Little City Receives Accolades from The Arc of Illinois

Little City was recently honored with the Distinguished Service Award from The Arc of Illinois for its Center for the Arts program. The positive impact this program has made in the lives of individuals with disabilities made Little City stand out from other service providers.

The Distinguished Service Award acknowledges an organization that offers an exemplary, unique and innovative program resulting in people with intellectual and developmental disabilities achieving full participation within the community. The award is presented to the provider whose services are a model of excellence to others.

“This award took me by surprise, I never expect awards—the work is its own reward,” said Little City Center for the Arts Administrator Frank Tumino. “At the same time it’s really nice to be recognized, and I’m especially thankful to think that this may cause more people to view Share My Kingdom, putting the spotlight back where it belongs—on our wonderful artists and their creations.”

For more than 20 years, the Center for the Arts has provided children and adults with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunity to explore and expand their unique and creative talents, promoting a sense of accomplishment and empowerment through the arts.

Little City staff member Theresa Fifarek was also honored by The Arc of Illinois with the QIDP Award, for providing outstanding dedicated service to individuals with disabilities. In her current role as a Case Manager, Fifarek is responsible for the care and well-being of 10 children who live in a Little City group home. She has worked at Little City for more than five years.

“Working at Little City has helped me grow exponentially, both personally and professionally,” commented Fifarek. “Although I face many challenges in my position, the youth and families motivate me to put 110 percent into my work every single day. I’m incredibly honored to be the recipient of this award.”

Little City Birch Home Case Manager Theresa Fifarek was presented with the QIDP Award from The Arc of Illinois for providing outstanding service to children with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
Executive Director’s Corner

“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.” —Elie Wiesel

Little City Friends and Family,

We believe, without question, individuals with disabilities should have the opportunity to live like people without disabilities. They should have the freedom to be employed, have a place to call home and be engaged in any community with family and friends.

Unfortunately, there are some communities and individuals who do not share our beliefs about the value and importance of integration. As you may know, Little City recently encountered a setback in our pursuit to provide a new home for people with disabilities. We came across some vocal members of a community who appeared to possess a “not in my backyard” mentality and were seemingly indifferent to the idea that community diversity can be a positive experience.

Today, I’d like to share the story to reinforce that our advocacy is never complete and that your support is critical at this juncture.

A few months ago, we intended to purchase a home in Bloomingdale with plans to use it as a group home for eight individuals with disabilities. All required information was submitted in a timely manner and we carefully adhered to all of the village’s instructions. A precondition was that we present our case for support to the Village Planning Committee.

During the Planning Committee meeting on May 6, we were met with some very unsettling and disturbing comments. While most community participants offered praise and acceptance of the mission of Little City Foundation, they adamantly opposed us opening a home in their community. What was most distressing and troubling was how some community participants and leaders portrayed people with disabilities as almost ‘less than human’ individuals who did not fit in nor could bring value to their community.

The message we received that night was that it is acceptable for people with disabilities to live wherever they chose—but not in in their community. By a 4 to 1 margin, the Planning Commission indicated their recommendation was for the Bloomingdale Village Board of Trustees to deny our petition.

On June 9, Little City’s Legal Counsel and I, along with board members, parents, supporters and Little City participants attended the Bloomingdale Village Meeting where they officially voted against us opening a group home.

One of the questions we received was whether we still had interest in pursuing ownership and occupancy of the home, as it was noted that shortly after the first meeting I withdrew my purchase offer. I explained that I withdrew our application to purchase the home because I don’t ever want anyone—our adults, staff and their families—to be placed in a potentially hostile environment.

As a matter of principle, we asked that the Village continue to deliberate and vote on our petition, which they agreed to do. While we already knew the outcome would be unfavorable, our intent was to help ensure that children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities were afforded justice, fairness and equality in any community in which they chose to live, work and play.

Although this was a disheartening experience, there were a few positives that came from this meeting. A young advocate, whose brother lives at Little City, invited 40 of his teenage friends to join us that evening—filling the room with concerned and caring high school students.

This sign of support from these young students gave me a sense of relief that just maybe their generation will be more accepting and inclusive towards individuals with disabilities.

Little City will continue to advocate for children and adults with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Thank you for your continued support and advocacy as we continue to fight the good battle.

Yours in service,

Shawn E. Jeffers, Executive Director

Please note: Little City understands that an action of one is an action of one. We do not believe all Bloomingdale residents and neighbors possess or hold the same perceptions, beliefs and stereotypes as some of the individuals who were present at the meetings. Our hope is that the Village will take a close look at its archaic and outdated codes and make Bloomingdale (as their neighboring municipalities have already done) a community that is more accessible and fair for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live, work and play.
Heart of the City

Food Frenzy Supports Little City in Finding Forever Families

More than 120 young professionals joined Little City’s Junior Board at Kendall College for the 5th Annual Food Frenzy on May 1. Guests enjoyed feasting on exclusive delicacies from Chicago’s hottest restaurants while raising $21,000 for Little City’s Foster Care & Adoption Program.

This program provides services to children with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities in foster care who have been identified as having been abused or neglected. The funds will be used for finding forever families for these individuals.

“The need for willing families to provide loving, nurturing and safe foster homes to children with disabilities has never been greater,” said Little City Junior Board President Brendan Scanlan. “The Food Frenzy brings young professionals together for a night where they can try new food from Chicago restaurants, while supporting Little City’s efforts to find loving families for children in need.”

Guests enjoyed exclusive food and drinks from Café Milk & Honey, Cream Wines, The Florentine, Goose Island, Lagunitas Brewing Company, Lula Cafe, Mana Food Bar, Red Door, Revolution Brewing, Southport & Irving, Sushi Dokku and Vera.

For more than 20 years, Little City’s Foster Care & Adoption Program has provided innovative, individualized and community-based treatment to children and their families. We are committed to recruiting and supporting foster and adoptive families that provide loving homes for children with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Thank you to the event sponsors for the evening; Presenting Sponsors: BMO Harris Bank and The Deratany Firm; Gold Sponsors: Land of Lincoln Health, Gordon H. & Karen Millner Family Foundation, Thompson Coburn LLP and Towers Watson; Silver Sponsor: Paramount Staffing and Bronze Sponsors: J. Krug and Associates and Amanda & Brian Roberts. Thanks to the DJ Sponsor Happy Destiny DJ Services and to Epic Events for providing the décor.

Little City Spotlight

New Chief Marketing Officer

Larry Heisler
Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)

Responsible for creating innovative and impactful brand-building and marketing strategies for the organization—leading to increased awareness, fundraising revenue and relevance—Larry Heisler joins Little City as the Chief Marketing Officer. As an integral member of the Little City team, he will work to revitalize the Little City brand.

Larry comes to Little City with many years of experience in the Branding and Marketing business, with expertise in creating powerful brands by thinking big, bold and brave. He possesses strong creative, communication and leadership skills with a proven track record of success across the broad spectrum of traditional and social marketing channels.
On May 7, Omron employees volunteered with the Senior Program located on Little City’s campus. Here, the volunteers helped support 26 participants while they were crafting, exercising and dancing. The group also engaged in socializing activities such as playing games.

The next day, a new group of 15 volunteers visited Little City’s Irving Park group home to perform a home beautification. Individuals helped landscape, did general clean up duties throughout the home and socialized with the three adults who participate in the at-home senior program.

“It’s gratifying to see how our relationship with Omron has grown over the years,” said Little City Director of Community Outreach & Engagement Shawna Egan. “Their support means a lot to us and we look forward to working with them in the future.”

After their Founders Day, Little City Volunteer Manager Catrina Johnson was invited to present additional information on Little City with Omron employees.

“When Omron employees volunteer at Little City they come with open hearts,” commented Johnson. “Their dedication to their community and to Little City helps make a difference in the lives of those we serve.”

To learn more about volunteer opportunities, visit www.littlecity.org/volunteer.

Omron Volunteers with Little City Senior Population

Activities with Little City’s senior population over two days.

Employees from Omron spent two days volunteering with Little City.

In the beginning of May, Omron celebrated its Founders Day in which employees worldwide volunteered their time to give back to their local communities.

During this time, 32 employees from Omron chose to support Little City. Groups of volunteers performed activities with Little City’s senior population over two days.

Annual PFG Golf Tournament

On Friday, May 30, more than 70 golfers participated in Little City’s Parent, Family and Guardian (PFG) Group Ted Arndt Memorial Golf Outing on the greens at Highland Woods Golf Course in Hoffman Estates. Golfers helped raise more than $20,000 for their loved ones at Little City. The group also generated $2,000 from their raffle that will be used for Little City’s Special Olympics Program.

Helping Hands

Little City extends its appreciation to the following groups and countless individuals, for their recent volunteer work with us:

- $99 Per Room
- Altria
- Assurance Agency
- Berkshire Hathaway Koenig Rubloff
- Buffalo Wild Wings
- CITI Bank
- Experian
- Holy Family
- Illinois Tool Works
- Intuit
- J.P. Morgan Chase
- Keller Williams Reality
- Lemont Calvary Church
- Liberty Mutual
- LifePath Adult Volunteers
- Little City Family & Community-Based Services Picnic Volunteers
- The Nielsen Company
- Omron
- Paramount Staffing
- PFG Golf Volunteers
- Danny Rosenwinkel-Eagle Candidate Troop 168
- Schneider Electric
- Target
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Chapter of Medlife
- World Autism Awareness Day Volunteers
- Zurich NA

For detailed descriptions of these recent projects or to learn more about getting involved, visit www.littlecity.org/volunteer or contact (847) 221-7804.

To stay on top of Little City news, events and advocacy efforts, join us on our social networks.
Blooming Collaboration with Brickman Group and Woodfield Mall

Adults with disabilities from Little City are joining forces with Brickman Group to provide landscaping at Woodfield Mall. Little City adults have been contracted to help landscape two flower beds with Brickman. These four employees will visit the flower beds twice a week for two hours to weed and water the area.

“We’re very happy to work with these great companies,” stated Little City Executive Director Shawn E. Jeffers. “Their compassion to help organizations like Little City is truly appreciated and our participants are thrilled to have this new employment opportunity.”

Through Little City’s Center for Employment a variety of employment opportunities are available for individuals with disabilities. Little City workers receive job training and are supported by job coaches to ensure they are meeting the requirements of their positions.

Brickman Group Account Manager, Curtis Riedell, has previous experience working with individuals with disabilities.

“It’s very exciting and pleasurable to see individuals with disabilities working with us to do landscaping at Woodfield Mall,” said Riedell. “We are happy to team up with Little City and provide these opportunities to their participants.”

The collaboration with Brickman Group and Woodfield Mall will last throughout the summer and they hope to explore additional employment opportunities in the future.

“Woodfield Mall is honored to work with Brickman Group as part of this collaborative effort with Little City,” said David Gott, General Manager at Woodfield Mall. “This is another stellar example of our commitment to the community as we work together to provide such a fulfilling employment opportunity for these individuals.”

Community Partners

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

- Alliance Agency
- American Chartered Bank
- Barrington Junior Women’s Club
- Women’s Club of Inverness

The above referenced grants were awarded on or after April 2014.

Little City participants Jorge Neira, Kevin Mastin, Dean Christensen, Paco Melesio and Chris Keiser.

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Little City Hero: Syed

Syed pictured post-surgery while still at Lurie Children’s Hospital

Syed is one of the many remarkable children that reside at Little City’s ChildBridge Center for Group-Home Living. His enthusiasm and upbeat personality cannot go unnoticed. Today, we’d like to share one of his inspiring stories.

On April 23, Syed went in for a scheduled, non-emergency operation at the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago. The operation was successful and the surgeons and medical staff were able to resolve the issues, while providing a comforting and nurturing environment before, during and after the operation. In addition to his parents and relatives, two Little City staff were there to support Syed during his surgery.

As they were preparing to leave, the surgeon gave Syed two tickets to the Chicago Cubs game for the following day. After hearing his family members were unable to attend, Little City Residential Program Coordinator Biswa Phuyal asked if it was possible to get additional tickets for Syed’s roommates so he could go with to the game his friends at Little City.

The surgeon returned with 10 tickets and suggested they take Syed to the game even though he had an operation the day prior. Syed’s guardian approved of him going to the game as long as he was not complaining of pain. When Syed was asked if he wanted to attend, he agreed with enthusiasm.

The next day, Syed attended an afternoon Cubs game with his four of his peers and three Little City staff.

Although they didn’t get to see a winning game, Syed didn’t let his recent surgery keep him from having a memorable afternoon with his friends and staff.

“What Syed went through can be difficult for anyone, but his determination and positive energy along with the support of his family members, Pointe home staff and the treatment team made this experience hassle free and enjoyable for him,” concluded Phuyal.

Just days after having surgery, Syed was enjoying the Chicago Cubs with Little City Clinical Therapist Mary

In Memoriam

Steve Amsterdam (1947-2014)

On December 7, 1983, Steve Amsterdam was placed at Little City and for the past 30 years he called Little City his home. Steve was a resident at the Cherry Home and participated in the Senior Program.

Steve was always in a good mood and wanted to talk about current events or whatever peaked his interest. He always greeted you with a warm smile, asked how you were doing and would often say something that made you laugh. He was constantly bringing joy to those around him.

We will miss Steve’s enjoyable personality and kind heart.
30 Little City athletes competed in Track and Field, Powerlifting, Bocce Ball and much more during the Special Olympics Summer Games at Illinois State University. Athletes brought home 22 gold, 19 silver and 4 bronze medals. The total of 45 medals surpassed our record of 43 medals from last year!

In May, young adults from Little City enjoyed getting dressed up and attending Prom. Their special, fun-filled evening included dinner and dancing.

Volunteers from Keller Williams helped beautify Little City’s Cedar Home where eight women live. The group of nearly 40 volunteers planted flowers, painted and personalized two rooms. Keller Williams donated all the home improvement items, in addition to a new TV and DVD player.

On Friday, June 6 Little City hosted the ChildBridge Center for Education Eighth Grade Graduation and Ceremony. Congratulations to Little City’s most recent graduates Chase and Wyatt (pictured above.)
Monday, August 11, 2014
Twin Orchard Country Club
Long Grove, IL

You’re invited to the longest running charity golf tournament in the Greater Chicago Area—the Little City Invitational—at the renowned Twin Orchard Country Club. This year, we honor Joe Adams, Managing Partner and CEO of McGladrey LLP. Register today at www.littlecity.org/lci.

Hot Chocolate Walk for Little City
Sunday, November 9, 2014 | Grant Park, Chicago
Support Little City while enjoying hot chocolate and chocolate fondue at the Hot Chocolate Walk for Little City. It’s chocolately fun for the whole family! For more information, visit www.littlecity.org/walk.

Little City Annual Dinner Gala
Saturday, October 25, 2014 | Hyatt Regency Chicago | 151 E. Upper Wacker Dr.
Join us at the Little City Annual Dinner Gala as we honor Matthew and Tina Schubert of Paramount Staffing for their dedication and commitment to supporting children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For more information, visit www.littlecity.org/gala.