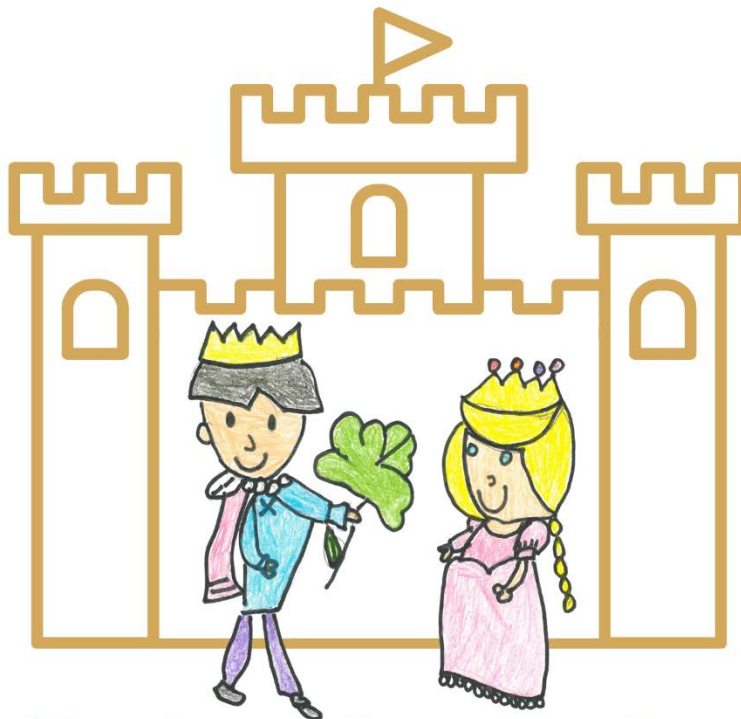


TEAM CAPTAIN TOOLKIT



20TH ANNUAL COMMUNITY LINK

BUDDYWALK®

national down syndrome society®

EDUCATE | ADVOCATE | CELEBRATE

SEPTEMBER 19, 2026 👑 BREESE, IL



INTRODUCTION



CONGRATULATIONS!

Thank you for registering your team for the **20th Annual Community Link Buddy Walk**! We are very excited that your team will be joining us on **Saturday, September 19th, 2026** for a day full of fun and excitement. Remind your friends and family to mark their calendars. Whether this is your first walk or your 20th walk, this toolkit will provide you with all the tools and information necessary to prepare for the event and/or achieve your fundraising goal!

First things first, upload a photo of your buddy and a quick story of your buddy to your team's page. After you have customized your page, encourage your friends and family to go to www.commlink.org/buddywalk and register to walk with your team or make a donation. You can do this with phone calls, emails and social media posts. Ideas of how to do this and other tips are included in this team captain toolkit.

We encourage you to read through this toolkit to make sure you are aware of deadlines, standards and tips that you need to be successful. All elements of this toolkit can be found in the Team Captain Corner of Community Link's Buddy Walk website (www.commlink.org/buddywalk). Have a party for your team, explore the website and get excited!

If you have any questions anytime, please contact me at 618-526-3929 or by email at HayleyP@commlink.org.

You will have to resign your team and team members up if you have not already done so. If you have any issues setting up your team or page, please reach out to me. Best of luck and thank you for all that you do!

DATES TO REMEMBER/REGISTRATION

July 17

- ❖ Last day for Early Bird registration at \$20 per person

August 28

- ❖ Last day to be guaranteed a t-shirt

September 16

- ❖ Last day for online registration (t-shirt not guaranteed after August 28)

September 19

- ❖ 20th Annual Community Link Buddy Walk (day-of registrations available for \$25, t-shirts available first-come, first-serve)

December 31

- ❖ Last day donations may be submitted for the 2026 Buddy Walk

Registration Notes:

Both the Early Bird and regular Walk Registration receive a t-shirt, just the price is different:

- ❖ Early Bird Registration (June 1 – July 3): \$20
- ❖ Walk Registration (July 4 – September 10, and day of registration): \$25

Only those registered by August 28 can pick up their t-shirts at AVH. Later registrations can pick up their shirt in the morning at the event (requested size not guaranteed, based on availability)

Like last year, we will be reaching out to Team Captains to find out if you want to pick up your entire team's shirts at AVH, or have individuals pick them up themselves.

FUNDRAISING METHOD

We are so thrilled that you have decided to fundraise for the 20th Annual Community Link Buddy Walk®. We have pulled together a quick four-step method to assist you in your fundraising.

STEP ONE: PLAN

Before you begin fundraising, we suggest creating a plan for your fundraising efforts. We have included a fundraising timeline to provide you with an idea of good times to push your fundraising efforts throughout the Buddy Walk season. We want you to be successful with your fundraising!

Build your network! Think about a list of people or businesses who might donate to your efforts this year. We recommend starting with:

- ❖ Friends and families
- ❖ Current or former colleagues and classmates
- ❖ Neighbors
- ❖ Church/Religious network
- ❖ Local businesses your family frequents (restaurants, retail stores, etc.)
- ❖ Social media connections

STEP TWO: TELL YOUR STORY

- ❖ **We encourage you to tell your story.** Your child or the individual who inspired you to create a team for Community Link's Buddy Walk® is a great start to your story. The questions below can help you practice your story:
- ❖ **Why do you walk in Community Link's Buddy Walk®?**
- ❖ **How has certain programming impacted you and your Buddy?**
- ❖ **How has Down syndrome (or other developmental disability) impacted your life and why do you believe it's important to raise money for Community Link?**

We have included a sample fundraising letter on the next page to help you start telling your story. We do encourage you to customize this letter and include a photo of your Buddy.

STEP THREE: REMIND YOUR NETWORK

We understand that reminding your networks about your fundraising can be difficult given how long the Buddy Walk fundraising season is. **We suggest using stories of your Buddy to promote your fundraising efforts throughout the year.** Sending out notes to remind your network about a milestone your Buddy has reached can also be a great way to solicit for additional donations at different times of the year. The more personal you can make it, the better!

STEP FOUR: THANKING YOUR DONORS

Don't forget to thank all those people who supported your team this year. The Community Link Buddy Walk website makes it easy to download your donor report with addresses, so you can send a quick, but heartfelt thank you note.

SAMPLE FUNDRAISING TEMPLATE

Below is [a sample letter template](#) to use when asking for donations for your Community Link Buddy Walk 2023 team.

Dear _____,

I am participating in the Community Link Buddy Walk® on September 19, 2026. Community Link's Buddy Walk primarily benefits local, Community Link participants by supporting programs in Clinton and St. Clair Counties. A total of 2.5% of the total money raised at the Buddy Walk goes to the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS), the leading human rights organization for people with Down syndrome. Community Link and NDSS envision a world in which all people with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities have the opportunity to enhance their quality of life, realize their life aspirations and become valued members of welcoming communities like ours. Join us and help make this vision a reality.

(If you have a personal connection, this is a great place to share your story and who you are participating in honor of.)

I hope that you'll consider donating to my walk team. No donation is too small and every dollar raised allows Community Link and NDSS to continue their important work on behalf of our loved ones with developmental disabilities.

To make a secure, tax-deductible donation to Community Link, please visit my personal fundraising page: [\(insert link here\)](#).

With gratitude,
Signature

OR... A SOCIAL MEDIA POST

(Don't forget to include photos or videos to your post!)

I am excited to announce that I am participating in the Community Link Buddy Walk® on September 19, 2026. I hope you'll support the Community Link Buddy Walk® - and me - with a donation.

(If you have a personal connection or are participating in honor of someone, share your story here)

The Buddy Walk® benefits the local participants of Community Link, and the National Down Syndrome Society NDSS, the leading human rights organization for all individuals with Down syndrome. Please consider making a donation to support Community Link, joining my team or both!

Check out my team's Community Link Buddy Walk® fundraising page here: [\(insert link here\)](#)



1665 N. Fourth Street
Breeze, IL 62230
618-526-8800 | www.commlink.org

FUNDRAISING IDEAS FOR YOUR TEAM

We encourage you to choose some creative ways to fundraise for our team, aside from soliciting donations through letters and social media. Think outside the box! Here are examples of some fun fundraising ideas.

INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

- ❖ **Birthday Donation:** Ask your friends and family to donate to your fundraiser in honor of your birthday. Facebook makes this extra easy to do.
- ❖ **Corporate Matching:** This is a simple way to multiply your donations. Some companies will match donations made by their employees. Many do a straight 1:1 to match, but others take it to the next level, offering a 2:1 or 3:1 commitment!
- ❖ **Play for a Cause:** Ask local businesses (crafting studio, skating rink, indoor children's play center, etc.) to designate a single day as a fundraiser for your Buddy Walk® team and donate all profits, a percentage of profits, or a certain amount to your team.
- ❖ **Lemonade Stand:** Host a good old-fashioned lemonade stand with your kids!
- ❖ **Wine Raffle Pull:** This is a perfect idea for a lady's night, and is simple to do. Ask local stores or restaurants to donate bottles of wine. Wrap up the wines to hide their values. Then, sell "wine pull" tickets that allow people to pull a bottle out of the selection of wrapped wines.
- ❖ **Sporting Event Watch Party:** Build off the passion, energy, and commitment of sports fans for your next fundraising campaign. Reserve a room or host a game viewing party at your home with plenty of snacks and drinks. You can charge a small entry fee and add a capacity limit to your event to control the headcount.
- ❖ **Penny Drive or Penny War:** Get teams (school classes, sports teams, etc) to compete by collecting the most coins in a set time frame like a month or school term. Have them use empty 5L water bottles for each class/team to collect their coins in. Talk to a local pizza restaurant to see if they would donate pizzas to the winning class/team. You get all the pennies to apply to your fundraiser.
- ❖ **Yard/Garage Sale:** Clean out the clutter and support your team! Get the word out to friends, neighbors, and supporters that you are hosting a yard/garage sale fundraiser. Ask them to donate items to be sold, and to come shop your sale. Include a donation jar along with information about the Buddy Walk® and your fundraising effort.
- ❖ **Twenty-One Dollar Tuesday:** On Tuesday, ask your connections across all your social media accounts to donate \$21 to your fundraiser. Do a shout-out post to recognize those that donate.
- ❖ **Host a Sales Party:** Host a consultant party with a portion of proceeds benefiting your team (i.e. Mary Kay, Pampered Chef, Tupperware) or ask a friend with a business to host one to benefit your fundraiser.

FUNDRAISING IDEAS *(continued)*

- ❖ **Benefit Workout Class:** Ask your gym to host a benefit workout class where donations can go to your fundraiser.
- ❖ **Dress Down for Down Syndrome Day:** Ask your employer or your child's school to host a dress down day(s), where employees who donate a certain amount to your fundraiser can wear jeans/comfy clothes.
- ❖ **Donation Jar:** See if local merchants will let you set up a donation canister near the cash register. Provide a flyer that explains your efforts on behalf of your Buddy Walk® team.
- ❖ **Get Help Spreading the Word:** Request to have your fundraising page link shared on the social media page or newsletter of your church, temple, gym, neighborhood, school, etc.
- ❖ **Fundraising Calendars for Social Media:** Customize and share the provided calendar template on your social media pages and ask your friends and family to “buy” a date (examples on following page).

BOOST OUTREACH

- ❖ **Social Networks:** Post a message on your favorite social media page asking your friends to support your efforts. Be sure to use the hashtag #CommunityLinkBuddyWalk or #CommunityLink
- ❖ **Email Signature:** Include your team name in your email signature.
- ❖ **Share the Passion:** Tell your story. The more you talk about your why you’re involved in your Walk, the more people will share in that excitement and want to donate or join your team.
- ❖ **Classmates:** Ask your child’s teacher if she can send home a Walk flier in his/her classmates’ backpacks.
- ❖ **Meet the Press:** Get an article in your company newsletter. Ask them to publish an article about you in which you request support.
- ❖ **Bulletin Boards:** Post a Buddy Walk postcard on bulletin boards at the gym, community center, coffee shop, etc.

USE YOUR TALENTS

- ❖ **Baby-sit**
- ❖ **Pet-sit**
- ❖ **House-sit**
- ❖ **Water the Garden:** Or any chores you or a family member would normally do for free for neighbors, friends or family, this time, ask them for a team donation.
- ❖ **Computer Graphics:** If you are good with computers, make nice cards and give them for pledges.

SPONSORSHIPS: LITTLE EFFORT, BIG PAYOFF

Look for sponsors for the event! Sponsorship packages are below or can be downloaded from Community Link’s Buddy Walk® website at commlink.org/buddywalk. These sponsorships will count towards your team’s fundraising goals.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Benefits	Presenting Sponsor \$2500	Gold Sponsor \$1000	Silver Sponsor \$500	Bronze Sponsor \$250
Complimentary walk registrations including t-shirts	8	6	4	2
Featured on back of t-shirt	Large Logo	Logo	Company Name	N/A for 2026*
Signage at event	Large Logo	Logo	Logo	Logo
Facebook promotion	Multiple individual	Individual	Group recognition	Group recognition
Recognition on Buddy Walk website	Logo	Logo	Logo	Logo
Receive window clings to display as a Proud Supporter	X	X	X	X
Company Name in press releases	X	X	X	
Recognition in event announcements	X	X	X	
Opportunity for exhibitor table at event	Premium location	X		
Featured on promotional materials and advertisements, individual press release	X			

***Bronze sponsors will not be on the t-shirt this year, to be included on the shirt, please consider Silver or above**

Level: ☐ Presenting \$2500 ☐ Gold \$1000 ☐ Silver \$500 ☐ Bronze \$250

☐ We do not wish to participate with a sponsorship, but wish to contribute a donation of \$_____

Company Name _____
 (as it should appear)
 Contact _____
 Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Phone _____
 Email _____
 Team _____

☐ Starting a Team ☐ Joining a Team ☐ Participating without a team

Walker Name **T-shirt size**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

Available sizes: Youth – 2T, 3T, 4T, XS, S, M, L
 Adult – Small, Med, Large, XL, 2XL, 3XL, 4XL

You can become a sponsor online by going to commmlink.org/buddywalk and clicking on "Donate"

Please return by **August 26, 2026** to participate in all benefits

Email logos to Michelle at michelled@commmlink.org

Sponsorships/donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law. FEIN #37-0955971

Send form and payment to: **Community Link, 1665 N 4th St., Breese, IL 62230**

If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Delfel at michelled@commmlink.org or 618-526-3989

THANK YOU!

CINCINNATI OH 45999-0038

In reply refer to: 0248222395
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BODC: TE

COMMUNITY LINK INC
1665 N 4TH ST
BREESE IL 62230



018059

Employer Identification Number: 37-0955971
Person to Contact: MISS CONVERSE
Toll Free Telephone Number: 1-877-829-5500

Dear Taxpayer:

This is in response to your Jan. 15, 2014, request for information regarding your tax-exempt status.

Our records indicate that you were recognized as exempt under section 501(c)(03) of the Internal Revenue Code in a determination letter issued in December 1973.

Our records also indicate that you are not a private foundation within the meaning of section 509(a) of the Code because you are described in section(s) 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).

Donors may deduct contributions to you as provided in section 170 of the Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts to you or for your use are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes if they meet the applicable provisions of sections 2055, 2106, and 2522 of the Code.

Please refer to our website www.irs.gov/eo for information regarding filing requirements. Specifically, section 6033(j) of the Code provides that failure to file an annual information return for three consecutive years results in revocation of tax-exempt status as of the filing due date of the third return for organizations required to file. We will publish a list of organizations whose tax-exempt status was revoked under section 6033(j) of the Code on our website beginning in early 2011.

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COMMUNITY LINK INC
1665 N 4TH ST
BREESE IL 62230

If you have any questions, please call us at the telephone number
shown in the heading of this letter.

Sincerely yours,

Susan M. O'Neill

Susan M. O'Neill, Department Mgr.
Accounts Management Operations

DONATION INFORMATION

CAN I ENTER DONATIONS RECEIVED VIA CHECK TO MY WEBPAGE?

- ❖ Yes, you can enter donations received via cash or check on your team's page, but they will need to be approved by an authorized Community Link employee to show up on your team page. Please mail all checks and hand-deliver cash donations directly to:

Community Link, Inc.
INSERT BUDDY WALK TEAM NAME
1665 N. Fourth Street
Breese, IL 62230-0157

WHAT IF PEOPLE WANT TO GIVE ME CASH?

- ❖ It is safest and best for record-keeping that you convert all cash received to a check or money order. If you are able, the safest option is to send a personal check covering the full amount, along with the corresponding donation forms to Community Link. We will be able to credit your friends and family for their generosity (as long as the forms are clearly completed with all information—name, address and amount given). If this is not possible, you can also always bring the cash donations and appropriate donation forms to Community Link's office or to Community Link's Buddy Walk and turn it in at Registration.

WILL MONEY TURNED IN AT THE WALK SHOW UP ON MY WEBPAGE AND MY DONATION REPORT?

- ❖ Absolutely! If the corresponding donation forms were completed and submitted along with your donations at the Walk, then you should see your fundraising efforts reflected on your team webpage and donations report.

ARE DONATIONS TAX DEDUCTIBLE?

- ❖ Your gift is tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by the law. Community Link Inc. is a registered 501 (c)(3) organization. Our tax ID number is 37-0955971.

WHERE DO I GET DONATION AND REGISTRATION FORMS?

- ❖ Donation and registration forms are enclosed in this packet. You may also print additional forms from the Team Captain's Corner on Community Link's Buddy Walk® website, or stop by the Breese East or Metro Buildings.
- ❖ Use the donation form for people wanting to make a donation only. Individuals wanting to participate in the Walk or 5K need to complete a registration form so they can receive a t-shirt.

WHO SHOULD BUDDY WALK CHECKS BE MADE PAYABLE TO?

- ❖ For tax purposes, please make checks payable to Community Link. Checks should not be written to Buddy Walk teams, team captains or individual participants.
- ❖ Please ask teammates to submit their corresponding donation tracking forms with their checks so your team will be properly credited for your fundraising efforts. If this is not possible please ask donors to indicate which walk team they are supporting and your name on the memo section of the check.

I TURNED IN A PACKET AT THE WALK AND DO NOT SEE ALL THE CHECKS PROCESSED YET.

- ❖ All donations to Community Link will be deposited, processed and posted to your team page by Sept 25, 2026. If do not see your donations on your team webpage after that date, please contact Michelle Delfel at michelled@commlink.org.

DO I HAVE TO SEND IN MY DONATIONS? CAN I BRING THEM WITH ME TO THE WALK? CAN I CONTINUE TO COLLECT DONATIONS AFTER THE WALK? WHAT IF MY DONOR'S DON'T WANT TO DONATE ONLINE? WHERE DO I SEND THE CHECKS?

- ❖ While you can always bring your donations to the walk, it is preferable that you mail them to us as soon as you can to the address below. We will continue to accept donations for Buddy Walk through December 31, 2026

Community Link, Inc.
INSERT BUDDY WALK TEAM NAME
1665 N. Fourth Street
Breese, IL 62230-0157

CORPORATE MATCH FAQs

I THINK MY COMPANY MATCHES. HOW DO I GET THIS STARTED?

- ❖ Every company handles its own matching gift program differently. Please contact your company's Human Resources department for instructions on how to double your fundraising efforts through matching gifts. Please be aware that some matching gifts can take up to six months to receive, so please plan accordingly.

WHERE DO I SEND MY MATCHING GIFT FORM?

- ❖ You can send your matching gift to the same address where you would mail donations. Please make sure to add your team name on the envelope.

I SUBMITTED A FORM FOR MATCHING GIFTS BUT DO NOT SEE THE DONATION ON MY PAGE. WHERE IS IT?

- ❖ Community Link cannot post a matching gift until the corporation involved approves it. Unfortunately, corporations match gifts on a different timetable during the year. If you have questions regarding your matching gift, please contact your company to see if the donation has indeed been matched. If it has, please contact Michelle Delfel at Community Link at 618-526-3989 or michelled@commlink.org, and she will do everything she can to ensure that the donation appears on your page.

AUCTION/RAFFLE ITEMS

- ❖ We are NOT planning on having a silent auction / raffle at the walk this year. We will have a silent auction at our annual gala, so if you have items you would like to donate, they will be used for that event!
- ❖ You can drop items off any time at the Community Link East Building for our annual Gala.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE REGISTRATION FEE?

- ❖ After July 17th, the Walk fee will be \$25 per person. Both registrations include an official commemorative Community Link Buddy Walk® t-shirt. Please register at: COMMLINK.ORG/BUDDYWALK

SHOULD I REGISTER MY KIDS?

- ❖ Yes, please register everyone who will be attending (even toddlers in strollers). This helps us plan for the day of the event, plus only those who register receive t-shirts.

I HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER WHO WANTS TO JOIN MY TEAM BUT MAY NOT BE ABLE TO ATTEND THE WALK. CAN THEY STILL JOIN MY TEAM?

- ❖ Yes, family members can still support you by joining your team and fundraise as a team member even if they are unable to attend.

WHAT IS THE CUT-OFF TO JOIN A TEAM?

- ❖ You can register online until September 16th until 11:59 PM. And, you can register at the event, but we encourage everyone to **register before August 28th to be guaranteed a t-shirt.**

SOME OF MY FAMILY WOULD LIKE TO COME, BUT NOT WALK. DO THEY NEED TO REGISTER?

- ❖ Everyone is welcome to attend. We encourage every participant to register by August 28th. If they would like an event t-shirt, they **MUST** register. T-shirts may not be available the day of the walk. Only those who register and pay the registration fee ON or BEFORE August 28th will be guaranteed a t-shirt.

SOMEONE DONATED TO MY TEAM, BUT MEANT TO REGISTER FOR THE WALK. WHAT SHOULD THEY DO?

- ❖ If a donation was made by someone and they now want a t-shirt, please contact Michelle at 618-526-3989 or michelled@commlink.org.

IF I AM REGISTERED, DO I NEED TO DO ANYTHING ELSE TO BE PRE-REGISTERED?

- ❖ No, if you have already registered online, you are all set.

IS IT BETTER TO REGISTER ONLINE OR REGISTER THE MORNING OF THE WALK?

- ❖ Pre-registering online is best! You will save \$5 per registration if you register by July 17th. Also, it helps us plan for a better event if we know how many people will be attending. Community Link, event sponsors and vendors order items based on how many people we have pre-registered for the walk. Plus, registering before the walk will alleviate registration lines at the event and you will be able to enjoy the event from the moment you get there. Each individual and team that registers will receive a webpage within the Community Link Buddy Walk® website. This will give friends and family a place to go to donate directly to you online. You can also customize this page with a photo and special message.



Community Link Buddy Walk Offline Registration Form

Register at online at: commlink.org/buddywalk

**Early Bird Walk Registration is \$20 through July 17, 2026 for all walkers.
After July 17, Walk Registration is \$25 for all walkers.**

**Registration forms must be received by August 28 to be guaranteed a T-shirt.
T-shirts should be picked up at AVH Ink & Vinyl in Breese between Sept 11-18**

PRIMARY REGISTRANT OR DONOR INFORMATION

Name: _____ T-Shirt Size: _____
Team Name: _____ ☐ Starting a Team ☐ Joining a Team ☐ Participating without a team
Email Address (required): _____
Street Address: _____ City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

ADDITIONAL REGISTRANTS

Name: _____ T-Shirt Size: _____
Name: _____ T-Shirt Size: _____
Name: _____ T-Shirt Size: _____
Name: _____ T-Shirt Size: _____

Registration Fees: Register by July 17 and pay \$20 per walker. After July 17, pay \$25 per walker (t-shirt included for all walkers)

FEES

Number of Walkers _____
Before 7/17/26 X \$20 = \$ _____
After 7/17/26 X \$25 = \$ _____
Donation \$ _____
Total Due \$ _____

T-SHIRT SIZES AVAILABLE

YOUTH	ADULT
2T	Small
3T	Medium
4T	Large
X-Small	X-Large
Small	2XL
Medium	3XL
Large	4XL

WAIVER

I hereby waive all claims against Community Link, Inc., sponsors, vendors, volunteers and any personnel for any injury that I or my family member might suffer from this event. I attest that I and my family members are physically fit and prepared for this event. I grant full permission for organizers to use photographs, videos and quotations of me and my family members in legitimate accounts and promotions of this event.

Signature (if 18 or older) _____ Date _____ Parent or Guardian signature (if less than 18) _____ Date _____

Please send this form, along with payment to Community Link. If paying by check, make payable to **Community Link** and send to:

Community Link, 1665 N. Fourth Street, Breese, IL 62230



1665 N. Fourth Street
Breese, IL 62230
618-526-8800 | www.commlink.org