



## Rosewood Services 25th Anniversary Celebration

Celebration Address by Tammy Hammond

Rosewood Founder and Executive Director

May 12, 2023

Several years ago, I read a quote saying “*Your story becomes the accumulation of your actions taken ..... and actions not taken*” ... That didn't seem overwhelmingly profound at the moment... but as I sit here today reflecting on 25 years of Rosewood, the truth of that statement becomes very clear.

I want to take just a few minutes to talk about the Rosewood Story ... Some of you know it well; you may have been here for a long time; a few of you have been here from the earliest days .... And some of you have been part of Rosewood for just a short time, and maybe have little idea of the past.

May 4th, 1998 ... I pulled up in the driveway of a house on North Washington that was to become the new office of Rosewood Services. I sat there in my well-used minivan as the reality of the moment soaked in. — I was the only employee, and my kids didn't

know that I had mortgaged everything, including their tennis shoes, to start a business that I hoped would make a difference in the lives of others. — I believed we could create unique opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities ... opportunities that could help them enjoy and participate in productive lives, much like the lives we all hope for.

I may have been the only employee that day, but I wasn't alone. Folks like Roland and Jane Smith, Randy and Sandy Smith, Leon and Carol Fishburn, Jeannie Girton and Phylis Vogt were in the background, encouraging me to get started and work hard.

Within a few weeks Vicki Schmitt became my first employee, Ladonna Dirks, Patty Halseth, Grace Johnson, Virginia Jacobs and Jennie Chism quickly followed, and we were off.

We began adding residential locations to provide homes for the clients we served, started construction on the Outback building to improve day services, and added vehicles to help with the growing transportation needs.

There really is no way to explain those early days other than everyone did whatever it was at the moment that needed done. We were gaining clients, things were growing rapidly, and I became thankful for the can-do attitudes of everyone around me.

Staying focused on creating innovative and unique opportunities for our clients led to Rosewood's growth. We added the Furniture Gallery, began the Equestrian Therapy Program, a riding arena, a greenhouse, an industrial kitchen, a studio to begin making the Rosewood Creations line of products, the Winery, the Wine Cellar, the Bargain Barn, the Maintenance and ECycle building, the Employment Network office, and now the new Studio work-training location.

That growth has allowed us to become one of Barton County's largest private employers, as we operate these day locations, along with numerous residential homes,

provide case management services, transportation, health monitoring, all of the administrative and marketing needs for our company, with all of these being performed locally.

Along the way, Rosewood has been fortunate to meet many people passionate about their own work, who became our friends as they have applied their expertise to help Rosewood to continue to create opportunities that impact the lives of people with developmental disabilities. To mention all of these folks is impossible, and if I tried, I am certain I would leave names unsaid that should have been mentioned, but these are a few that stand out, some of them are here today joining us....

People like Dan Biles, who led us for many years through the legal work, and sometimes drama, necessary to operate our business, well before he became a Kansas Supreme Court Justice.

The late Bob Bethell, a Kansas State Representative who worked hard to change Kansas Statute, so Rosewood Winery could become the only winery in North America to employ individuals with developmental disabilities.

Joel Jackson, who from the start, began guiding and advising us on guardianships and all of the necessary paperwork, Joel also serves on our Foundation Board.

Sheryl Cheely, who serves on Rosewood Roots and Wings Foundation Board, and as a small portion of her generosity to the community, purchased and donated the Dolly Trolley to our Foundation to operate, bringing smiles to faces of children and adults alike.

Howard Partington, who after his retirement from a lifetime of serving in city administration, joined us to assist with his expertise in dealing with government departments, helping with KDOT transportation, and monitoring Topeka for items important and integral to Rosewoods operation.

Then there is my family.... Four years after I founded Rosewood, my husband, Eric, left his job and trained to become a PATH-certified therapist to manage the equestrian program; my daughters Amanda and Anna began working while they were in school and have become leaders in managing Rosewood's daily operations; my son Alex took over management and daily oversight of the winery; while my son Andy marketed the wine to liquor stores across Kansas. I would like to say they chose to be a part of Rosewood, but I'm afraid if you asked them, they might say it was more expectation than choice. No matter their answer, I am very thankful they are here.

These people, together with so many others, along with each and every one of you have been, and continue to be, essential in helping Rosewood grow, and making an impact on the people we serve, and on our community for the past 25 years.

The impact achieved has been substantial, as we have been able to successfully help clients become employed and earn paychecks ... watched them compete in winemaking contests against all of the other wineries in Kansas ... and bring home medals ... participate in horse shows winning hundreds of ribbons, and eventually winning world championships ... just to mention a few.

We have made a positive impact on our community by choosing to operate as a normal business, rather than choosing to ask the community to foot our taxes through non-profit status. By choosing that, we have been able to generate nearly 125 million dollars of payroll, property taxes, vehicle taxes, and sales tax into the community to be re-spent over and over, helping support other businesses and the services necessary to operate a safe community.

While our past impact is important, it truly is what each one of us do today, and what we will do tomorrow that continues to impact lives and the community around us... YOU are important .... What you do makes a difference.... We are writing this story ... The

Rosewood Story ... together ... and as the quote from my introduction states, Every action we take – and don't take – will impact the story that is written.

As I look at these past 25 years, I feel Rosewood has been successful, not because of our growth, because growth is merely a result. I believe success is measured much differently.... I believe success is measured by the *difference* you have made in the lives of others ... and the *difference* they have made in your own.

Thank you all for being here today; I am proud to be here with you; proud of the difference we are making together. Thank you for working hard each day to continue to help write the Rosewood Story ... and at the same time, continuing to write your own story. Our story would be much less of a story without each one of you.... Thank You.



**Celebrate Silver** – Hundreds of people, associated with Rosewood Services, enjoy a beautiful sunny spring day on the west lawn of Great Bend Brit Spaugh Zoo on May 12. Rosewood Services is celebrating its silver anniversary this month, having opened its doors in May of 1998.