Icebreakers Break Barriers with Advocacy

Robbie and Kevin were more than 200 miles from their homes at Little City, but they had never been as connected to Little City as they were on that May afternoon.

The two longtime Little City residents were in Springfield fighting for the causes they believed in with three of their fellow residents. They visited state representatives’ offices to talk about the need to keep Little City as the open community it is today, and dropped off information at the governor’s office about the importance of increasing the wages for the staff who work and help them where they live.

With the help of Little City staff, residents gathered together in January to form Icebreakers – a group of Little City residents passionate about having their voice heard in Springfield and where they live. The group of roughly 40 people elected the first officers including Robbie as president, two vice presidents, a secretary and Kevin as treasurer.

While their visit to Springfield was important, Robbie and the Icebreakers have been advocating for significant changes right at home.

The most ambitious change the group has sought was a more hands-on approach to the hiring and evaluation of Direct Support Professionals. Robbie said it is important that Direct Support Professionals treat residents with respect and also push them to be as independent as possible.

It wasn’t long before Little City’s Chief Human Resource Officer, Renee Watts, helped develop a solution that is already being piloted in two homes. Residents of specific homes will fill out an evaluation as a group to ensure anonymity and provide feedback on the Direct Support Professionals for their home. That evaluation will then be part of the overall evaluation for the employee.

“It’s good to see results,” Kevin said of the active response Little City provided. “We’re happy with how things have gone.”

The group is also in discussions to solve more issues it sees in the community. Robbie said some top concerns are speeding on campus, smoking too close to buildings and the need to make changes to fire drills.

Having worked directly with the group, Renee Watts said she is impressed with what the residents have already been able to do.

“I’ve been extremely impressed with their focus and wanting to do more than just live in the community, but change it too,” Renee said. “They want to take control of where they live and I commend them for that.”

Community Case Manager Tim Gavin, who helps organize the group for its Monday meetings and serves as a resource along with Maya Ladasky, said the group did not take long to hit the ground running and learn to identify and express changes they want to see.

“I’ve really seen the group take a leadership role,” Tim said. “It’s been great to see.”

The concept is spreading throughout all of Little City’s locations as well. Both Countryside Center and Lakeside Center have advocacy groups and it comes at a crucial time for Countryside Center participants who prepare to move to a new building.

Robbie said there is already interest in having all the groups work together. His presidency will run for at least a year and he plans on staying as active as possible. While the first trip to Springfield only included elected officers of the group, Robbie said there are plans to go back in the fall with the entire Icebreakers group to make an even bigger statement.

“We can’t wait to go back to Springfield,” he said. “The state isn’t working like it’s supposed to.”

To contact the Icebreakers group, email icebreakers@littlecity.org.
Executive Director’s Corner

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead

Dear Friends,

One of Little City’s core missions is to advocate for the rights of the people we serve. People with autism and other developmental disabilities deserve the right to work in the community, live where they choose and expect the same dignity and respect given to others.

We do our best to provide education and awareness on the subject of developmental disabilities, we email our lawmakers to make needed and deserved changes for those with disabilities, and we try to be a voice for a group often seen as voiceless.

But Little City residents are absolutely not voiceless and it is inspiring to see and hear what they do when they rise together.

The Little City Icebreakers is a group of almost 40 residents who have come together to advocate for their rights both at home and in the community. The group recently took a trip to Springfield where they told legislators to protect their home and maintain the community they choose to live in. It is a powerful sight.

For all the emails, calls and lobbying we do on their behalf, we can never assume their words and nothing is as powerful as their voice. It is uplifting to hear that voice in a conversation that has gone on too long without it.

But the Icebreakers are more than just a group focused on Springfield. They are advocating right here at home and we must listen. From wanting to be more involved in the evaluation of Direct Support Professionals to addressing safety concerns on campus such as speeding and disregarding stop signs, the Icebreakers are determined to tackle the issues important to them.

With an eye on the big picture, it is important to never lose sight of the fact we work where they live – they don’t live where we work. The Icebreakers not only remind us of that, but they will push us to improve and innovate to make Little City better every day.

It is uplifting to see similar groups start in our Countryside Center and Lakeside Center, where those participants have their own sets of needs and changes they would like to see. We hear them loud and clear. They motivate us to work harder and advocate for the changes they need and we hope they inspire you to do the same.

With deep appreciation,

Shawn E. Jeffers, Executive Director

Little City Spotlight

Little City Wins 38 Medals at Special Olympics Summer Games

The Little City Special Olympics team finished off its season just like it started, collecting wins and shattering records at a blistering pace at the Illinois Special Olympics Summer Games in Bloomington.

Whether it was Kevin completing the heaviest lift recorded in Illinois Special Olympics with an amazing 430-pound dead lift or Blake who won a gold in track and field in his debut at the Summer Games, Little City athletes put on a show that backed up their title of Kevin T. Kendrigan Outstanding Team of the Year.

“It was just great,” said head coach Tim Lahart. “It was one of the best years we’ve had and not just in the competition. It was the most organized we’ve ever been. Everyone was really laid back and it was just a great experience.”

Of the 38 medals, Little City athletes took home 17 golds, 15 silvers and six bronzes – 14 of the golds were courtesy of the powerlifting team.

“When I saw the divisions I thought we would get seven gold medals even if we performed really well,” Tim said. “The guys just shined. They blew by their personal records...some by 10 or 15 pounds.”

And in a year full of success and plenty of medals, it’s the team’s collective focus on doing their personal best each time that keeps them grounded but also moving forward.

“It’s what they get from sports more than the medals and accolades,” Tim said. “Someone getting a personal record and silver is better than not getting a personal record and getting a gold. Teaching them to give their best is what it is about. Seeing that human potential and seeing them become special because of their abilities. That’s the focus.”

With the best season ever behind them, the team is looking to add more athletes and hopefully see more participants try out a new sport. Sports is one area where it’s not other people setting goals for them, but the athlete setting goals for themselves.

“They don’t hang medals on me,” Tim said. “They earn it and it’s important that they know they can earn things for themselves.”
Little City Continues the Opportunity Walk and Roll

It was a walk to remember for Little City as it debuted another classic Countryside event with the Opportunity Walk and Roll on June 4. The former Countryside event gave past attendees a unique look at Little City as the event was held on the Palatine campus for the first time ever. It was a huge success, as more than 250 people helped raise more than $56,000 for Little City – topping last year’s numbers.

“The Opportunity Walk and Roll is yet another great event from Countryside that we are honored to continue at Little City,” said Executive Director Shawn Jeffers. “The money raised today will make a real difference for all those we serve at Little City.”

The event included a walk throughout the campus, music, food, games and an impressive special performance by the Jesse White Tumblers. There were also stations where people could learn more about the programs offered at Little City. More than 50 volunteers made the event possible, including those from Presenting Sponsor: Weber-Stephen.

A very special thank you also goes out to the event’s Platinum Sponsor: Allstate; Silver Sponsor: Kathleen Young; and Bronze Sponsors: Friends of Countryside and Knights of Columbus #597.

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Little City would like to thank our Gold Sponsors: FE Moran, Paramount Staffing, Linda LaPorte, the Scanlan Family and Titan Electrics. Thank you also to the Silver Sponsors: Andrea and Ed Hockfield, Tim Lahart and Nicholas Hodges.

Above: Walkers enjoy a beautiful afternoon on the Little City campus as the former Countryside event was held at Little City for the first time ever.

Left: Joellen Hoeser and Mauricio Marquina were just some of the hundreds who came to the Opportunity Walk and Roll on June 4.

Fabulous Food Frenzy Raises $21,000

The Little City Junior Board served up a generous donation to the Little City Special Olympics team of more than $21,000 thanks to another successful Food Frenzy event.

The annual May event organized by the Little City Junior Board took place May 5 at Loft 644 in Chicago and featured an exotic spread of cuisines from some of the city’s best restaurants. From sushi to spirits, there was no shortage of delicious offerings to be had as attendees networked with other professionals and also browsed an expansive silent auction.

“Little City’s Junior Board is a tremendous asset to the organization and the Food Frenzy is one way they show their passion and enthusiasm for our mission,” said Executive Director Shawn Jeffers. “We are lucky to have such dedicated young professionals pushing our mission forward.”

Little City would like to thank our Gold Sponsors: FE Moran, Paramount Staffing, Linda LaPorte, the Scanlan Family and Titan Electrics. Thank you also to the Silver Sponsors: Andrea and Ed Hockfield, Tim Lahart and Nicholas Hodges.

Above Left: More than 100 people came to Loft 644 to enjoy a night of food, fun and great auction items.

Above Right: Deanna Desmond, Junior Board President Conor Desmond, and Junior Board Members Brendan Scanlan and Chris McCarthy. The Little City Junior Board organizes this event each year.
Volunteers Beautify the Port Center at Little City

The pros came out to paint the Port Center South as Little City welcomed dozens of volunteers from Sherwin-Williams who gave the building new life. Volunteers managed to paint the entire exterior of the building thanks to a lift, and made the useful and functional building look as good as it operates. The project was also possible because of prior work done by volunteers from Citi who cleaned the area, trimmed bushes and created the space needed for the paint job. Because painting is often expensive, volunteers and donated paint is vital to maintaining buildings on campus.

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

- Allstate
- BHHS KoenigRubloff Realty Group
- Breakthrough Technologies
- Citi
- City of Aurora
- Clipped Wings
- Coldwell Banker
- Comcast
- Cornerstone Bank and Trust
- Daily Herald
- District 211 Students
- Fifth-Third Bank
- Friends of Countryside Parent Family Group
- Harper College
- Illinois State University
- J.Krug and Associates
- Lakeside Location Volunteers
- LaSalle Solutions
- Little City Junior Board
- Little City Parent/Family/Guardian Group
- Motorola
- Opportunity Walk & Roll Volunteers
- Paramount Staffing
- Recipe for Success Volunteers
- Sherwin-Williams
- Show Sage
- Shum Development
- State of Illinois
- 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.

First High School Students Graduate from Day School

Education and will now move on to recreational and employment opportunities outside of Little City. Karrie Dean, administrator at the ChildBridge Center for Education, said it was bittersweet to see the two longtime students graduate and prepare to move on.

“We focused a lot on the individual contributions made to the school and how they changed the lives of peers and staff. There was a lot of congratulatory pieces based on that,” Karrie said. “We work with the students for so long that it is sad and happy at the same time.”

Little City will now have high school graduates moving forward most years, but it is always possible some students can join their home school districts. Unlike traditional school districts though, students can learn at the ChildBridge Center until the day before their 22nd birthday.

Zachariah and Lizelle were not the only graduates as four eighth graders also celebrated making the jump to high school. The celebration cannot last too long though as Karrie said advancing to high school means an elevation of expectations.

“For our eighth-grade students, the biggest change is in expectations,” she said. “It is pretty consistent to what they are used to, but there is a growing up piece to it. We want to see them take that next step.”

Congratulations to Zachariah E., Lizelle T., Eisa A., Amir F., Joseph N., and Randale T. on their big accomplishment!
Little City Offices Furnished by Generous Donations

It’s almost impossible to take a trip to Little City and not see Rick Sidor’s touch in some fashion. While the name may be unfamiliar to some, Rick has become a visible presence in almost every corner of Little City. Whether it is the fully furnished office of Executive Director Shawn Jeffers or the conference tables, chairs, couches and other furniture throughout Little City, Rick most likely donated it.

Rick’s furniture service business, Eco Tekk International, frequently decommissions old office furniture and finds a new home for it instead of selling it or throwing it away like many companies.

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

- Altria Group
- Assurance Agency
- Barrington Junior Women’s Club
- Barrington Township
- Elk Grove Township
- The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust
- Omron Foundation
- Regional Transportation Authority
- RJN Foundation
- Schaumburg Township
- Charles and M.R. Shapiro Foundation
- Sunstar
- Vernon Township
- Westfield Insurance
- Wheeling Township
- Women’s Club of Inverness
- Zurich Foundation

The above referenced grants were awarded on or after April 2017.

“It is the most important aspect of what I do because it is a differentiator,” Rick said of his company Eco Tekk International. “The traditional route for companies like mine is to either sell it off or throw it away. But donating it is a wonderful opportunity to do good for everyone.”

Every time Rick donates a piece of furniture, he avoids landfill fees for his customers and more importantly, he avoids landfills altogether. Since 2007, Rick has donated enough furniture to avoid disposing more than 273,425 dumpsters worth of product into landfills.

And while he is certainly aiding the environment, he is also helping nonprofits save needed dollars. Rick has donated more than $100,000 worth of furniture to Little City since he first started six years ago. He also gives furniture to other nonprofits and government agencies such as sheriff’s departments that are on tight budgets.

Rick said he sees the trend of big corporate offices unloading highly valuable furniture continuing as modern office spaces take on a different look.

“Big private offices aren’t en vogue anymore,” Rick said. “This is all still very good furniture, but it’s sort of like your grandmother’s china. It’s valuable to the right people but you have to find the right fit. For Little City, it’s very good furniture finding the right home.”

Eco Tekk International’s most recent donation to Little City came from global law firm Latham & Watkins and fully furnished the executive director’s office at no cost.

Little City’s Wellness Policy

Little City’s ChildBridge Group Homes and ChildBridge Center for Education subscribe to the National School Lunch Program. We have a policy in existence promoting the importance of health and wellness that can be viewed at www.littlecity.org/dayschool.

For more information or to get involved contact Karrie Dean at kdean@littlecity.org or Julie Mota at jmota@littlecity.org.
Foster Team Makes Graduation Dream Come True

If it takes a village to raise a child, it certainly helps for the village to have a Chikiya “CeCe” Jones.

Chikiya, a family stabilization specialist at Little City, plays an essential role in the foster care program, making sure children adjust to their new families, stay on track and are equipped for the future. It’s an incredibly difficult job with the potential for extraordinary accomplishments.

One of Chikiya’s most rewarding experiences happened this spring when Kiara walked across the stage to receive her high school diploma. Kiara switched foster families in her senior year, was on the brink of expulsion with just weeks to go and trying to raise her three-year-old daughter. And she made it across the stage.

“It was beyond rewarding. I was crying I was so proud. My heart was overjoyed,” Chikiya said. “There’s times I wanted to pull my hair out, but it’s always worth it.”

Kiara’s path to graduation was a bumpy one, but not without support. Kiara not only had to learn to be a mother, but she had to overcome her own developmental disability that made it more difficult to keep up with classmates. She also had to learn to regulate and control emotional responses.

The key point in her ultimate success came when Chikiya helped facilitate an emergency placement for Kiara during the school year to a new foster family while also convincing her the best option would be to let her three-year-old stay with the previous foster family while she focused on graduating.

Though Kiara fought the idea at first, Chikiya said it has developed into a great situation. Kiara has increased confidence and self-esteem after graduating and she regularly visits her child while now focusing on the skills she needs to be a mother, how to budget and other essential skills for a successful future.

Chikiya said the mutual agreement between Kiara and her child’s foster family is on a yearly basis and will be revisited in April. Until then, Chikiya said she sees Kiara continuing to grow as an active and engaged mother.

“We give her the tools, but she has to use them and she has,” Chikiya said. “You can see that Kiara has more self-esteem knowing she overcame against all odds.”

PFG Raises Money for Equine Therapy at Golf Outing

The Little City Parent/Family/Guardian Group made some birdies for horses at their annual golf outing, raising thousands of dollars for Little City residents to participate in 10 weeks of equine therapy. This past June, the 28th annual PFG Golf Outing once again took place at Highland Woods Golf Course in Hoffman Estates. Golfers enjoyed a beautiful day on the course and bid on more than 60 great raffle packages, which helped raise money for 21 residents to participate in the Equine Therapy sessions.

Gil Fergus, president of the PFG, said the board came up with the idea to raise money for residents to go to equine therapy in part because of the success Gil saw in his own son after going through the program at Walk On in Barrington.

“I was surprised my son could even do it,” Gil said. “When I went to visit the farm, I was really impressed. It’s an incredible opportunity for residents.”

In addition to raising money for the Equine Therapy sessions, the PFG also presented Jonathan Clark Green with the Spark Plug Award for his years of dedication to Little City and the work he does to get more people involved.

Jonathan’s siblings have lived at Little City for many years and Gil said Jonathan took an active role not only as a member of the Little City Board of Advisors, but also on a grassroots level as he consistently is bringing new people to the golf outing and volunteer events.

Gil said that is a main focus of the PFG group going forward this year with a social event in September and a volunteer day later in the fall. He said both events provide a great way for Little City families to introduce friends, family and co-workers to Little City and the important service it provides.

For more information about the PFG and upcoming events, contact Phyllis Shipbaugh at pshipbaugh@littlecity.org.

Little City would like to thank TTSG and Bentron Financial for sponsoring the event.
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:

**Celebrating 34 Years of Employment!**

Little City congratulates Sue Saltzberg on an incredible 34 years of employment at the American Egg Board. Sue is the longest tenured employee at the American Egg Board and a testament to what Little City participants can do in their communities.

**Clipped Wings Donate Van**

Clipped Wings O’Hare Chapter members Diana Baker, Sylvia Davis and Mona Konio stand with the van the organization donated for Countryside Center participants to use. Clipped Wings raised the money at its annual golf outing.

**Whole Foods Market Raises $8,000**

Little City thanks Whole Foods Market for its generous donation thanks to their locations in Kildeer and Schaumburg. The stores committed 5% of their net sales from June 22 for a total of nearly $8,000. Thank you to all who shopped and supported Little City!

**Grant Grows Employment Training**

*Left to right: Executive Director Shawn Jeffers, Grants Manager Carrie Seida, Jeff Krug, and Chief Development Officer Ed Hockfield. Little City received a grant from Westfield Insurance Foundation thanks to the help of J.Krug and Associates, Inc. The grant will help fund job employment training at the Dorothy Rose Horticultural Center.*
City Guide: Upcoming Events

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/lci

Center for the Arts Exhibit at David Adler Music and Arts Center

September 5 - 28, 2017 | 1700 N. Milwaukee Ave, Libertyville, IL

This special exhibition, titled “Write the Vision”, will feature six Little City artists who use the written word in their artwork, or who abstract forms derived from writing within their artwork. These artists are Jeff Aikin, Tarik Echols, Joe Flasch, Harold Jeffries, Angelo LaPietra and Wayne Mazurek.

Little City Annual Dinner Gala

Saturday, March 3, 2018 | Hyatt Regency Chicago, Chicago, IL

Join us for an evening of dinner and dancing as we celebrate 59 years of dedication in supporting children and adults with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities.