Community Employment Takes Off with Little City Work Programs

Gustavo P. wants to start his own maintenance service one day. It may only seem like a dream for a person with developmental disabilities, but thanks to Little City, Gus has taken the first steps to make it a reality.

Gus is a prime example of the possibilities that Little City’s Employee Development Services program can accomplish in conjunction with Little City’s Employment First Program. Together, those two programs can help someone like Gus move from the vocational skill work that happens on-site at Countryside Center to a five-day a week maintenance job at the Wyndham Hotel.

“I love my job,” Gus said. “I want to have my own business one day.”

Gustavo’s success was not an exception in 2018, it became the norm for many of Little City’s prospective employees. People like Jillian G. and David K. both earned community jobs at two separate Culver’s locations, Kerri M. started work at Church Creek Senior Living and a plethora of job hopefuls started valuable volunteer work in the community at places like the Anderson Animal Shelter to get a taste of what community employment would require.

The transformation has been incredible to witness for Wendy Mayfield, site director at the Countryside Center, who has known people like Jillian and David before the merger with Little City. For someone like Jillian who had worked at a Panera as part of a school program before graduating, Wendy said it was great to see her get back into the food service industry she is passionate about.

“The way we have the process setup now helps people on an individual level,” Wendy said of the multi-tiered approach to community employment. “Some people may need to work on interview skills, others may need to work on social skills but we can work on that through this program and get them ready.”

That crucial process starts with the Employee Development Services (EDS) program.

The EDS program is designed to help people transition from recreational, leisure and foundational life skills programs to community employment. Whether they come from the Countryside Center’s piece-work program or from the horticulture program on the main campus, supervisors try to identify people with the potential skills to land a community job.

EDS is currently comprised of 30 program participants, with about 10 each coming from the main campus, Countryside Center and Lakeside Center. The program is a mixture of standardized employment curriculum, paid work training and volunteerism.

Once an individual demonstrates success in EDS, they move on for referral to the Division of Rehabilitation, which partners with Little City to fund job development and placement in the Employment First Program.

The Employment First Program focuses exclusively on assisting

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Executive Director’s Corner

Dear Friends,

As we start 2019, there is great excitement for a truly remarkable milestone as Little City will officially mark 60 years of service for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in October. It is an achievement that would not have been possible without all the dedicated staff, supporters and families that have come through the doors since 1959.

While we take time to reflect on our accomplishments and appreciate how far Little City has come, we must also take this opportunity to look forward. Using our history as a foundation for where Little City should go is a start, but the challenges that await us in the next decade and beyond will require us to move out of our comfort zone.

I am humbled to see the outpouring of support Little City receives year after year and I am eager to celebrate all those accomplishments at our special 60th anniversary Gala this April. But what excites me most is knowing we have the supporters, staff and families at Little City who will not rest on the merits of our past, but push into new territory as we work to make our next 60 years more groundbreaking than our first.

Yours in service,

Shawn E. Jeffers, Executive Director

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”
–Søren Kierkegaard

Community Employment Takes Off

...Continued from cover

individuals with all types of disabilities to enter the workforce. A job developer teams with the potential employee to go over interests, past work experience and skills to determine the jobs best suited for the person. The developer then remains in place, assisting in building natural supports and providing the level of coaching required for the employed to become independent.

One of those job developers is Kristina Popoca who helped Jillian and Gus land their jobs. She said both have transitioned seamlessly into community work and have inspired co-workers and raised the morale. She said it isn’t uncommon to walk into Culver’s and see Jillian giving food recommendations to the customers and having pleasant interactions with everyone.

“It’s been great so far and the ultimate goal is to phase me out completely,” Kristina said. “Once they have the skills to be completely independent, my site visits will continue to go down until I don’t need to do them at all.”

The same success can be said about Kerri and David, who have found incredible support from both Church Creek and Culver’s staff, respectively. Their job coach, Rebecca Schachter, said both employers took a very hands-on approach in training and job coaching and it has helped them both grow as employees and take on more responsibility.

“Culver’s and Church Creek have gone above and beyond to welcome, support, accommodate and integrate David and Kerri into their work environments,” Rebecca said. “Both employers were open to coaching, asked how they could better communicate with David and Kerri, as well as looked for ways to improve their overall training, all of which benefit their staff and not just David and Kerri.”

With Kerri and David being part of the initial EDS class, their success is sure to lay the foundation for many more of Little City’s job seekers to find employment success in 2019 and beyond.

Jillian G. has become a valued member of the Culver’s family thanks to the skills she learned through Little City’s Employee Development Services. She can often be seen giving food recommendations to customers and putting a smile on the faces of all those around her.

To stay on top of Little City news, events and advocacy efforts, join us on our social networks.
The year 2019 will be monumental for Little City as the organization celebrates 60 years of service to individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

While the milestone will be marked in style at the 2019 Annual Gala on Saturday, April 13 at the Drake Hotel, the entire year will be an opportunity to reflect on past successes and prepare for a future that is sure to promise new and exciting developments in helping the people we serve reach their fullest potential.

Started in 1959, Little City was initially envisioned as a way to care for people with developmental disabilities as they entered adulthood and their caretakers grew older. At a time when little was known about developmental disabilities, Little City quickly became not only a place with the highest quality care, but a community that was on the forefront of unlocking the many talents and potential of all who came through its doors.

The support for Little City’s mission was evident from the first day and has only grown over the last 60 years from that initial dream of a group of families looking to provide a safe and nurturing home for their loved ones. Little City’s programs have become some of the best in the nation including a dynamic residential program with on- and off-campus housing, employee development including dedicated centers in Schaumburg and Waukegan, an internationally recognized Center for the Arts and arguably one of the best Special Olympics teams in the state.

The amazing support over the decades has also allowed Little City to be a leader in providing programs for children with developmental disabilities. From the state-of-the-art Duffey Family Children’s Village to the cutting edge ChildBridge Center for Education, children at Little City today are getting a head start on reaching new heights never thought possible even a few years ago.

As we prepare to celebrate 60 years of Little City in 2019, we want to celebrate you, the donor, supporter and author of Little City’s rich history. Without the support of countless donors over the last 60 years, Little City would not be what it is today. We hope to see you at the 2019 Annual Dinner Gala to celebrate and prepare for a bright future.

Beloved resident Jerry Rose has lived at Little City for nearly all of its 60 years.
Making a Difference

Uganda Trip a Life-Changing Experience for Employee

Katie Decker hugs one of the students from the Amaanyi Center in Entebbe, Uganda. Katie took a trip to Uganda with volunteers from SkillCorps in July to work with children with developmental disabilities.

Katie Decker was 7,800 miles from Little City, but the challenges were the same.

There in Entebbe, Uganda, there were children and adults with developmental disabilities that desperately needed support. Unfortunately, that support has not always existed in Uganda.

Katie, the assistant director of Adult Residential Services at Little City, helped change that this past year when she visited the Amaanyi Center in July with a group of volunteers from SkillCorps as part of the Global Autism Project.

The Amaanyi Center is a first of its kind for people with developmental disabilities in Uganda that teaches life skills, vocational skills and academic and personal development. The center itself launched in early 2018, so

Decker and the rest of the SkillCorps volunteers were able to provide crucial assistance and insight to help develop the center’s programming.

“I was able to work with two influential teachers there, Stephen and Rosemary, as we collaborated to develop objectives for the next four months and that process was incredibly empowering,” Katie said. “Watching Rosemary teach functional mathematics and seeing the students working on it with enthusiasm was so powerful.”

The Amaanyi Center has been a massive step forward for people with developmental disabilities in Uganda. According to the center director, Christa Preston, people with developmental disabilities are often call “kasiru,” meaning dumb, or “kateyamba,” meaning helpless. They are five times more likely than their peers to be victims of abuse. Young girls with intellectual disabilities are at the greatest risk, with more than 90 percent reporting incidents of abuse.

The center has already made a major difference offering training in academics, personal empowerment, healthy relationships, community outreach and employment skills.

Katie said it was clear to see how happy everyone was at the center and the strides they have made. Katie and the rest of the volunteers were immediately accepted and warmly welcomed as they were often referred to as auntie or uncle as if part of the family.

“I spoke with Christa about how impressed I was with their students’ independence, and she shared with me that one of the things she set out to do in Uganda was see what independence looked like where there wasn’t any other option,” Katie said.

Because of false assumptions about people with developmental disabilities, community outreach was another point of focus during Katie’s trip. She said staff members would go around knocking on doors and asking people if they knew or have seen a child with autism before and explain the issue. The last thing the person would see as the staff member walked away would be the back of the shirt that said #nomorehiddenchildren.

While the trip was a life-changing experience for both Katie and the students at the Amaanyi Center, it was the familiar feeling of seeing a child with developmental disabilities accomplish a new feat that motivated her to keep doing more both abroad and at home.

“I remember observing the autonomy of the students as they washed their own laundry in wash bins and it gave me this feeling of steadfast determination both for Amaanyi and my clients back home,” Katie said. “I am grateful to have had the opportunity.”

Katie’s trip was made possible thanks to generous funding from Little City board member Alex Gianaras.

Community Partners

Thank you to the following funders for their generous grants that support the work and mission of Little City. Grants were awarded on or after September 2018.

- Adreani Foundation
- Citigroup
- The Davee Foundation
- Dermody Properties Foundation
- DuPage County
- Edmond and Alice Opler Foundation
- Elk Grove Township
- George M. Eisenberg Foundation For Charities
- Greater Chicago Club Managers Association
- Hanover Township Cook County, IL
- Laughing Acres Family Foundation, Inc
- Libertyville Township
- Palatine Township
- Richard A. Perritt Charitable Foundation
- Russell and Josephine Kott Memorial Charitable Trust
- Schwaben Society Charitable Fund
- Village of Arlington Heights
- Village of Schaumburg
- Wauconda Township
- Wells Fargo Foundation
- Wheeling Township
- Winnetka Congregational Church
- Libertyville Township
- Palatine Township
- Richard A. Perritt Charitable Foundation
- Russell and Josephine Kott Memorial Charitable Trust
- Schwaben Society Charitable Fund
- Village of Arlington Heights
- Village of Schaumburg
- Wauconda Township
- Wells Fargo Foundation
- Wheeling Township
- Winnetka Congregational Church

Our Helping Hands

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

- 100% Foundation
- Adult Transition Program South-Higgins Education Center
- Astellas
- Berkshire Hathaway Koenig Rubloff: Schaumburg
- Boy Scouts of America
- Buildtech Services LLC
- CustomEyes
- Discover
- Friends of Countryside
- Giving Tuesday Volunteers
- Holy Family Parish
- Jewel Osco, Palatine
- Knights of Columbus
- Little City Parent/Family/Guardian Group
- Make a Difference Day Volunteers
- Motorola Solutions
- National Eagle Scout Association
- Netrix LLC
- Omron
- Recipe for Success Volunteers
- SpiEdge Services on Behalf of American Express
- St. Edna’s Parish
- William Rainey Harper College
- Wipfli LLP
- Zurich Foundation

To learn more about getting involved, visit www.littlecity.org/volunteer or contact Stephanie Darnell at sdarnell@littlecity.org.
Sysco Chicago Donates $12,500 for a New Food Truck

Thanks to Sysco Chicago, Little City can keep its food on the move.

Sysco Chicago recently donated Little City $12,500 to purchase a new truck to transport food all around campus. With numerous homes for children and adults in addition to the Center for Employment and Business Opportunities, a school, recreation center and centers for art and horticulture, food transportation is vital for Little City’s daily operation.

Bill Brennan, director of facilities at Little City, said the truck used for transportation was one of the oldest in the fleet and there was a pressing need to replace it.

“When you’re transporting food you want to make sure it is reliable and sanitary,” Bill said. “This is a truck we are going to be able to use every day and will last for years.”

The donation was part of Sysco Chicago’s Nourishing Neighbors program that provides charitable donations to agencies working to provide healthy, nutritious meals to those in need such as food banks, after-school programs, and seniors. Sysco Chicago has been a valued partner of Little City for years in not only providing food but also donating at special events like the Little City Invitational. This donation for a new truck is above and beyond the usual giving Sysco provides every year.

“We care for people by giving back, doing good and changing lives in our communities,” said Gary Salvestrini, president of Sysco Chicago.

Little City thanks Sysco Chicago for its years of continued support and for providing a much-needed vehicle that will ensure our residents can eat healthy meals every day.

Motorola Dials Up Special Holiday Delivery for Little City

Motorola donated $15,000 in total to make the gift giving extravaganza a possibility. The company not only purchased the gifts, but held a gift wrapping competition that saw more than 100 employees from the Chicago, Elgin and Schaumburg locations come together to connect with one another and gain a better understanding of Little City’s mission.

“It was definitely enjoyable both years but I think the volunteers really understood Little City’s mission this year and what they were giving to,” said Stephanie Darnell, Director of Volunteer Services at Little City. “It was a higher turnout than last year and there were so many gifts bought that touched so many lives.”

While every person received a gift, so did every home. Whether it was a smart thermostat, security-enhanced doorbells or other smart technology, homes were equipped with a special gift to enhance the residents’ comfort, safety or entertainment.

Motorola, of course, was not the only company to show generosity during the holiday season. Organizations including the Holy Family Parish, Netrix LLC, Discover, Jewel-Osco, the 100 Percent Project, St. Edna Catholic Church and so many more gave in meaningful ways. Whether through financial donations, meals or holiday gifts, these organizations and so many in the community rallied around Little City to make sure everyone had a special holiday season.

Little City would like to thank Motorola and all the organizations and individuals who go above and beyond in making the holidays a special time for everyone who is part of the Little City family.
Little City’s Foster Care & Adoption program celebrated 25 years in 2018—marking an important milestone for a program that has helped hundreds of children find both foster care and forever families. Emily Rawsky, Director of Foster Care & Adoption, said the program has come a long way since it first started and has developed a reputation as one of the most progressive agencies in the state. The Human Rights Campaign recognized Little City as the first foster care and adoption agency in Illinois to obtain cultural competence in serving the LGBT community. The program has also been a leader in finding loving homes for youth with special needs who have been identified as abused or neglected by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Emily sat down with Little City to talk about some of the highlights of the milestone year and the future of the program.

**Little City: How did you feel this past year went for the program as it celebrated 25 years?**

**Emily:** We think it went really well. I think one of our main goals was not only celebrating people in our programs—the foster parents—but also to continue to get the word out about Little City foster care being in Chicago. We had multifaceted marketing campaigns that really helped increase our exposure. We had 202 inquiries from prospective parents last year, which was up from 139 and 132 in the past two years. So I think our campaign really did reach people.

**Little City: How did the program celebrate 25 years?**

**Emily:** We were able to show our appreciation for all our parents who make the program successful at a luncheon in April. They loved our special video and having time to share stories and connect over being foster parents and adopting. It showed me we are doing a good job and that they feel appreciated. It’s not just recruitment that is important, but retention is important. Our best recruiters will always be our foster parents.

**Little City: What has made the program grow as much as it has over the years?**

**Emily:** What Little City Foster Care is doing has unequivocally been more progressive than what most agencies are doing in the state. We have been in the forefront of being innovative with web based platforms and sharing our success stories and getting the word out. A big difference we had this year was a bigger presence in the community. We did open houses this year, which was new for us, and all those were very successful.

**Little City: Where do you see the future of the program going?**

**Emily:** The highlight of the year was the response we were getting from the community, donors and foster parents. We are going to grow and enhance our open house model and do some things on a larger scale to reach people in person.

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**Giving Tuesday Tops Donation Records in 2018**

More than 100 individual donors combined to give $27,525 compared to the roughly $26,000 donated in 2017. Additionally, with the help of corporate matches and another generous $10,000 matching gift from The Coleman Foundation, Little City raised a total $38,575. Money raised from Giving Tuesday will help all programs at Little City maintain their high standards and grow opportunities for all who rely on them. Whether it is a person working toward community employment at the Lakeside and Countryside Centers or a student learning at the ChildBridge Center for Education, every Little City program will be positively affected by the Giving Tuesday success.

“It has been truly amazing to see the growing success of Giving Tuesday year after year thanks to donors who not only come back, but come back in greater numbers with even larger donations,” said Shawn Jeffers, Executive Director of Little City. “We take great pride in the trust people put in Little City to provide the best possible services for people with developmental disabilities and we will continue to do just that with the help of this campaign.”

Giving Tuesday is not only about financial support. More than 30 volunteers came out to the Little City campus on Nov. 27 to spread holiday cheer. The volunteers spent time playing games with residents, decorating ornaments and creating other decorations for the season.

“We want everyone at Little City to be able to experience the magic of the holidays and creating that special atmosphere would not be possible without volunteers,” said Stephanie Darnell, Director of Volunteer Services. “We are grateful to everyone who came out to help make Little City a winter wonderland.”

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Giving Tuesday not only raised money for Little City, but it inspired more than 30 volunteers to come to the Little City campus and spread holiday cheer.

Giving Tuesday continues to grow in importance at Little City thanks to supporters and donors who have set a new donation record for the third consecutive year.
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:

**Little City Celebrates the Holidays**

Little City residents pose for a picture at the annual holiday party at the Cotillion Banquet in Palatine on Dec. 13. The evening was just one of many holiday parties around Little City as Countryside, Lakeside, the children’s program and Foster Care & Adoption programs all celebrated the holiday season.

**Hastings Home Receives Renovation**

Residents at the Hastings Home were recently treated to major renovations thanks to the combined efforts of The Coleman Foundation, Designs 4 Dignity and a $5,000 private donation that covered all the furniture costs. The renovation included all new flooring, an updated kitchen with new modern appliances, improved space utilization and more storage. Thank you to everyone who made this dream home possible!

**The Little City Choir and Generous Donor Create a Special Holiday Event**

The Little City Horticulture Center was home to special holiday spirit in December as a beautiful tree was generously donated by longtime supporter Rick Sidor. The Little City choir gathered around the tree to deliver a performance of holiday favorites and delight staff and donors alike. Little City would like to thank Rick Sidor for the amazing tree and to employee Malorie Solus for leading the choir.
Little City now accepts unwanted gift cards!

Little City is thrilled to announce, in partnership with Raise, that we now accept gift cards as donations! Raise (www.raise.com) is an online gift card marketplace that connects consumers to sell their unwanted or partially used gift cards, with others who will buy gift cards at a discount. If you have any unused or partially used gift cards, consider donating them in support of Little City.

To donate, please mail your gift cards to Little City:
650 E. Algonquin Road • Suite 104 • Schaumburg, IL 60173

For any questions, please email tmaraccini@littlecity.org.

60th Annual Dinner Gala
April 13, 2019 | The Drake | Chicago, IL | www.littlecity.org/gala

10th Annual Food Frenzy
May 10, 2019 | Chicago, IL

56th Annual LCI Golf Classic
June 17, 2019 | Twin Orchard Country Club | Long Grove, IL

PFG Golf Outing
June 2019 | Highland Woods Golf Course | Hoffman Estates, IL

For more information about any of our special events, please contact Susan Clark, Director of Special Events at 847-221-7892 or sclark@littlecity.org.