



ANNUAL REPORT



2020





MORE THAN COFFEE!

Can you imagine wanting to work in the community but not knowing what to do to make your dream a reality?

That's just how Rosie felt. She desperately wanted to make her own money, gain some independence, and work in the community, but she wasn't sure how to make that happen.

Rosie has attended Community Link's day program for several years. She works in production assembling parts used in construction and industrial applications. Working at Community Link has taught Rosie that dedication and focus are skills needed to hold a job. Even though she has proven to be successful at Community Link, her goal is to work in the community.

Last November Rosie's dream of working in the community came true when she began working as a café assistant at The Red Porch.

The Red Porch is a café in New Baden that employs individuals with developmental disabilities. Rosie was chosen as one of the first to be hired. When she started, she worked closely with her Community Link job coach Beth to learn specific skills required to serve as a café assistant.

"We worked together to learn how to serve food, clear tables, deliver drinks, assemble salads, wash dishes, as well as meet and greet customers," Beth said.

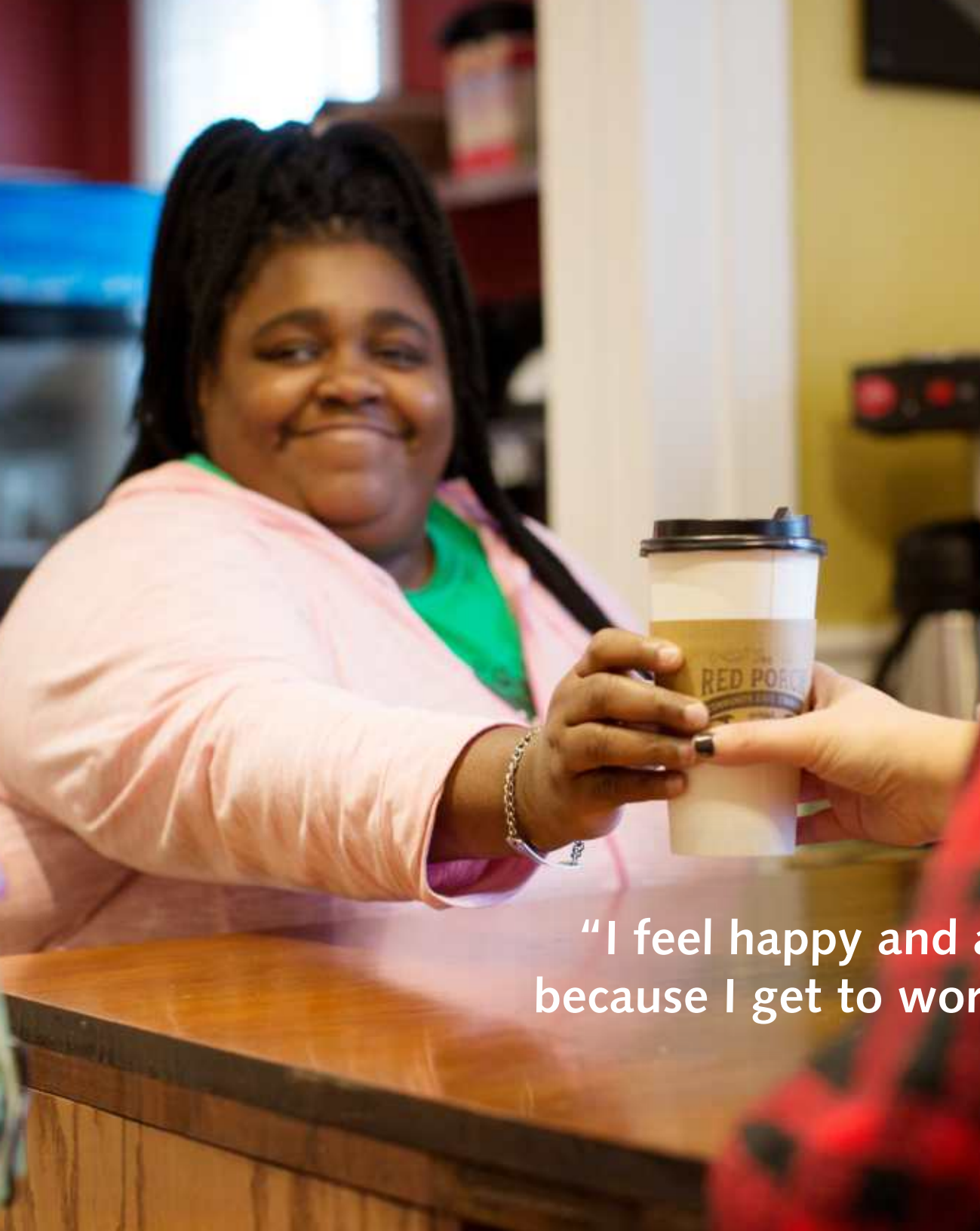
Rosie loves working at The Red Porch. She stated, "I feel happy and awesome when I'm here because I get to work in the community and meet new people."

Her favorite thing to do at the café is making sandwiches and salads. She swells with pride when she sees people enjoying the items she's made.

Besides gaining pride and self-confidence, Rosie is making friends. There's a strong personal bond that forms between people when they work together. Rosie has developed deep, close, personal relationships with her co-workers. They're not just friends, they're family.

The café assistant positions at The Red Porch are designed so that many of our participants can enjoy a valuable work experience. Eventually, Rosie will find a different job in the community, possibly at another café or maybe at a clothing store (something Rosie has expressed interest in).

After Rosie leaves, her position will be filled by another individual with developmental disabilities and that person will have the opportunity to realize the dignity of working at The Red Porch.



COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT

Finding community employment for individuals with disabilities is a challenge. The unemployment rate for persons with a disability is more than twice the rate of those with no disability. To answer that challenge, Community Link opened The Red Porch Café in November 2019. Located in New Baden, Illinois, this café serves as a collaboration between Community Link and Clinton Manor Living Center.

The Red Porch provides training for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities beyond the current sheltered workshop traditionally offered at Community Link. The café provides participants opportunities to learn new skills in a community business, providing work experience which may lead to employment in other or similar businesses. The Red Porch café is an innovative approach to a complex issue.

“I feel happy and awesome when I'm here because I get to work in the community and meet new people.”



Community Link's First Step program celebrated its 20th anniversary at Hannah's Playground in Breese.



Danita Deerhake from Cut Loose cuts Addison's hair.

COMMUNITY LINK'S FIRST STEP PROGRAM

In 1973, Barb Linnemann began the Early Intervention program in an effort to provide services to young children who were in need of different types of therapies.

Over time, Barb and her staff of therapists began to see there was a greater need for children in the community. Therapists were encountering a large number of children who did not qualify for Early Intervention services but needed educational support. Barb came across the Early Head Start program and set forth the process of bringing the program to Community Link.

On April 13, 1999, Community Link was awarded its first grant for the Early Head Start program. In October of that year, the first three team members were hired and home visitors began seeing families in December.

Since the First Step program began, there have been six directors and many team members. The program has been through many changes, but one thing remains the same—we are dedicated to serving the most vulnerable members of the community.



Kids and parents enjoy a "Water Fun" playgroup at Northside Park in Breese.

Dental Clinic and Health Fair

- Dental Safari examined 122 children, ages birth to 18 years old.
- The Lion's Club performed 91 vision screenings.
- 1st Step staff members fingerprinted children and provided families with DNA kits.
- Representatives from 20 different agencies, businesses and organizations attended and shared resources with families.
- Lisa Wise and Danita Deerhake from Cut Loose gave free back-to-school haircuts to families enrolled in the 1st Step Early Head Start program.
- Essendent donated 70 backpacks filled with school supplies.

Holiday Help

- Four local schools donated items to our Parent Store.
- 22 individuals provided gifts for families.
- The Maschhoffs adopted five families.
- Clinton County Mom's Group adopted a family.
- Dr. Morra's office adopted a family.
- St. Bernard's Giving Tree donated items to families.
- K & J Chevrolet held a toy drive for our families.
- The Clinton County Licensed Beverage Association gave a monetary donation to purchase items for our Parent Store.



Chuck and Linda Poettker look at all the beautiful items up for bid on the silent auction. Some items were one-of-a-kind pieces made by Community Link participants.



Special Needs Foundation for Community Link Board Secretary Anthony Budde admires Community Link Board Member and participant Jennifer Foushee.



Bonnie Harper and daughter Jennifer check out the items available for bid in the gala program.



Republic of Tea's Minister of Evolution Todd Rubin and Minister of Commerce and Enlightenment Kristina Richens Tucker are ready to bid.



Community Link Board President Dax Garrison welcomes gala guests.

GALA

The Special Needs Foundation for Community Link hosted its Building for the Future Gala on Saturday, September 21st at The Hettenhausen Center for the Arts "The Hett" on the campus of McKendree University.

Approximately 125 guests attended and \$70,000 was raised for Community Link's endowment fund.

Guests enjoyed an evening of cocktails, dinner, silent and live auctions and were inspired by a special video.



THE RED PORCH CAFÉ

The Red Porch café is an inclusive community gathering place where everyone is welcome, embraced and appreciated for who they are. We believe every person has something to contribute, and we are passionate about empowering people with disabilities by providing jobs and training.

The purpose of The Red Porch café is to embrace Community Link's vision, mission and core values by promoting inclusion and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. We honor these values providing exceptional products, adapting to community needs, maintaining positive attitudes, as well as advocating and demonstrating the mission and values of Community Link.

Café

The Red Porch provides exceptional drinks and food choices that are primarily health-conscious. Our multi-functional environment allows customers to interact with one another in a multitude of ways. It all starts with coffee, tea or Ski.

Community

A sense of belonging is simply human nature. And that feeling of belonging connects us to the relationships we develop. This community space helps develop an increased sense of social responsibility by providing a space where people are enabled and empowered to do more for one another.

Connect

Feeling connected to others allows us to feel supported, valued and loved. Connections are what hold relationships together and we learn from others' experience and insight. The Red Porch strives to be a space where people can stay connected to one another as well as pursue new experiences while broadening their networks.





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PROUDLY SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

The Red Porch proudly serves local, handcrafted products by vendors who directly support Community Link and our mission.

Some items that you'll find at our shop include coffee from Goshen, tea from The Republic of Tea, soft drinks (yes, including Ski) from Excel Bottling Company, honey from L & B Apiary, soap and candles from Perfectly Polished and pastries from Berkmann's Baker's Dozen.

It has been such a privilege to serve our community coffee, tea or Ski this past year. If you haven't tried The Red Porch for breakfast or lunch, stop by for a carry out or dine out on our back deck or front patio. If you need to save time, you can order online at theredporch.org.

The Red Porch and Community Link thank Michael Brave and the board members of Clinton Manor Living Center for collaborating with us on this venture. We appreciate all that you have done for us!



MAKING FRIENDS



FARM LIFE

L: Amanda K, Nicholas C, Matthew C, Markus W and Jakob R from Metro pose outside the goat pen at Roelke Farms. R: Tim D poses in front of rides at Roelke Farms.



CARNIVAL FUN

L: Dale T gives his biggest smile to volunteers from First Baptist Church Rogers Arkansas. R: Chris T sang while a volunteer from First Baptist Church Rogers Arkansas played the piano.



LOVE ON A LEASH

L: Geoffrey H loves snuggling with Pattington. R: Markus W and Pattington pose for the camera.

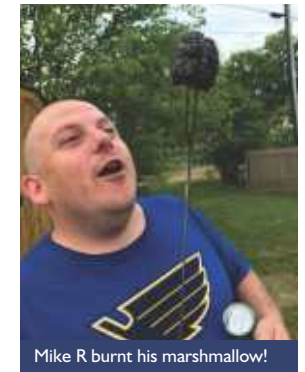
FAMILY LIFE



Not even Covid could keep Rita from visiting Julie...even if it was through a window.



Stephane E attempted the whipped cream challenge.



Mike R burnt his marshmallow!



Leroy T made moon sand.



Bill K created a tie dyed shirt.

Life during Covid hasn't been easy, but the residents in our CILA homes have made the best of a tough situation. Just look at some of the fun activities they have experienced during the pandemic.

Visiting during Covid took on new meaning. Community Link introduced technology into our CILAs so that they could video chat with family, as well as other CILAs.



Mark S video chats with friends.



Innovative thinking by Mike's sisters allowed them to be a part of Breese 373's bingo time.



Stephanie T caught the big one!

REMEMBERING OUR FRIENDS WHO PASSED AWAY

- Cloud Blaylock, 60, Oct. 12, 2019
- Danielle Braun, 47, Nov. 29, 2019
- John Porter, 38, Sept. 16, 2019
- Marilyn Toennies, 69, June 7, 2020
- Jerome Winkeler, 58, Sept. 30, 2019
- Devin Winter, 24, Sept. 20, 2019



FINANCIAL REPORT

Community Link presents the following audited summary of revenues, expenses and changes in net assets for the Agency's Fiscal Year 2019-2020, ending this past June 30. For a copy of the completed audit, please e-mail info@commlink.org or call (618) 526-8800.

Revenue

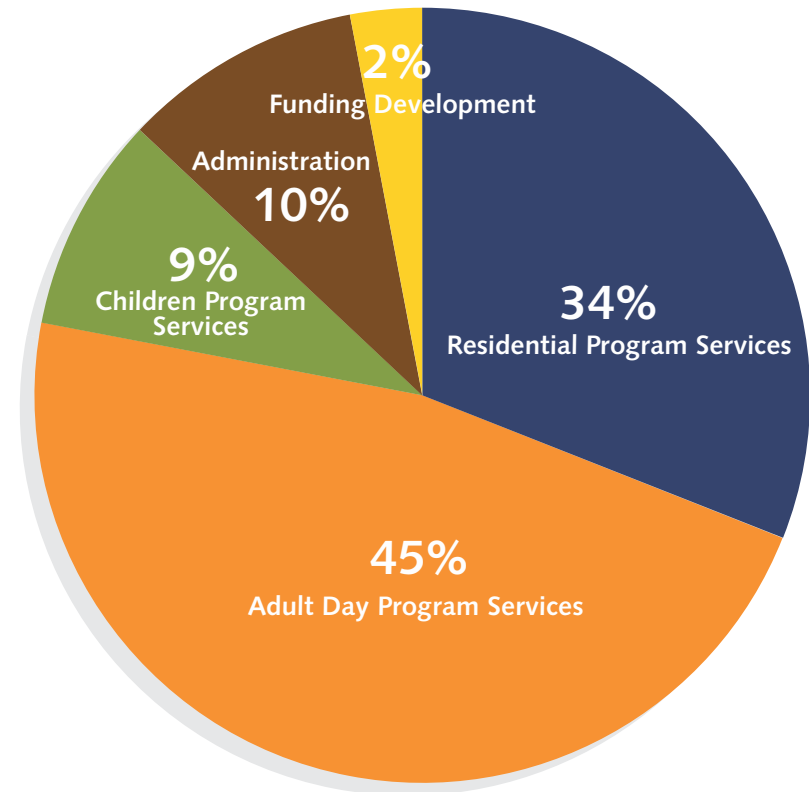
Fees for Service/Gov't Grants	\$6,692,904	85%
Contributions/Fundraisers	\$649,342	8%
Sales from Worksites	\$491,418	6%
Investment and Other Income	\$26,275	1%
Total Operating Revenue	\$7,859,939	100%

Operating Expenses

Salaries & Benefits	\$6,047,172
Other Operating Expenses	\$1,686,189
Total Operating Expenses	\$7,733,361

Net Operating Gain

Depreciation Expense	\$263,737
Net Loss after Depreciation Expense	(\$137,159)



FUNCTIONAL EXPENSE FY 2019-2020

Residential Program Services - 34%

Adult Day Program Services - 45%

Children Program Services - 9%

Administration - 10%

Funding Development - 2%

Message from the Board President

It's hard to know where to start crafting a letter for our 2020 annual report. Just like many for-profit and other not-for-profit agencies, Community Link has been met with its share of challenges this year.

Personally, I found the perseverance of not only our staff, but also our participants to be the most positive example to come from life in a pandemic. Our staff put into place protocols and mitigation strategies designed by the agency's management team. Staff responsibilities during the pandemic didn't end when their shift was over. They were asked to limit many activities in their personal time and due to their sacrifice, our participants have remained safe.

While everyone's been adapting to our current "new normal," we had many success stories and improvements that happened during 2020. Participants began utilizing new technologies that allowed them to communicate with their families when physical visits just weren't safe. The Community Link Virtual Inclusion Facebook page was created to connect our participants to the communities in which they work and live and to create social settings that are safe for them. Some of the activities shared on the Virtual Inclusion Facebook page are things like yoga, music, art lessons and virtual field trips.

Late this summer, a familiar face returned to lead the organization. John Huelskamp returned from his time at Beverly Farm with new perspectives and ideas to continue to move Community Link forward in this ever-changing landscape.

We're in the café business! In partnership with our good friends at Clinton Manor, The Red Porch opened in November and continues to stay busy. I may be a little partial, but I think you'd have a hard time finding a more comfortable spot for a high quality breakfast or lunch. And I haven't even mentioned the best part—many days, you'll find Rosie there to greet you and provide you the beverage of your choice. The café also allows the opportunity to see locally produced items showcased on our shelves from area businesses that have welcomed our storefront with open arms.

COVID-19 has certainly had a financial impact on the agency, but thanks to our Paycheck Protection Program loan, quick changes to programs under the direction of management and support from people just like you, we have continued to maintain financial stability. Our community is the reason we remain optimistic in the midst of such trying times. When we hear painful financial stories from other non-profits, we are reminded how fortunate Community Link is to operate in such a generous community.

Simply put...we are very grateful. Our participants are safe thanks to our wonderful staff. Because of the vision of staff and partnerships with other agencies, we opened The Red Porch. We feel that it's the best little café in the area and we continue to feel the love and support from our community.

2020 will certainly be a year to remember. I will always remember it as a year of challenges, adaptation and perseverance. Stay safe!

Sincerely,
Dax Garrison



FY 2020 Board of Directors

Dax Garrison, President
Jason Gourley, Vice President
Tracy Welker, Treasurer
Paulette Evans, Secretary

Ron Foppe
Jennifer Foushee
Brad Hansell
William Hibner
Theresa Morrison
Jeff Niemeyer
Amanda Oelze

Executive Director
John Huelskamp





THANK YOU!



LOCATIONS :

East Facility (Production):
1665 N. Fourth Street, Breese, IL 62230

First Step (Children's Program):
955 N. Plum Street, Breese, IL 62230

West Facility (Developmental Training):
8510 Old US Hwy 40, Breese, IL 62230

Metro (Production & Developmental Training):
9815 Bunkum Road, Fairview Heights, IL 62208



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