinen, and Kelsey Huhta have a home filled with faith, hope, and love! Could any of us ask for anything more in this life as we journey toward our eternal home in heaven?

The establishment of this home speaks of God's love and the simplicity of living faith. These writers and photographers shared what they felt, saw, and experienced and allow us also to feel the joy of this new venture.

Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever" (Phil. 4:19,20).

Rod Nikula

Building Hope, Inc.—Need becomes Reality

Building Hope, Inc. is a private non-profit corporation established on May 5, 2016 with the mission of providing support services to believing adults and children with varying physical and cognitive abilities. Tarja Brown, of Litchfield, Minnesota, is its Executive Director.

"I think that services for the children or loved ones of believers has been a need for many years in God's kingdom," she says. The need has now become a reality. The first such home, located in Monticello, Minn., provides services to three women who are renting the home.

The Work Began

Much work goes into the organization of such a venture. Three sets of parents initially got together and invited four others to assist them, forming the board. Brown, who is currently employed in this field, was asked to be on the board, bringing approximately 20 years of experience to the group.

Building Hope also needed to be registered with the IRS and the State of Minnesota as a 501C3 charitable organization. It needed to be licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services as an organization that would provide services either to adults living on their own or adults and children living with their families. A suitable home needed to be found, as well as believing staff.

Brown says, "The home is the home of our clients and is a believing home. Staff are there to assist them in everyday matters of life. This is their home, and we are there to serve them with love." Staff provides services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, thus enabling the women to live and work in the community, to have friends and family over, or to go to visit other believers.

Future Plans

Future plans for Building Hope are to ex--pand services to include other believing brothers and sisters who may have need for these types of services in this area. A letter written by Curt Simonson, chairman of the board, went out to nearby

congregations, expressing Building Hope's mission and how it might help to provide a service and answer questions about the organization. "We believe every life is a blessing from God and should be valued, protected, and cherished. Our hope is that all who serve and are served by Building Hope can enjoy a pleasant atmosphere each day along the journey to heaven," the letter states.

God Has Blessed

Brown says that being part of this endeavor has brought her much joy. Many prayers have also risen to the Heavenly Father to guide the footsteps of those involved. "God has richly blessed us, and all thanks go to God for the success we have had," she says.

Kathy Nevala

A New Home, a New Life

When we moved to Monticello almost two years ago, I had the pleasure to get to know Betsy Simonson. Betsy found out that we are related, and cousins are very important to her. Every Wednesday or Sunday at services, she seeks out her cousins and friends. She comes to greet, gives a hug, and lets us know how she is feeling. Faith is important to Betsy; she freely asks for the gospel. When her new home came to fruition, we heard something new about it every week. She was busy making plans and lists as to who could come to visit. Each week, she showed me who was on the list. Each week she had hope.

Then the hope became true. The first week the girls were in their new home, Betsy invited me for coffee. I feel fortunate to live close by, and I was able to walk there. Betsy came running to the door to welcome me. She seemed a little shy. This was not the Betsy I had seen before. She told me she was nervous to have company. But in just a few minutes she relaxed and showed me around her new home. She had set the table, ready to serve coffee and cookies that she had baked. She introduced me to her new friends Jessica and Kelsey.

Since the first visit, I eagerly wait to go to visit my new friends. I learn something new from them every time. Betsy and Jessica go to work Monday through Friday at Functional Industries in Buffalo. A bus picks them up every morning and drops them off in the afternoon. Kelsey will be starting a new job soon.

The girls love to help with chores. Kelsey is good at cleaning. Betsy loves to bake. Jessica likes to wipe the table and counters. She is very detailed, and there is not a crumb in sight when she's done. The girls are able to do their own laundry with some assistance. They also help plan menus.

The girls have learned to work together. As with siblings, it isn't easy to al--ways get along. But the gos--pel is most important. They take care of each other as believing friends do.

Jessica loves to play with cards. She sorts them by color and number. The cards go everywhere with her. I have come to know Jessica as a happy-go-lucky girl. She is smiley, with a sense of humor. She loves to color, do puzzles, and play catch. She won't let me forget anything. If I take my glasses off, she is worried about them until I put them back on.

Kelsey has been teaching herself sign language. She likes to color and do word searches. She also loves to sing and play piano. She takes great care of her many dolls. Kelsey played a song for me that was in memory of her grandma Naemi Huhta. Kelsey says her grandma loved music.

Weekend time feels good. Betsy says she can sleep in. The girls love to go on outings. Once a month they go to the

library to take out books and CDs. Sometimes they go shopping and stop somewhere for tea. Sometimes they do crafts or bake. Kelsey says the best part about the weekend is that they can go to church on Sunday.

The weekdays are routine: personal cares, getting ready for the work day, working, helping prepare supper, and favorite evening activities. An early bedtime is good. The girls like to go to Bible class or services on Wednesdays. Many evenings end with singing and saying the evening prayer together. All the girls love their new home. They look forward to each new day and like to know which staff will be on the next day. As night falls on this new home, we can be assured that tomorrow is a new day of grace and hope.

Denise Nevala

An Example of Faith

Having the girls join our congregation has been a joy. As they've gotten to know us, they are sure to find us every church service to greet with "God's Peace!" or give a welcoming hug. Our little kids keep tabs on them and whisper to us, "The girls are here!" One evening it was my husband's turn to teach Bible Class. One of the girls came over and asked him if he was the teacher that evening. He confirmed, and she said, "I'm feeling tired tonight, can you forgive me in case I fall asleep in your lesson?" This freedom and simplicity of faith is a great example to our whole family. We feel blessed to have them be part of our congregation life.

Ruth Kiviahde

Girls Offer Important Connection

It has been special to have the Building Hope girls attend our Monticello congregation events. We see them come with smiles on their faces, eager to connect with various people. They find their seats quickly and sing from their hearts. Sometimes at the beginning of Bible Class one of the girls has touched base with the Bible Class teacher, promising to listen and not fall asleep during the lesson. The small children as well as the older kids see and interact with the girls on a regular basis. Each of the girls has her own special way of connecting with different members of the congregation. Having them as part of our congregation reminds us that God has made us all a little different and has not made any mistakes.

The girls come to church with the help of a staff member who works in their home. Many of the staff are familiar faces from our congregation and some are from neighboring congregations. It is important and fun to connect with the staff from other congregations, too. God has allowed the girls' home to be in our congregation, and we are thankful for that. Perhaps Monticello or another congregation will be blessed with a boys' home someday!

Tim Kesti

Parents Thankful for New Home, Too

"I'm going to live here the rest of my life!" Betsy Simonson says to her mother Melba. The transition of three young women from their family homes and another group home into the Building Hope group home, in Monticello, Minn., has

been very good.

For over a year, parents Ron and Melba Simonson, Dean and Sharon Kallinen, and Ernest and Martha Huhta, along with the other Building Hope committee members, met to discuss and plan the opening of a group home for four girls. These meetings consisted of planning, organizing, and establishing Building Hope, Inc. All three parents alluded to the fact that the whole organization could not have moved forward without Tarja Brown's professional assistance. Sharon Kallinen says, "It seemed to take forever." A few years ago other parents met, but nothing materialized. "It just wasn't meant to be at that time," Melba explains. But in God's time, the obstacles and hurdles resolved, and suddenly the group home was a go for November 1, 2016.

"I was in denial," Martha Huhta says, regarding her daughter's need to live in a group home. The support from others, and Kelsey's question, "How come I can't move out and live with some girls?" helped her accept the idea of Kelsey moving into the home. For the first few days, Kelsey was quiet there. Then, she spread her wings and began to love it. The other housemates and staff members are now her "friends." The Huhta family has relocated to Monticello from northern Minnesota. "It's nice to live close by so we can stop there at a moment's notice," Martha says.

"Jessica has really blossomed since she moved into her new place," her mother Sharon says. Jessica had been living in another group home for ten years. After moving in, "it took me by surprise how easily she transitioned," Sharon adds. Jessica seemed to sense the difference from the group home she was in to one where she is surrounded by believers. The parents all agree that the home is a wonderful, safe place where their girls can be independent.

To be blessed with the gospel by the other girls in the home and from the staff members is a reassuring comfort. "It feels good to know that Betsy will have a place to live after we're gone," Melba says.

Kayla Fredrickson