



Happiness Bag, Incorporated is an independent, not for profit, United Way Agency, which provides recreational and educational programs and services to individuals with mental and/or physical disabilities in the Wabash Valley. The one question that is most often asked: "What is a Happiness Bag?" A happiness bag is a tradition in Korea, similar to our Christmas stocking, except the Koreans use it all year long. The colorful little bag is used to give gifts, usually making the receiver happy, but often provokes thought to help the recipient become more aware of life and to learn a valuable lesson. Happiness Bag adopted its' name from this tradition and utilizes this philosophy in all of its endeavors.

Founded in 1971 as a touring theater company, Happiness Bag presented plays to schools and various organizations, with the cast consisting of students from Indiana State University. As the touring company grew, the cast began to primarily consist of individuals with disabilities and those without. As a direct result of our theater group, Happiness Bag has evolved to service not only the needs of the physically and mentally disabled, but their entire family as well.

Happiness Bag, Incorporated is organized exclusively for charitable, educational, and recreational activities. In general, the mission statement of Happiness Bag is as follows:

*Happiness Bag, a not for profit organization, provides adaptive recreational and educational programs that promote self-image, maintain skills and supports care givers of disabled children/adults in safe, nurturing environments.*

In 1987, Happiness Bag changed its program format from the drama/arts areas and began to focus more on the recreational and educational areas of programming for the physically and mentally disabled. Our Agency is the only recreational and educational oriented facility in the entire Wabash Valley that accepts individuals with most all types of disabilities and degrees of capabilities, from the extremely gifted to the severely mentally disabled. Even though all of our programs are designed for the physically and/or mentally disabled, enrollment is not limited to this population. We provide care and programming for individuals ranging in age from five to adult.

Due to the number of programs we offer and the continued growth in the number of individuals participating in our programs, in 1997, we moved from our location on South Seventh Street to our current location. A group of individuals, who wish to remain anonymous, made it possible to have a long-standing dream become a reality. The facility is located on the south side of Terre Haute and sits directly behind the Vigo County Fairgrounds. Our facility offers a large recreational room, spacious offices, and a full size gymnasium. Additionally, our facility rests on approximately six acres of land, which also includes a softball field. The Board of Directors continuously work to further develop the programs and services for all individuals in our community. It is our sincere hope that as a result of our long and rich history in the Wabash Valley, we will continue to grow and prosper and provide quality programs and services to not only our program participants, but their families as well.

## **Programs offered by Happiness Bag, Incorporated**

***Personal Development & Social Growth:*** This program incorporates many opportunities for our participants, including an ***After-School program***. Individuals participating in the ***After-School program*** are comprised of individuals from the Adult Day Services program and individuals attending at the conclusion of their school day. The ***After-School program*** begins at 4:00pm and lasts for one hour. This program consists of activities in the areas of: arts/crafts; music; recreation; nature; drama; as well as special holiday and birthday parties. Prior to and at the conclusion of the ***After-School program***, we provide structured care until parents/guardians/providers are available to pick up their child/adult. We provide care during school breaks, such as spring and Christmas breaks, as well as other holidays when school may not be in session. During the School year, care is available until 6:00pm, Monday through Friday. If prior arrangements are made, we can provide care until 7:00pm, Monday through Thursday.

Arrangements must be made with the Covered Bridge Special Education District and Vigo County Special Needs Transportation Department for transportation to inquire if transportation is available to our facility at the conclusion of the school day. For those attending Spectrum, arrangements must also be made with their staff for transportation to our facility. Additional transportation services have been provided by the Area 7 Agency for Aging and Disabled and the Terre Haute City Bus. All transportation fees are the responsibility of the individual participant, unless other arrangements have been established with the Executive Director.

Additional programs offered through the ***Personal Development & Social Growth program*** include Friday night dances and Friend's Club. The **dances** occur approximately every other month. Sometimes the dances have a holiday theme and other times, it is just a good old-fashioned social. All of our dances have our own very special DJ, Nancy of Songbird Karaoke. The admission fee for the dances is generally donations of paper products, snack or craft-related items and at Christmas time, gifts for the Mental Health Association's Christmas Gift Lift. The **Friend's Club** meets one or two Saturdays throughout the year and provide participants with the opportunity to participate in a variety of social activities with their peers. The group also conducts their own fundraising event, making "Cookies in a Jar". The funds raised from this event assist in funding various overnights and parties throughout the year.

For emergency early school dismissals, registered participants in school, whose parents/legal guardian/provider works, can attend our facility for the remainder of the day. In the event that the Vigo County School Corporation closes for winter weather related issues, Happiness Bag is also closed.

***Adult Day Services:*** The Adult Day Services program is designed for individuals who have completed their stay in the public school system. These individuals are generally 21 years of age or older. The primary focus of this program is to assist and instruct the participants in maintaining current skill levels, to adapt current skills to "real life" situations and to provide the participants with a meaningful day of activities. This program is offered year-round, from 9:00am until 3:00pm, Monday through Friday. Participants bring a non-perishable lunch with them daily and for those who stay after 3:00pm, a nutritious snack is provided. Themes addressed during structured activity time are Emergency response, cleanliness, decision-making, the body, nutrition, seasons, countries, modes of transportation, feelings, self-esteem, safety, wildlife, outer space, exercise/recreation, and community outings. The activities are planned to meet the needs of all participants regardless of ability level. This program has been approved to accept individuals who are receiving Medicaid Waiver services established by the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities through one of the following waivers: Developmental Disabilities waiver, Autism Waiver and the Support Services waiver.

**Summer Day Camp:** We provide an eight-week day camping experience, which is held Monday through Fridays, from 9:00am until 3:00pm, at our facility for our school-aged participants. These individuals divided into groups participate in a variety of structured activities throughout the day that are centered on a particular theme of the week. The activities can be in the areas of arts/crafts; recreation; music; nature; or drama. The **Summer Day Camp** has the distinction of being the only summer program in the Wabash Valley area, solely designed for individuals with special needs.

**Respite Weekends:** Throughout the year, we will offer various *Respite Care Weekends* for our participants. Participants will be taken on a "first come, first serve" basis and will spend the weekend at the Center providing parents and/or caregivers with a needed break and the participant with an opportunity to spend time with their friends, just like a "slumber party".

**Bowling:** Bowling is held on Friday evenings in the fall and spring at the Terre Haute Bowling Center and on Sunday afternoons at Patrick's in Sullivan. In the fall, bowlers work on their skills to gain ribbons and medals during competition in the Indiana Special Olympics. During the spring session, bowlers strive for trophies awarded at our Annual Awards banquet in the summer. We utilize ramps, handle balls, etc. for those in need of extra assistance. Anyone regardless of his or her degree of disability can bowl. We have the distinction of having the **only** bowling league solely designed for individuals with special needs and also the largest organized bowling league in the Wabash Valley.

**Special Olympics:** Any individual, with an intellectual disability and at least eight years of age, is offered the opportunity to participate in programs offered by Special Olympics Indiana through our agency. The Special Olympics season begins in August with the aquatics program. Practices for the aquatics program are conducted at the Arena pool on the campus of Indiana State University. This program offers both lap swimming and recreational activity. In September, the fall bowling season kicks off with athletes being given the opportunity to enter the Area 7 Special Olympics bowling tournament which is held at the Terre Haute Bowling Center in November. Athletes, placing in the top portion of their divisions, are then eligible for competition at the State level in Indianapolis in December. Also, in September, the Unified volleyball season takes off. Athletes compete in games and tournaments to prepare for competition at the Fall Classic in mid October. Athletes are also given the opportunity to begin conditioning training throughout the month of November for basketball. Each team practices two nights per week. These teams play games throughout the months of January and February to prepare for tournament action in March across the state. Although basketball may have just concluded in March, April brings about the time for track & field season, bocce, and spring aquatics individual events. Bocce is considered a *Masters level* sport and is only available to athletes, 30 years of age and older. All of the preparation and practice for track and bocce is put to the test with the Area 7 Special Olympics Spring games in May.

Once competition is complete at the Area level, it is time to switch things to high gear and prepare for the Indiana Special Olympics State Summer Games, held the first weekend of June on the campus of Indiana State University. Our athletes are given the opportunity to compete in one of four sports – unified or traditional doubles bowling; track & field; unified or traditional bocce; or aquatics during this three-day weekend event. Athletes are placed in divisions according to their ages and entry scores and will compete against over 2600 athletes from across the State of Indiana.

As soon as the Summer Games are completed, we begin fighting the heat for softball season. We generally field two or three teams and compete in a variety of tournaments and games through the summer months. The final objective is to compete in the State Softball tournament in Indianapolis in late August.

All of the athletes that participate in the Special Olympics programs must participate complete an application packet and participate in an eight-week training program for each sport that they compete in. The athletes receive quality training and instruction from individuals who have been trained and certified through a mandatory certification program required by Special Olympics International.

***Respite Care Program:*** This program provides parents/caregivers with a needed “respite”. The respite can be provided in the home of the participant or in the community. It is asked that respite services be scheduled at least two weeks in advance so that staffing can be obtained. Respite services cannot be scheduled while a parent/caregiver is working, nor while daily Happiness Bag programs are in operation. Respite services are available to individuals receiving Medicaid Waiver services or as a private pay service.

Happiness Bag believes in the United Way philosophy of volunteerism. We rely heavily on volunteers; parents/guardians/providers, the Indiana State University AmeriCorps program, Foster Grandparents, fraternities and sororities from the local colleges and universities, the Junior Mental Health Association’s No Fear Future Clubs, and the Council for Exceptional Children from Indiana State University. Additionally, various civic and social organizations have helped by giving of their time to work with the individuals whom we serve. In cooperation with Indiana State University, St Mary of the Woods College, and Ivy Tech State College, we provide students enrolled in a variety of courses to receive “hands on” experience and at the same time receive credit for their course requirements. Many family members also help out by donating their time to help with lawn work, maintenance, cleaning, fund raising, chaperoning programs, and other special events.

Happiness Bag is very pleased to have the support of the Happiness Bag, Incorporated *Parent Advisory Organization*. This group of parents, guardians, family members, friends, etc. was made a legal entity in the fall of 1997. This group was formed to promote the welfare of Happiness Bag and implement various activities and fund raising projects, which are considered appropriate by the governing board of Happiness Bag, Incorporated; to assist with the activities which supplement and compliment the Center’s programs and services. The Parent Advisory Organization plays a dual role by helping the community to better understand and appreciate Happiness Bag and by assisting the Center and its’ programs for better understanding within the community.

Happiness Bag, Incorporated is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. This group of community leaders, which also includes parents/guardians of our participants, provides guidance to the Executive Director in the overall management of the Agency. The Board of Directors is responsible for implementing fund raising activities, which assist to supplement funding received from the United Way, as well as various other donors and benefactors. The Board of Directors is also instrumental in the on going efforts to increase the awareness and support for Happiness Bag throughout the entire community.

Although there are fees associated with the majority of our programs, Happiness Bag, Incorporated will work with all individuals regarding financial responsibilities for services. Due to the uniqueness of our organization, it is a constant challenge to find and/or develop sources of funding to supplement what we receive from the United Way, participant fees, monthly donations, grants and foundations. However, without this support and that of the community through contributions for fund raising efforts, we would never have the opportunity to allow our participants many of the same experiences that others may take for granted.

Because of the need in the Wabash Valley for care and understanding of the disabled, we provide people from all walks of life, a unique and effective educational and recreational program. If it had not have been for the original touring theater company and its tremendous success, the support of the United Way, and the hundreds of volunteers from the community, Happiness Bag, Incorporated would not be where it is today.

If you or someone you know could utilize the services that Happiness Bag, Incorporated offers or if you would like to receive a *Participant Application Packet*, please contact us at 812-234-8867, Monday through Friday or you may also check us out on-line at [www.happinessbag.org](http://www.happinessbag.org). For further information, please contact Jodi Moan, Executive Director at [jmexdir@aol.com](mailto:jmexdir@aol.com) or Christi Deal, Program Director at [wthboys3@aol.com](mailto:wthboys3@aol.com).