



Strategic Plan

FY 2017–2020

This document contains the vision, mission, values and strategic initiatives as recommended by the Strategic Planning Committee and approved by the Board of Directors on August 22nd, 2017.

INTRODUCTION

The previous strategic plan was developed in 2013 and extended through 2016. John Lengerman chaired the task force. The plan served as a road map for Community Link and critical advances were made in board and funding development as well as transitioning the organization to a person-centered philosophy.

Community Link began this new strategic planning process in October 2016. Board member Joseph Heimann chaired the Strategic Planning Committee. Board members on the committee included Leslie Pedtke, Sandra Harris, William Hibner, Amanda Oelze and Jennifer Foushee. Staff members on the committee included John Huelskamp, Barb Nelson, Fran Taylor, Chris Gebke, Laurie Hemker and Cindy Timmermann.

Strategic planning consultant, Dawn Newman, from St. Louis University, was selected from a pool of qualified candidates to facilitate the committee retreat and the overall planning process. Many trends, factors and issues affecting Community Link over the next three years were researched and identified. Ultimately, five (5) strategic goals were selected in response to the most pressing issues confronting Community Link and requiring action in the next 1-3 years. Specific objectives were developed to support their achievement. The five identified strategic goals, to be addressed during the fiscal years 2018-2020, are as follows:

- 1. Growth in the Residential (CILA) Program**
- 2. Growth in the Endowment Fund**
- 3. Increase Private Sources of Revenue**
- 4. Reduction in Staff Turnover/Length of Open Position Time**
- 5. Develop Self-Sustaining Business and Alternative Options to Traditional Sheltered Workshop Employment and Sub-Minimum Wage**

MOTTO

Disability to Possibility

MISSION

To challenge, teach and inspire both participants and community, linking them in ways that enhance their lives

CORE VALUES

- **Respect** – *Honoring the value, autonomy and contributions of everyone*
- **Commitment** – *Excellence through passion*
- **Making a Difference** – *Enhancing the lives of others*

PHILOSOPHY

Our charitable community organization is built upon a tradition of offering services that meet the highest quality standards to individuals, whether child or adult who are in need because of disability, age or economics. Whether services are provided in the home, in a residential setting, in a day-program setting, or on the job, those services are focused on the individual, their family and their community and are provided in a competent, caring, and professional manner. All agency programs have a goal of learning and implementing best practices.

VALUES

Community Link is guided by the following values:

All people...

- ❖ Will be treated with dignity and respect.
- ❖ Will have support in making self-directed living choices to pursue their dreams.
- ❖ Regardless of their disability, or other difficulties, can live and work in the community.

It is our responsibility to...

- ❖ Improve the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities, and other difficulties, through innovation and best practices.
- ❖ Provide caring support in a family-oriented environment.
- ❖ Advocate on behalf of all people with developmental disabilities, and other difficulties, to live and work in the community.
- ❖ Educate the community about the needs and offerings of people with developmental disabilities and other difficulties.
- ❖ Support families in the care of their loved one.
- ❖ Enhance exceptional support through continual self-evaluation.
- ❖ Be good stewards of funds we receive from the government and our donors.
- ❖ Practice excellent fiscal management to ensure long-term viability of the services we provide.

SCOPE OF OPERATIONS

Founded 45 years ago, in 1972, as Clinton County Rehabilitation Center, Inc., Community Link, at the current point-in-time, regularly serves over 200 children and 300 adults from eight (8) Southwestern Illinois counties: Bond, Clinton, Effingham, Jersey, Madison, Marion, St. Clair and Washington. Community Link's eight CILAs (Community Integrated Living Arrangement group homes) are located in five municipalities: Aviston, Breese, Carlyle, Germantown, Highland and Trenton. The agency is a major employer, with 150 full-time and part-time employees on all shifts in Clinton, Madison, Washington and St. Clair counties, plus 150 participants earning a part-time paycheck in the production (sheltered) workshop.

HISTORY

Serving people with developmental disabilities and families with children Pre-Birth to 21, Community Link helps people achieve learning breakthroughs, employ their skills and talents (ideally in the community, but also in our “sheltered” production workshop, and even in classroom settings), live as independently as possible in a home of their own, and make friends as active volunteers in community groups that welcome their presence and contributions.

Community Link, chartered as Clinton County Rehabilitation Center, Inc., was founded by a small group of parents seeking local services for their children with developmental disabilities. The agency began with a staff of six serving 27 persons in Clinton County. In 41 years, the agency has grown to regularly serve more than 200 families of young children at risk of developmental delay and more than 300 adults with developmental disabilities annually across multiple Illinois counties including Clinton, Madison and St. Clair.

The agency’s most recent expansion was in January 2008, in response to a sudden request to provide services for up to 116 adults with developmental disabilities in St. Clair County (thus increasing Community Link’s adult caseload by nearly 50 percent). To meet this community need, the agency had to find and lease a service-delivery site in St. Clair County, promote and re-assign personnel internally, hire additional personnel, and equip the rooms. The Metro site opened in July 2008, less than six weeks after obtaining municipal permits. Some of the new program participants initially were served at the existing sites in Clinton County, and 100 are now being served at the Metro site, with additional participants enrolling monthly.

Governed by a voluntary Board of Directors, the agency has demonstrated its ability to provide quality, well-managed services, comply with programmatic and fiscal requirements, and effectively and efficiently administer grants. The agency has been continuously accredited by CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) since 1979, has remained the federal Early Head Start grantee for two counties since 1999, and meets or exceeds the Quality Standards for Agencies of the United Way of Greater St. Louis.

Community Link’s longtime executive director, John J. Sedivy (who led the human-services agency almost since its inception in 1972 until his retirement June 30, 2008) was honored with the 2007 Don Burke Award for Executive Excellence by the Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities.

The agency developed from a satellite training-and-employment facility of the Kaskaskia Workshop in Marion County. The growing number of persons needing services in Clinton County prompted parents, supported by the Clinton County Mental Health Association and other concerned citizens, to incorporate a sheltered workshop separate from Kaskaskia Workshop to serve Clinton County. Community Link received its charter in April 1972 under the name of Clinton County Rehabilitation Center, Inc. (CCRC). CCRC moved to its present location in Breese in 1982 and changed its community (dba) name to Community Link in 1995. The process of formally changing the corporate name to Community Link for all business matters was completed in 2008.

Initially operating as a workshop that fulfilled contract work and made and sold crafts, Community Link has expanded its services to encompass educational, vocational, residential, family-support, case coordination, and recreational and community-service programs. The Developmental Training Program teaches individuals with developmental disabilities the life skills that empower them to become more self-reliant. The Work Training Program offers adults with developmental disabilities the chance to perform hand-assembly and packaging work, as well as learn skills necessary for obtaining community employment. Job Readiness Training, Job Placement and Supported Employment have helped program participants find and maintain competitive community employment. A Senior Services Program serves people of retirement age who also have developmental disabilities.

In addition to the on-site programs, Community Link also provides off-site Community Living Programs for persons with developmental disabilities. Since its inception in June 1981, this residential program has grown from its original Community Integrated Living Arrangement (CILA), or small-group home, in Carlyle, Illinois, to eight CILAs, which combine household-skills training with independent living, in Aviston, Breese (3 homes), Carlyle, Germantown, Highland and Trenton. Each CILA is home to between four and eight adults and provides a family-sized, community-integrated setting with 24-hour supervision. For those living independently, Community Link provides Intermittent CILA, which includes in-home assistance with budgeting, meal planning, home maintenance and transportation to appointments.

Community Link's First Step in-home programs serve families raising young children, from the time of the mother's pregnancy through age 21. First Step was the first home-based program in Southern Illinois for children 0-3 with developmental delays. Thirty-four years later, its parent educators and therapists still promote prenatal care, educate parents, and involve family as the child's first and best teachers, through Prevention, Early Intervention

and Early Head Start programs. Beginning in 2007, through Children's Waiver, First Step also now provides service facilitation for children ages 3-21 with developmental disabilities. Annually, First Step also: provides more than 300 children with screenings for developmental delays; contracts for pediatric therapy services; hosts dental-hygiene clinics serving 50-75 youngsters; facilitates playgroups and socializations for young children and their families; offers bilingual assistance; and links families to agencies that can provide emergency basic needs and health care.

Community Link partners with South Central Transit to ensure bus/van transportation for people between their homes and Community Link. Riders are assisted by bus monitors. Most of the buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts for people with multiple disabilities. More than 250 people now use this transportation network each working day. Additionally, each CILA home has a wheelchair-accessible van, as does the Early Head Start program.

In 2007, Community Link introduced the *Buddy Walk*, a nationwide program established in 1995 by the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS), which includes a one mile walk to promote acceptance and inclusion for persons with developmental disabilities. The Buddy Walk is held at the Carlyle dam and used as a fund and friend raiser for Community Link.

John Foppe was hired in June of 2008 to replace longtime executive director John Sedivy. Born without arms, Foppe is the author of *What's Your Excuse? Making the Most of What You Have*. A protégé of Zig Ziglar, Foppe has been an international adviser on overcoming challenging conditions and effectively implementing business visions.

Fall 2008 saw rapid escalation of the State of Illinois fiscal crisis, with projected funding cuts and immediate six-month payment delays, affecting human-services agencies statewide. A Wall Street Journal front-page article highlighted the possible resulting closure of the Highland CILA and consequential effects on residents; readers responded with major gifts.

Seeking to increase social-enterprise funding streams while increasing community awareness and integration of disabled residents, Community Link launched in October 2010 a client-operated Curbside Recycling pick-up service in Breese, with support and substantial funding from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Mr. Foppe resigned in June of 2011 and was replaced by interim executive director Fran Taylor. John Huelskamp was hired as Community Link's new executive director in January of 2012. Huelskamp makes the transition from

geriatric, long-term care to the field of developmental disabilities and other difficulties.

In 2013, Community Link adopted person-centered concept as its core philosophy. As a result, the formation of the Link Enlighteners, a small group of participants from Adult Day Program that take daily trips into the community for independence, inclusion and acceptance, begins.

In 2015, Community Link moves its annual Buddy Walk from Carlyle to Breese. Spanning a five year period from 2013 to 2018, the Buddy Walk grows from 300 registered walkers to 1,750 registered walkers and goes from \$16,000 raised to \$174,000 raised.

In 2017, Community Link formally begins partnership with the Special Needs Foundation for Community Link that establishes an endowment fund for Community Link.

Also in 2017, Community Link opens its eighth CILA, an eight bed home located in Trenton, Illinois.

45 YEARS OF GROWTH AND EXCELLENCE

- 1971** Initiated by a small group of concerned parents, opening as a satellite of Kaskaskia Workshop, with a sheltered workshop and work-activity center in Carlyle.
- 1972** Chartered on April 13 as a not-for-profit corporation (Clinton County Rehabilitation Center, Inc.) by the State of Illinois, with six staff members and 27 program participants. Executive Director hired.
- 1976** Pioneered Early Intervention with Southern Illinois' first home-based program for children 0-3 and their families, after First Step Program Director was hired in November.
- 1979** Awarded highest level of accreditation by CARF ... The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities; status maintained continuously since 1979.
- 1979** Expanded the agency's services to include Case Coordination.
- 1981** Opened the agency's first community integrated living arrangement (CILA) group home.
- 1982** Relocated offices and daytime programs to Breese to accommodate the growing number of program participants and workshop contracts.

- 1985** Committed to the CILA group-home concept for the long term by purchasing a two-story home in Germantown; relocated the six CILA residents from their rented house in Carlyle.
- 1987** Expanded the Breese facility, doubling the original square footage, to provide 10 Developmental Training classrooms and a lunch/recreation room for participants, with the old section remodeled to better suit production activities and add office space.
- 1987** Started contractual relationship with B Line.
- 1989** Awarded state funding to provide Respite Services for Clinton County families.
- 1992** Created, within the Developmental Training Program, a Senior Program for participants age 55 and older, who wanted to retire or work only part time and who desired typical senior activities such as attending the Senior Center for lunch or having coffee in the morning at a restaurant.
- 1993** Expanded services to include Supported Employment, providing participants with community jobs and supports to maintain the jobs.
- 1993** Expanded Early Intervention services through a Part H grant from the Illinois State Board of Education.
- 1993** Co-founded and became organizers for the Clinton County Interagency Council, meeting quarterly.
- 1995** Expanded day facilities in Breese, opening a second building (now called Community Link Breese East) housing administrative services, community services, 0-3 services, and production facilities, and extensively renovating the original building in Breese (now called Community Link Breese West).
- 1997** Announced name change to Community Link, in 25th year of providing services.
- 1997** Expanded CILA program with its second group home—in downtown Carlyle.
- 1998** Approved as a United Way member agency—the first in Clinton County.
- 1998** Started contractual relationship with Jim's Formal wear.
- 1999** Awarded federal contract to provide Early Head Start in Clinton and Washington counties.
- 1999** Enhanced First Step services, with staff certification as Parents as Teachers educators.
- 1999** Opened a third group home, in Highland, adding services in Madison County.

- 1999** Added, in the Developmental Training Program, a Sensory Activity Room to develop, stimulate and enhance the program participants' five senses.
- 2000** Moved Germantown CILA residents into a spacious one-story home, providing greater accessibility for the aging original CILA residents.
- 2001** Opened the fourth CILA, after working with Breese to amend zoning code.
- 2001** Earned a perfect CARF survey score, placing Community Link in the top 3 percent internationally among its accredited agencies.
- 2004** Awarded one of the first state grants to increase awareness and coordinate a system of Infant Mental Health services.
- 2004** Opened the fifth CILA, a ranch-style home in an Aviston subdivision.
- 2004** Special Needs Foundation for Community Link is started.
- 2007** Purchased the sixth CILA home, the second in Breese.
- 2007** Introduced Buddy Walk as an annual fund and friend raiser to be held at Carlyle Lake dam.
- 2008** Opened another Developmental Training facility, called Community Link Metro in Fairview Heights, Ill.
- 2008** Longtime Executive Director, John Sedivy, retired; John Foppe hired.
- 2008** Wall Street Journal front-page article featured Highland CILA residents' plight amid state funding/payment crisis; readers responded with major gifts.
- 2010** Participant-operated Curbside Recycling pick-up service launched.
- 2011** John Foppe resigns as Executive Director and is replaced by Director of Finance Fran Taylor as Interim Executive Director.
- 2012** John Huelskamp is hired as Executive Director.
- 2012** Purchased and opened a seventh CILA home, the third in Breese.
- 2013** Expansion of Metro facility completed with additional bathrooms, classrooms and office space.
- 2013** Community Link adopts person-centered concept as its core philosophy
- 2014** The Link Enlighteners, a small group of participants from Adult Day Program that take daily trips into community for independence, inclusion and acceptance, is formed.
- 2015** Buddy Walk is moved from Carlyle to Breese.
- 2016** Buddy Walk attracts over 1500 people and becomes first fundraiser Community Link event to raise over \$100,000.

2017 Community Link Inc. and the Special Needs Foundation for Community Link form new partnership agreement that establishes an endowment fund for Community Link.

2017 Purchased and opened an eighth CILA home, the first in Trenton.

SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning method used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in a project or in a business venture. The aim of any SWOT analysis is to identify the key internal and external factors that are important to achieving the objective. These come from within the company's unique value chain. SWOT analysis groups key pieces of information into two main categories:

- Internal factors – The strengths and weaknesses internal to the organization.
- External factors – The opportunities and threats presented by the external environment to the organization.

The internal factors may be viewed as strengths or weaknesses depending upon their impact on the organization's objectives. What may represent strengths with respect to one objective may be weaknesses for another objective, thus the chart below may indicate a factor as both strength and a weakness.

Important Strengths and Weaknesses of Agency

IDENTIFIED STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES	STRENGTH	WEAKNESS	BOTH
Growth of the Buddy Walk/Community Support/Organizational Awareness	x		
Staff recruitment and retention of DSP's		x	
Increase in use of volunteerism	x		
Strategically marketing our needs to the community, in view of competition			x
Culture as a rural based "security" agency for many stakeholders			x
Culture shift towards a person-centered philosophy			x
Metro location in Fairview Heights in significant regional population center	x		
First Step services to children and families/ has tie-in to larger community	x		
Offering diverse programs and supports to multiple populations			x
Retirement of long-term management/leadership positions		x	

Important Opportunities and Threats for Agency

IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS	OPPORTUNITY	THREAT	BOTH
Mergers/acquisitions with other, smaller non profits	x		
Opening additional CILA's, especially in the Metro East and Washington County markets	x		
Imbalance in present revenue/income streams—80% government, earned income, & public funding, esp. considering federal and state financial struggles		x	
Use of social media to market organization	x		
Continued expansion of Development efforts	x		
Direct Support Professional staffing shortage		x	
Increased advocacy efforts, especially at State level	x		
Uncertain funding future from United Way		x	
Reduction in ICF/DD Participants and Funding			x
Federal and State push to eliminate sub-minimum wages and sheltered workshops			x
Reliance on Eaton B-Line as predominant production contract			x

STRATEGIC GOALS 2017-20

Upon careful review of the above factors, trends and issues, the task force has selected the following five (5) strategic goals to address critical issues confronting Community Link and requiring action in the next 1-3 years.

- I. **Growth in the Residential (CILA) Program:** Organization will aggressively seek to expand CILA program over the next three (3) years by opening an additional two to four (2-4) homes (currently at 8) and increase participant census in CILA program by up to 50%.
- II. **Growth in the Endowment Fund:** Organization will work towards growing endowment from \$200K to \$500K over the next three years.
- III. **Increase Private Sources of Revenue:** Organization will continue growing development, special event fundraising and employ other strategies to supplement underfunding by the State of Illinois and potential United Way funding cuts.
- IV. **Reduction in Staff Turnover/Open Position Time:** Organization will invest in agency-wide training and add resources to CILA program in hopes of reducing turnover and open position time.
- V. **Develop Self-Sustaining Business and Alternative Options to Traditional Sheltered Workshop Employment and Sub-Minimum Wage:** Organization will explore business opportunities to develop a self-sustaining and alternative option to reduce reliance on state funding and production contracts, and provide participants opportunities of making minimum wage and community integration.

SCENARIO FOR THE FUTURE

Over the next 10 years, the future scenarios for Community Link would ideally include:

- Expansion of existing and addition of new programming.
- Improved training, professional development, education, benefits and retention of Community Link staff.
- An improved, fully trained, and constantly oriented board engaged in an annual retreat for its development.
- Focus on and full use of community integration with all agency participants in accordance with a person-centered approach.
- A fully developed, managed volunteer program involving parents, caregivers, and community members in a wide array of supportive services on behalf of Community Link.
- Reputation for such exceptional support to participants that others will come to us for help, advice and to serve as a leading partner in joint efforts with them.
- Moved away from a dependence on state funding, and instead towards more endowments, contributions, volunteers and other resources.
- Offer CILA homes with four occupants or less and/or having individual bedrooms.
- Match participants up with community business partners through the Discovery process that offers them minimum wage and community integration opportunities.