A Cut Above the Rest

The tablecloth was immaculate. The glass was set on the correct side of the plate. The forks were in perfect order. Jeff Aiken had set a table fit for a banquet.

But he did much more than set a table. He set himself up for new and exciting opportunities as part of the first-ever graduating class of the LifePath Culinary and Kitchen Arts Program.

On March 30, Aiken and seven other Little City participant trainees graduated from the 10-session, LifePath Culinary and Kitchen Arts Program. The training program, delivered by staff from Twin Orchard Country Club, provided both the education and opportunities for skill acquisition necessary for the participants to actively pursue jobs in the food service industry.

Sessions included topics such as kitchen safety, hygiene, table setting and even food prep. Whether it was nuanced details like learning to hold the glass by the stem or bigger tasks like learning to apply breading for fried chicken, Aiken said it was a valuable experience.

“I really liked the guys who taught the classes,” he said. “They taught us things we need to know to work in a restaurant.”

This pilot training program served as the “next step” in an ongoing partnership between Little City and the Greater Chicago Club Managers Association (GCCMA). It highlighted the unique job requirements of not only the private club industry but food service employment in general and provided learners with direct, one-on-one training and education from experts such as General Manager Gavin Speirs and Food & Beverage Director Ben Janssen from Twin Orchard Country Club.

The majority of the training took place in Little City’s fully-equipped hospitality training kitchen and dining room, but the final session took place in Twin Orchard’s kitchen facilities, giving participants real-world experience in a live setting including prepping cocktail sausages and breaded chicken alongside professional cooks.

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Executive Director’s Corner

Dear Friends,

The path forward is mission driven and purpose led.

At Little City, we look to the future with hope and optimism, and are constantly inspired by a legacy of compassion and caring that continues to make a positive and profound difference in the lives of children and adults with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities, and their families.

Although there are challenges faced by us and every other organization dedicated to human services, we must turn inward and relentlessly challenge ourselves to do better, advocate for change, and advance our ability to help the most vulnerable members of society reach their unique potential.

We must also look outward to the greater good that we bring to the Great Big World that is Little City, because putting things in perspective keeps everything real and in focus – our mission to serve, a vision to remain vital and vibrant, and a steadfast commitment to secure the brightest future possible so that individuals can call Little City home for many years to come.

Enjoy the beautiful and inspiring stories shared in this Tapestry issue. Meet six-year-old Nadia, who required trauma therapy after living in an abusive foster home, and with the help of Little City was adopted into a loving home. Or a group of Little City residents who were the first to graduate from our Culinary & Kitchen Arts Program, learning and developing skills that could lead to community employment.

Making a difference in someone’s life is the big story of Little City, and we do it thousands and thousands of times a day. It fills me with pride, and if that isn’t a solid foundation for the path forward, I don’t know what is.

With deep appreciation,

Shawn E. Jeffers
Executive Director

A Cut Above the Rest

“The combination of a transformational environment such as the kitchen along with the expertise of the trainers, hands-on learning experiences and course materials adapted for the learning styles of the trainees, culminated in a truly rewarding experience that has resulted in immediate benefits and which will ultimately pay future dividends,” said Casey Burke, Little City’s Director of Employment and Day Services.

The class was also part of Little City’s all-new Employment First program, which aims to help people with ALL disabilities – whether they are a Little City participant or not – find a job in the community. The graduates of the culinary program, which included one non-Little City participant, will be some of the first people to meet with the Employment First team.

The Employment First team will help the graduates determine how best to put to use their newly acquired knowledge and skills. Some will seek competitive community employment in local dining or service establishments and others will take a more active role in the meal preparation and dining experience in their own homes and continue training with Little City’s Employee Development Services Program.

Little City would like to congratulate the entire culinary program graduating class: Jeff Akin, Beth Welz, Christopher Keiser, Mital Desai, Howard Bynum, Karen Quandt, Simone Kilberts and Andy Arroyo!

And if you or anyone you know has a physical or developmental disability and is looking for employment, you can contact the Employment First program at employmentfirst@littlecity.org.
Little City cooked up a delightful evening of delicacies for the 12th annual Recipe for Success to benefit people with developmental disabilities. The longtime Countryside culinary classic debuted under the Little City name on March 27 at the Meadows Club in Rolling Meadows to great success, bringing in tens of thousands of dollars to support Little City in its mission.

Roughly 200 people enjoyed a wide array of food from 18 restaurants providing gourmet entrees, amazing appetizers, delicious drinks and decadent desserts. Attendees not only had their pick of culinary treats, but they had great deals to bid on all night during the silent auction.

The Bruce Blanck Quartet entertains the crowd at Recipe for Success with renditions of Frank Sinatra and other classics.

The silent auction featured packages from 46 contributors that ranged from exclusive golf outings to live shows and sports events. The big prize of the night – a $600 pearl necklace from Monson Jewelers – was raffled off to one lucky winner.

While the food and auction items take center stage at Recipe for Success, it is the people who make the event a success that are at the heart of the event. Little City Executive Director Shawn Jeffers, board president Matthew Schubert and board member Greg Burns all spoke about the landmark event as a symbol of Little City and Countryside Association coming together to provide better services and opportunities for those with developmental disabilities.

No speaker represented that unification better than former Countryside board member and current Little City board member Lianne Paterson who spoke about how much her family and son love his home at Duffey Family Children’s Village and the bright future Little City has because of the merger.

"Little City is honored to carry on a truly great Countryside tradition in Recipe for Success," said Shawn Jeffers. "This event shows how much people care about the work Little City does and their willingness to support that mission even under a different name."

Little City would like to thank all the sponsors that made the event possible: Presenting Sponsor: Allstate; Epicurean Sponsor: Cornerstone; Aficionado Sponsors: Rit and Meeta Faisal, Andrea and Edward Hockfield, Moats Office Properties, Paramount Staffing, Platinum Systems and Kathleen Young; Confiture Sponsors: Clipped Wings O’Hare Chapter, Kiwanis Club of Palatine, The Light Brothers and Motor Werks; and Precious Pearl Raffle Sponsor: Monson Jewelers.

Little City would also extends special thanks to the Bruce Blanck Quartet featuring Jack Miuccio for the wonderful live music throughout the evening.

Emmett’s Brewing Co. serves up BBQ Pulled Pork Sliders during Recipe for Success. Emmett’s was one of 18 local restaurants to participate in the event.

The Bruce Blanck Quartet features Jack Miuccio performs renditions of Frank Sinatra and other classics.

Left to right: Tom Koos, Debbie Koos, Little City Director of Special Events Heidi Merritt and Little City Executive Director Shawn E. Jeffers.
**Making a Difference**

Boys & Girls Club Volunteers Get Big Experience at Little City

Every year, the best and brightest from the Boys & Girls Club of America come together for the Keystone Conference to gain important educational, career and community experience. 2017 marked the 50th anniversary of the Keystone Conference and more than 2,500 Boys & Girls Club staff and participants came to Chicago to take part in career experiences, college experiences and – to Little City’s benefit – community service.

Much like coming to Chicago was an awe-inspiring experience for some of the teens who had never left their hometown, seeing Little City for the first time as they got off the bus to volunteer was an eye-opener for the roughly 100 teens who participated.

“The kids were amazed at the expanse of it,” said Eve Respess, National Director of the Character & Leadership program for the Boys & Girls Club. “They were amazed it was not just one place. People could live there, do art; it really opened their eyes and showed them that people with developmental disabilities participate and are not just set aside or forgotten.”

Hosting the volunteers in March was a rare opportunity for Little City as the Keystone Conference moves every year and the Boys & Girls Club had hundreds of Chicagoland area agencies to choose from. But Eve said it was a no-brainer when she was looking up potential sites and saw Little City.

Having a brother with a developmental disability, Eve said she knows the importance of the work places such as Little City do every day.

“It is important for these kids to be exposed to people with developmental disabilities and I find they end up being very interested in it,” Eve said. “This is a new generation of kids. They really enjoy the opportunity to work with people with disabilities.”

Eve said many of the volunteers – who earned the opportunity to come to Keystone through their yearlong community service – noted many of their hometowns did not have anything like Little City. She said Little City now has a place at the top of the list anytime the group comes through Chicago.

“Our Keystoners gave something to Little City through their service, but Little City also served the teens,” Eve said. “They saw there is a place for everybody in this world. And we were happy to leave our little footprint.”

**Our Helping Hands**

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

- 100 Women Who Care
- $99 Per Room
- Atria
- Barrington Bank
- Berkshire Hathaway KoenigRubloff
- Boys & Girls Club of America
- Comcast Cares
- DePaul University CMAA Student Chapter
- EarthPaint.org
- First Presbyterian Church Foresters
- Greater Chicago Club Manager Association
- HandsOn Suburban Chicago
- Holy Family Parish
- Little City Board
- Little City Junior Board
- Little City’s Parent, Family and Guardian Group
- The Nielsen Company
- Northridge Preparatory School
- Oakton Community College
- Paramount Staffing
- Recipe for Success Volunteers
- Sherwin Williams
- Special Olympic Volunteers
- St. Edna’s Parish
- William Fremd High School
- William Rainey Harper College

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

**In Memoriam: Robert “Bob” Morgan**

Little City is saddened to announce the passing of longtime resident Robert “Bob” Morgan, who passed away in the presence of his loving family on March 6.

Bob had been a resident since October 1995 and quickly became a beloved member of the community. It wasn’t long until Bob found a constant companion in Ellen Blazek, who would be seen sharing in nearly every activity with Bob. They would often go shopping together and enjoy dinner outings, concerts and live plays.

Through all the things they enjoyed, the most important may have been their faith. One of the biggest passions the two shared was attending church and volunteering at St. Theresa Catholic Church in Palatine. They would frequently go to prayer groups and could be seen helping out with food drives during the holidays.

That support group has been especially helpful in this difficult time, as one generous parishioner gave Ellen a teddy bear after Bob’s passing. Vicki Osborne, Little City’s lead program manager for Supported Living Arrangements, said Ellen of course named the bear Bob and it has helped bring some comfort in a tough time.

“It has been tough for her. Those two always seemed like a married couple and looked so cute holding hands walking across the parking lot,” Vicki said. “Anytime she gets emotional or lonely now though, she just hugs that bear and it helps.”

Bob was also a very proud uncle and had tremendous love for his family. He will be forever remembered by all who worked with him and the lifetime of friends he left behind.
Thank you to the following funders for their generous grants that support the work and mission of Little City:

- Assurance Agency
- Barrington Township
- DuPage County Human Services Grant Fund
- Andrew Flis/ITW
- Hanover Township Mental Health Board

- Illinois Arts Council
- Illinois Department of Human Services
- Jackson National Community Fund
- National School Lunch Program (ISBE)
- Rotary Club of Palatine
- Wheeling Township

Support Little City every time you shop online!

Amazon Smiles provides one of the most convenient ways to support Little City all year long. Whether you are shopping for a special gift or an everyday item, proceeds of your purchase can go to Little City. Just follow these steps:

1. Go to www.smile.amazon.com
2. Log in to your Amazon account
3. Search for Little City Foundation when selecting a charity and click on it
4. Shop til you drop!

Be sure to start at smile.amazon.com every time you shop at Amazon and your purchases will make a difference for Little City!
Nadia, who had been abused in a previous foster home under a different agency, got the therapy she needed with the help of Jordan, Little City and her foster parent Kimberly Mitchell-Davis – one of the three sisters looking to adopt Nadia and her siblings.

The breakthrough happened for Nadia, and in November of 2016 she was adopted by Kimberly, whose sisters had adopted Nadia’s siblings about a year earlier. Nadia and her 9-year-old sister and 6-year-old brother now go to the same school and Kimberly and her sisters take turns watching all the children after school to keep the family close.

“The trauma therapy was a real game-changer for Nadia,” said Jordan, adding that Nadia’s aggressive behavior has dissipated. “It’s a really cool story and a great situation for everyone.”

Jordan is no stranger to incredible stories though. She is in the middle of one herself as she has placed five children into forever homes in the span of six months – an incredible rate in the foster care system.

Jordan started her streak in October when she placed sisters Netxahit and Michaela in the loving home of Netxahit’s paternal grandparents. It was the most challenging of the placements because Jordan and the Spanish speaking grandparents didn’t speak the same language, but they found ways to overcome the barrier and make the adoption happen.

After Nadia, Jordan had another placement in December when she placed 17-year-old Megan with her “aunt” Victoria. Megan was initially in foster care with the ultimate goal of returning home, but after her biological mother signed over her rights, Megan found a haven in Victoria’s home where her aggressive habits and penchant to skip school ceased.

Jordan finished her impressive run with 4-year-old Joshua, who suffers from severe autism and is non-verbal. A distant relative stepped up and took on an incredible amount to make the adoption happen.

“I was blown away by the foster parents,” Jordan said. “They fought hard to get him specialized services and went through a million steps to make it happen.”

There is no time to rest on her laurels though. Jordan is working on a getting a group of four siblings all placed under the same roof by the end of 2017.

You could say that Jordan Sigunick pulled off a miracle.

The Little City child welfare specialist had a group of three siblings that were going to be adopted by three adult sisters who all lived next to each other and would create the perfect support system by keeping the siblings near each other.

But there was one problem. Six-year-old Nadia, the middle child of the group, wasn’t ready.

“She told me “I’m not ready to be adopted. I have to work on my issues,”’” Jordan said. “My mind was blown that a 6-year-old could convey that.”

Little City Adoption Specialist Makes Families a Reality

Do you know if your company makes matching gifts?

Little City makes it easy to find out whether your company will match your donation to Little City.

You can find out if your company will match your gift and how to make that donation. Simply go to www.littlecity.org/matching-gifts.

Be sure to make the biggest impact from your donation today!
Little City aims to provide the highest possible 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. Recent updates from around our “City” include:

**Swim Team Draped in Medals**

The Little City swim team had its most successful District meet ever in March, winning seven golds, five silvers and two bronze medals. Team members representing Little City were Danny Schellenberger, Dan Poelle, Jerry Rose, Samantha Rizzetto, Kevin Desmond, Liz Faillo, Jeff Aiken, Justin Knoc'hanaus and Tony LaPorte. Five of the swimmers qualified for State Summer Games in Bloomington on June 9-11, 2017.

**HERO Award Presented to Little City**

Little Executive Director Shawn Jeffers receives the HERO Founder’s Award from Geralyn and Joe Miskulin, president and vice-president of the H.E.A.L Foundation in Bloomington, IL. The H.E.A.L Foundation recognized Little City for its excellence in serving people with developmental disabilities. Little City looks forward to working with H.E.A.L. in the future. Visit www.jonsheroes.org for more information on this inspiring foundation.

**Recognition for Business Excellence**

Little City was one of 20 suburban businesses and organizations honored during the 27th Annual Awards for Business Excellence, presented by the Daily Herald Business Ledger and its sponsoring partners at Medinah Banquets in Addison. The AABEs are presented in recognition of business achievement, growth and community involvement. The honorees, including Little City, were businesses and nonprofit organizations in the suburbs nominated by their peers for the award.

**Third Children’s Home Under Way**

The Coleman Foundation Home, the third home in the Duffey Family Children’s Village, is making tremendous progress and is nearing completion. We want to thank all the donors who have made this project to give children with intellectual and developmental disabilities a nurturing and supportive environment a reality.
Opportunity Walk & Roll
Sunday, June 4, 2017 | Little City Campus, Palatine, IL
This charity fundraising walk celebrates and creates awareness of all that Little City has to offer. The walk festival is a day filled with celebration, recognition, games for the whole family and great food. Form a team and register today at www.littlecity.org/opportunity

Center for the Arts at North Shore Art League
June 12 – July 17, 2017 | North Shore Art League Gallery, 620 Lincoln Ave., Winnetka, IL
The North Shore Art League Gallery at the Winnetka Community Building will have an art exhibition showcasing artwork from Little City’s Center for Arts. For more information, please contact Heidi Merritt at (847) 221-7807.

Ted Arndt Memorial Golf Outing
Friday, June 16, 2017 | Highland Woods Golf Course, Hoffman Estates, IL
A golf outing designed exclusively for Little City’s Parent/Family/Guardian Group. The event promises to be an exciting day of golf and contests.

54th Annual Little City Invitational Golf Classic
Monday, August 21, 2017 | Twin Orchard Country Club, Long Grove, IL
Enjoy 18 holes of golf at one of the top golf courses in the country. The day is capped off by a fabulous reception and a silent auction that is guaranteed to impress. This year, Little City is proud to present the Morrie Kellman Humanitarian Award to Barbara Bradford and Bob Sherman. Register today at www.littlecity.org/uci