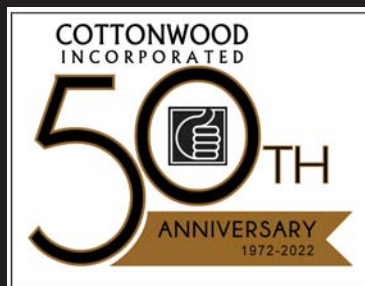


# CONTACT



Fall 2022

In touch with all things Cottonwood...



**COTTONWOOD  
INCORPORATED**

We help people with disabilities shape their own future.

# A Message from Our CEO



Happy Anniversary, Cottonwood, Inc.! It is a privilege to join this amazing organization with such a rich history and strong foundation. Our roots run deep and our mission is firmly embedded in the culture—evidenced in each service we deliver. Not unlike the past 50 years, Cottonwood will face challenges that include a critical staffing crisis, funding shortfalls and the need to rapidly advance technology and the technological infrastructure to support our complex systems. Cottonwood is well-positioned to face and conquer these challenges as well as capitalize on numerous opportunities to advance our mission. With the increase in funding from the State of Kansas we received last year, we have seen a shift in the staffing shortage and have been able to open our doors to serve more individuals and we are positioning ourselves to continue to grow our day services. We are strategically looking at our production operations and opportunities for additional contracts that not only provide revenue for our organization but offer a variety of work options. JobLink just hit an all-time high of people served in competitive, community jobs and it will continue to take advantage of the current job market. The financial markets have not been kind across the board but our Foundation has maintained stupendous oversight of our investments and continues to be an incredibly strong asset for us. We continue to diversify and look for ways to enhance our reserves and reduce our risks. We will continue to work at a county, state and national level to advocate and lobby for funding allocations and legislation that positively impacts persons-served and our community.

2022 has been an incredible year for me personally and professionally. My confidence in this organization, the boards, leadership and staff grows every day. Every day, I witness the dedication and drive of the teams who make the wheels turn here! We will continue to invest energy into the foundation and mission of Cottonwood for future generations.

Please enjoy this edition of the Contact and learn more about what an amazing place Cottonwood is!

*Colleen Himmelberg*

## Board of Trustees

### COTTONWOOD INCORPORATED

Doug Anderson	Kirsten Flory
Joe Baker	Kerry Glasgow
Barbara Ballard	Dr. Phil Godwin-Emeritus
Marilyn Bittenbender	Webster Golden
Zak Bolick	Carl Locke - Emeritus
Perry Buck	Shirley Martin-Smith
Jim Budde-Emeritus	Tom Mulinazzi
Mary Carson	Gary Rexroad
Robert Day	Jeff Sigler
Beth Easter	Paul Werner

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Hank Booth	Tim Mock
Brad Burnside	Allison Vance Moore
Kristin Eldridge	Martin Moore
Michelle Fales	Carrie Parker
Kurt Goeser	Miles Schnaer
Mark Gonzales	Jon Smiley
Brandon Graham	J. Taylor
Colleen Himmelberg	Andy Vigna
Tom Larkin	Richard Zinn
Nancy Longhurst	

CONTACT is published for the friends and supporters of Cottonwood, Inc. by the Community Relations and Development Department: Ettie Brightwell and Kari Bentzinger.

Cottonwood, Incorporated is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization that serves individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Cottonwood provides an array of employment options, onsite and in other parts of the community, residential, and case management services. Cottonwood is a member of Interhab, the Resource Network for Kansans with Disabilities.

Cottonwood is partially funded on a contractual basis with the Kansas Department for Aging & Disability Services. Cottonwood receives some funding from Douglas and Jefferson Counties. Cottonwood is an affirmative action equal opportunity employer. We do business in accordance with the Federal Fair Housing Law. (The Fair Housing Amendment Act of 1998)

Labeling and mailing services for this newsletter have been provided by men and women of Cottonwood.

An adapted version of this publication and other materials are available by calling 785.842.0550 or by visiting us on the web at [www.cwood.org](http://www.cwood.org).



**Follow Us! Like Us! Share Us!**



Cottonwood, Inc. & Salute Festival of Wine & Food



@cottonwood\_inc



cottonwoodincorporated



# DSP Week



September 12th-16th, 2022 was designated as Direct Support Professionals (DSP) Week. DSPs are our hard-working professionals who work directly with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

We do so appreciate the hard work that our DSPs put in each and every day, but this week gives us special opportunities to show them how important they are to us and the people we support.

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, DSPs, for all you do!  
Our DSPs are the most amazing, caring individuals!



The week kicked off with shout-out signage for the entire community to see how much we appreciate our DSPs.

- On Tuesday, the Management Team served our staff delicious pastries, coffees, hot cocoa and lemonade from the Uplift Coffee Company.
- Wednesday was a day of Gift Card Give-Aways from places around Lawrence.
- Eileen's Cookies headlined the treat for Thursday.
- Friday, we celebrated our DSPs with a special DSP Appreciation 50th Anniversary Bag and gift card.



# Celebrating



**Tana Ahlen, Cottonwood Foundation Board of Trustees:** "Jean Milstead encouraged me to join the Cottonwood Foundation Board in 1993. And I am so thrilled that I did! One of my first eye-opening experiences was to discover that two friends from my 1957 kindergarten class were consumers at Cottonwood and to see the full and happy lives that they were living. The growth, expansion, and development of Cottonwood over the years has been joyful and rewarding. My experiences at Cottonwood are a highlight of my life."



**Jill Baker, Retired Staff:** "From its beginnings in the early 1970s, Cottonwood has been so solidly strong and present, not just for the persons supported and their families, but also for Lawrence and surrounding communities. Cottonwood has been integral to the enjoyment of full and productive lives on an individual basis, but also integral to the overall health and livability of the Douglas and Jefferson County communities. A well-managed, sound, high-performing, quality driven non-profit is an asset and not a drain on community resources. Few non-profits, or even for-profit businesses for that matter, can say that for 50 years they've maintained their organizational fortitude and performed their mission with such unwavering competence sprinkled with a lot of kindness and heart. Cottonwood was strong then, is strong today, and will be strong tomorrow. It has deep roots."



**Carl Locke, Cottonwood Inc. Board of Trustees, Emeritus:** "Mahatma Ghandi is quoted as saying: "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members." Over the past 50 years, Cottonwood has been at the forefront in ensuring that our community ranks very high in this measure. As a member of the Board of Trustees for over 20 years, I am so proud of how the staff has worked to make the mission statement, We Help People with Disabilities Shape Their Own Future, to be an actual achievement. The organization has survived many challenges over these many years and will face new challenges in the future. I am sure the staff, the Boards of Trustees will meet those new challenges in the years to come. Through the efforts of these groups, Cottonwood will continue to be a shining example of how our community grades very high in "... how it treats its most vulnerable members."

**Brad Burnside, Cottonwood Foundation Board of Trustees:** "As a long-time Foundation Board Member, I continue to be gratified by the Lawrence Community's support for Cottonwood's mission of helping people with disabilities shape their own future."



**Tom Mulinazzi, Cottonwood, Inc. Board of Trustees:** "Carl Locke introduced me to Cottonwood. I was so amazed with the work the consumers were doing and really impressed with the positive attitude in the buildings. I was hooked! I have a granddaughter who needed some help in this area and this was another incentive for me to get involved. One of the reasons Cottonwood has survived and thrived is because the staff is so dedicated. The tenure of most of this staff is proof of their commitment. "



**Johanna Branson, Sister of Sam B., Consumer:** "We were around during Sam's whole childhood when there was no Cottonwood so we know what a difference having this place has meant in his life and in the life of our whole family. I think having had Sam and realizing the challenges that he was going to face in his life was a major motivating factor for my mother, and a lot of the social action work she did certainly in gathering together with her colleagues to found Cottonwood. The longevity of the staff, the way they care about the clients, you're all wonderful and we really can't thank you enough, words fail us. We're very proud of our brother and what he's been able to do at Cottonwood. Thank you!"



*I love the people here at work, I love everybody in the world,*

# 50 years!



**Sheri Holmes, Life Enrichment Coordinator:** "50 years and going strong! When I look back at the strides we have made as an agency and an industry, I think a great big THANK YOU goes to the people we support for inspiring us to do better and continuously improve our services over the years. On this special anniversary, it is important that all of our friends, families, stakeholders, and community partners know that their support and trust have been the biggest driver towards our continued growth in both the past and

present. The future is sure to bring many new opportunities for growth and success. May we weather any storms that come our way, continue to find new and innovative ways to serve, and we will continue to celebrate the success and progress of our agency for years to come. Happy Anniversary, Cottonwood!"

**Zak Bolick, President, Cottonwood, Inc. Board of Trustees:** "It's been 50 years. 50 wonderful years. And that is certainly worth celebrating. But what makes me smile the most is seeing our consumers and our employees continue to grow and succeed day in, day out. I feel so fulfilled by the work that Cottonwood does in our community. And I know that because of the hard work and advocacy that our staff, management team, and fellow board members do for Cottonwood that we are in GREAT hands for the next 50+ years!"

**Kara Walters, Administrator of Services:** "It warms my heart to recall Cottonwood's 50-year history of abundant growth: the unique individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families that trusted us to become an intimate part of their lives, the hundreds of skilled, caring, and devoted direct support professionals who unstintingly shared their talents and efforts to provide excellent services, the forward-thinking directors and administrators who always looked at what could be without letting the daily obstacles dim our vision for the future. The list goes on and on. Looking ahead to the next 50 years stirs my mind. That reality is yet to be defined, full of possibilities, challenges, and changes. There are so many new people to welcome into the Cottonwood family, so much potential, so many opportunities, so much to be done. Bring it on! Knowing what won't change calms my soul: Cottonwood's mission to "help people with disabilities shape their own futures" is ageless and rock solid. No matter how unmapped and rocky the future might be, our mission guarantees that our foundation is strong and will keep us balanced and on track. It is truly a golden age for Cottonwood."

**Sue Zupancic, Parent:** "Cottonwood has been a true blessing, not just in Melissa's life, but in all of our lives. The uniqueness of Cottonwood working out with the community and the community working back with Cottonwood has enveloped the consumers within the community and to society. But the most important things are the people that support the consumers, the caring, the giving, the empathy, people love what they do here, and you can tell that by the great care, and it's at every level - the houseparents that take care of the individuals, the case managers, the nursing staff, JobLink. The journey has been amazing and all of our family is so appreciative of what Cottonwood has done, not just for Melissa but for all of us."

**Kurt Goeser, President, Cottonwood Foundation Board of Trustees:** "Cottonwood is an incredible organization that does monumental work for the community we serve, proudly reflecting the compassion of the entire Lawrence Community. I am so proud to have served on this board for so many years and experienced Cottonwood's contributions to those with intellectual disabilities."



*all my friends. My life is going great! - Barb McEldowney*



## Employers of the Month!

May - Children's Learning Center  
 June - Domino's Pizza  
 July - Genesis  
 August - Chill's  
 September - Oskaloosa Thriftway  
 October - Papa Keno's

## Employer Quotes:



"Including people with disabilities as employees within our organization not only helps give the person a feeling of independence and importance but also adds a diverse dynamic for the organization. Inclusion helps teach tolerance and diversity."

- Children's Learning Center



"We have used JobLink in the past and have had a mutually beneficial relationship. It has been a joy to work with the many different JobLink employees. The JobLink employees are hard workers, are always eager to do more/ask questions, and show up on time ready to work. JobLink makes it easy matching individuals to job specific duties and following through with job performance on specific needs basis."

- KU Dining, The Underground



"We love providing opportunities to those that otherwise would not have them! This is an amazing opportunity to provide a job to a hardworking individual that appreciates their job!"

- Domino's Pizza

**We appreciate your partnership!**

Since 1984  
 Joblink has  
 developed  
 2898 jobs!



# CONGRATULATIONS!

# JobLink

...a division of Cottonwood, Inc.



Congratulations to Cottonwood's JobLink division on being voted 1st Place Staffing Agency in Lawrence, Kansas!!



With JobLink, you'll find that we share your commitment to quality.  
 For more information contact Phil Bentzinger 785-840-0550 or pbentzinger@cwood.org

*I like that I am helping others to find a job or gain a skill that results in*



There always seems to be a flurry of activity at Cottonwood Industries. For over 101 months (that's over 8 years!) in a row, there has been over 100% work availability. The contracts procured by Cottonwood Industries provide the people we support many varied opportunities to learn, maintain, and hone valuable skills while earning money and completing meaningful work for a variety of local and regional businesses.



Choose Cottonwood Industries to perform all the jobs in your order fulfillment cycle, or choose just those jobs that we can perform most cost-effectively for you. Contact us today to discuss your needs. Robert Bieberle, Cottonwood Industries Business Development Manager, at 785-842-0550 or rbieberle@cwood.org.





The sold-out Mass St. Mosey kicked off the festival on a very sunny and hot Thursday evening, July 14th. The heat did not seem to wilt any of the enthusiasm of the Mosey participants.



# Salute!

2022 marked the 23rd anniversary of Salute! A Festival of Wine and Food. And for the first time in several years, we were able to gather in person for all three days of the Festival! A special thank you to all of our sponsors, participants, donors and volunteers for their strong, continued support. Proceeds from Salute enable us to drive our mission of helping people with disabilities shape their own future and lead their best lives.



This year's Winemaker Dinner was hosted by The Oread Hotel on Friday, July 15th and featured wines from Trincherro Family Estates. Kyle Ehman from Trincherro eloquently guided attendees through an amazing evening of food and wine pairings.





We were able to gather for the Grand Tasting once again at the Oread Hotel on Saturday, July 16th. Over 500 people enjoyed up to 200 wines, beers or spirits and had food tastings from nine local restaurants or caterers. The bidding was spirited with the live auction led by our friends, the Nigro Brothers Auctioneers! Salute continues to be Cottonwood's largest fundraising event and this year was no exception with over \$160,000 raised for Cottonwood. Save these dates for next year:  
July 13-15, 2023

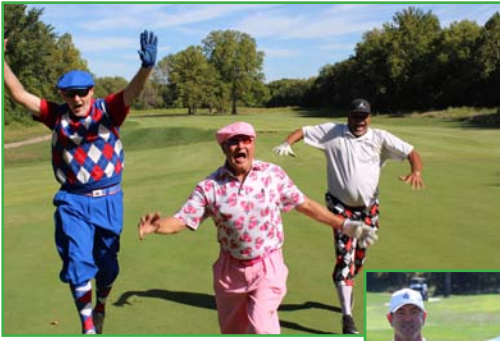
# Thank You!





# Cottonwood Classic Golf Tournament

The Cottonwood Classic Golf Tournament was held on Monday, September 19, 2022 at Eagle Bend Golf Course. And what a scorcher of a day it was! Prior to tee off time, the group enjoyed a wonderful lunch courtesy of 23rd Street Brewery. The extreme heat only seemed to fuel our golfers who turned in some amazing scores for the day.



Congratulations to Flight A team winners: 1st Place: the Meritrust team of Tim Mock, Jay Taylor, Cole Shaffer, and G.R. Underwood; 2nd Place: the Midco team of Kevin Romary, Ryan Catlin, Nick Schmidt, and Derek Wheeler.



Thank you to all of our valued players, volunteers and sponsors!



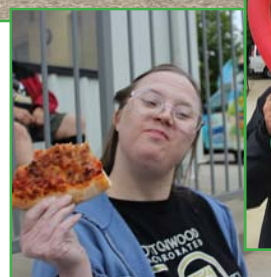
The Blanchard AE Group Team garnered 1st Place in Flight B with the Advanco team swinging to a 2nd place finish in Flight B.

## Mini Masters

The Cottonwood Mini Masters returned to the Cottonwood property on Thursday, September 22, 2022, and what a party it was!! It was an absolutely beautifully cool evening in Lawrence. We all enjoyed a wonderful pizza dinner thanks to Toppers Pizza and the Kona Ice Truck provided a wonderful, sweet treat for all. Thanks to Travis Walsh and Lawrence Mini Golf for the amazing miniature golf set up. The course definitely received a workout from the Cottonwood consumers, staff and family members playing on it throughout the evening. There were some serious dance moves displayed in the ever-popular street dance while other folks displayed amazing fishing skills by hooking prizes at the fishpond! What a fun night with all of our friends! Can't wait until next year!



Congratulations to Wade C. and Amy R. for their sizzling 1st & 2nd place finishes.



A new addition this year came with Dale, the Balloon Twister. He created some unique and wonderful balloon art for all.





The 21st annual Cottonwood Classies were held on Monday, November 8, 2022 at Southwest Middle School. This event is truly a celebration of all that is Cottonwood and what makes Cottonwood such a uniquely wonderful place. The Classies is Cottonwood's way of honoring those who excel in their lives and jobs, making a difference in the lives of the people we support and in the communities in which we live.

## Congratulations to all of our award winners:

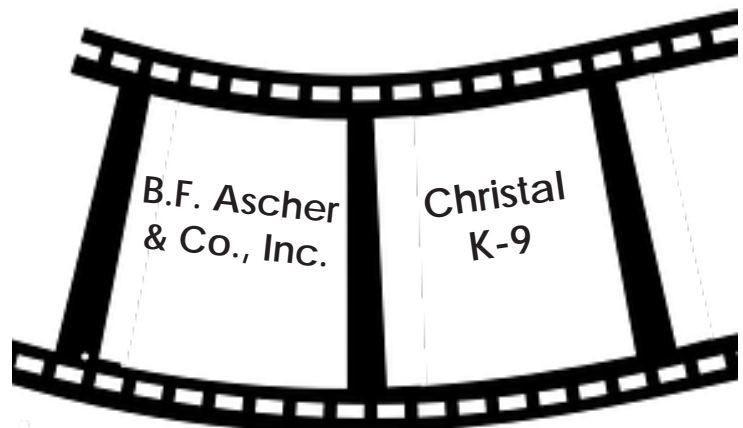
**Caring & Commitment Awards**  
*Jarrod Brown & Keri Rodriguez*

**Shining Star Award**  
*Yvette Bell & Melissa Franklin*

**Distinguished Service Award**  
*Nancy Longhurst*

**JobLink Employer of the Year**  
*Christal K-9*

**Cottonwood Industries Business Partner of the Year**  
*B.F. Ascher & Co., Inc.*



# Thank you!



Cottonwood was honored to be named the Envista Cares Challenge recipient for the month of June, 2022. Thanks to tremendous community support, Envista Credit Union was pleased to present Cottonwood with the challenge match of \$2,500. In addition, Envista provided Cottonwood with marketing and media promotion that included radio, emails, online ads and social media. "Our goal at Envista is to lead, inspire and make an impact with our giving," said Secily Rees, market development officer of Envista. "Cottonwood is an incredible example of an organization that makes an enduring impact on our community. We are honored to support them and are inspired by their leadership."

## Tours

We are very proud of the work that is done at Cottonwood to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Come see for yourself what an amazing place Cottonwood is! If you are interested in finding out more about Cottonwood and/or touring our facility, please contact Ettie Brightwell, Director of Community Relations/Development at [ebrightwell@cwood.org](mailto:ebrightwell@cwood.org) or (785) 842-0550.



Standard Beverage Company



Congressman Tracey Mann



James Person, AbilityOne



Police Chief Rich Lockhart



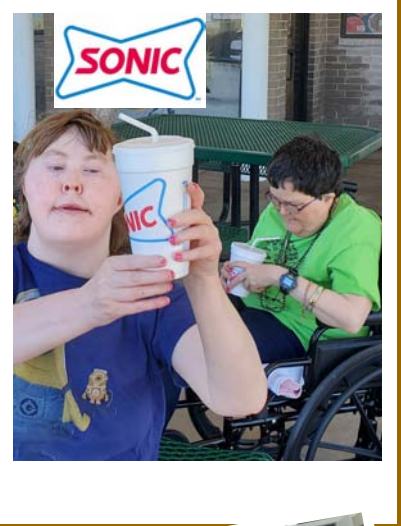
Amarr Garage Door



*I think Cottonwood prides itself on quality and there's across the board respect for all*



# Out and About



aspects of the support team. It's just a cutting edge organization. -Vicki Rohrer, Residential





It was such a fun treat to have the Lawrence Public Library's new book mobile, Dottie, make her debut at Cottonwood! Dottie is at Cottonwood the first and third Tuesday of every month. Dottie is open to the public, so stop by, say hi, and check out a book or two! Read on!!



Ben and his mom, Michelle, were thrilled to have Dottie stop by Cottonwood. Ben used to volunteer at the Lawrence Library for years before he came to work at Cottonwood. Michelle continues to volunteer at the library!



## Congratulations!



Susan Rogers, Covid 19 Hero Award Recipient: Cottonwood's own Susan Rogers, Health Supports Nurse Manager at Cottonwood, Inc. received the COVID 19 Hero Award at the state-wide Interhab Power Up conference on October 14, 2022. The COVID-19 Hero is a person who has gone above and beyond during the coronavirus pandemic. The way this person has gone above and beyond could be demonstrated in a number of ways – whether it be coming up with a new, creative solution, working through illness, or supporting others. Susan's work for Cottonwood during this time exemplifies just those qualities and more. She was not searching for a challenge when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, but she rose to the occasion and became a vital contributor, communicator, and key influencer in Cottonwood, Inc.'s efforts to interpret guidelines, establish parameters, limit exposure, test, trace, quarantine, isolate, vaccinate, address personal protective equipment needs, calm frayed nerves, and mobilize her staff and others to meet the ever-evolving needs of the people we support. Susan's infectious enthusiasm and energy towards her work enabled Cottonwood to mobilize its efforts on a dime. Her resilience in the face of the pandemic continues to be an inspiration to those of us who have the privilege of working with her.



*It's great to work at a place where the focus is on helping people become*



# VOTED Top 2



# Nonprofit & Best Place to Work

Do you know someone who is looking for a job that is truly rewarding and interesting?

Cottonwood will give you a welcoming work experience that broadens your understanding of and appreciation for the diversity of our fellow community members, sharpens your problem solving strategies, hones your organizational skills, provides numerous teamwork and collaboration opportunities- the list is long.

Cottonwood employment also ties in directly with many fields of study: social work, speech/language pathology, healthcare, etc.

Cottonwood benefits include:

- Company paid medical, dental and vision
- KPERs Retirement
- Paid sick and vacation time



## Apply Today!

Visit [www.cwood.org/careers](http://www.cwood.org/careers) for available positions  
Contact Matthew Moore, Human Resources Coordinator, [mmoore@cwood.org](mailto:mmoore@cwood.org)



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Community!**

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AmazonSmile donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases to Cottonwood, Inc. Support Cottonwood, Inc. by shopping at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and designate Cottonwood, Inc. as your non-profit recipient.

*more independent, successful and fulfilled. -Steve Steinbach, Work Services*





## Opportunities to shape the future - you can make a lasting difference!

The Cottonwood Foundation is a separate but affiliated 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization established to facilitate the contribution of funds for the benefit of Cottonwood, Inc. The Foundation's purpose is to promote and further the advancement of services at Cottonwood. With increased competition for limited philanthropic funds, gifts have become even more critical to help ensure a long, healthy future for Cottonwood, Inc. Contributions can be made in a number of ways, including cash, securities, real estate and personal property, life insurance, retirement plans, in-kind gifts, and planned gifts through a will or trust. Each contribution makes a difference in the lives of the people we support and helps ensure the future of Cottonwood.



**ONE-TIME GIFT** Your gift makes a big difference!



**QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DEDUCTIONS**  
Individuals who've attained age 70 1/2 may make QCDs.



**MEMORIAL & HONORARIUM**  
Honor your loved one with a gift today.



**PLANNED & ESTATE GIFTS**  
Learn how to leave a legacy through a Will or Trust.



**MONTHLY GIVING**  
Help shape the future of the people we support year-round with a monthly automatic gift.



**COMPANY MATCH**  
Many companies offer a company donation match.