

BMMH Narrative for 501c3 Application

Throughout the United States, Catholic parents of adult children with disabilities dream of finding a living situation for their child that provides a homelike atmosphere in a Catholic setting. A few organizations, such as L'Arche in St. Louis and Misericordia in Chicago provide such a setting, but there are only a few like them across the country. In the Central Illinois area, there is no such facility. In fact, there is a significant shortage of both housing and support professionals for adults with developmental disabilities in Illinois, as well as in the nation. A Chicago Tribune exposé published in 2016 highlighted the sufferings and even deaths of adults with disabilities in Illinois living in groups homes. Another Tribune article in 2018 highlighted a state auditor general report that found systemic failures in the licensing and oversight of taxpayer funded group homes in Illinois. The Coleman Institute Researchers rank Illinois 47th in it's fiscal effort funding of Community Disability Services. Despite these problems, the State of Illinois proposed a budget cut of \$87 million for services for people with developmental disabilities in January 2024. Clearly there is a need for better housing and care for adults with disabilities in Illinois. In the Peoria area specifically, there is a general shortage of homes for adults with disabilities, there are no Catholic facilities, and one with a Christian mission, the Apostolic Christian Home, has a multi-year waiting list.

The National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research Report from 2015 states the Illinois has 1,362,286 developmentally disabled persons. The Tri-county area around Peoria includes Peoria, Tazwell and Woodford Counties. Peoria County has 20,664 developmentally disabled persons, Tazewell 14,667 and Woodford has 3,692. Our plan is to provide housing in the Tri-county area first and then branch out to the other 42 counties that make up Central Illinois.

Who are the people who would benefit from a home such as this? Mike is a 55-year-old male with autism since childhood who unfortunately did not receive a diagnosis until he was over the age of 50. Throughout his adult life he struggled to hold down a job, and eventually was evicted from his low-income housing due to events that occurred related to his autism. His family has taken him in, helped him get tested and diagnosed, and has sought state support to help him with housing and caregiving costs, but none is available due to his late diagnosis. Without family support, he would be homeless. His Catholic faith is incredibly important to him and he longs to live more independently in a Catholic environment.

Daniel is a 27-year-old man with Down syndrome whose parents strongly desired a home that would have a Catholic or Christian atmosphere. The only option in the area was the Apostolic Christian Home in Morton, IL. His parents placed him on their waiting list in 2004 when he was only 7 years old, hoping that it would be a place he could move to as an adult. He has now been on the waiting list for almost 20 years, and there are still 7 people ahead of him. In 2023, only one adult male on their waiting list was able to begin residency in their facility. Daniel's Catholic faith is a huge part of his life and his true desire is to live in a home that will support his overall needs and also allow

him to continue his church involvement such as serving at Sunday Mass and participating in the Knights of Columbus.

John is a 47-year-old Catholic man with Down syndrome who was the only child of elderly parents who spent their whole lives caring for him. When his father died and his mother required a nursing home, there was no family who could take him in. Since they had not previously sought state support, the only option was emergency housing, which was not Catholic or Christian, and was in a town many miles distant from his hometown, which would have separated him from his mother and his job, of 10 years, at Home Depot. Without friends to step in, he also could have become homeless.

All these men desire a Catholic home where they can receive the support they need to live active and meaningful lives. Blessed Michael McGivney Special Needs Housing, Inc. was established to help meet this need in Central Illinois. We aim to provide the highest quality of life for adults with developmental disabilities and to do so in an atmosphere consistent with the theological and moral commitments of the Catholic Church. Our goal is to assist the future residents to live in community, helping each other and respecting each other's God-given dignity. We plan to provide them with housing in a family-like atmosphere, along with assuring they have adequate support to live a fulfilling life. We desire to establish small, family-like homes with a Catholic atmosphere and to assure that residents have adequate support to work a job, to pursue hobbies, and to practice their faith with others. Living in a community will allow them to develop relationships with peers, improve communication and problem-solving skills, work cooperatively to care for their home, and share hobbies and social activities. Daily prayer time, weekly mass, participation in church events, and volunteering at church activities will deepen their spiritual life. We hope this environment will draw them closer to Jesus and help them know how much they are loved by God.

Blessed Michael McGivney Special Needs Housing, Inc. is a non-profit corporation and operates exclusively for religious and charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future Federal tax code.

We have a volunteer Board of Directors who are focused on establishing the organization and raising funds. As we grow, we expect to identify other volunteers and professionals who will contribute needed services and professional advice at reduced rates or in-kind. To date we have spoken with more than 20 families concerning their developmentally disabled loved ones about the need to plan for the future. In April of 2024, we will speak at the Central Illinois Parents of Special Adults meeting. We plan to begin our fundraising once we achieve tax exempt status. When we have adequate funds to obtain our first home, activity will begin to place residents in the home and provide support as outlined above.

Our organization will have a three-tiered approach to fundraising. The initial fundraising will focus on obtaining suitable, family style housing for low-income adults with developmental disabilities in the Greater Peoria Illinois area. We will be seeking homes

that will provide private bedrooms for 3-4 residents, with shared living space and an area for caregivers to complete tasks and documentation. We will solicit donations of money, property, homes and/or donated services. Though we hope to have homes or property donated, we will also seek to purchase or build homes that will suit the needs of future residents, with a focus on family style living. Initially we would like to establish one home for developmentally disabled men and one home for developmentally disabled women.

Once housing is obtained, further funds raised will be used to establish an endowment that will provide funds to hire a property manager and a home administrator as well as to supplement the cost of caregivers. We realize that many adults with developmental disabilities and their families do not have the funds to pay for caregiving and public support programs generally fall far short of what is needed. Hiring talented and caring support personnel is expensive, so we hope to be able to offset some of these costs for our residents.

The duties of the property manager will include care and upkeep of the properties, managing contracts and leases, managing finances, and managing security. We do anticipate the manager possibly having additional duties that are not normally thought of as property management – primarily, handling household emergencies that residents with disabilities might not know how to handle, such as issues with minor plumbing, appliances, or electrical outages.

In addition, a home administrator will be needed to coordinate the day-to-day lives of the residents. Coordination of caregivers may be needed if residents use different agencies for caregivers. Home administration will also involve coordinating residents' schedules for work and activities, assuring transportation, planning menus, planning activities within the house, assigning chores, and coordinating caregiver duties and schedules.

Obtaining donated funds or houses and/or buying or building homes for low-income developmentally disabled adults will further our exempt purposes by following our mission statement. We will help low-income adults who are developmentally disabled.

One hundred percent of funds raised will be used for these core activities – obtaining housing, covering the cost of property management and home administration, and supplementing the cost of caregivers. It is expected that residents will pay below market value for room and board. These will help cover the costs of utilities, repairs, maintenance, and upkeep, as well as food, cleaning, and security.

Once adequate funds are raised, Blessed Michael McGivney Special Needs Housing, Inc. will spend 90% of its time providing housing and support for adults with developmental disabilities. 5% of the time will be spent on continued fundraising. 5% of the time will be for promoting community awareness and talking with parents or guardians of developmentally disabled adults and local organizations.