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Enable: 1000s of Volunteers Make a Difference Each Year

More than 1,000 people volunteer at Enable each year either as individuals or in groups, making a difference in the lives of people with disabilities and seniors. They support the services Enable provides that make it possible for people with disabilities and seniors to live full and independent lives in their own homes in the community. These include residential assistance, which offers 24/7 care in group homes and supervised apartments; site day services, which are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and in-home supports such as personal care to assist with daily living tasks, respite support for caregivers, accessibility services that modify homes, and care management for aging adults.

“Enable’s volunteers include individuals; groups; retirees; families; students at elementary, junior and high school, and college levels; faith-based and civic groups; and businesses,” said Sharon J.B. Copeland, MSW, LSW, Enable’s chief executive officer. “Volunteers have been integral to Enable’s mission since the non-profit was founded 26 years ago. We believe in community integration and through volunteerism we bring neighbors together and unite different parts of the community. Many of our volunteers faithfully return year after year, telling us that through service, they receive more than they give. We are always looking for new volunteers. No prior experience is needed; just a caring attitude and a warm heart!”

As early as 1993, Enable’s Volunteer Advisory Committee for the Housing Rehab Program donated their time, expertise, and ideas on providing housing rehabilitation services and modifications to eligible Mercer County residents. Today Enable continues to provide accessibility modifications to Trenton residents with funding from a CDBG grant through the City of Trenton.

Connect with Enable — Enable’s volunteer program — started in 2005 with a generous grant from Janssen Pharmaceuticals; their support continues to this day. Although the efforts began with under 100 volunteers the first year, the program has grown immensely. In 2015 1,025 volunteers donated 2,413 hours to Enable, conducting friendly visits; assisting at day programs; painting bedrooms; maintaining yards; taking consumers to worship, parks, or shopping; and more.

Melanie Dominguez, a senior at the Lawrenceville School, volunteered at Enable’s Day Services this fall for the third year. “The other places I could have chosen dealt with children or seniors, whereas at Enable, I see people I don’t interact with regularly. I come here on Wednesday

afternoon, leaving a place of huge privilege to make a difference in the lives of those where it matters most.”

Over the last three years, more than 50 Lawrenceville students have participated in one-on-one activities on a weekly basis with Enable Day Services participants. “The students love volunteering at Enable,” said Rachel Cantlay, Lawrenceville’s director of community service. “One student described how nervous he was the first time he went to Enable. He was unsure how to deal with people who are non-verbal. Instead, he discovered new ways to communicate that he’d never experienced before and made deep human connections. He described how bright the people he met at Enable were and how much he looked forward to his weekly visits.”

Four years ago, American Express employee Pat Crosetti volunteered for one day at an Enable group home — and was hooked. She has been a volunteer with Enable ever since and formed a volunteer group at her company. “AmEx encourages its employees to get involved in community service, not just with money but with their time. My group loved the work they did with Enable,” said Pat.

The group raked leaves and put up holiday decorations. Pat has a warm relationship with the residents at the group home where she volunteers. Together they created a flower garden. They play games, bake cookies, listen to music, and exercise outside. “They bring so much joy into my life,” she said.

For more information about Connect with Enable, Enable’s Volunteer Program, or to make a donation, please call 609-987-5003, e-mail info@enablenj.org, or visit at www.enablenj.org.