

Abby Visits Day Program

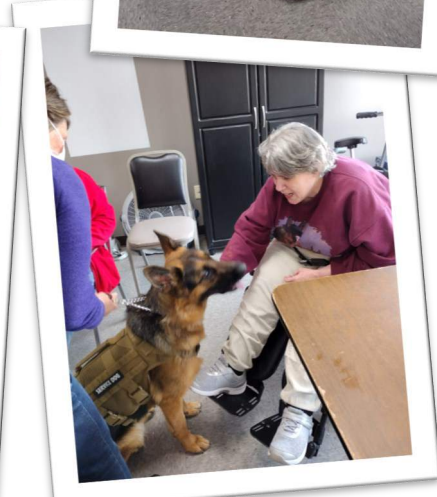
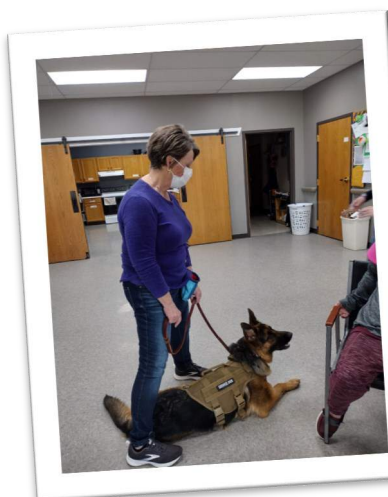
The day program had very special visitors; Carolyn & her beautiful German Shepherd puppy, Abby. They are friends of Cyndy Reynolds. Abby joined Bruce, a retired Marine, and Carolyn, to assist Bruce with his PTSD. Abby is almost one year old, has completed obedience training and has just begun her service dog training. She is working on being introduced to new people and environments. Abby demonstrated all the tricks and commands she had learned in her obedience class. Abby was also happy to show everyone lots of love, she received lots of love, too!

Carolyn thanked us for welcoming her and Abby. When she asked if they could visit in the future we all responded, "Anytime!"

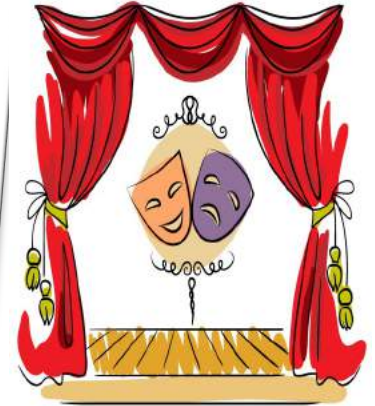
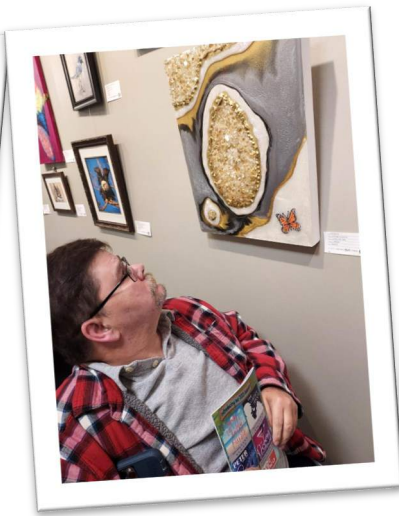
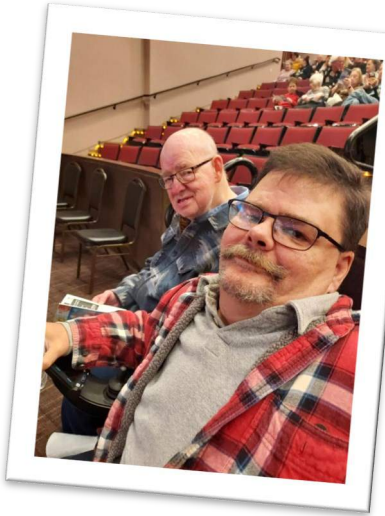
According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a service dog is "a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability."

A service dog is trained to take a specific action that helps mitigate an individual's disability. The task the dog performs is directly related to their person's disability.

For example, guide dogs help blind and visually impaired individuals navigate their environments. Hearing dogs help alert deaf and hard of hearing individuals to important sounds. Mobility dogs assist individuals who use wheelchairs or walking devices or who have balance issues. Medical alert dogs might also signal the onset of a medical issue such as seizure or low blood sugar, alert the user to the presence of allergens, and myriad of

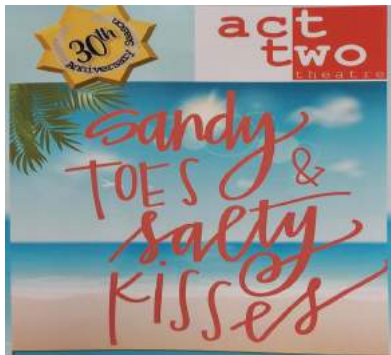


Residential Services



Ray, Jerry and Donna attended Sandy Toes and Salty Kisses at the Cultural Arts Centre. It was good planning to arrive early to ensure seating because it was sold out.

Before the play they enjoyed the art display in the lobby. Both Ray and Jerry found pictures that interested them. Of course, Jerry found some monkeys that he liked. Ray pointed out several that he liked. He mentioned often on the pricing alongside of the pictures.

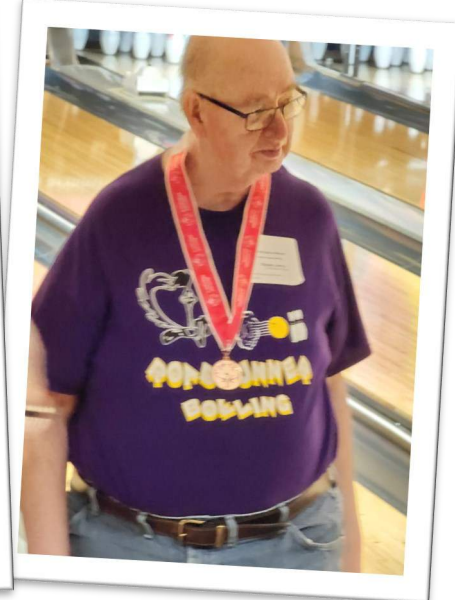
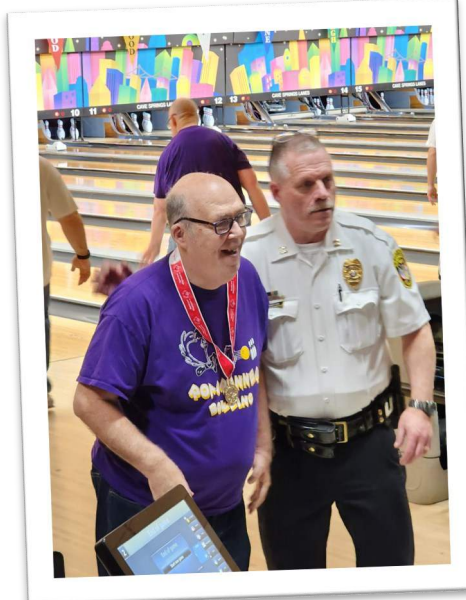


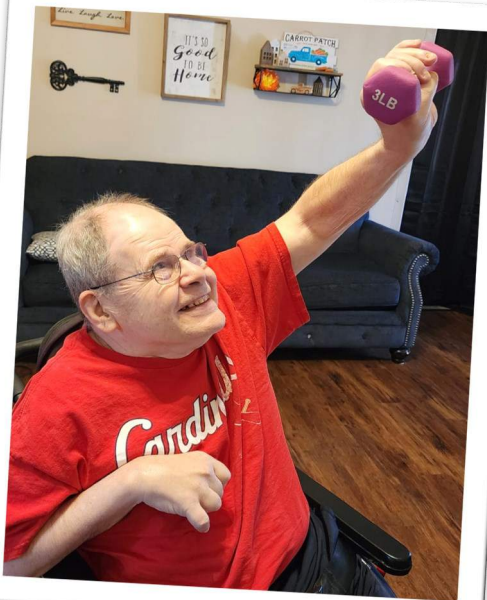
The show was full of adult humor. Lots of laughs and smiles and a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the arts. Much thanks for the donated tickets from Sonya.



Congratulations, Jim and Jerry!

Jim earned the gold medal and Jerry earned the bronze medal at the Missouri State Special Olympics Bowling Tournament held at Cave Springs Lanes.





Steven stays in shape by exercising at home.



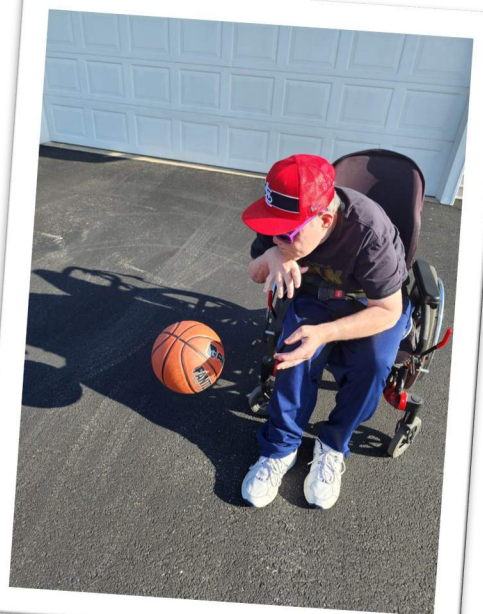
Curtis painted a gnome to decorate his front porch.



Megan made an Easter cake to take to her parents Easter Celebration.



Steve, Jerry and Ryan (pictured right) didn't let these beautiful Spring days go by without going outside and shooting some hoops! Steven shows off his dribbling skill and Jerry scored on Ryan!



Steven received a train set for Christmas and his friend Ray helped in assembling it.



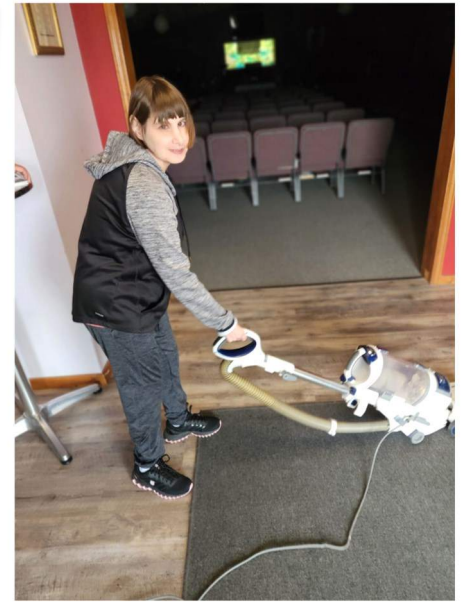
community Skills



Jackie and Mia did a fantastic job vacuuming and cleaning CO.11. Way to go , Ladies!!!



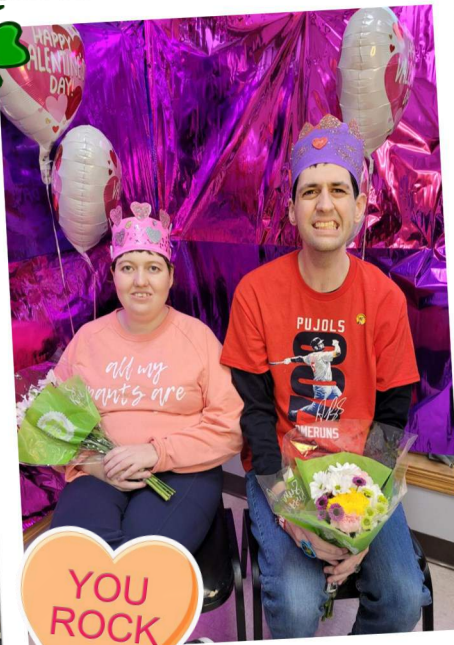
Steven and Angel, making healthy cake pops.



Kelly is learning how to vacuum at a local church.



Adam, Mia and Jackie created bouquets at the St. Patrick's Day event at Day Program.



YOU ROCK

The Day Program celebrated Valentines day! Katie and David pose as King and Queen of Hearts.



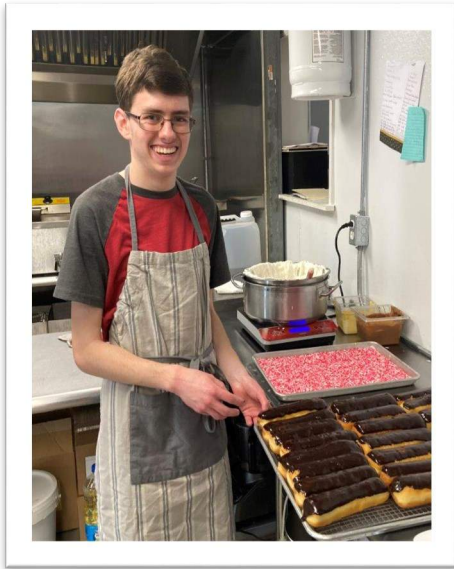
Lizzy participated in the Powell Memorial Library Peep Diorama Contest.

Employment Services



We have been very busy the last few months!! In January we had two clients start working. Jason, at Independence U Fitness as a custodian. Seth started working at Denny's as a crew member. Bre started at Main Street Elementary as a Latchkey Assistant. If you see them, please congratulate them!

Nadine, Austin, Marissa and Joel have all reached 90 days of independent employment! Way to go!! Jillian, Reece, Natalie, Linda, Travis, Cauly, Jared, Caleb, Eric and Kaden started receiving Employment Services this quarter.



Welcome our newest Employment Specialist, Hattie. Hattie joined the ES team January 9th & is doing a great job!



Welcome Hattie!

March is also National Disability Awareness Month and we wanted to highlight Tyler who was hired at Friendship Farms as a donut maker! (pictured left) Congratulations!! Go get some yummy donuts!



Congratulations Cyndy!



The DSP of the 1st quarter of 2023 is Cyndy Reynolds!

Cyndy has worked for Community Opportunities for a combined total of 19 years as first, a Life Skills Teacher in the Residential department, and now as a Community Skills Teacher in the Day Program. Cyndy is known for her fun, positive and spunky personality. The person who nominated Cyndy said, "She is always willing to help wherever she is needed, willing to do anything to help a client or another staff."

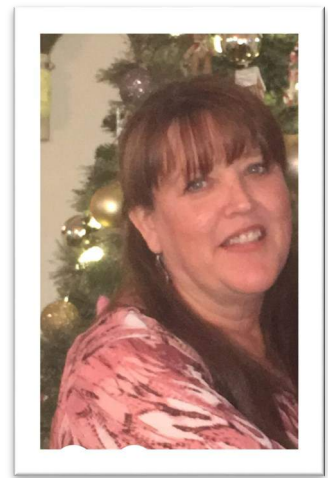


Thank you, Cyndy, for everything you do to support individuals with disabilities and congratulations on your award!

HEALTH & SAFETY



By Connie West, H&S Chairperson



Allergy Season is Upon Us

For those of us that deal with seasonal allergies, the struggle is real. There are some medications that can be helpful if your doctor approves. There are also a few

things you can do at home to help.

The main suggestion is “Keep the windows closed.” Many people enjoy opening the windows to let in some fresh air. For those with allergies though, this just allows the dust, mold spores and pollens to get into your home and the air you are breathing. The best time to open your windows is briefly, just after a rain. The dust and pollen will be settled at this time.



Other things you can do to combat seasonal allergies include changing or cleaning your furnace filters frequently, dust, vacuum and mop frequently. Shower and change your clothes as soon as you get in after spending time outdoors. Happy Spring!



Equity & Inclusion

EXPLICIT BIAS

IMPLICIT BIAS

@movementmatters

happens due to thought

happens without thinking

communicated directly

communicated indirectly

conscious actions/thoughts

subconscious actions/ thoughts

planned & organized

spontaneous & not planned



Example: "I don't hire _____"

Example: Choosing a seat closer to someone of your own race

During our All-Agency meeting, we discussed plans to create a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Committee. We also touched on the topic of implicit biases, which are ingrained beliefs, attitudes and behavior we are not overtly conscious of.

Once we start noticing and paying attention to our own and others' implicit and explicit biases, we have an ethical obligation to address them and work on developing counter-stereotypes to decrease our biases to increase awareness. We can also create opportunities to connect with all kinds of people not like ourselves.

So far our committee members are: Sonya DeMerchant, Allison Harmon, Gina Gipson, Candis Pratt, Connie West, Allison Harmon and Kailey Miller.

Please contact Sonya DeMerchant at sonya@commopps.org if you're willing and interested to join our DEI committee!



Representatives from Senator Eric Schmitt's office have been touring Senate Bill 40 Boards around the state this month to show the senator's support of the work the boards do in service to individuals with developmental disabilities. On March 6th, Director of Field Operations, Morgan Corder, and Field Representative Chris Walker visited Community Opportunities.

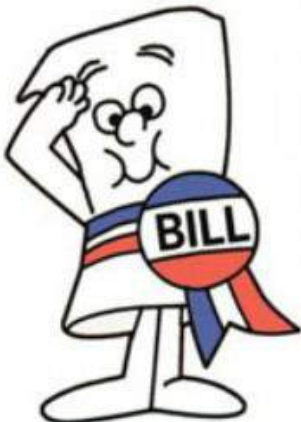


Mr. Corder shared that Senator Schmitt has a teenage son with autism and has a personal interest in the support and services Missourians with developmental disabilities receive around the state.

The senator's representatives met with Community Opportunities Executive Director, Mary Sullivan-Thomas who provided an overview of the agency's services, which includes Residential, Day Habilitation, Community Skills & Employment, as well as Case Management services. Sonya DeMerchant, Director of Case Management, gave them a tour of the facilities and introduced them to numerous staff. They asked a lot of questions about the needs and barriers of our clients. Staff shared with them that affordable and accessible housing is at the top of the list, along with the need for public transportation outside of business hours to maintain employment for individuals who can't drive.

The statewide staffing shortage is also a barrier that impacts Community Opportunities. Even though the Department of Mental Health received state funding for providers to pay their staff up to \$15/hour last fiscal year, they are still not being paid what is needed in order to hire more staff to meet the demand, nor did DMH get allocated additional funding for providers this year.

Sonya also shared details about the challenges case managers face with supporting individuals with disabilities who are homeless in our county, and who have the added difficulties of mental illness and/or substance use disorders. "When the System doesn't provide the infrastructure and funding to support the people most in need, it doesn't just hurt our clients. It hurts the entire community." Case managers carry a heavy burden. When their clients are sitting on long wait lists and can't get the support and services they need, it can be very discouraging. Further, case managers across Missouri have not received pay raises in seven years. Again, when DMH doesn't get the funding approved in their budget, the SB40 board providers are limited on what they can pay their case managers, too.



The senator's representatives expressed appreciation for our efforts – the many challenges and rewards – to improve the lives of Lincoln Countians with disabilities. Mr. Walker and Corder reminded us that Senator Schmitt's office offers Constituent Services to help people navigate any federal program, such as resolving Social Security claims and welcomes personal calls and emails.



Healthy Living

By Angela Ray, Community Living Specialist

For several years, I have struggled with weight loss and have finally found a program that has worked for me, changing the way I look and feel about food! Last June I saw an email with an offer to try NOOM through our health insurance so I took that leap and signed up. I am happy to say I have lost 40 pounds from June to November and have been able to maintain which is what I have struggled with in the past, especially with holidays.

NOOM is a program that uses Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as the main approach. CBT is a type of therapy that has proven to help people change their habits and behavior.

How does Noom work?

You start by answering some questions on the website about your current weight, your goal weight, and your experience with dieting and weight loss. It takes about 10 minutes. Then you will receive a plan with a suggested calorie range for every day. Your plan will show you how your weight could drop over time based on the clinical recommendation for sustainable weight loss pace at one to two pounds per week.

Daily lessons: From day 1, daily lessons of around 5-15 minutes help you change your mindset around the way you eat and feel about food. You will get exercises, quizzes or tasks to complete, and insights into the root causes of your eating habits. All based on behavioral science.

Food tracking: Tracking everything you eat/drink throughout the day. Simple and gives you ways to save items you may eat often. Also allows you to scan a barcode and enter the food items.

Food 3-color system: All the foods you log are green, yellow or orange under their color system.

Green foods (like most vegetables and some fruits and whole grains) fill you up while keeping your calories low. Orange foods do the opposite, while yellow foods are in-between. No food is off limits.

The key is to balance the amount of green, yellow, and orange foods that you eat and Noom gives you a suggested daily allotment for each, to make it as easy as possible for you.

Coaches and guides: Coaches adapt to your needs. If you only want to check in once every couple of weeks, great. If you are struggling with sticking to your calorie budget and need advice on how to get more green foods into your day, just ask. Your coach is trained in the science behind behavior change, and is a huge resource to help you develop the accountability you need to hit your goals. My coach and team are amazing!

NOOM also offers other progress tracking: exercise and steps, weight, water intake, blood pressure, blood glucose. You can find recipes as well! This app is very informative and has been a great tool for myself.

You can easily use this app on your phone (iPhone or Android). Discover NOOM and several other discounts our health insurance offers! <https://www.activeandfitdirect.com/>

FRIENDLY FACES

I'm Marsha "Sweet Tea" Rothermich, I've worked at Community Opportunities for nine years in May.

My favorite vacation was a trip Cruise to Cancun

My favorite quote is, "Today is a good day to have a good day!"

The best surprise that I have ever received was when I woke up on my birthday and I had a new Jeep in the garage. It was a gift that my husband, Phil, surprised me with.

My favorite song is I can only imagine, by Mercy Me

The movie version of my life should be titled? Steel Magnolias

If I won the lottery I would: I would take care of my family and then gift to people in need.

One thing people are surprised to find out about me is: I am super adventurous! I like to do cool things. I want to sky-dive—that would be so fun!

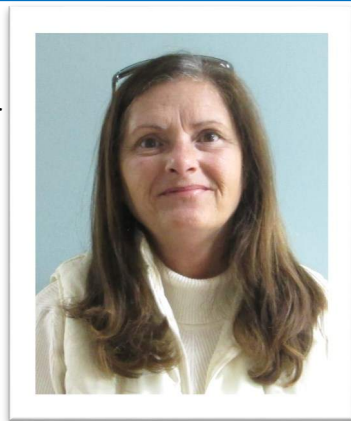
If I were a superhero I would be: Wonder Woman

What are you passionate about? I am passionate about my job and my clients.

What is your favorite family tradition? Our annual family vacation.

Pet peeve? I better pass on that one...

What is the best meal you have ever had? Hamburgers cooked on the grill with fresh sliced tomatoes.



Employee Anniversaries



Diana Arseneau (1)
Lillie Conway (1)
Judy Ebert (1)
Liv Linneman (1)
Trenton Martin (1)
Ryan Williams (1+)

Mikayla Wood (1)
Kelsey Cannon (2)
Brian Scott (3+)
Amanda Helvey (4)
Anna Jaggie (5)
Brandi Pezold (5)
Candis Pratt (10)

Jessica Hodge (14)
Malinda Derr (18)
Jessica Ruediger (19)
Angela Ray (22)
Darla Gamble (36)
Mary Sullivan-Thomas (37)



New Employees!

Emilee Roby 03.06.2023 - Day Program

Kiara Whitchurch 03.27.2023 - 21 Opportunity Ct.

Heather Wade 04.11.2023 - Office Assistant

Sonya Mitts 04.12.2023 - Community R.N.

Hats Off to...



- ★ ... Brandi for taking half of Janelle's route when she needed help!
- ★ ... Marsha S. and Donna O. for always assisting the guys with completing their evening routine and for working so hard in keeping their home organized and welcoming!
- ★ ... Kim W. for talking the schedule while Janelle was off—you're a ROCKSTAR!
- ★ ... Jessica, Kenzie and Cindy for taking care of everything else while Janelle was on maternity leave!
- ★ ... the ENTIRE Day Program Team for being amazing and stepping up to the plate time and time again!
- ★ ... the Employment Team for always sending your schedules in early!
- ★ ... Cyndy Lou-Who for surprising Duke with a wonderful and well appreciated lunch!
- ★ ... Sandy for always working so hard in getting all the things done!
- ★ ... Jessica for being such a strong advocate for staff and consumers!
- ★ ... Duke and Angie R. for moving the guys into their new home!
- ★ ... Tim G. for LK's new router/modem set-up!



It literally PAYS to refer! If you refer someone who is hired, and completes their three-month training, you get paid a \$100 referral incentive. Our staff are our best recruiters because you know the job better than anyone... so spread the word & possibly earn yourself some extra money!

Congratulations to Mary Mitts, who will be receiving a \$100 referral incentive for referring Hattie Franklin!

Congratulation to Mikayla Wood who will be receiving a \$100 referral incentive for referring Mary Mitts!



Classes & Clubs @ the Program Building



1st Tuesday every month 4p-6p Sci-Fi Club- hosted by Greg L.

2nd Tuesday every month 4p-6p Anime Club- hosted by the group

3rd Thursday every month @ 4p - Craft Class \$3/attendee

4th Wednesday every month @ 4p- Cooking Class \$3/attendee

Last Thursday every month 4-5p- Sit 'n Fit Chair Exercise



Space is limited. Contact your CLS or CSS if you would like to participate.

Check the monthly activities calendar for more activities & changes.