

HOPE HAVEN

SUMMER HORIZONS 2026

news

HOPE HAVEN AMBASSADORS

Changing the Narrative



A moment of exclusion at a 2025 community event – being told to “sit in the back” and that they “had nothing to offer” – sparked something powerful. From that experience, the Hope Haven Ambassadors program was born, with a mission centered on changing the narrative about people with disabilities.

Over the past year, the group has grown beyond its original four members and now focuses on disability awareness, inclusion, respectful treatment, community involvement, and advocacy. They’ve attended statewide events such as Hill Day (2025) and Advocacy Day (2026), completed DD Council trainings, and spoken at local organizations including Kiwanis, the Senior Center, and church groups.

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HOPE HAVEN AMBASSADORS (CONTINUED):

At each stop, members share personal stories of discrimination, resilience, and hope.

“I want my community to know it’s okay to be different,” says Maggie Rumpel, a 24-year-old member with Down Syndrome who works 25-30 hours a week at Accura HealthCare and is active in volunteering.

The newest Ambassador, Octavio Cleveringa, age 23, advocates for those who “need a voice when they themselves can’t.”

Another member, Laurie Phillips, speaks out about employment barriers after losing hours due to Medicaid income limits: “I got a \$1.50 raise, and because of that, I had to cut my hours down to 10.”



Program Leader Paula Gomez provides structure and training as the group continues to grow in confidence and purpose.

During Disability Advocacy Day at the Capitol on April 1st, the Ambassadors shared their stories with legislators. Many encounters were discouraging – some lawmakers avoided them or said they “didn’t have time.” Yet the group left more determined than ever. As Octavio put it, they will “continue to advocate... even if they shut us down.”

At Hope Haven, we believe every person has God-given gifts to share. Programs like the Ambassadors help people discover those gifts through friendship, confidence, purpose, and belonging. They create opportunities not just to participate in the community, but to shape it.

After the Flood:

A LONG ROAD HOME

After two long years of uncertainty, transition, and shared spaces, Brent and Brian are finally home.

When flooding devastated parts of Rock Valley in 2024, the two Hope Haven members were suddenly displaced from the place they called home. Their journey took them to Orange City and Niessink, where they lived with others and did their best to adjust without a space of their own. Though they were surrounded by support, the longing for home never faded.

That's why early April marked such a powerful milestone. Brent and Brian moved back to Rock Valley, unlocking the doors to their new home – and to a renewed sense of peace, comfort, and independence.

“

Yes. It's ours.

-Brent



Both men showed their excitement to have their own individual spaces again. They're looking forward to simple joys: quiet mornings, familiar routines, and watching the newly planted grass grow in their yard so they can sit outside and enjoy the sunshine.

When asked if he was happy to be home, Brent smiled and said simply, "Yes. It's ours." It was a moment that said everything.

Brent also wrapped his staff member, Starla, in a heartfelt hug when reflecting on the help he received during the flood and throughout the past two years.

A LONG ROAD HOME (CONTINUED):

His gratitude was unmistakable – a reminder of the deep bonds formed through the compassionate work Hope Haven provides to our members. Their homecoming is a beautiful reminder of resilience, community, and the power of having a place to call your own.

WAVES OF GENEROSITY: MAKING MEMORIES ON *Spirit Lake*

Shelley and her husband have turned their family's story into something truly meaningful for their community. Their daughter, Hallie, lived with significant disabilities and brought joy, humor, and resilience into every day. When Hallie passed away at 22, the loss was profound — but Shelley felt strongly that her daughter's impact shouldn't end there.

She wrote a memoir, *Because She Was*, capturing Hallie's life and the lessons she taught everyone around her. The book became a way to share Hallie's spirit, her challenges, and the love that defined her family's journey.

This summer, the Brouwers reached out to our Spirit Lake Hope Haven office with a heartfelt idea: offering boat rides to members who might not otherwise have the chance to enjoy a day on the lake. What began as a simple gesture has quickly become a highlight of the season. Members climb aboard, feel the sunshine and wind, and experience a bit of adventure — all in Hallie's memory.

Through these boat rides, Shelley and her husband are creating new moments of joy while keeping Hallie's legacy alive. Her story continues in every smile on the water.



And the smiles say it all.



PETALS OF JOY AND INDEPENDENCE

At Hope Haven, flower-picking day has become a joyful May tradition for Susan, Laura, Marisa, and Jan. It's a tradition made possible thanks to Frank, the husband of the ladies' DSP, Starla. Frank arrives with a smile, ready to take the ladies flower shopping and let them pick out anything that catches their eye. When asked how she feels about Frank helping them each year, Jan summed it up simply: "He's a good guy."



Once the flowers are planted, the ladies rotate watering duties, keeping their yard bright and colorful all summer. Frank even calls now and then with friendly reminders. When asked about favorites, Susan chose tulips, Jan picked tulips and roses, and Laura said she loves them all except ‘those thorny ones’.

Additionally, these ladies live in one of Hope Haven’s ‘Smart Living’ homes, which uses helpful technology to support the ladies while giving them more independence. Trained staff can check in and assist remotely whenever needed, which means the women enjoy freedom, safety, and peace of mind without having someone on-site overnight.

Between their Smart Living home, their My Day activities, and their cherished flower-picking tradition, these women continue to grow, thrive, and bloom – together.



36TH ANNUAL GOLF BENEFIT UPDATE

As one of northwest Iowa’s longest-running charity golf events, the Hope Haven Golf Benefit continues to make a real difference through the generosity of participants and supporters. This year was no different. The event was held on Wednesday, June 17th at Emerald Hills Golf Course, and we were thrilled to welcome 35 teams who came out to support our mission and enjoy some friendly competition. A huge thank you to everyone who made this event such a success and helped us raise nearly \$70,000!





CEO MATT BULEY RESIGNING

“Serving Hope Haven has been one of the great privileges of my life.”

Hope Haven shares with deep gratitude that CEO Matt Buley will step down on July 15, 2026, as he follows God’s leading into a new chapter in Minneapolis. While we celebrate this next step for Matt and his family, we hold deep appreciation for the impact of his nine years of faithful leadership.

Matt has guided Hope Haven through seasons of growth and challenge—including the COVID-19 pandemic and the historic 2024 flooding—always with compassion, humility and a steady trust in the mission God entrusted to this organization. His presence has shaped our culture and strengthened our foundation in lasting ways.

“Serving Hope Haven has been one of the great privileges of my life,” Matt shared. Board President Ron Boote added, “Matt leaves Hope Haven stronger and well-prepared for the future. We are profoundly grateful for his leadership and the foundation he leaves behind.”

As Matt steps into this new season, we pray God’s blessings over him and his family. His influence will continue to ripple through our work for years to come.

Terry Meyer, Hope Haven’s Chief Financial Officer, has been appointed Interim CEO following Buley’s departure, bringing 17 years of organizational and financial leadership to the role. He will be supported by Chief of Staff Lisa Schwanke as the Board ensures steady leadership during the transition. The Board has also engaged JobfitMatters to recruit the next CEO, continuing a partnership that previously led successful senior leadership searches.

Hope Haven remains steadfast in its mission, serving communities through disability services, employment support, mental health care, children’s services, residential programs and international wheelchair ministry.



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UPCOMING *events*



AUG

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DUELING DUOS

The Roof Garden | Spirit Lake, IA

Back by popular demand, Dueling Duos returns for another night of high-energy entertainment. Save the date and join us for an evening of music, laughter, and impact you won't want to miss!

[Learn more at hopehaven.org/events](https://hopehaven.org/events)

SIGN UP FOR EMAILS: Scan the QR code to join our email list! We'll only send a few emails a month, with community updates and reminders about upcoming events.



HOPE HAVEN MEMORIAL

Memorial Gifts to Hope Haven honor the lives of relatives, friends, or associates by enhancing the future for people with disabilities. Such lasting tributes also affirm the donor's love for the Lord and provide a legacy that supports the practical work of God's kingdom. These gifts will provide for special needs among clients.

Hope Haven's "Book of Remembrance" provides an attractive, permanent record of all memorials.

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Deanna Lockhorst
Mr. & Mrs. John Schreurs
Mr. & Mrs. Dave Aalberts
Mr. & Mrs. Rich Schwanke
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Laura McKee
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Barbara Dykstra
Harlan & Elaine Vermeer
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George Vogel
Don Lockhorst
Daryl Kruid
Daryl Kruid
Daryl Kruid
Elaine Hofland
Audley Tensen
Audley Tensen
Audley Tensen
Audley Tensen

DONOR

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Mr. & Mrs. Orvin Olivier
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Hope Reformed Church-George
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Flossia Van Roekel
Clinton and Flossie Van Roekel
Harvey Klein
Harvey Klein
Henry Kroon
Harriet Kleinhesselink
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