

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



MISSION

To offer opportunities for growth and independence for people with developmental disabilities.

VISION

A community where everyone is valued for their presence and contributions.



BUSY BEE-ing Colin



If you have not had the pleasure of meeting Colin...we hope someday you will!

Colin is well known around the greater Clinton County area for his bright smile and enthusiastic personality. He has been lots of places with his parents, Kathy and Ron, since he was young. They think these adventures have helped build his love of getting to know new people, and remembering everyone he meets. Everybody knows Colin and he never forgets a face!

Colin is a man of his community, always showing support to others with a helping hand or kindness. He enjoys riding his bike around his hometown. He frequently stops at Kassen Excavating, where he occasionally volunteers to help clean or gets a ride in their truck. They even have a truck with his name on it. He also loves to support his brothers' alma mater, Mater Dei, especially the football team. He loves to attend games, and enjoys the energy of the crowd while watching the action of the games. This year, the Mater Dei football team walked with Colin's Crusaders, his Buddy Walk team, to thank him for all of his support for so many years.

Colin had attended Nashville Community High School. He has been a creature of habit most of his life, and he liked that his class was big, filled with lots of friends, some of which are now at Community Link with him. While at school, his parents and teachers met to consider Colin's future. Kathy and Ron knew they wanted Colin to be close, and they had heard good things from their friends about Community Link. During high school, he worked a couple days a week at a local workshop and really enjoyed working. After graduating, he was excited to do similar work at Community Link, with people he knew and trusted.



It has been 8 years, and Colin is loving the Community Link Day Program, but not necessarily for the reasons that his family thought he would. Colin loves to work, and he works hard. He also enjoys seeing his friends every day. But what really brings Colin joy is meeting new people and trying new activities.

It's his joy of getting outside and meeting people that drives Colin to be an active member of the Busy Bees at the Breese East building. The Busy Bees have a full calendar of activities. Everyone has a choice to work, or participate in different activities, onsite and beyond. Colin has chosen to visit some cool places with the Busy Bees. They have been hiking, fishing, and eating at different restaurants. He loves participating with cooking classes and art projects. The Busy Bees have given him an outlet to consistently try something new and get to meet different people from all over Southern Illinois and St. Louis.

Colin's enthusiasm and love for life are truly inspiring. He is dedicated to his community and works hard while he is at work. The Community Link Day Program gives him the opportunities and tools he needs to make new connections and experience life to the fullest.





YEAR OF GROWTH AND CHANGE

It has been a big year for Community Day Services, filled with lots of new opportunities. While this is a common theme for Day Services and will continue to be in the future, this last year has served as groundwork for years to come. There were lots of breakthroughs, some challenges, and lots of new choices offered for participants of Community Link.

The Busy Bees at the Breese East building have been out and about this year, scheduling weekly trips to different locations in the community and beyond. Some of our adventures took us to Whispering Pines, the horse races at Fairmount, Carlyle Lake, the St. Louis Cardinals game, and more. At the Breese West building, Direct Support Professionals have been offering different activities in each of their rooms to offer more choices for their participants. Jess's Hair Salon, Craft Time with Faith, the Wild West Kitchen Club, the Workout Room with Taylor, and Nails by Lesley have all been big hits. At Metro in Fairview Heights, the Go Group takes regular trips to recycle, play bingo, and volunteer at the food pantry. We also love visits from Love on a Leash.

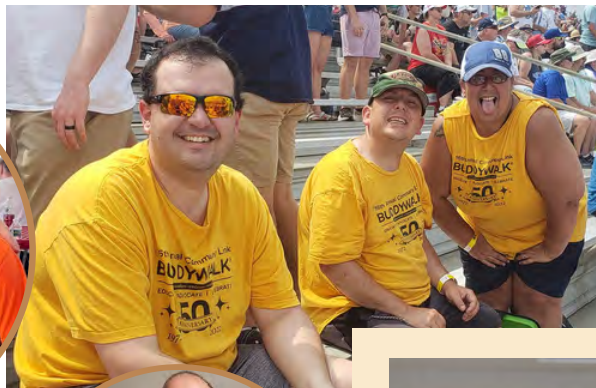
Moving into the new fiscal year, the Day Program is looking forward to offering more choices by receiving input from participants, looking for business partnerships, and remaining involved in our community.



THRIVING IN COMMUNITY

Our CILA (community integrated living arrangement) residents excel in creating a balance between managing their responsibilities, embracing new learning experiences, and enjoying their local community. At home, we take on laundry, cooking, cleaning, and personal care routines.

Once the chores are done we have been out and about in full force. Staff collaborate with residents to make a full calendar of events for evening and weekend entertainment. We enjoy being outdoors, going to restaurants, bingo nights, listening to live music, attending festivals and sporting events, and more. Every day our CILA residents are living life to the fullest!



Amy Nettles was awarded the Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (IARF) Community Care Professional of the Year for 2023. Amy has been an employee for 11 years, currently working in our Carlyle CILA. She is known for making impossible things possible. See our CILA Home video featuring our Carlyle family at commmlink.org.



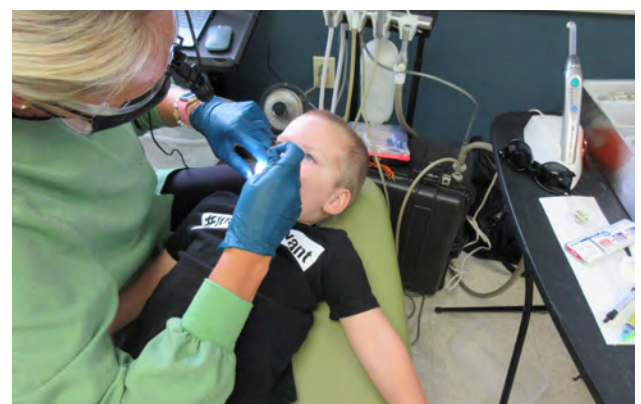
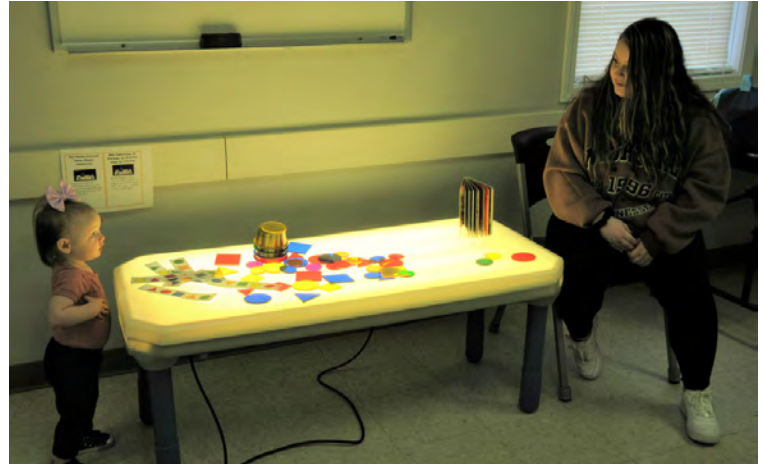
Since 2019, The Red Porch Café has been brewing coffee, serving sandwiches, and making friends in the heart of New Baden. Our brick and mortar café continues to offer a full menu of staple items as well as seasonal specials, however, this year, we have also been more active in the community. The Red Porch is expanding to offer "Red Porch Days" throughout our home Clinton and St. Clair Counties. What started as an opportunity for the Community Link Day Program participants to work in-house on customer service, change making, and work skills, is now evolving into a community opportunity.

The café now travels to different businesses in the community and sets up a mobile restaurant for lunch. Community Link participants distribute orders and practice job skills. Many times, we even get a tour of the business. Thank you to SOGA and Deien Chevrolet for being the first businesses to welcome us. The Red Porch is looking forward to visiting more business locations in the next year.



If you attended the Buddy Walk, we hope you had a chance to grab soup or sandwiches from The Red Porch Café. Café employees were excited to fuel the walk by providing delicious made-to-order meals to enjoy.

The 1st Step team has gotten back into the swing of things this year, with playgroups resuming and home visits continuing to provide opportunities for children and parents to grow and learn. Family educators strive to fill gaps their families need. Playgroups resuming has brought back a sense of camaraderie with 1st Step participants. We served 4 pregnant women and 53 children in the last program year, and we are looking forward to continuing to provide services to more families in need in Clinton and Washington Counties.



We've also been part of some great collaborations to bring more opportunities to the families we serve. During our two dental and vision clinics, 160 children (birth to 18) were seen by the Dental Safari dentist and hygienists. The Lion's Club performed 118 vision screenings. We collaborated with SAFE (Sexual Assault and Family Emergencies) to host a presentation for parents on body safety, signs and symptoms of abuse and what to do if you suspect abuse, as well as internet safety. Last March, we began a new collaboration with the local University of Illinois Extension Office, providing families with monthly informational videos on tips and tricks for purchasing and cooking foods, along with information for healthy eating choices.

Special Needs Foundation for Community Link

The Special Needs Foundation for Community Link is always looking to the future and finding opportunities to keep it bright. The foundation was formed in 2004, originally to fund special projects for Community Link. In recent years, the foundation identified that the most benefit to the organization is building security by growing an endowment fund.

For 50 years, Community Link has been a good organization but we want to be more. The foundation support gets us from good to great. Every time the foundation grows, so do the opportunities for people to be in the community, for us to hire more staff, and to build more connections with local businesses.

The current endowment had grown, through donations and investments, to over \$600,000. Our goal is to grow to over \$5 million to ensure a bright future through a reliable source of funding. Those who contribute build a legacy that lasts generations.



At the 2023 *Run for Possibilities* gala, the Special Needs Foundation for Community Link brought the excitement and energy with a derby-themed event. It was an evening filled with fast-paced horse racing, auctions, and games that contributed over \$90,000 to the foundation. So many people gave donations, items, and volunteered their time, all which contributed to the success of the event.



The foundation board members are now preparing for the *Palace of Possibilities* gala. The Vegas-themed evening is sure to test your luck with casino games, auctions, and more. Save the date of April 6, 2024 and join us for good food, drinks, and games for a great cause.

Board of Directors

Helen Heimann
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Amy Kruse
Vice President

Joe Heimann
Secretary/Treasurer

Amber Brooke
Ashley Gramann
Dana Korte
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A SUPER WALK

Another SUPER day was had by all who attended the 17th Annual Community Link Buddy Walk at Breese Northside Park on September 16, 2023. This year we celebrated our participants, our superheroes, who demonstrate extraordinary powers and super human strength every day.

This year, Jesse James Entertainment got the crowd excited with a concert beginning at 10am. The one-mile walk began at 11am, with over 1200 registrants filling the streets of Breese. We thank everyone who walked with us and share our vision that all individuals are valued for their presence and contributions.



After the walk, the second annual Super Buddy Dog Show began at 12pm. This year, there were 22 pups in the competition, with Paxton winning Best Buddy in Show. Many people enjoyed lunch and treats from our food vendors: the Red Porch Café, Suits Me BBQ, Taco Jo's, Sip N Scoot Mobile Café, and Fantastick Pops.



The 2023 Buddy Walk raised over \$125,000 and hit our goal! This could not have been done without the amazing hard work of our team captains, sponsors, volunteers, and donors. We are SUPER grateful for an amazing turn out and beautiful day of celebration.

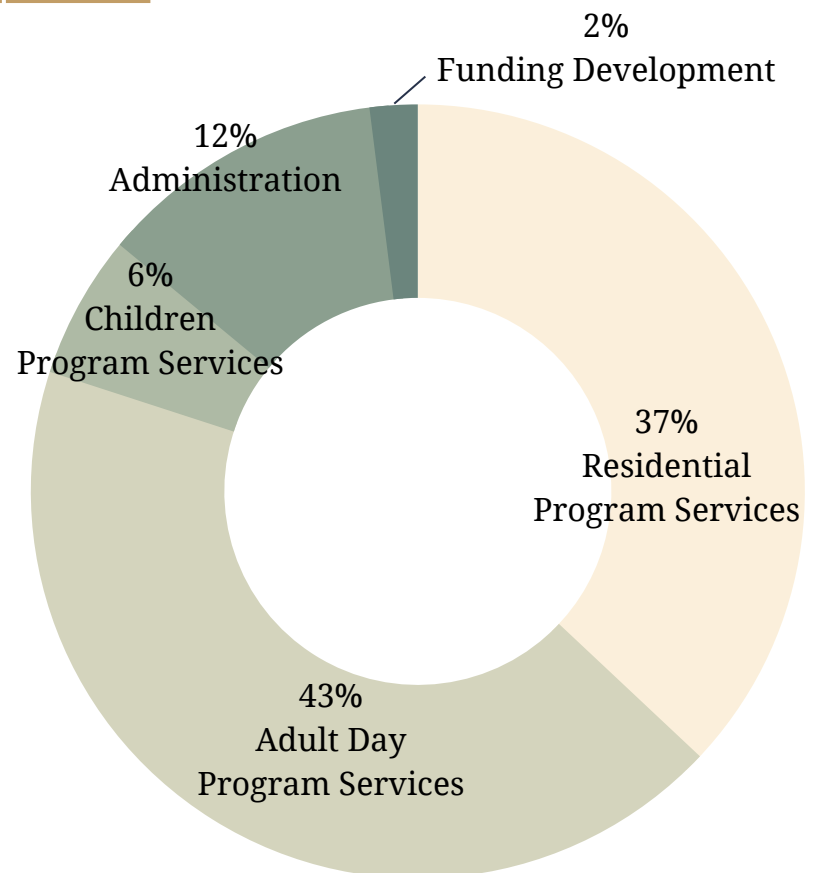
FINANCIAL REPORT

Community Link presents the following summary of revenues, expenses and changes in net assets for the Agency's Fiscal Year 2023, ending this past June 30. For a copy of the completed audit, please email info@commlink.org or call 618-526-8800.

REVENUE

Fees for Service/Gov't Grants	\$8,829,197	86%
Sales from Worksites	\$937,336	9%
Contributions, Fundraisers and Other Income	\$532,404	5%
Total Operating Revenue	\$10,298,937	100%

FUNCTIONAL EXPENSE FY 2023



OPERATING EXPENSES

Salaries & Benefits	\$7,373,806
Occupancy	\$500,522
Other Operating Expenses	\$1,444,781
Total Operating Expenses	\$9,319,109

Net Operating Gain	\$979,828
Depreciation Expense	(\$218,447)
Gain on Sale of Assets	\$79,795
Change in Net Assets	\$841,176



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

The last fiscal year has truly been one of growth and change. For the past 50 years Community Link has supported hundreds of individuals with developmental disabilities in achieving learning breakthroughs, finding jobs, living in a home of their own and making friends. In 2023, we have continued those endeavors but have also made significant changes in our service delivery methods. Changes to the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) settings rule went into effect in March 2023. These changes provide more informed choices, limit rights restrictions, and offer more community inclusion for our participants.

Our vision for the future is defined by choice and independence. Our guiding principles ensure our participants are fully supported in living a meaningful life. In order to achieve our mission, we must go further, not only upholding a standard of compliance, but delivering an organizational expectation of excellence.

As we reflect on the past year, the word that is repeated most often is *more*. Our staff are having *more* conversations with participants, asking them *more* questions about their hopes and dreams, hearing their voices and messages *more* clearly, and offering them *more* options and choices, all in pursuit of a life filled *more* with opportunities for growth and independence. Based on their feedback, participants have more independence, more activities, more choices, more privacy, and more opportunities to plan their day and express themselves as they want.

Thank you to our amazing staff who have adapted with the sole focus of improving the lives of our participants. There is no doubt that we are facing some headwinds with how we fulfill our mission. The future is always uncertain. However, I'm confident in the strength of our community, friends and families to help us continue to thrive. On behalf of the full board, we truly appreciate your unwavering support in this journey of growth and positive change. You are the tailwind!

Sincerely,
Ron Foppe



Ron Foppe
President

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Vice President

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Spencer Campbell
Paulette Evans
Charles Hilmes
Amanda Loepker

Sandra Porter
Bailey Rinella
Kirsten Wilkerson

John Huelskamp
Executive Director

Remembering Friends Who Have Passed Away

John Mooney, 69
January 29, 2023

Jennifer Eide, 53
April 10, 2023

Flame Locey Isaak, 58
June 13, 2023

Barbara Schwarz, 66
July 9, 2023

Lorraine Cousino, 53
April 3, 2023

Whitney Hancock, 43
May 25, 2023

Harley Duniphan, 26
June 24, 2023

Allen Korte, 67
September 16, 2023



Thank You
**FOR CREATING
POSSIBILITIES**

**Special Needs
Foundation
Palace of Possibilities
Gala**

April 6, 2024
American Legion
Breese, IL



**18th Annual
Community Link
Buddy Walk**

September 14, 2024
Northside Park
Breese, IL

EAST FACILITY/ADMINISTRATION

1665 N Fourth Street | Breese, IL 62230

WEST FACILITY

8510 Old US Hwy 50 | Breese, IL 62230

METRO FACILITY

9815 Bunkum Road | Fairview Heights, IL 62208

FIRST STEP (CHILDREN'S PROGRAM)

955 N Plum Street | Breese, IL 62230



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