



*This fall, in addition to planning for the Buddy Walk, we are advocating for our future. The best way you can show your support now for our participants is by being a part of the Walk. You can register to join us or donate to be with us in spirit. Please also watch for further communications about how you can advocate for dignity and opportunities for all individuals.*

# Possibilities

**Summer 2023**

## **NO to House Bill 793!**

The HB 793 bill, known as the "Dignity in Pay" Act, is a well-intentioned legislation that calls for the end of Illinois Department of Labor issuing 14(c) certificates to organizations like Community Link. While similar bills have been passed in sixteen other states, and it is great in theory, there are several reasons why Illinois is NOT ready for this.

### **Here are six reasons why:**

1. The funding is not there. All other states that have eliminated sub-minimum wage were already funding community-integrated employment dramatically higher than Illinois.
2. The bill's phase-out period is too short. The bill calls for sub-minimum wage to be eliminated by July 1, 2027, which is less than four years away. Phasing out in such a short window will lead to gaps in services and make many individuals currently receiving paid-employment opportunities unemployed.
3. The bill does not take in account the unique challenges of Southern Illinois such as limited employment opportunities and lack of transportation. Employment and transportation opportunities in Chicago are not the same in Southern Illinois.
4. The bill relies on the "We're Illinois, just trust us" mentality that eliminating 14(c) will be ok. Like Charlie Brown trying to kick the football from Lucy, we have relied on Illinois time and time again to meet the deadlines they set and the funding they promise only to have Lucy pull the football from us.
5. This bill eliminates choice instead of offering more choices. Illinois has a Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) that is available to support people with disabilities who choose to work in the community. Unfortunately, almost three out of every four individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) that apply for competitive employment through DRS are denied. Without sub-minimum wage work, these individuals will have no choice but unemployment.
6. This bill lumps all disabilities, physical and intellectual, in the same bucket. This bill does not account for the unique challenges and significant system supports needed for successful I/DD community employment.

Because of these reasons, Community Link does not support HB 793 "Dignity in Pay" Act in current form. Until the State of Illinois first recognizes the "Dignity of Work," we cannot allow a choice to be removed from our participants without the certainty of opportunities and funding. If you have further questions, please reach out to me at [JohnH@commlink.org](mailto:JohnH@commlink.org).



Community Link at the 2023 Clinton County Fair Parade

## Chris E, the Busy Bee

Chris has a bright personality full of energy and excitement, as his staff, family and friends will tell you! He is kind, outgoing, funny, and caring. Chris has attended Community Link's Community Day Services (CDS) for the last 20 years, and is excited to be celebrating his 20th work anniversary! In this time, he has enjoyed lots of cool day trips, made lots of friends, and worked many productive hours!

Chris is a very hard worker. He says his favorite part of CDS is making money. When it is time to do some work, he rarely sits down. However, he is also quite the adventure goer. At the Breese East location, he is very active with the Busy Bees, signing up for as many community activities as he can. He likes to go fishing and to Cardinals games but really loves to bowl! He is an avid bowler for the Special Olympics. He enjoys bowling with his girlfriend, Sara.

Chris's staff says he appreciates the social aspect of his job. He is close to his staff, specifically his direct support staff, Rachel. He says, "all of my staff listen to me and help me with anything I need."

Angie has been part of Chris's support team for more than 15 years. She remembers Chris being pretty quiet at first, but as they got to know one another better, he quickly opened up and now talks with her as a friend. Christina has been his Program Manager for 2 years and feels the same way. She says he needs time to build rapport with someone new but with his warm personality, new people do not stay strangers for long!

Being in an comfortable environment with friends makes Chris extremely successful at Community Link! He loves spending time with participants and staff. Whether he working, going out, or learning to bake a new treat, he is smiling. Community Link has been a great place for him to flourish for the last 20 years, and he can't wait for more opportunities.



## Jennifer Travels to Berlin

If you know Jennifer, you know she has a passion for cheerleading. The skills that she exhibits in her cheerleading are also found in her work at Community Day Services (CDS) every day. Jennifer likes that her staff and her coworkers are all so supportive of her and her interests. She also likes to tell them about her different adventures, especially with cheerleading.

While many people have exciting summer plans, Jennifer may win the award for furthest traveled this year! Jennifer and her mom, Bonnie, traveled to Berlin, Germany with the Without Limits Cheer program for the Special Olympics World Games. Jennifer met the famous former football player, Tim Tebow. She made friends from all over the world, and she cheered for numerous sports! While away, she was missed by many at Community Link, but when she returned, they were excited to hear all about her great adventure!

Jennifer has been active with Community Link CDS since 2018. She can be uneasy with people she does not know very well, but as she gets to know everyone better, she really opens up. Her staff and friends say she always has a smile on her face and is very respectful and kind to everyone...she may even offer a hug! Jennifer is a go-with-the-flow person who really likes to stay busy. She likes to work and make her own money, but also enjoys day trips, art classes, or spa days with the Busy Bees.

Her Program Manager, Christina, has gotten to know Jennifer very well over the last year, and loves how much their relationship has grown. For Jennifer's last birthday, her mom, Bonnie, asked Christina to help with a birthday surprise for Jennifer. Her group ate pizza and celebrated with her. This day really helped Jennifer come out of her shell and find her place. Her staff at Community Link is so excited to support her while she grows as a person, an employee, and a cheerleader in the future!



## Superheroes All Around in 2022

- 8** CILA homes  
(community integrated living arrangement)
- 50** CILA Residents
- 59** Early Head Start Participants
- 4** Day Program Locations
- 222** Day Program Participants
- 6** Individuals working in community
- 131** Individuals doing production work
- 173** Individuals engaged in community activity

### The Captain of GO PEG GO

Peggy is very proud to work at Community Link's Community Day Services. Peggy has been a part of CDS for 18 years, first at our Breese West location, then for the last 2 years at our Metro location in Fairview Heights. She is happiest with lots of work and enjoys all aspects of her job. Her staff, Jess and Adam, say they have never heard her complain when they have a busy day, no matter what they are assembling.

Peggy is known to work hard, but also to joke around. She is a social butterfly and jokester, which makes it no surprise that one of her favorite events is the Buddy Walk! Peg leads her Buddy Walk team *Go Peg Go!* with her family and friends. Spending time with them is her favorite part of the Buddy Walk.

One may think that Peggy was always the social butterfly, but Jess explained that was not always the case. When Peggy started at our Metro location, she was shy and only talked to her housemates. She only spoke to the staff when she needed to. It was a new environment and she needed some time adjusting to it.

Jess helped Peggy feel more at home by spending some time getting to know her and helping Peggy get comfortable with others. Then she really started to notice a shift. Peggy became more open with her, and she with Peggy. Their client and caregiver relationship evolved into a friendship. Jess explained, "of course my job is to take care of our clients to the best of my ability, but through doing so, they become friends."

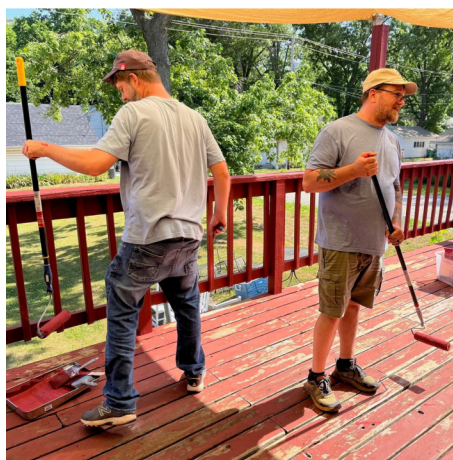
Adam also felt like the more he gets to really know Peggy, the more he understands how to communicate with her and make her laugh, and their relationship is a friendship as well.

At Community Link, participants and staff work together day in and day out, whether that be in working, exploring our community, or learning new skills. Staff spend time to get to know participants; learning how to best communicate, how to make them laugh, and how to best push everyone to their full potential. As Jess says, "we are here to take care of our clients, but they are also our best friends."



Join us for our Super Buddy Dog Show following the Buddy Walk this year! The competition, judged by our Community Link participants, will start at noon on September 16 at the stage in Breese Northside Park. This year's categories include: Best Dressed, Most Talented, Best Personality, Waggiest Tail, and Best in Show.

Want to enter your favorite furry friend in the competition? It's free! Visit [commlink.org/buddywalk](http://commlink.org/buddywalk) and follow the "Dog Show" tab. Space is limited, enter today! Sponsorships are also available, please contact Michelle Delfel at 618-526-3989 or [MichelleD@commlink.org](mailto:MichelleD@commlink.org) for information. We hope to see you and your pup at our 2nd annual Super Buddy Dog Show!



### Volunteers Needed!

We are excited to be renewing our volunteer program after a few years of limited opportunities. The biggest opportunity we have coming up is for our Buddy Walk! We need volunteers to help set up and tear down, run the drink stand, help with silent auction, and more. You can sign up to be a Buddy Walk Volunteer at [commlink.org/buddywalk](http://commlink.org/buddywalk).

We are also in need of volunteers throughout the year to engage with our participants or help with light maintenance, painting, or office work. Please contact Katie Newman at [KatieN@commlink.org](mailto:KatieN@commlink.org) or 618-526-3929, who would love to hear what sorts of projects interest you!

## CALLING ALL SUPERHEROES



*Join us for the Buddy Walk and celebrate the hero inside each of us!*

**September 16, 2023 | Northside Park - Breese, IL**

**Sign up today! Registration is \$20 per person and includes a t-shirt. Sign up by August 25 to be guaranteed a t-shirt**



**Register online at:  
[commlink.org/buddywalk](http://commlink.org/buddywalk)  
or scan the code**

**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](mailto:MichelleD@commlink.org) or 618.526.3989 for more information or sponsorship opportunities**

