

LITTLE CITY, BIG  
**P I C T U R E**  
N E W S L E T T E R

APRIL  
IS **AUTISM**  
**ACCEPTANCE**  
**MONTH!**



**SPRING 2025**

**ENCLOSED:**  
Stories About  
Overcoming  
Challenges

**ASE Expansion  
Project Update:**  
Almost There!

**LITTLE CITY**



Little City, Big Life.

# A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Dear Friends & Donors of Little City,

Advocacy remains at the heart of everything we do. Over the past several months, our team has traveled to **Springfield** and **Washington, D.C.**, advocating for the critical needs of the children and adults we serve. We are working tirelessly to protect Medicaid, secure essential transition services for youth moving into adult living arrangements, and push for fair wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Through strong partnerships with our state and federal associations, we continue to make sure the voices of those we serve are heard loud and clear.

Amid these efforts, we also celebrate the incredible achievements of our **Little City Bulls basketball team**, who recently brought home the **gold at the Special Olympics state tournament!** With spring in full bloom, our Special Olympics programs are ramping up, and we can't wait to see more of our athletes shine!

In other news, as I shared in our most recent appeal, we have the opportunity to expand our **Autism Spectrum**

**Engagement** program into a larger space at our Countryside Center. I ask you to learn more about this impactful project and consider supporting this initiative here: [littlecity.org/ASE](http://littlecity.org/ASE)

Earlier this month, we opened a **new community behavioral health center in Chicago** dedicated to serving youth with autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and mental health needs, and expanding access to vital mental health services for Medicaid-eligible children and families in the community. This incredible resource is made possible through a significant grant from the **Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services**.

Looking ahead, we're preparing for some exciting upcoming events. On **April 22**, we will celebrate **Earth Day** with a special event on campus, and in **May**, we will kick off our much-anticipated **annual plant sale**. We also recently launched **Life in Motion**, a private-pay recreational resource for individuals—whether or not they are on the state waiting list—offering meaningful daily activities to enhance their quality of life.

And be sure to check the back page for our upcoming signature events: our **Annual Gala on May 3** and the **Little City Invitational Golf Classic on June 16!**

Despite the challenges we may face this year, our resolve remains stronger than ever. We will always put the people we serve and their families first, advocating every day to ensure they have the resources, opportunities, and support they deserve. Thank you for standing with us, for your advocacy, and for helping us fulfill our mission.

Sincerely,



Rich Bobby  
Chief Executive Officer

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS:** Thank you to the following funders for their generous grants that support the work and mission of Little City. Little City received grant funds from the following grantors between November 16, 2024 and March 15, 2025.

Adreani Foundation • Bloomingdale Township • BNY Mellon Foundation • Citi • Dick's Sporting Goods Foundation • George M Eisenberg Foundation for Charities • Elk Grove Township • Hanover Township • Hambrick Foundation • Illinois Department of Human Services • Rotary Club of Palatine • Russell and Josephine Kott Memorial Charitable Trust • Marvin and Kay Lichtmann Foundation • Motorola Solutions Foundation • Palatine Township • Ritzman Family Fund of DuPage Foundation • Regional Transportation Authority • Schaumburg Township • Wheeling Township

**Helping Hands:** Little City extends its appreciation to **Clarke, CrossCountry Mortgage, Discover, Forward Space, Girl Scout Troop #47427, MEL, Gallagher, and Zurich** for their recent volunteer work with us since December 2024.

# You have helped Nathan overcome his challenges

Help us make room for five more just like him



Few people have grown with Little City's Autism Spectrum Engagement (ASE) program as much as Nathan.

When Nathan first came to Little City almost 10 years ago, he struggled with emotional regulation. He would hit walls or himself, or damage items in the room as he grew frustrated over things he struggled to express. **Like most in the ASE program, Nathan is almost fully non-verbal, and communication is a major barrier.**

"He was going through two major changes when he first came to Little City – joining the day program and moving into the residential program," said Glenda Dike, Life Skills Supervisor. "It was a lot for him to handle and he would get aggressive and angry."

But it didn't take long for him to turn a corner thanks to the ASE program. Glenda, who has been with Little City nearly 20 years, has worked as a DSP in both the traditional day program and the ASE program. She said the higher staff-to-participant ratio in ASE, the pace of the day, and individual attention is what allowed Nathan to progress where he would have struggled in the traditional day program.

The program started in a classroom at the Center for Employment & Business Opportunities (CEBO) where Nathan first discovered his passion for art. He became independent enough to walk from CEBO to the Center for the Arts next door without one-on-one staff assistance.

Now at the Countryside Center, Nathan has grown even more, having gone from refusing to go on even small community outings to embracing even the biggest experiences – *including a trip to the Shedd Aquarium that was once thought impossible for him.*

As we've highlighted here in this edition of *Little City, Big Picture*, our ASE program has the opportunity to expand into a larger space onsite that would make room for 5 individuals on our waitlist.

**Because of your support, the accessibility and empowerment provided to Nathan through our ASE program has helped him overcome his challenges.**

**Now, this expansion will increase the size of the program and offer greater opportunities for physical activities, recreation, and sensory experiences, so more people like Nathan can thrive.**

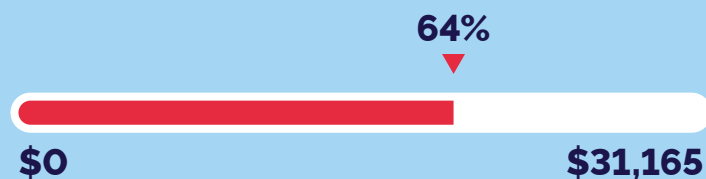
Glenda said the life-changing difference is clear in Nathan and the expansion of the ASE program will help more people who need this service.

"We have been at max capacity for quite a while and we see more and more people come to visit with loved ones who are non-verbal and need this level of support," Glenda said. **"The need for the program just continues to grow."**

## ASE EXPANSION PROJECT: Help us make room for 5 on our waitlist

Little City's Autism Spectrum Engagement (ASE) Program is in high demand. And we have an opportunity to expand into a larger space on-site and build it out with all of the life-changing resources and sensory equipment needed to support and empower more adults with autism just like Nathan.

We have a project goal of \$31,165 to complete this expansion that will allow us to make room for 5 individuals on our waitlist and add 125 hours of enrichment and programming every month.



Learn more about our ASE Expansion Project and consider supporting this growth initiative today at [littlecity.org/ASE](http://littlecity.org/ASE)

# BOBBY IS THRIVING AS A PLAYER – AND AS A PERSON

**Bobby always believed in others, but it was time to believe in himself.**

For years, Bobby enjoyed playing basketball on Little City's Special Olympics Green Team. The team is designed for newcomers or more casual play for those who may need a greater level of support. But Michael Cusick, Little City Director of Recreation Services and Special Olympics coach, said it was time to push Bobby to his potential.

"Bobby has always had an openness to teamwork and wants to do his best to support his teammates," Mike said. "Physically, he isn't the most intimidating player, and I think that held him back, so I wanted to move him up to the Blue Team this year."

When the season started in October, it was a challenge for Bobby to keep up with the speed and physicality of his new teammates, but Mike said he started to see the hustle and confidence right away. And if the result of moving Bobby up to the Blue Team was the confidence and belief in himself that he developed, and that he so freely gives to others, the move would have been worth it.

**But moving Bobby up resulted in so much more.**

While the team was having a great start to the 2024-25 season, the team lost its first game of the year right before the regional tournament, threatening their confidence. Crumbling under adversity before the most



important games of the season could have derailed what they were building.

But Bobby's positive and supportive attitude toward everyone was making a difference

"After that loss, the attitude could have been, 'Oh no, we lost' and all doom and gloom like it had been previously," Mike said. "But their attitude was that they played well together, and they were resilient, especially Bobby who really became a leader on and off the court."

The team ended up winning the regional tournament and qualifying for the state tournament where they captured the state championship! For many on the team, it was their first state championship.

For Bobby, it was a result of his ability to rise to the challenges and believe in himself.



"The goal is always to have the team grow so they can thrive as people off the court, too, and apply it outside of basketball," Mike said. **"But to see how much they all flourished, especially Bobby, and to see them work so hard to become champions together was really special."**

# FROM LIFE-CHANGING IMPACT TO LIFE-CHANGING LEGACY

If anyone knows the life-changing impact Little City can make, it is Carol Meyer.

**Carol has seen Little City's growth firsthand over the years as her brother Wayne (pictured right) first came to the agency when he was 11 years old in 1961. Now at 73 years old, Wayne is the longest tenured resident at Little City and Carol said it has been a lifetime of great memories and amazing growth.**

"We wouldn't trade this situation for anything," Carol said. "He has really matured and learned so much along the way. The best thing I can say is I know he is very happy. He loves his life."

Today Wayne enjoys the day programming at Countryside Center where he can stay active, socialize with friends, take classes, and engage in community outings. During his decades at Little City, Wayne has benefited from almost every program Little City has to offer, from Special Olympics to art and gardening classes.

**And for Carol, Little City has become part of the family and has inspired her to join the Abraham & Judith Bohrer Heritage Society – committing to a planned gift to Little City to help continue this life-changing impact for years to come for so many more just like Wayne.**

Giving as part of the planned giving program is just one way Carol and her family hope to help other families have the same life-changing experience Wayne has had at Little City.



"Little City is ever changing but it has always made Wayne happy," Carol said. "We're just very lucky."

**Learn more about how you can include Little City in your planned giving to ensure a legacy of life-changing impact continues for individuals with disabilities at Little City. Visit [littlecity.org/PlannedGiving](https://littlecity.org/PlannedGiving)**

## SHOP THE PLANT SALE IN MAY!

Help our participants **GROW** and brighten your day!

**MAY 1 – JUNE 7**

**HOURS:** THURS/FRI 10AM-5PM  
SATURDAY 9AM-3PM

LITTLE CITY HORTICULTURE CENTER  
1740 W. ALGONQUIN RD, PALATINE

## LITTLE CITY ADVOCACY: RECENT NEWS & EFFORTS

*Little City advocacy is in full swing!*



Scan the QR code for an update on our advocacy efforts on both the state and federal levels or visit [littlecity.org/Advocate](https://littlecity.org/Advocate).

# UPCOMING EVENTS

COMING SOON!

## LITTLE CITY'S MASTERPIECE GALA

Saturday, May 3, 2025

The Ritz-Carlton | Chicago, IL

Our annual dinner – *Little City's Masterpiece Gala* – is coming soon on May 3. Time is running out to get your tickets to join us as we honor and celebrate our deep history of providing hope and opportunity for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities!

And this year we are delighted to present Eleni and Jimmy Bousis with the Vernon Carson Luminary Award.

**Get your tickets, check out our silent auction, and bid from home at [littlecity.org/Gala](http://littlecity.org/Gala)**

## SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR 6<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HERO WALK!

Sunday, September 7, 2025

Busse Woods, Grove 27 | Elk Grove Village, IL

**Walk with the Heroes of Little City at the 6th Annual Hero Walk!** Join us in September and walk with the heroes of Little City on a leisurely stroll through scenic Busse Woods and help celebrate over 65 years of creating hope and changing the lives of individuals with disabilities with other Little City friends and families!

**This family-friendly event is open to all and includes lunch, games, raffles, and more! More details to come!**

JOIN US FOR OUR

## 62<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL LITTLE CITY INVITATIONAL!

Monday, June 16, 2025

Twin Orchard Country Club | Long Grove, IL

Join us for one of the signature charity events of the summer, the Little City Invitational Golf Classic! Come out to Twin Orchard Country Club in Long Grove for a day of golf while helping Little City raise much-needed awareness and funds for children and adults with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities.

And help us recognize our **2025 Morrie Kellman Humanitarian Award Honoree, John "Jack" George of Akerman LLP!** Little City is honored to celebrate Jack and his decades-long commitment to furthering this mission for individuals with disabilities.

**Register or sponsor today at [littlecity.org/LCI](http://littlecity.org/LCI)!**

## SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR POKER TOURNAMENT & CASINO NIGHT!

Friday, October 17, 2025

Bank of America Tower | Chicago, IL

**Our Poker & Casino Night is BACK!** Save the date to join us for the hottest Texas Hold 'Em tournament and casino night in Chicago, featuring an all-night gourmet buffet by Gibsons and premium drinks.