

Tearing Down Walls, Building Up People

A member in Wisconsin turned his life passion into a career of helping people flourish.

by Anne Rogers



Greg Gintz (far right) and his *Therapy Without Walls* team get together for a retreat on Greg's family's land.

At the age of five, Greg Gintz realized he loved helping people when he volunteered with his parents to assemble food baskets. In elementary school, he volunteered to be a peer mediator, and helped his fellow classmates resolve conflicts. When he looks back, he feels like these experiences were the beginning of his career training.

Greg became an Eagle Scout at seventeen. He named the project that earned him his Eagle Scout status the *Giving Tree Project*. It began when he met with his high school social worker to ask how he could help others in the Verona community. Over 300 children were in need and weren't going to receive Christmas presents that year, so Greg got started right away by meeting with local businesses. He set up Christmas trees covered with tags for people to take and purchase a present for a child. Over 330 presents, plus cash, were donated. "I recently met with scouts from my old Verona troop and found out they still carry

out this annual project," Greg stated. He is proud that he connected the scouts with the high school social worker and that years later, the project is still helping children in the community.

When asked about his career path, Greg explained, "I knew I wanted to go into social work during my sophomore year of high school." After high school, he graduated with a degree from UW-Madison and worked for one year at a nonprofit in direct practice. He eventually started working for Sauk County Human Services, where he served adults with serious developmental problems and adolescents who had not had success with treatment. Unfortunately, when Sauk County privatized, social workers were the first to get laid off, and Greg was forced to start over. That's when he founded *Therapy Without Walls*.

Therapy Without Walls is based in Reedsburg, Wisconsin and provides services outside of the confines of traditional therapy by meeting with patients in their homes,

*"Knowing
what you enjoy
most in life from
a very young
age can help
you choose your
profession."*



Greg (left), Dominick, and Grant Gintz pose for a three generation photo of Eagle Scouts.



Greg Gintz receives the *Most Distinguished Agency Supervisor of the Year Award* from UW-Madison School of Social Work.

schools, and communities. Greg started the agency with zero staff, but within one month of opening, he had enough demand to start hiring. Now, the organization is about to celebrate it's tenth anniversary and currently employs 40 staff members working in ten different Wisconsin counties. Greg has opened six offices; two in Reedsburg, two in Richland County, and two in Adams County. He has plans to open three more. "I want to reiterate that I love what I do," Greg shared. "I feel reaffirmed and rejuvenated as my agency grows and we're able to work with more adults and kids in their local communities."

In addition to running his organization, Greg partners with the University of Wisconsin by hiring two to four interns per year, lecturing to graduate-level classes, and talking to UW students and staff about different services and models. Out of 600 supervisors, Greg was recently selected to receive the *Most Distinguished Agency Supervisor of the Year Award* from the UW-Madison School of Social

Work. Last year, Greg received another honor preceptor — Honorary Staff Member of the University.

Greg's involvement with National Mutual Benefit started at a young age. With NMB's support, Greg helped establish the first skateboard park in the Verona area. "When we were younger, it was illegal to skateboard in parks, and we'd get kicked out. So in the fifth grade, me and two of my buddies went around town to get a petition signed by residents advocating for a skateboard park in town." The park was finally built, safely and legally by the time they were seniors in high school. NMB provided matching funds to help build the skateboard park and held annual competitions for a few years to create awareness.

Greg has also served on his local NMB Branch 400 board for many years. Throughout his tenure, he and his family have engaged NMB and community members through several fundraisers in the Madison area. They've also helped improve their community

through food baskets, Flag Day and Veterans Day observances, and Adopt-a-Highway and park cleanups. Most recently, when a state of emergency was declared in Reedsburg due to flooding, Greg and his family applied for a Community Benefit Grant from their branch and assisted the Wisconsin National Guard and the Reedsburg Chief of Police with disaster relief. They helped coordinate the filling of sandbags and transporting them to homes in the area in order to prevent more damage.

The two most important things in Greg's life are his family and his community. "I used to look up to a lot of people like Michael Jordan and Tony Hawk, but in the end, it's my dad, Grant Gintz, who's my hero," he stated. "He has always been there for me and has always led by example." Greg continues to lead by example, and his own children seem to be following in his footsteps. His son Dominick was recently honored at his Eagle Scout Court of Honor, making him the third generation Eagle Scout in the family. ♦



It was a group effort to provide flood relief in Reedsburg this year. Greg (left) and many other humanitarians filled and transported sandbags to protect homes.



Greg Gintz (center) stands with Verona Skatepark competition winners at an annual summer event.