



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



MISSION

To provide opportunities for choice, growth, and independence for adults with developmental disabilities.

VISION

A community where every person is valued for their presence and contributions.

VALUES

Dignity: We respect and celebrate all individuals.

Integrity: We earn trust through honesty and accountability.

Compassion: We treat everyone with kindness and empathy.



MIKE IS MAKING HIS WAY



Mike has been a part of the Community Link family since 2008, when he moved into one of our CILA homes and began attending our Day Program. He is a quiet guy, but has always made it clear that his ultimate goal is to be as independent as possible. The more independent he has become, the more his smile shows.

Through the Day Program, Mike has developed many skills to be more self-sufficient. He loves the discipline of working every day and getting a paycheck. He also likes spending time with his friends and his CILA family. His favorite thing about Day Program is riding his bike or walking to and from work every day, when the weather permits. He loves the quiet and solitary time of his commute to work.

His experiences of earning his own money, being a part of a team, and commuting on time, have given Mike confidence to continue to do more on his own. He has been walking and riding around the community more often, and made friends with the employees and patrons of the Breese American Legion. He has connected with many people at the Breese Legion, and he enjoys the comradery. Eventually, he asked if he could volunteer and help clean up after big events, like weddings. Mike loves to help out with places and people he really cares about, and he loves making a difference.





“I like to be helpful and help those I care about, like my staff, my coworkers, and friends at the Legion.”

But Mike didn't stop there. He had been thinking about getting another job besides his work at Day Program for a while, and decided to go for it. He now works two days a week at PJ's Diner in Breese, and is loving it. He likes staying busy, being productive, and getting to see his friends and coworkers.

At PJ's, Mike washes dishes, which keeps him very busy. He has made friends with his coworkers and enjoys seeing the regular customers. He likes knowing he is a member of the PJ's team, and a part of his community when he is there.

Besides working hard, Mike also enjoys playing guitar, admiring and riding in nice cars, riding his bike and his scooter, and walking around Breese. His bike and scooter give him freedom, which makes him very happy.

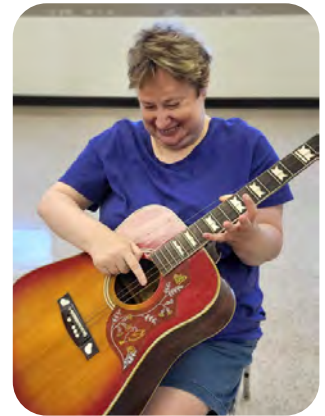
Without Community Link, Mike isn't sure what his life would be like. His staff help him reach his goals and encourage him to do more on his own, especially working. He hopes that someday, with the support of Community Link, he can live in his own apartment in Breese. He is determined and on his way...



OLD AND NEW FAVORITES

At each of our Community Day Services locations, Breese East, Breese West, Fairview Heights Metro, and onsite at Clinton Manor, participants are getting more choices and filling their days with activities that make them truly happy. While production work is still an option, we have more variety and choices to work, play, and learn.

We have been out to so many places this year. We love revisiting our tried and true favorite places, but have also been branching out to visit new places. While it has taken some courage to get out of routines and experience new things, we've been creating new memories and finding new interests.



YOGA
MUSIC
PICNICS
COOKING
GARDENING
CITY MUSEUM
SCIENCE CENTER
WILOUGHBY FARM
WHISPERING PINES
RESTORATION RANCH
TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM
LOCAL RESTAURANTS
BALLPARK VILLAGE
GRIZZLIES GAMES
APPLE ORCHARD
PLANETARIUM
CARD CLUB
KARAOKE
FISHING
PARKS



INDIVIDUAL CHOICES

Within our 8 CILA (community integrated living arrangement) homes, our residents are enjoying new adventures and more opportunities. Our staff has been hard at work to encourage different, more individualized experiences. Lately our residents have been choosing lots of fun activities like concerts, sporting events, the zoo, and more. With the addition of a new Community Inclusion Specialist position, many of these adventures in smaller groups have been possible.

The CILA homes have also enjoyed more parties and events all together as a big family, with participants and loved ones. Throughout the last year, we hosted our annual Christmas Party, the second annual barbeque, a tie dye party, and a fall painting party.

As we look ahead, we are excited for more choices and new experiences.





AN ALL STAR SUCCESS

We had an All Star day at the 18th Annual Community Link Buddy Walk at Breese Northside Park on September 14, 2024. This year we celebrated the All Star talents of our participants, and the hurdles they overcome.

The event was a wonderful success! Not only did we beat our goal of raising \$125,000 for the participants and mission of Community Link, but our community stepped up with amazing support. We had over 1400 registrants this year creating a huge crowd to cheer on our friends with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities.

It was a beautiful day starting with our participants singing karaoke, followed by the sacred 1-mile walk. We continued the day with food, crafts, games, conversation, and our Best Buddy Dog Show.

None of this could be possible without the generosity of so many. Thank you to everyone who registered and donated to reach our goal. We are grateful to our sponsors, team captains, and volunteers who went above and beyond.

We also thank our staff who ensure that this day, and every day, brings joy and smiles to all of our participants. The day of the walk is just the beginning, the success of the day creates more opportunities for enjoyment, learning, and relaxation for our participants all year long.

The Red Porch Café has been Brewing Kindness at our brick and mortar café in New Baden since 2019. The café serves coffee, sandwiches, and other specialty items. In the last year, our café staff has been really focused on how to reach more people, beyond the four walls of the café. We have expanded our “Red Porch Days,” when we deliver to different businesses throughout Clinton, Washington, and St. Clair counties with the help of our Busy Bees group. On Wednesdays, the group delivers lunch to a different town, making several stops at local businesses.

For a new collaboration this year, we created the Busy Bees energy bites, made and packaged by the Busy Bees at the Red Porch on Mondays, then distributed to New Baden businesses to sell. The energy bites are made of peanut butter, granola, M&M’s and honey. They were rolled out for the first time at the Buddy Walk this year, sold by Sip N Scoot Mobile Café.

The Red Porch staff were happy to serve at the Buddy Walk again this year! The menu included delicious seasonal food items and made to order sandwiches. The chili and buffalo chicken sandwiches were big hits among the crowd of Buddy Walkers!



Special Needs Foundation for Community Link

The Special Needs Foundation for Community Link was formed in 2004 to fund special projects for Community Link. Family members of Community Link wanted to broaden opportunities for their loved ones and that goal carries on today. In more recent years, the Foundation has focused on growing an endowment fund to take Community Link from good to great.

Through the support of individuals and businesses in our community, the endowment has grown to over \$900,000. This investment will provide a bright future for Community Link with a reliable source of funding that will last for generations.



The Special Needs Foundation for Community Link hosted its annual event, the *Palace of Possibilities* gala, on Saturday, April 6. The Breese American Legion looked like a palace, straight from Las Vegas, with casino game tables and lots of sparkles filling the room. The night was made possible by the foundation board members, who worked for many months to bring the event to life.



The guests, sponsors, and donors were incredibly generous, raising more than \$123,000 to support the foundation. These donations have been added to the endowment that supports Community Link today and decades into the future.

Helen Heimann
President

Amy Maschhoff
Secretary

Joe Heimann
Treasurer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Amber Brooke
Amy Buller
Ashley Gramann
Dana Korte
Haeli Robke



Our Early Head Start program has supported pregnant women and families from birth to 3 years of age in Clinton and Washington Counties for the last 25 years. The program has used the Parents as Teachers model and offered families support services, playgroups, and family activities. In 2024, we served 2 pregnant mothers and 36 children through the Early Head Start program.

We collaborated with several agencies to serve more families. The two dental clinics that we hosted with Dental Safari saw 137 children, aged 0-18. The Lions Club helped us conduct vision screenings, and saw 91 children aged 0-18.

Through our program, we hosted three separate parent trainings with guest speakers at each, including a behavior training with Shelley Kenow, a SAFE training with Lexy Engleman, and at home visits for family budget training. We also offered several trainings from the University of Illinois extension office.

After careful deliberation, we have made the extremely difficult decision to relinquish the Early Head Start grant as of August 31, 2024. We have determined that we can best serve our community by focusing on the purpose for which we were founded, to create opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities. We are proud of the 25 years that the Early Head Start Program served Clinton and Washington counties, and we know the contributions to the community will be felt for years.

Barb Lunnemann-Sedivy was the initial director of the children's program who launched the Early Head Start program.

We would like to thank all of the staff, donors, families, and friends of Community Link who made such a difference in the lives of children in our community.



FINANCIAL REPORT

Community Link presents the following summary of revenues, expenses and changes in net assets for the Agency's Fiscal Year 2024, ending this past June 30. For a copy of the completed audit, please email info@commlink.org or call 618-526-8800.

REVENUE

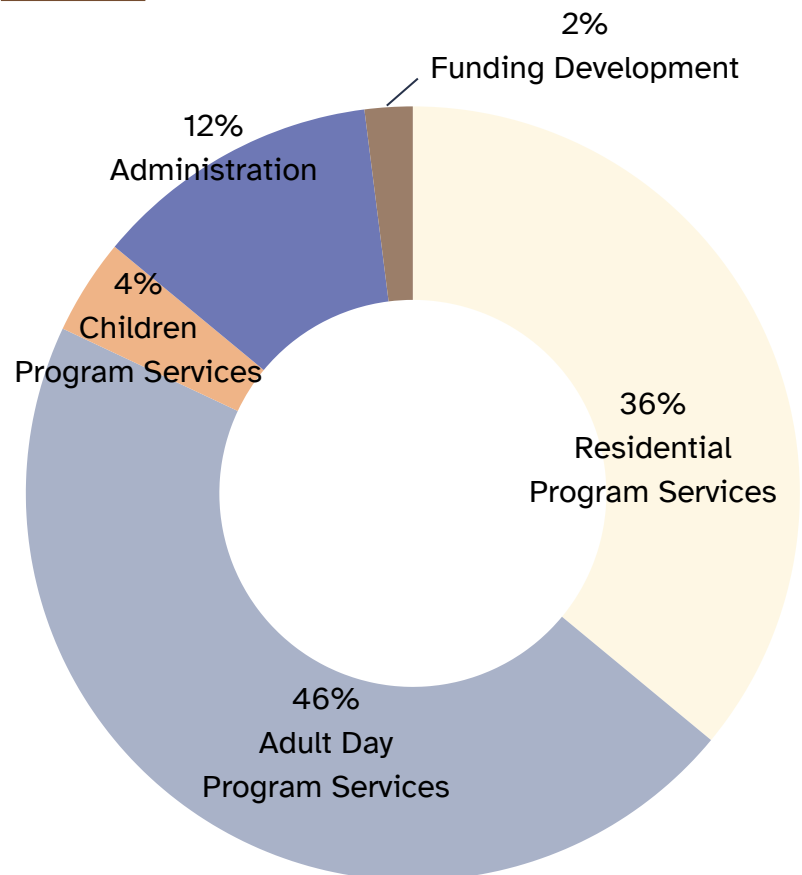
Fees for Service/Gov't Grants	\$9,467,280	85%
Sales from Worksites	\$1,127,059	10%
Contributions, Fundraisers and Other Income	\$610,976	5%
Total Operating Revenue	\$11,205,315	

OPERATING EXPENSES

Salaries & Benefits	\$8,199,877
Occupancy	\$502,063
Other Operating Expenses	\$1,443,238
Total Operating Expenses	\$10,145,178

Net Operating Gain	\$1,060,137
Depreciation Expense	(\$189,217)
Change in Net Assets	\$870,920

FUNCTIONAL EXPENSE FY 2024



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

I invite you to take another look at the cover of this report. We are proud to present our updated Mission, Vision, and Values of Community Link. These are an enhancement of our previous statements, not a full departure from the past.

Our previous Mission focused solely on “growth and independence” but we have now added “choice” at the forefront. Our participants are more engaged than ever in shaping their own future. Both at our Day Programs and in our CILA homes, we are offering more personalized choices for learning and leisure.

We have identified our core Values to focus on the 3 concepts that truly embody what Community Link is all about: Dignity, Integrity, and Compassion. We respect all individuals, we are always working to earn trust, and we believe in treating everyone with kindness.

As Community Link moves into the future, changes in regulation and legislation will significantly change our service delivery methods. We have developed a Strategic Plan for the next 5 years to continue to be an innovator in creating opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities. We are dedicated to ensure our participants are fully supported in living their best and most meaningful lives.

On behalf of the full board, I’d like to recognize and thank our extraordinary staff who exemplify dignity, integrity, and compassion every day. We are grateful to you, our community, friends, and family who share our vision that every person is valued for their presence and contributions. The strength of Community Link is the strength of our community. Thank you for standing with us.

Sincerely,
Ron Foppe



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ron Foppe President	Bailey Rinella Secretary	Jerry Albers William Becker Pam Buehne Andrew Cassibry	Charles Hilmes Amanda Loepker Sandra Porter Teresa Sudholt	John Huelskamp Executive Director
Tara Hilmes Vice President	Jeff Niemeyer Treasurer			

REMEMBERING FRIENDS WHO HAVE PASSED AWAY

Ronica Kramer, 59, November 20, 2023	Carol Sexton, 62, February 13, 2024
Jane Webb, 73, November 29, 2023	Ralph Dugan, 76, April 13, 2024
Andrew (Andy) Stephens, 55, November 30, 2023	Aki-Bua (Aki) Tillman, 51, April 16, 2024
William (Billy) Joost, 63, December 14, 2023	Lynn Randall, 57, October 16, 2024
George Nunn, 70, December 20, 2023	Joshua Hutchinson, 47, December 15, 2024
Mark Schomaker, 65, December 20, 2023	



Thank You



For Creating Possibilities

**SPECIAL NEEDS FOUNDATION
UNMASKING THE
POSSIBILITIES GALA**

March 29, 2025
American Legion
Breese, IL

**19TH ANNUAL
COMMUNITY LINK
BUDDY WALK**

September 13, 2025
Northside Park
Breese, IL

SAVE THE DATE

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

THE RED PORCH CAFE

301 E Hanover Street | New Baden, IL 62265



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