

## Chamber celebrates fifth Homes of Hope opening

Jeff Bricker — May 18, 2015



Homes of Hope, Inc. manages five local residential houses that are home to 17 adults with intellectual disabilities. Photo by Jeff Bricker/for Chronicle Media

What happens to adults with intellectual disabilities when family can no longer take care of them?

What about when parents pass away and other family are not able to support?

It was these disturbing questions that drove a handful of concerned local parents to form Home of Hope more than 20 years ago.

Today, Homes of Hope, Inc. manages five local residential houses that are home to 17 adults with intellectual disabilities.

On May 14 the McLean County Chamber of Commerce celebrated a ribbon cutting for the fifth home opened by Homes of Hope. The home, in north Normal, is nondescript and from a glance is just like every other home on the street. There is nothing advertising that it is a Home for Hope house and that's intentional. Residents aren't looking to stand out, but to integrate into their neighborhoods. And the neighborhoods have been very accepting of the residents. That acceptance was on display with a number of neighbors coming out for the ribbon cutting for introductions and well wishes.

"We've grown so much as a society and a community," said Holly Phillips, director of fundraising and development.

Each member of the organization's staff, board of directors, and volunteers all seem to be focused on the same goal.

"It's important that everybody have the opportunity to live an independent life," said Katie Novak, board member.

"(Adults with disabilities) don't always want to live at home ... but they need constant care. And Homes of Hope was a perfect fit for that," said Thom Jones, local real estate agent and board member.

Added Phillips, "When the parents are gone and no one is left to take care of them, we are good net."

Each house is staffed 24 hours a day with a trained professional. Volunteers are also utilized to supplement the assistance provided to residents. Each home has between two and five residents depending on house size and fit.

While having a safe residence is one key element to having an independent life, it's not all that Homes of Hope provides. Transportation is also provided for all residents giving them increased accessibility to the community and the ability to hold down employment. Many of the residents have jobs including a handful who work at the recycle center in Eureka.

Some funding does come to the organization from the State of Illinois, but that funding alone is not enough to support the homes and the residents.

Homes of Hope needs continued financial support from the community. They have two major fundraising events a year — one in June and one in November. Coming up on June 7 will be the Homes of Hope Car Show at the Mackinaw Valley Winery. The free event is open to the public and promises to be a great time. More information can be found [www.homesofhopeinc.org](http://www.homesofhopeinc.org)