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Lending a hand comes naturally

COMMUNITIES

:: BY AMEREN JOURNAL STAFF ::

Matt Thayer, managing supervisor, Investor Relations, Ameren Services, has a longstanding commitment to volunteerism.

In the winter of 2003, while still an MBA student at Washington University in St. Louis, Thayer wrote the original business plan for Memory Care Home Solutions, a non-profit organization with a mission of extending and improving quality time at home for people with memory loss, dementia or Alzheimer's disease. He is now president of the board. He is also vice president of the board of Rainbow Village, a non-profit organization that provides safe, affordable homes in the St. Louis area for people with developmental disabilities, and sits on the Saint Louis Science Center Emerging Leadership Council.

Thayer, whose first community service experience was as an Eagle Scout, says lending a hand to others comes naturally.

"I grew up in a family where my parents always found a way to balance work, community service and family," he says. "Community service and helping others are responsibilities we take very personally – my wife and I work to pass these values on to our children."

Memory Care, his first major responsibility, is particularly gratifying.

"It's about enabling people to cope with the stresses of caring for someone with, typically, Alzheimer's disease," Thayer says. "We are reducing caregiver stress, reducing hospital visits and responding to the unique needs of those we serve. I have personal pride in this."

In 2006, Memory Care founder and executive director Lisa Baron, who had asked for his help with the business plan in 2003, invited Thayer to join the board. He started as treasurer and became board president just over a year ago.

"He's worn a lot of different hats in support of the organization, and we're thrilled to have him at the helm now," Baron says. "Matt is constantly raising the bar in all areas of our organization. His unbridled enthusiasm, positive values and grounded leadership help us serve as many families as possible. His comfort at the helm is a gift to Memory Care Home Solutions and the broader community."

Thayer, who estimates he spends about 200 volunteer hours a year with Memory Care, adds another 60 to 100 hours with Rainbow Village. He has been on the Rainbow Village Board for



five years, is on the finance committee and is president of the Rainbow Foundation.

"It's rewarding," he says. "The most impactful thing to me is meeting and interacting with our residents at our annual picnic. Seeing the challenges these folks face can be emotionally overwhelming."

It's also encouraging.

"They are warm, curious individuals who always want to shake your hand, know your name and engage with you," he says.

Thayer is particularly appreciative of Ameren's commitment to helping the community, from co-workers who volunteer time to the financial support Ameren offers Memory Care and Rainbow Village.

"Having not only Ameren's significant financial support for our communities, but also knowing there are lots of people willing to help when an organization is in need, I think that's tremendous," Thayer says.