Damon, an occupational therapist of nine years, uses his iPad at the therapeutic day school because it is an interactive multi-purpose tool. “My iPad replaces a lot of things while serving many purposes. It can play music and become a leisure activity, it acts as a paper and pencil task, replaces worksheets and can be an interactive book,” added Damon.

For example, if Wyatt becomes upset or distracted, Damon can turn the iPad into a self-calming tool by playing music. Once Wyatt is relaxed and has the proper level of alertness that is needed to learn, Damon will go back to using educational apps that target accuracy and control. Wyatt has shown major improvements by using an iPad. He has improved his fine motor skills so much that he now has the ability to use a stylus, which acts as a pen. His visual skills have also greatly increased. In addition, Damon discovered that students have an increased attention span while performing paper and pencil tasks that they are normally averse to.

Students use iPads twice a week for the last ten minutes of their occupational therapy sessions. During this time, students are engaged while they reinforce the movements and fine motor skills they were taught. Students pick from a predetermined list of educational apps that range from puzzles and interactive books to drawing and writing letters. Thanks to a generous donation from Plexus Manufacturing Solutions, Little City will now provide iPads to each student. These iPads will not only be occupational therapy tools, but will also give students who are nonverbal a voice by acting as their communication tool.

Students with Autism Benefit from iPads

Although Wyatt has autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities, he is continually excelling at Little City’s ChildBridge Center for Education—a leading-edge therapeutic day school. Wyatt is one of the five students utilizing new technology and improving skills with different educational applications (apps) on an iPad.

The ChildBridge Center for Education, located on Little City’s 56-acre Palatine campus introduced iPads in the classroom six months ago to help students achieve their goals and monitor their progress. Little City is one of the few schools in the district leading the way in usage of this technology.

“iPads have revolutionized the way I approach therapy,” stated ChildBridge Center for Education Occupational Therapist Damon Simmons. Damon uses the hand-over-hand technique while helping Wyatt write his name on an iPad.

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I have an intellectual disability, and I got a job today.

Because of Little City, I am my own hero.

READ MORE AT WWW.LITTLECITY.ORG/HERO
Executive Director’s Corner

“Challenging Times Calls for Advocacy, not Apathy or Fear” — Shawn E. Jeffers

The Executive Director’s Corner

Very recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released data estimating that 1 in 88 American children has some form of autism spectrum disorder. That’s a 78 percent increase compared to a decade ago, according to their report.

Now more than ever, our communities are in need of agencies like Little City to provide person-centered care and advocacy to children on this very broad spectrum and their families.

Another huge influencing factor affecting the disability landscape is Ligas and similar consent decrees closing state institutions, which will require the placement of thousands of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities into the community. Discussions about how, with whom and where these folks should reside are passionate ones.

Little City wants to serve these individuals but there are numerous challenges currently confronting our organization. One challenge is the residential offerings we provide on our therapeutic, 56-acre campus. For some, the definition of community, does not include campus-based residential options, or homes like those operated by Little City, and therefore they contend that we should no longer exist.

Those that support this narrow definition of community portend to speak for all people with disabilities and they attempt to silence those who suggest otherwise. They suggest that those who do not align with their definition of “community,” are labeled as “ill-informed” or out of touch.

Little City, in fact, has an ethos and practice that is strongly oriented towards client choice and least restrictive services. To a certain extent, we are an anachronism of this age of “non-institutional” care where “community-based” is defined as “where” the residence is physically located, instead of the quality of the client-centered services, or the choices available to the client.

Some believe that de-institutionalization is defined as moving clients from large congregate care facilities to smaller congregate care in the community. However, the roots of deinstitutionalization clearly involve choice and quality of care, not just location.

One of Little City’s valued clinical experts recently asked me: “Is this a verbatim description of a gated community or is this in fact, Little City?”

A form of residential community often characterized by a closed perimeter of walls and fences; consists of small residential streets and includes various shared amenities. Often similar to a small town with its own infrastructure (backup power supply, sanitation, and security guards), they may also be a park or other common area. For larger communities, it may be possible for residents to stay within the community for most day-to-day activities. It is a type of common-interest development where residing in the community is by choice.

As I read the definition of a “gated community,” I wondered why such a well-established, accepted feature in our society is OK for other groups, but not for those at Little City. Many of the features of the gated community are quite similar, if not identical, to that of the Little City community: voluntary admission, choices to foster safety and well being, and programs and services to foster community cohesion.

Another concern on our advocacy and policy agenda is the fear of some neighborhoods and local municipalities about the infusion of more group homes across a broader disability spectrum. Numerous local papers recently reported on impassioned village discussions about group-home living in various neighborhoods in our service area.

Some fears include declines in home values, increases in crime and destruction, and the potential influx of people they consider to be “undesirable.” The acronym often used to describe this thinking is NIMBY—“not in my backyard.”

We have attempted to quell the fears and concerns about our impact on neighborhoods in a proactive and positive way—by being the best neighbor we can be. We care for and about each of our homes. We are devoted to the people who live in our homes and dedicated to the staff who each day dutifully provide care and support. Studies have proven that group homes do not lower the property values of surrounding homes and that people who live within the homes do not present any untoward risks or dangers (when compared to other members of the community). Yet, the ignorance persists.

Friends, in summary, four major influences affecting our society, Little City and those we serve: (1) the disturbing increase in the prevalence of autism, (2) the thought that Little City does not provide “community housing,” on our therapeutic campus, (3) the increased need of residential options for thousands who will be integrated from state institutions into our communities, and (4) citizens who do not want individuals with disabilities living in their neighborhoods, are all issues that require further dialogue. We ask you to join us in that dialogue.

As the executive director of Little City, I call on you for your continued support during these challenging times. We need to communicate that we need advocacy, not apathy or fear.

Respectfully in service,

Shawn E. Jeffers, Executive Director
**City Planning**

Pathways to Employment

A basic value of American society is that citizens are productively employed and receive a reasonable wage for their work. For people with disabilities, this is best achieved through the preferred option of integrated work. It is the policy of Little City that people with developmental disabilities who want jobs should have the opportunity to be actively employed without jeopardizing other rights or benefits which assure them necessary continuing support.

Unfortunately today, many high school students (with disabilities) graduate and are left with only two options: (a) go to college or (b) go home. For those who may have not have any other choice but to go home, Little City’s Center for Employment & Business Development will create an employment training program which will identify, train and create employment ready candidates for the community workplace.

The Center will provide much-needed support to these “students in transition” by helping them to identify their career interests, assess their skills, choose a job and receive training and management for advancement.

Using current knowledge and job outlook data from the U.S. Department of Labor and Department of Education, the Center for Employment & Business Development will provide training opportunities in nine career clusters:

- Food Services
- Skilled Labor
- Janitorial/Cleaning
- Cashier
- Stocking/Shipping/Receiving
- Clerical/Data Entry
- Assembly/Packaging
- Retail Sales
- Grounds Maintenance
- Janitorial/Cleaning
- Stocking/Shipping/Receiving
- Assembly/Packaging

To date, more than 70 satisfied companies in the greater Chicago area have hired individuals trained at Little City and we look forward to growing that number!

If you are interested in hiring, contact Wayne Frederickson at (847) 221-7808 or hire@littlecity.org.

**Little City Spotlight**

New Director of the ChildBridge Center for Group-Home Living

Jack Flight will oversee the daily operations of the ChildBridge Center for Group-Home Living to ensure that our children continue to receive the best possible programming in their homes. He’ll also help implement Little City’s first-rate treatment model in every environment.

“Jack has a wealth of experience leading a children’s residential program and an extensive clinical background. He is a very hands-on leader and has a great passion and drive for working with children,” commented Chief Program Officer LeAn Taylor.

“I look forward to becoming part of the Little City team. I know the great work they have been doing for over 50 years and I am excited to become part of that and contribute to helping the residents grow and reach their dreams.”
Spring is a time for fresh starts, so why not take a moment to begin something new? Just as plants produce new growth, there’s something simple we can do to bring newness to our lives by creating or updating our will.

Many people are reluctant to write a will, or even discuss one. However, those who do are always glad they did. Contrary to what some believe, a well-written plan is never about life without us. It affirms the life within us.

When we write a will, we tell the world what’s important to us. A will affirms our hopes, dreams and protects our loved ones and cherished causes.

Take a moment this spring to enjoy all that the season’s flower-filled fields have to offer. But also let it serve as a reminder to call your attorney about writing your will, or ask if it needs updating. In the meantime, think about your values, your beliefs and the family members and charitable causes that are most likely to share these values with you.

We hope the heart of the Little City mission falls within those values and beliefs. For more information, please contact The Heritage Society of Little City at (847) 358-5510 or bequests@littlecity.org.

“My heart swells with pride to know that my contributions over the years have not only helped my daughter…but hundreds of other wonderful families who have been in my situation. I am grateful for what Little City has done for me and know by making plans for the future, I will help improve the programs and services for many years to come.”

—Verne Carson, Little City parent, supporter and Heritage Society member

Little City FY11 Annual Report

“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.” – STEVE JOBS

Through these challenging times, Little City remains strong, focused and innovative. When committed to a vision, change can be a good thing. In fact, change can spur growth. And that’s the case at Little City.

Throughout this annual report, you will learn how Little City remains a service leader in disability care through innovative initiatives. You will discover how Little City continues to empower individuals with disabilities—our heroes. You will learn once again, how your support and friendship proves invaluable to hundreds of our children and adults.

To view our annual report, visit www.littlecity.org/annualreport
Generous Grant Expands Health & Wellness Initiatives

With a generous grant of $20,000 from Aetna Foundation, Little City’s Center for Health & Wellness (CHW) continues to grow with its new Health & Wellness Initiative. The Center for Health & Wellness provides on-site primary health, oral care, social-emotional and behavioral health care, dietetics and nutrition, and therapeutic recreation to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Under the new initiative, Little City developed and implemented an agency-wide, health program ensuring accessibility to fitness and wellness opportunities. Little City identified physical activities clients can engage in at their place of residence. During leisure times, the CHW staff will support and study the effects of healthy dietary practices and provide further education and research in modeling an all-encompassing health and wellness program.

The first of its kind in the field, the initiative encourages an embracement of healthy living as the lifestyle for all children and adults, as well as the corporate culture for all staff.

The Center will also serve individuals beyond Little City as it strives to become accessible to any person with a developmental disability throughout the Chicago area. It will also serve as a model program that can be replicated in other urban areas throughout the United States and in other countries.

Read more about the progress of Little City’s Center for Health & Wellness in the “Little City in the News” column of our homepage.

Community Partners

Thank you to the following funders for their generous grants that support the work and mission of Little City:

- Aetna Foundation, Inc.
- Allstate Giving Campaign/United Way
- Alvin H. Baum Family Fund
- Carl R. Hendrickson Family Foundation
- Cook County
- Elk Grove Township
- Rotary Club of Palatine Foundation
- Wells Fargo Foundation

Wanted: Book Donations

Just in time for spring cleaning — Little City is collecting your new and gently used books, CDs, DVDs, VHS movies, records, comic books and more.

Little City has multiple drop-off locations, including the Little City Palatine campus and other sites throughout neighboring suburbs. We’ll also pick up donations of 150 or more books. For a complete listing of drop-off locations, please visit www.littlecity.org/bookdonations.
Heart of the City

Junior Board’s Food Frenzy Keeps Growing

Over 120 young Chicago professionals joined Little City’s Junior Board on March 1st for the 3rd Annual Food Frenzy. Guests gathered at Loft on Lake to enjoy exclusive delicacies from some of Chicago’s hottest restaurants, while participating in a silent auction, playing the hit Mystery Wine game and networking with others.

Junior Board members helped generate awareness for individuals with disabilities and raised over $21,000 this year, an all-time high. All proceeds benefited Little City’s ChildBridge Center for Children & Families which offers adoption/foster care and in-home personal and family supports programs.

For more than 15 years, Little City’s foster care and adoption program has provided innovative, individualized and community-based treatment to children with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Little City consistently has over a 95 percent placement stability rate within this program.

Entertainment for the evening was provided by She Says. Little City thanks the following event sponsors: Vincent, Café Milk & Honey, Mana Food Bar, IPO Restaurant, City Provisions, Coco Pazzo, Farmhouse and Lula Cafe. The beverage sponsor for the night was Goose Island. Presenting sponsors included BMO Harris Bank and Health Plus Physicians Organization and gold sponsor Towers Watson.

Special thanks to Chef Chair Jill Barron from Mana Food Bar and Event Co-Chairs Amanda Bowser and Erin McCrary.

Volunteer for Little City’s Smiles Tag Days

Want to make a difference in the lives of those at Little City while interacting with your own community? Then mark your calendar now for the 2012 Smiles Tag Days weekend! We’re looking to recruit hundreds of volunteers to collect donations from fellow community members at storefronts and street corners from September 13-15. Just a few hours of your time can make a huge impact!

For more information, contact Shawna Egan at (847) 221-7840 or segan@littlecity.org.
News from Around the City

Little City aims to continually provide a distinguished quality of life for the people it serves, including offering a variety of educational and recreational opportunities, wellness initiatives, options to explore creativity and more. Some recent updates from around the “City” include:

Students Make Paper
Students at the ChildBridge Center for Education learned how to make paper during their Art Therapy Class.

Little City Bulls vs. Staff
The Little City Bulls basketball team challenged the staff, led by Executive Director Shawn Jeffers in a close game. The Little City Bulls pulled ahead in the last few minutes and won with a final score of 51-48.

Little City Hero: Barry Howell
Although Barry Howell can’t distinguish his right hand from his left, he earned a silver medal in the 2.5k cross country ski event during this year’s Special Olympics Winter Games. He has demonstrated great courage and determination. Next year Barry will try the 5k race.

Adult Valentine’s Day Dance
Little City adults had a great time dancing and socializing at the Valentine’s Day Party.
Runway Exclusive 2012

*Enjoy the latest spring and summer fashions from Neiman Marcus. This luncheon will feature great raffle giveaways and will conclude on the runway showcasing highly-coveted clothing lines from top designers.*

**Runway Exclusive 2012**
*A Fashion Show Benefit for Little City*

**Friday, June 8, 2012**
Fairmont Chicago | Millennium Park
200 North Columbus Drive, Chicago

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49th Annual Little City Invitational

**Monday, August 13, 2012**
Twin Orchard Country Club
22353 Old McHenry Road, Long Grove

**Twin Orchard is one of the premier country clubs in the Midwest with two 18-hole golf courses, offering magnificent views of Northern Lake County. This year, we honor Kenneth L. Ender, Ph.D., President of Harper College.**

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Ted Arndt Memorial Golf Outing

**Sunday, June 24, 2012 | Highland Woods Golf Course**

Hosted by the Parent/Family/Guardian Group, the Annual PFG Golf Outing includes an 18-hole scramble with cart, lunch at the turn, dinner buffet and free driving range before the shotgun start. [www.littlecity.org/pfggolf](http://www.littlecity.org/pfggolf)

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38th Annual Smiles Tag Days

**September 13–15, 2012 | Various Chicago and suburban locations**

We need YOU and hundreds of volunteers to collect donations from fellow community members at storefronts and street corners from September 13–15. Contact (847) 221-7840 or segan@littlecity.org.