



Possibilities

Spring 2024

From Good to Great

At Community Link, we truly believe in the value of the presence and contributions of every individual in our community. This is the vision we live and work by every day, and it is the future we are working toward.

In 2004, families of Community Link participants wanted to broaden opportunities for their loved ones and formed the Special Needs Foundation for Community Link. Those families recognized that additional funding and resources were needed to fulfill the vision.

Today, at Community Link, we are creating the day program of the future. We have been listening to our participants, who love what they do, but also want more. We are also listening to our residents and redefining the meaning of an “ideal CILA home.” Based on all we are hearing, we are committed to providing more independence and choice.

These endeavors take resources, and the Foundation recently stepped up to build for our future, not just now, but always. At the *Palace of Possibilities* gala on April 6, over 200 guests and supporters raised more than \$124,000 to invest in the endowment for Community Link. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who was part of this amazing night for an amazing cause.

The highlight of the evening was when Joanne spoke to the crowd. Joanne is a sweet and caring person who has been part of the Community Link family for over 30 years. **To see and hear Joanne tell her story, please visit commlink.org and view the video “From Good to Great.”**

2024 Palace of Possibilities Gala



Joanne showed the pillows she hand-embroidered

Ed Lends a Helping Hand



In his 3 years at our Fairview Heights (Metro) day program location, Ed's staff have noticed lots of personal growth. He has made many friends and connections. Ed says most of his family have moved away, so his staff and friends are great supports for him.

He feels that he is met with kindness every day which makes him happy and comfortable. One of his favorite parts of attending day program is working toward new goals, and he appreciates the help of his staff.

Ed is known as the man who is willing to lend a helping hand. He takes pride in his work here, and helps out with all parts of production, though he is best at assembly.

While he is appreciative of his paycheck, his dream job is to do janitorial work. He always offers to help with cleaning or mopping any time it is needed. While he hopes to one day be a janitor in the community, he assures staff that he will still work at the day program even if he gets a job elsewhere because he loves coming here and doesn't want to let anyone down.



Sam Feels at Home

When Sam started at the day program in 2019, she wasn't sure what to expect. She was excited for new activities, but was nervous about starting something different. When she came on her tour, she saw a few familiar faces, including someone she has known her whole life, Tina, one of the staff members she would soon be working alongside.

She quickly felt at home, and found that she is very good at production work. She loves working because she gets to see her friends and work in Coleen's group, and she likes to work hard to receive her paycheck. The work is great for her because it allows her to focus on one thing at a time.

Sam often goes with the Community Link Busy Bee's group to try different activities and go different places, which is another aspect of the day program that she really enjoys. She likes to go fishing and be outdoors when the weather is nice. The group also goes to different coffee shops and has taken a trip to Union Station. She thinks it is nice that she earns a paycheck but can also do other activities when she wants.





Larry Enjoys New Activities

Anyone who knows Larry, knows that he prides himself on being kind, hardworking, and happy. He loves to be the smiling face that people talk to at day program, where he has brought joy for almost 25 years. He says that while he has always tried to see the brighter things in life, the Community Link day program just makes that easier.

Larry enjoys drawing and doing lots of art activities. His favorite thing to draw is trucks. In the lobby of the West building hangs a large, beautiful truck drawing, Larry's masterpiece.

He says he loves Community Link because he feels he can be himself. He can do the things he wants to do, and enjoy time spent with friends. He appreciates many of the new activities offered at the West building, but his favorite is cooking class. While he loves learning to cook, he is also a big fan of eating.

Larry also loves the days that Bob, a Community Link volunteer, comes to spend time with everyone. Larry really looks forward to these visits, as Bob plays games, reads, and often brings a snack for all to enjoy.



Staff Spotlight: Jess at West

The Community Link West building has exciting news! Community Inclusion Specialist Jess now has his own room to promote more activities and choices for our West location participants.



There are so many participants who are all unique in their own way, but Jess has taken the time to meet with each person to ensure their ideas for new activity options are heard. This has already given participants the opportunities to try new games, cook and bake new recipes, and get to know one another better!

Jess has been with Community Link for the last 5 years, and loves all of the different roles he has played so far. His favorite part of working here is that he has the ability to interact with so many different participants, and that the organization has a small town feel where lots of the participants really know one another, even if they aren't in the same day program location.

He loves that his fellow staff really care about the participants, and feels that can be hard to find. He is looking forward to seeing the community inclusion program grow in the future and providing more opportunities.

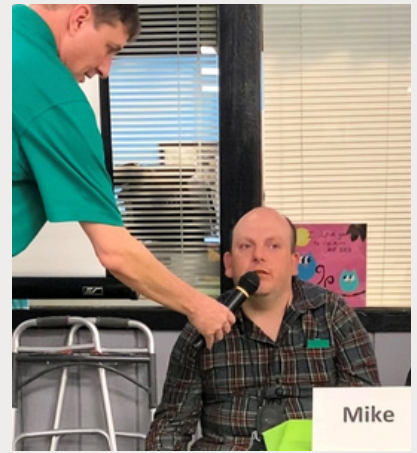
Panel Speaks at Staff Training

In March, we held our all staff in-service day at Breese East. It focused on informing and hearing staff as we develop our new strategic plan for our future. The best part of the day featured a panel of our participants, who volunteered to answer questions and shared their thoughts directly to staff in attendance.

The participants on the panel were Mike, Brandy, Shannon, and Diana. They talked about their favorite things to do and shared thoughts about the new offerings at both day program and CILA. The group felt that the organization was listening to them and gave ideas of changes they would like to see.

While each stated they enjoy their workshop opportunities, they expressed interest in going into the community for recreation and work. Many were interested in new learning opportunities in cooking, art, reading, and math. Once they completed the Q&A, a video was shown of additional participants sharing their views from our Breese West and Fairview Heights day program locations.

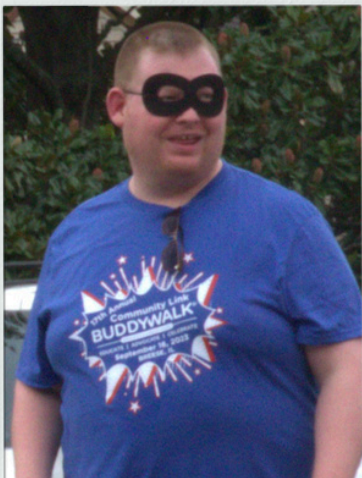
As opportunities and regulations change for our individuals, we are evolving to provide more independence and more choices. Based on feedback from this panel, we will continue to reach out to local businesses to provide recreation, learning, and work opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities.



SAVE THE DATE

The 2024 Buddy Walk is coming soon!

September 14, 2024 | Northside Park - Breese, IL



**Registration Opens
June 1, 2024**



Join the Community Link family for another fun filled day at Northside Park in Breese for the 2024 Buddy Walk! The festivities begin at 10am and many of your favorite activities and foods will be returning. Proceeds from the Buddy Walk support Community Link and raise awareness for individuals with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities.

Please contact Michelle Delfel at MichelleD@commlink.org or 618.526.3989 for more information