

SUMMER 2026 NEWSLETTER

BRIGHTSTONE



THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP P3
PASSING THE TORCH: BRIGHTSTONE'S NEW BOARD MEMBERS P7
I BELIEVE P8

BRIGHTSTONE IS A COMMUNITY FUNDED 501(C)3 NONPROFIT SERVING ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE.

BRIGHTSTONE.ORG

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Dr. Colin Looney*
Meghan Schneider
Bob Speck

**New Board Directors
who joined in 2026*

BrightStone's Mission

To provide a comprehensive work, social support, and residential community for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, expanding their potential and helping them develop mentally, physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.



LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends,

When I walk through campus each morning, I often think about the word *growth*. But lately, as I look into the eyes of our students and hear the relief in their parents' voices, another word takes over: **Strength**.

Not the kind of strength you measure in concrete and steel, but the kind you witness in newfound confidence, meaningful friendships, and lives filled with purpose.

I often think of the parents who spent years wondering, *"What happens when my child grows up? Who will see their value?"*

And then I see the answer unfolding right here every single day:

- **I see it when a student steps into their very first job**, shoulders back and wearing a proud smile because they've earned their very own paycheck.
- **I see it in the quiet tear of a mother** who realizes her adult son will soon move into one of our residential homes – not just into a safe room, but into a life rich with roommates, shared dinners, and lifelong independence.
- **I see it in our classrooms**, where students who were once told what they couldn't do are discovering all the things they can.

Behind every new building, every vocational partnership, and every milestone reached on our campus, there is a student whose world just got bigger. And behind every student is you – the family members, prayer warriors, financial supporters, volunteers, and friends who chose to believe in them first.

That is why I am so thrilled to launch the second year of our I Believe in BrightStone initiative. Throughout the rest of this year, we are handing the spotlight over to those who know our mission best: our students and their families. As you read their personal stories of strength, friendship, and newly found belonging, I know you will feel the same profound gratitude I do.

On September 7, we will celebrate 27 years since our founding – nearly three decades of proving what is possible when a community rallies around these extraordinary adults.

As you turn the pages of this newsletter, I hope you don't just see what BrightStone is building. I hope you see the lives you are transforming.

Thank you for giving our students a place to belong, and for being the strength behind every single one of their successes.

With deep gratitude,

Lee Rose
President and CEO

The Power of Partnership

WHERE DREAMS ARE TRULY INFINITE!

In May, BrightStone was honored to be named as a 2026-27 beneficiary of The Circle of Giving through the Carousel of Dreams at The Factory at Franklin. The carousel operates entirely for philanthropic purposes, with all ride and sponsorship proceeds directed to Williamson County non-profit organizations..

Artist Ken Means spent three decades crafting the 32 beautiful and unique animals that make up the carousel.

“We don’t take this honor lightly,” says BrightStone CEO, Lee Rose. “On behalf of everyone at BrightStone, I want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Carousel of Dreams Foundation and Brandy Blanton, President and CEO, for their vision, generosity, and commitment to making a difference in the lives of others. This partnership is a powerful reminder of what can happen when a community comes together around a common purpose. We are grateful for the impact this support will have on our students and families, and, most of all, for the opportunity to share our mission with the entire community in such an enjoyable and special way.”



SUPPORT BRIGHTSTONE THROUGH THE CAROUSEL OF DREAMS OPERATED BY THE CIRCLE OF GIVING

Visit often for year-round fun with a purpose! For just \$5, children and adults can enjoy a timeless carousel ride while helping support life-changing organizations like BrightStone.

Want to make an even greater impact? Join BrightStone students and staff as a volunteer at the Carousel of Dreams. By giving your time, you'll help reduce operating costs, allowing even more of the carousel's proceeds to directly support BrightStone's mission.

INNOVATION HUB MOVES TO CAMPUS

A new groundbreaking and forward-thinking collaboration is coming to BrightStone! The Assistive & Supportive Center for Empowerment, Neurodiversity & Development (ASCEND) was officially launched on campus in July. ASCEND is a joint initiative between BrightStone, Vanderbilt's Frist Center for Autism and Innovation (FCAI) and Neuro Technologies (NTs) to form a unique innovation hub designed to help bridge the gap between innovation and real-world application of assistive technologies, solutions, and tools for neurodiverse individuals while supporting other emerging companies focused on transformational solutions. One example of the assistive solutions currently in use in Neuro Technologies portfolio is its SANDI platform, a program designed to assist individuals with disabilities in learning to drive.

Having this hub on BrightStone's campus will allow ASCEND to have a physical home in a real-world environment where innovation intersects daily life. The hub will serve as a “living lab” environment where researchers, innovators, service providers, and families can continue to collaborate and innovate on solutions that provide greater independence to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The center will also engage the broader community through demonstrations, events, and workshops.



What a Spring It's Been!

NEW PATH GRADUATES!

Congratulations to our newest graduates of BrightStone's vocation program, Preparation and Training for HireAbility (PATH). Two groups of students graduated in May after having met the required hours of classroom and internship work. Supported by small group coaching, these students have contributed greatly to the community through their internships with our PATH community partners. They now march on with greater skills to help them with their independent vocational endeavors and interests.



(top) Staff: Halle Harper, Lindsey Wommer, Hays Howard, Susan Sistrunk, Lee Rose
(bottom) Students: Brandt, Jock, Kelly, Ryan, Kate



(top) Staff: Susan Sistrunk, Hays Howard, Lindsey Wommer, Halle Harper, Lee Rose
(bottom) Students: Carrie, Matt, Ben, Grace, Madison

NEW PROGRAMS AT BRIGHTSTONE!

Our program offerings continue to expand! With the addition of a Cooking Club, students have been cooking up some yummy treats including smoothies, guacamole, mini pizzas, parfaits, corn dogs, and, of course, BrightStone dips! This important life skill helps provide enjoyment and fulfillment while enhancing the independence of our students as they learn measurements, utensil identification, kitchen safety, and more. Students also learn important nutrition and shopping skills through trips to the grocery store.

We are also proud to announce that the Cooking Club will be working hand in hand with the Garden Club. Currently Garden Club students are helping to grow and care for a wide array of fruits and vegetables, including strawberries, pumpkins, potatoes, butternut squash, onions, tomatoes, and peppers. The produce grown contributes to the Cooking Club and great meals on campus, allowing students to see firsthand great uses for their work.

BRIGHTSTONE STUDENTS GIVE BACK

Many BrightStone students carry out their passion for serving others in the local community. This spring, our students who regularly volunteer at Fire Station 24 attended a very special home dedication for the Tunnel to Towers Foundation alongside Captain Domingo, who invited them to be part of this special day. This day was more than about attending an event. It is a representation of the passion of our students wanting to give back to the community and the meaningful connections they have. We are deeply grateful to Williamson County Fire/Rescue for walking beside our students in helping to fulfill this purpose. **Visit BrightStoneTN on YouTube and tune in to WBST Episode 18 to see our students live in action!**

FIESTA, FRIENDS AND FUN!

Fiesta, friends and fun! To kick off the Memorial Day weekend, students had a great Fiesta full of games—tortilla, sombrero tosses, and pinatas—dancing, friendship, and live music with the Fletcher Brothers. A special thank you to Atmos Energy for grilling up a delicious lunch!



Stars Were Shining Bright!



Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, donors, auction bidders, volunteers, staff, and community supporters, this year's event raised an incredible **\$507,000** to support BrightStone's life-changing programs where every day, our students experience the joy of belonging, meaningful relationships, and a supportive community that encourages them to thrive.

BrightStone's annual A Night Full of Stars, presented by Atmos Energy, was truly a night to remember! The night celebrated friendships and everything that makes BrightStone a special place. The event was expertly hosted by professional auctioneer Tom Riles alongside BrightStone student, Bill. Nearly 400 friends, supporters, and community partners gathered in celebration of friendship, community, and the life-changing impact of BrightStone. The evening was filled with meaningful connections and unforgettable moments as guests enjoyed a special performance by the BrightStone Student Show Choir, an inspiring concert by GRAMMY, CMA, and ACM Award-winning country music star Carly Pearce, a delicious dinner from Suzette Catering and Events, a cocktail reception, a paddle raise, and both virtual and on-site auctions featuring more than 150 items.



MORE EVENTS TO COME!

Join us at **THE GROVE** for the **25th Annual Jim Hinton Memorial Golf Benefit**, presented by Atmos Energy **OCTOBER 26TH AT 11AM**. Jim Hinton was a beloved board member and helped launch the Golf Benefit as one of the primary fundraisers for support of BrightStone's General Operating Expenses. Funds raised help support our teachers and staff as well as bridging the gap between tuition and actual cost of service delivery.

Visit <https://BrightGolf25.givesmart.com>



Save the date for the **BrightStone's Annual Christmas Program. TUESDAY DEC. 8TH AT THE FACTORY AT FRANKLIN.**

As a thank you to the community and all who support BrightStone, our students bring you this free event. This annual holiday tradition is our way of giving back to you. Please join us for a beautiful evening featuring a joyful concert by our students, a small reception, and a holiday pop-up shoppe showcasing products made by our students.



Contact MC.Mousourakis@brightstone.org for more information on sponsoring these amazing events.

Serving the Mission

GROWING THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BrightStone is continually working to gain the best skills and innovative approaches needed to best serve in their roles. Here are just a few of the training programs our staff has attended so far this year:

THE COACT PROJECT SYMPOSIUM

Hosted by Marbridge, the symposium brings together like-minded leaders to share best practices, discuss industry challenges, and develop innovative ideas. Marbridge is a nonprofit residential community in Texas, offering lifelong care, vocational training, and specialized programs helping those with IDD fuller, more independent lives.

SHIFT'S EMPLOYMENT FIRST EDUCATION

SHIFT is providing training for our vocational staff to advance their skills in helping individuals with disabilities secure competitive, integrated employment rather than relying on segregated work. BrightStone's vocational staff are in the process of becoming certified in their individual positions. Congratulations to Lindsey Wommer who received certification as Employment First Leader and Halle Harper who is now certified as Employment First Job Coach.

THE BROOKWOOD WAY CONFERENCE

Brookwood has been a model for BrightStone as we have continued to expand. Members of BrightStone's marketing, residential and program staff benefitted from an immersive deep dive into Brookwood's operations as a faith-centered, vocational, and residential campus for adults with IDD.

TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children)

Hosted by Brookwood's Center for Learning, TEACCH is focused on deepening understanding of autism and strengthening support for neurodiverse learners. Three of our Lead Teachers attended this immersive experience to gain practical strategies and real-world insights to enhance learning, independence, and quality of life.

CENTER FOR NONPROFIT EXCELLENCE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Training is focused on best practices for recruiting, training, retaining and recognizing volunteers. Congratulations to our Event and Volunteer Manager, Courtney Eoff, for receiving her Volunteer Program Management certification.

BRIGHTSTONE HOSTED OUR OWN STAFF DEVELOPMENT TRAINING WITH DR. TRISH HOLLIDAY AND TAKING FLIGHT WITH DISC.

This behavioral assessment tool helps employees increase self-awareness, communicate more effectively, and improve decision-making skills and productivity. It was a very fulfilling training for all of us and a powerful way to boost morale and promote positive relationships at work.

"Attending the TEACCH training was a valuable experience that strengthened my understanding of how we can better support our students through structure, predictability, and individualized approaches. While at the training, I was able to learn strategies that can be applied in our environment to promote independence, help our students be more successful, and gain confidence. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this training and look forward to continuing to apply these strategies at BrightStone. The knowledge we gained from TEACCH will help us continue creating more supportive experiences for the adults we serve."

MEGAN LECHNER
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER - DAY PROGRAM MANAGER

WELCOME TO OUR NEW EMPLOYEES



**Barbra
Alsberge**
Residential
Direct Support



**Megan
Hoeffler**
Lead Teacher



**Terry
Sinclair**
Bus Driver



**Melissa
Varga**
Teacher
Assistant



**Julietta
Watson**
Residential
Direct Support



**Ty
White**
Residential
Direct Support



PASSING THE TORCH

Thank you to outgoing Board Members!

We celebrate two incredible leaders, Senator Jack Johnson and Dr. Ian Byram who have recently completed their terms on the BrightStone Board. We are incredibly grateful for the years of service and advocacy for our mission. During their tenure, they have fiercely championed Brightstone's mission while providing leadership and direction during the development of our campus, establishment of our residential program, and transformational growth of our day program.

Welcome to our new Board Members!

JOHN DODD

John is a senior partner with Blue Trust's Nashville office helping individuals, families and business owners gain clarity and confidence in financial decision making by applying biblical principles and technical counsel. John has been a featured speaker for the American Institute of Banking, the Federal Reserve, Focus on the Family, Kingdom Advisors and Christian Medical and Dental Society. His past and present community involvement includes leadership positions at InfoAdvantage Toastmasters, Friends of Susan Gray School at Vanderbilt University, Young Life Capernaum, Brentwood YMCA, Leadership Brentwood, and Cool Springs Rotary. John and his wife, Kathleen, moved to Brentwood over 3 decades ago and have two wonderful daughters, Joy and Grace.

PAUL JONES

Paul is husband to Cameron Jones and father to Marilyn, Birdie, Charlie and George. He currently serves as the President of Solomon Builders. He learned about Brightstone and the mission of Brightstone when Solomon Builders had the honor of building their campus. Brightstone stands out as one of Solomon Builder's most impactful projects of the last 10 years, and Paul is honored to continue to serve the organization.

COLIN LOONEY, M.D.

Colin is a longtime admirer of BrightStone and a returning board member. Dr. Looney is an orthopedic surgeon at the Bone and Joint Institute of Tennessee and was introduced to BrightStone more than 20 years ago by his mentor, the late Dr. Craig Ferrell. Dr. Looney and his wife Mary have a son and daughter and live in Franklin.

I Believe

EVERY STORY BEGINS WITH SOMEONE WHO BELIEVED

The 2nd Annual *I Believe in BrightStone* project kicked off at the beginning of August and will run through December 31st.

Last year, the community came together to launch the inaugural Project. This beautiful storytelling series provides an inspiring look into the lives of our remarkable adults and their incredible families.

The stories spoken directly from our BrightStone families are what drives the purpose and the heart of our project. And this year, as we share even more stories, we're inviting you to truly look beyond the words themselves.

Because behind every story is a life transformed. Friendship formed. Potential achieved. Confidence and independence gained.

And, behind every answered prayer is a family who found hope, support, and a place where their loved one truly belongs.

At BrightStone, adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities discover far more than educational opportunities and vocational training. They discover community. They build lasting friendships. They experience the joy of being known, celebrated, and valued for exactly who they are.

For families, BrightStone is often the answer to years of uncertainty and concern about the future. It is a place where sons and daughters are seen not for their limitations, but for their incredible potential. It is a place where dreams become realities and where lives are transformed every single day.

Through the end of the year, we'll be celebrating the students behind each story. And, through our project, you'll meet OUR friends – the students and families who have changed our lives and whose lives have been forever changed through BrightStone. Their stories are powerful reminders that when a community believes in people, extraordinary things happen.

Without you, this transformation wouldn't happen.

The hard reality is that without the ongoing support of our community, BrightStone is not possible.

Thank you for helping create a future filled with hope, opportunity, friendship, and belonging.

Together, we help create a brighter purpose-filled future.



This year's



I Believe in BrightStone goal – \$1 million!



Imagine a Place Called Home

For many adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families, the transition into adulthood brings a difficult question:

What comes next?

Parents wonder where their adult children will find a community that isn't just safe, but vibrant—a place where they can build independence, share meals with friends, and truly belong. **That desire for belonging is at the very heart of BrightStone's Homecoming Capital Campaign.**

BUILDING MORE THAN JUST WALLS

When we set out to raise \$4 million for our campus expansion, it wasn't about adding buildings to a map. It was about opening doors for adults who are waiting for a place to call home. Because of the extraordinary generosity of our community, we are already seeing this vision take shape.



TWO NEW RESIDENTIAL HOMES

Construction on the first home begins later this summer, opening up life-changing opportunities, independence, and secure living for six new BrightStone residents.



ESSENTIAL CAMPUS INFRASTRUCTURE

From laying foundational utility lines to building a dedicated Transportation Pavilion, these updates ensure our daily operations, student transit, and equipment are secure and running smoothly.



A SPACE TO CONNECT

Future plans include a vibrant outdoor recreational area on the Land of Dreams – a place for fishing, hiking, family picnics, and shared moments that bring our entire community together.

HOW YOU CAN HELP US CROSS THE FINISH LINE

- Every gift brings us one step closer to completing these transformative projects by year-end. Here are a few meaningful ways you can make an impact today:



One-Time Gift

Make an immediate impact toward the final \$800,000 by giving online or by mail.



Multi-Year Pledge

Spread your support over two or three years to help secure BrightStone's long-term growth.



Tribute or Naming Opportunities

Honor or remember a loved one with a designated gift toward a specific feature, like the Transportation Pavilion or recreational area.



Donor-Advised Funds & Stock Gifts

Maximize your tax benefits while making a powerful contribution directly from your investments or fund.



Corporate Partnerships & Matching Gifts

See if your employer offers matching gift programs to double or even triple your impact!

HELP US OPEN THE FINAL DOORS

Thanks to supporters like you, we are now within \$800,000 of our \$4 million goal. Every dollar remaining isn't just a financial metric – it represents the final stretch toward giving more adults with IDD a supportive environment where they can thrive, grow, and connect.



Show Your Support!

NEED-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS

For families caring for a loved one with IDD, financial commitments are lifelong. Rising healthcare costs, aging caregivers, and unexpected hardships can make quality care difficult to afford.

At BrightStone, we intentionally offset the true cost of tuition so our programs remain accessible. And for families who need an extra hand, our community-funded need-based scholarship program ensures that financial circumstances never stand in the way of belonging and growth.

We believe in being open and transparent about how your gifts come to life here. Annual tuition at BrightStone is currently \$17,700 for a 5 day week (7.5 hr day) full-time student – which equals approximately \$10/hour across the 231 program days we are open each year.

The annual tuition covers only 25% of the actual cost to provide specialized instruction, adaptive resources, vocational training, student transportation, and dedicated staff. Because BrightStone receives no government funding, we rely entirely on the generosity of our community to bridge the remaining 75% gap.

Without continued scholarship support, the vital progress our students make – developing life skills, growing in faith, and building independence – is at risk.

Whether through a one-time gift or a multi-year pledge, your support directly eases the burden on families and invests in lifelong transformation.

Investing in potential.

Changing Lives

Since establishing the Scholarship Fund, generous supporters have contributed nearly **\$800,000** to need-based scholarships, enabling BrightStone to award more than **\$537,000** to families in need.



NEARLY

\$800,000

GENEROUSLY
CONTRIBUTED TO THE
SCHOLARSHIP FUND.



MORE THAN

\$537,000

AWARDED IN
SCHOLARSHIPS TO
FAMILIES IN NEED.

Every gift opens the door to opportunity.



Today, we provide nearly

\$100,000

in need-based scholarship assistance each year, helping ensure that each student can continue pursuing their dreams, building meaningful relationships, and discovering a future filled with purpose.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY

To make a gift or learn more about supporting BrightStone's Need-Based Scholarship Fund, visit **brightstone.org** or call us at **(615) 790-4888**.

BELIEVER'S CLUB

Support BrightStone all year long as a monthly donor and help bridge the gap between student tuition and the cost to run our life-changing programs.

As a monthly donor, you will receive:

- A Handmade gift created by a BrightStone student
- A 10% discount on BrightStone products year-round
- An invitation to the Believer's Club Christmas reception where you can shop early for holiday gifts
- Your name on the Monthly Donor recognition board in BrightStone's lobby
- The joy of spreading hope, dignity, and purpose year-round

Make your monthly gift at

BrightStone.org/donate, or contact **Diane.Frazier@BrightStone.org**



Scan the QR code or visit **BrightStone.org/donate** for all the ways to support BrightStone and our mission.

**STORIES MY WIFE
WISHES I WOULDN'T
TELL THE CHILDREN**

MEMORIES OF A BOY'S LIFE
IN A WEST TEXAS OIL CAMP



DAVID T. (BUTCH) SEAY



**HAVE A
FUN READ**

**"Stories My Wife Wishes I
Wouldn't Tell the Children,"
authored by our friend David
Seay. Proceeds help benefit
BrightStone!**



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You can now purchase our BrightStone cookie and dip mixes online for pickup, or, have them shipped to your door! There are also some unique gift items. Visit brightstone.org for a link to the store and start shopping! More products will be added along the way so check back often for something new.



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