

Making a difference in San Antonio

PRESENTED BY *By Jessica Else, Contributing Writer*



For 75 years, Mission Road Ministries has been providing dignity and lifegiving services to community members diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and they're celebrating the milestone all year long.

Birthday parties are scheduled for the rest of the year and the first part of 2023 at most of Mission Road's apartments and programs. And the birthday will be a highlight of this year's Big And Bright

Western Shindig Fundraiser in November.

The nonprofit operates programs for children and adults with IDD as well as several apartments for long-term living with full-time care. Founded in 1947, Mission Road Ministries was started by a family whose adult son was injured in a motorcycle accident.

A search for a place for their son led the family to a tranquil plot of land in San Antonio with a ranch house and a cottage on 22 acres. It's the same land where Mission Road Ministries now sits, with a few more additions since its founding.



Photos courtesy of Mission Road Ministries

Now, Mission Road Ministries owns 20 homes with 24-hour a day supervision by qualified professionals where adults with IDD are housed. Each of the homes are outfitted with wood floors and granite countertops. The same ranch house serves as a headquarters for organizers and staff, who not only operate the full-time residency program, but also host several other programs that range from day care to finding outside resources for community members.



Adults and children with IDD are able to receive medical and mental health services, and they're also able to interact with each other and the outside world. Employment and job coaching programs are also

available, as well as programs that help enhance basic life skills.

Lynette Farrimond, Vice President of Development and Communications is one of the women who work to make all of Mission Road's programs happen and the woman who has been coordinating Mission Road's Big And Bright Western Shindig Fundraiser for the last 12 years.

"They started Mission Road Ministries with three boys and three teachers on that first day, which I think is poignant because it had a one-on-one focus from day one." Farrimond said.

She continued: "Really, we do one thing, we have people who take care of people. Everybody in our care has one thing in common and that's a diagnosis of IDD."

One family was able to support Mission Road Ministries for decades, but in the 1970's the nonprofit started branching out. Staff and founders realized they needed to find more sources of funding to continue their work and recognized a need to make more friends within the community.

And so, an annual fundraising Shindig was created as a major fundraising event for Mission Road Ministries. Since its beginnings, the Shindig has grown to be a huge event in the San Antonio area, drawing hundreds of people together for a western-themed dinner. More than 700 guests attend the event every year.

The Shindig puts a cowboy twist on a black-tie gala. Regular attendees break out their silver and turquoise, their best belt buckles and their good boots to gather and celebrate Mission Road Ministries' work with food, entertainment, dancing and a live and silent auction. There will also be an online auction for those who can't make the live event, but still want to participate.

"A lot of the same people come to the Shindig every year so it's very much like a family reunion," Farrimond said. "It's a big group that includes donors and people who support Mission Road and families that have adult children with IDD."

Not only does the Shindig provide an opportunity for community members to invest in Mission Road Ministries' work, but it also allows friends to reunite and families to connect and be inspired by each other.

"We're not a fundraising organization, we're an organization that helps people and we have to fundraise to do that," Farrimond said. "We like for everyone to be able to reunite and have fun while we raise money."

Recently, there's been a goal every year of raising \$1 million to go toward life and dignity-giving programs that are ongoing at Mission Road Ministries. This year is no different, Farrimond says they're still aiming to meet that \$1 million fundraiser goal. Last year they almost met the goal, raising \$950,000.

Every year the Shindig is chaired by a different duo from the community. The chairmen of the Shindig work with Farrimond to set the tone of the event, helping with everything from decorations to organizing the food, the auction and the rest of the program.

The 2022 Shindig Chairmen are Jessica and Josh Odom and they're already deeply involved in the planning process for the event.

"Jessica is really into the food and the décor, she's good at organizing that, so those two elements are really going to be great this year," Farrimond said. "You can expect the same fancy, western flair we're used to."

The Shindig's location has moved around a bit since it was hosted at the Bluebonnet Palace in the 70's and 80's. For the past few years, the event has been hosted at the Witte Museum, though the same centerpieces that were used in decades ago are still available for use.

“We elevated it rather significantly when we moved it to the Witte Museum,” Farrimond said. “It’s a little more elegant now, but it certainly hasn’t lost its western flair.”

The 43rd Annual Big And Bright Western Shindig is set for November 10, 2022. Ticket prices and table sponsorships vary, starting at \$350 for an individual ticket.

“It’s a chance for our family to get together, and also for folks to learn about what we do here at Mission Road Ministries,” Farrimond said.

She pointed out statistics that show the difficulties involved in raising a child diagnosed with IDD, highlighting the divorce rate in those families as 9 out of 10 couples getting divorced while parenting that child.

“We say it gently, but we do say intellectual developmental disability is a condition, it’s not an illness and it’s not currently curable,” Farrimond said. “Even though there are a lot of advances, it means a very different life experience for those couples. And that’s where Mission Road comes in.” The staff at Mission Road Ministries understands that coping with a child diagnosed with IDD is difficult, no matter the child’s age. The staff members at Mission Road are prepared to share the lifelong burden of parenting a child with IDD.

Through programs, parents can get a break from their duties to concentrate on self-care. Parents can get resources on how to best care for their child. And parents can find a safe, full-time environment for their child where professional caretakers are available 24-7.

“For many families, we know that it feels like our burden to bear, but our message is that you don’t have to do it alone,” Farrimond said.

For more information visit www.missionroadministries.org.