



Transformations

STARTING WITH YOU

Our Mission

Since 1959, Little City has been dedicated to serving children and adults with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities by providing the best options and opportunities to live safely, learn continuously, explore creatively, and work productively throughout their lifetime. By inspiring, advocating, and pursuing success with passion and purpose, lives are changed through hope, happiness, and optimism.

Our Vision

To create an inclusive community where each individual and family we empower can achieve equity, pursue their dreams, develop meaningful connections, and gain the support and skills they need to thrive.



Because of You, Transformation Takes Root

Dear Little City Friends,

2025 was a remarkable year at Little City — **one defined by growth, transformation, and renewed purpose.**

Every milestone we reach and every life we touch is possible because of you. Your generosity and steadfast commitment to our mission make all the difference for the children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), autism, and behavioral health needs who depend on us.

This year, your support helped us expand access to critical services, such as a new Community Behavioral Health Clinic in Chicago and our new Life in Motion day program. Our Center for Education continues to thrive and support students with the highest support needs, and we broke ground for the new Bell Family Arts Center, just to name a few.

From innovative programs that foster independence and inclusion, to new spaces that inspire creativity, skill-building, and connection, to our high-achieving Special Olympics teams, the impact of your giving is evident every day in the lives of those we serve.

The challenges facing people with disabilities – *and the funding systems that support them* – remain real and

ongoing, and we continue our fierce advocacy at both the state and federal levels.

While the road ahead may feel uncertain, we remain “productively paranoid,” staying vigilant, informed, and responsive, and never losing sight of the hope and confidence that ground us. Regardless of the curveballs thrown our way, we will face them together.

As we look ahead, we are filled with optimism for what’s next. Together, we will continue to build a future where everyone can learn, grow, and thrive – no matter the challenges they face.

Thank you for being an essential part of the Little City family. Your partnership is what allows hope to flourish and transformation to take root. **We believe wholeheartedly that, with you by our side, we will continue to make our vision a reality every single day.**

With appreciation,

Rich Bobby
Chief Executive Officer

Heather Ritter
Chair, Little City Board of Directors





A New Chapter for Creativity: Bell Family Arts Center

Thanks to the leading generosity from Julie Bell and IKEA, the fully renovated and reimagined **Bell Family Arts Center** will offer Little City artists a transformative space to explore digital art, textiles, ceramics, and more. And with a public gallery, artists will be able to connect their creativity to the community.

Christine's Creativity is Shining Because of You

No program at Little City is experiencing a greater transformation than our celebrated arts program – and no one is embracing that transformation more fully than Christine. **And it's a transformation made possible because of you.**

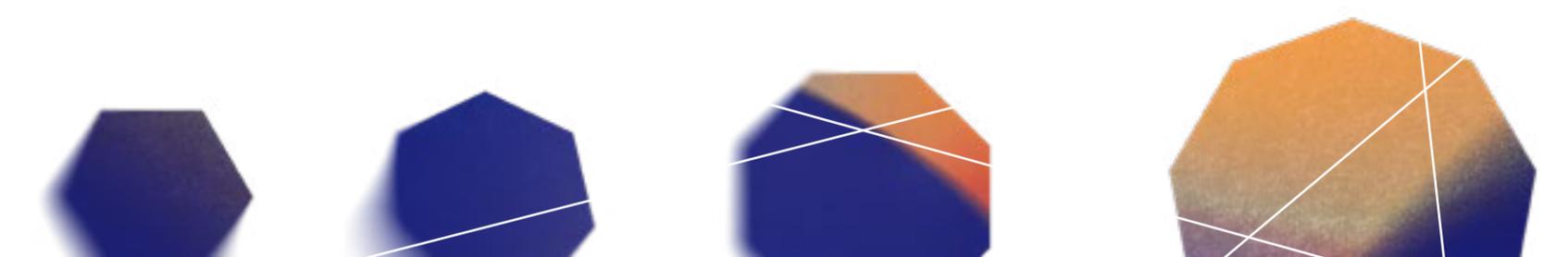
Christine has been part of the Little City arts program through its peak years, its COVID-era shutdown, and now its energetic resurgence. With every twist and turn, she transformed alongside it. From pottery in the pre-COVID studio, to weekly coloring packets during the shutdown, to painting at the Recreation Center today, Christine has shown that creativity can thrive through any transition.

This year, as the arts program prepares for another major milestone – *the opening of the fully reimagined Bell Family Arts Center* – Christine's renewed focus and commitment have helped inspire others to re-engage. **Your support is what ensures artists like Christine have access to consistent, meaningful opportunities to grow and express themselves.**

"Getting the artists to really care about their work again has been a big focus," said Art Center Educator and Coordinator, Elizabeth Stafford. "Many came in wanting to rush through projects – maybe from having experienced the shutdown before. Letting them know you can work on a piece for more than a week is important, and Christine really embraced that. She's done amazing work that gets noticed."

Thanks to a state grant and your generosity – *including transformative support from board member Julie Bell* – the new Bell Family Arts Center will expand opportunities in digital art, textiles, ceramics, and other mediums, and will include a public gallery connecting artists to the community and future buyers. The new center will also feature a fully operational cafe space for vocational training in sales and customer service. This next chapter simply wouldn't be possible without donors like you.

As more artists return and new participants join for the first time, Christine's example will help guide them through this exciting transformation.



Where Opportunity Meets Possibility: Chris' Story

Sometimes all it takes is a change in scenery to spark a transformation.

Chris had been part of Little City's Autism Spectrum Engagement (ASE) program for over a decade and had fallen into a routine. Quiet and reserved, he enjoyed walks, activities at his desk, and solving puzzles – but Glenda Dike, Life Skills Supervisor, noticed he was becoming disengaged.

"He would just have low energy at times, keep his head on his desk, and not want to do much," said Glenda, who has worked with Chris for nearly 10 years. "I knew getting this new space would be a chance for Chris and everyone in the program to find new passions and engage with each other more."

That transformation began with the fall 2025 completion of the renovated ASE space at Little City's Countryside Center. The new environment is bright,

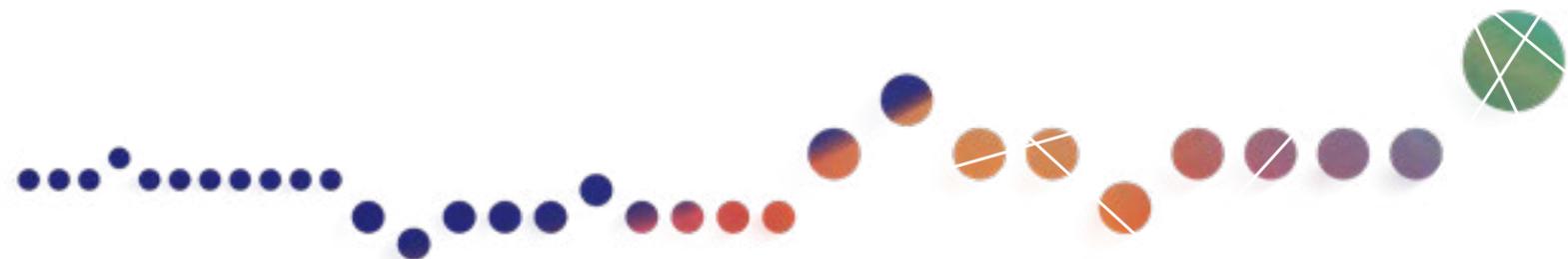
dynamic, and spacious, with natural light streaming through large windows, dedicated stations for activities, foosball and giant Connect Four games, and wide-open areas for exercise and movement.

A space generously funded by donors like you.

And the results were immediate. Chris and his peers became more active, social, and engaged. "Being surrounded by natural light and having space for sensory items and new activities has made a huge difference," Glenda said. "Chris is always moving now – not just walking, but collaborating, playing games, and exploring. We've seen a real transformation in everyone."

Because the ASE program serves participants with the highest support needs, donors like you play a critical role in providing spaces and experiences like this expansion onsite that helps each individual grow, practice independence, and discover new interests.

"Chris is always moving now – not just walking, but collaborating, playing games, and exploring. We've seen a real transformation in him and others in the ASE program."



Karen's Journey: From Shy to Active

Karen had been involved with Little City programs for years, but she rarely stepped outside her comfort zone.

In 2025, everything changed when she started saying yes – bringing her greater happiness, better health, and a year rich with achievement.

"Karen never really got involved much with our recreation program before, but I am so proud of the big changes she took on this past year," said Katlyn Shute, Adult Recreation Therapist and Special Olympics Head Coach. "She tried volleyball for the first time, went to state for bocce ball and won silver, joined the choir, and became so active. You can see how happy it makes her."

Katlyn noted that Karen had always been shy and reserved, but trying volleyball helped her overcome fears of not being good enough or letting her team down. **Once she embraced new experiences, Karen began participating in more activities and became a regular, attending recreation programs four times a week.**

"It was night and day when she realized she didn't have to be the best to try something new," Katlyn said. Karen

started saying yes to challenges and transformed her routine, her confidence, and her health.

The recreation program offers a wide range of activities that promote social, emotional, and physical wellbeing – from swimming and basketball to cooking classes and choir. In 2025, a new partnership with Harper College gave participants access to additional gym space, creating even more opportunities to engage with the community.

Karen says she loves all the activities she's exploring and is even giving basketball a try, despite occasional nerves.

"She's grown so much this year," Katlyn said. "She's even beginning to tackle some of the tasks that aren't as enjoyable—like strength training and conditioning—and it's had an enormous impact on her. She tells me she is feeling better and has more energy. I'm so proud of her."

This is the power of your support – helping friends like Karen overcome their challenges and experience an amazing transformation.

"She started saying yes to challenges and transformed her routine, her confidence, and her health."





“For Tony, it quickly became a place where he could try new things, meet new people, and grow in ways that felt meaningful to him.”

A New Program Designed Around Possibility

Tony’s story has been one of remarkable transformation – marked by newfound confidence, friendships, and a growing sense of independence.

When Tony joined Little City’s new Life in Motion program in May 2025, he was stepping into a flexible, person-centered day program designed to help people explore interests, build community connections, and strengthen everyday life skills.

For Tony, it quickly became a place where he could try new things, meet new people, and grow in ways that felt meaningful to him.

Emily Griffin, Life in Motion Coordinator, said watching Tony open up and discover what he enjoys has been one of the highlights of the year.

Tony embraced the spirit right away. He bonded with other participants and staff almost immediately and began saying “yes” to a wide range of experiences – swimming on campus, movie outings, bowling, museums, and more. Each new activity helped him grow more confident in community settings, while building skills that support greater independence.

That growing confidence has carried over into his goals for the future. Tony is now participating in job training and has begun exploring job development opportunities with Little City. With his strong social skills and can-do attitude, he hopes to move toward community-based employment.

“A lot of our participants regressed during COVID and lost some of those skills and habits that come with being out in the community,” Emily said. “Now we have people going home and asking their parents to take them places and they can stop in grocery stores and help with that – it’s been great to see.”

Tony’s journey last year shows what’s possible when someone is supported, encouraged, and given the chance to grow – one new experience at a time.





“They really love him and support him there and when you have someone doing this kind of hard work who just really loves coming to work every day, it helps everybody.”

Joseph’s Path to Community Employment

Joseph Reinhard has never shied away from hard work, which is exactly what helped him find the kind of hard work that changed his life.

In March 2025, Joseph joined Little City’s Employment First program – a service that extends beyond traditional Little City residents and participants to assist more people with disabilities in the community. Robert Hadden, a job coach for Employment First, took on Joseph’s case and said the hard work started right away.

“From the start, Joseph was proactive and knew what he could and wanted to do. He was very engaged in the process,” Robert said. “The challenges came up in the interviewing process. We went through a lot of interviews trying to get him hired and it wasn’t panning out, and it was tough to know why.”

The lack of early success was difficult to figure out at first, Robert said, because Joseph communicates well and works hard, but the managers conducting interviews didn’t always give feedback. Like many people who go through Employment First, Joseph does not have as noticeable or as severe developmental disabilities as many Little City participants, which can make the hiring process more confusing for employers.

While Joseph is quite personable, Robert said he discovered it caused issues in the interview process employers didn’t fully understand.

“He loves people so he would sometimes interact with them like he had known them for a long time, asking what they did that weekend, if they had gone fishing (since Joseph loves fishing), just questions you shouldn’t ask in an interview,” Robert said. “So, I worked with him on sticking to the questions at hand and asking situation-based questions if he had any for them. And he really got the hang of it.”

Not long after Joseph improved his interviewing skills, he landed a job at Hines Components in Kirkland working as a general laborer both inside the warehouse and outside when needed.

Joseph now works full-time, five days a week, and drives himself an hour each way to get to work. **He said he loves the job and the people he works with. He’s so eager he will often get there half an hour early or more and will wait for his shift to start.**

Robert said that Hines has been an incredible start to Joseph’s work life and believes it will only continue to get better.

“They really love him and support him there and when you have someone doing this kind of hard work who just really loves coming to work every day, it helps everybody,” Robert said. “He’s doing a great job.”

Aubrey's Story: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities

It was overwhelming for Aubrey at first.

Transitioning from the quiet of home-based services to Little City's Center for Education introduced her to a world of classrooms, students, and staff she wasn't used to. She struggled to communicate and manage emotions triggered by the new experiences and stimulation.

"She was pretty scared coming into a new school and being around new people. She didn't have the skills to help her be in a school," said Imani Roberts, Aubrey's social worker. "She'd display some aggression and had a hard time with emotions."

Aubrey began in the THRIVE Program, designed for students with the highest level of support needs. Small classrooms, one-to-one support, and a half-day schedule helped her adjust.

Over time, it became clear that she could be independent and make significant strides when given direction and space to work. For someone who once relied on constant support to regulate emotions, this was a major transformation.

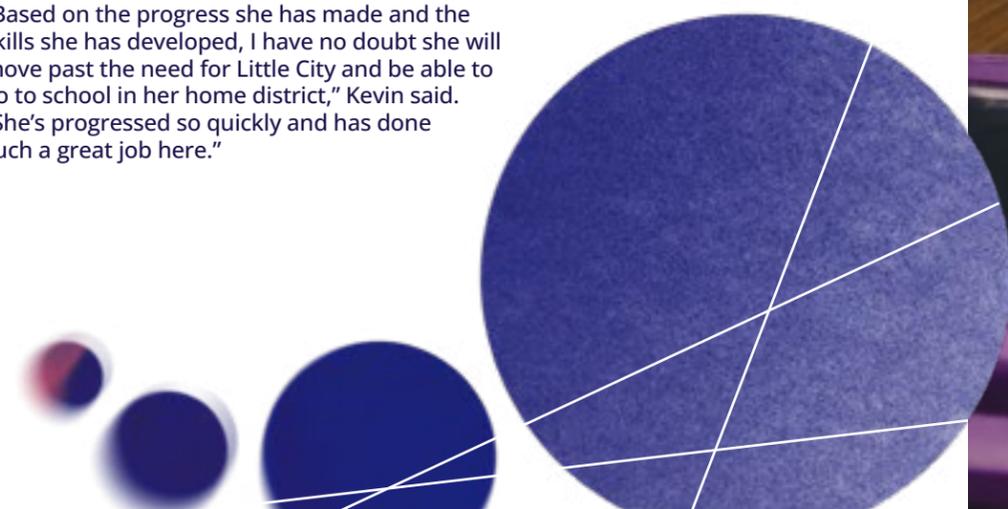
"I didn't work with her right from the beginning, so I was really surprised to see how independent she was and how good she was at following directions based on her history," said Kevin Medema, Aubrey's Board Certified Behavior Analyst. "She still has things to work on, but she went from always needing that physical contact from other people to help regulate emotions to doing it pretty quickly on her own."

By fall 2025, Aubrey was joining larger classrooms for art, music, and gym. After winter break, she had fully phased out of THRIVE.

Though only in seventh grade and at the school for less than two years, her progress has been so remarkable that she is on track to thrive in her home school district's special education program.

"Based on the progress she has made and the skills she has developed, I have no doubt she will move past the need for Little City and be able to go to school in her home district," Kevin said. "She's progressed so quickly and has done such a great job here."

"By fall 2025, Aubrey was joining larger classrooms for art, music, and gym. After winter break, she had fully phased out of THRIVE."





"It can be such a physical job, and Jimmy has a unique ability to handle that and a passion for doing the work."

A New Passion Blossomed for Jimmy

A transformation can be as simple as redirecting energy into a new passion.

Jimmy, long known as one of Little City's top athletes, has won gold medals in powerlifting, led flag football and basketball teams, and participated in nearly every Special Olympics event he could.

In 2025, that same drive and athleticism sparked a new passion – horticulture.

"I had actually been trying to recruit Jimmy for a couple years," said Wayne Johnson, Horticulture Manager. "He's been such a huge help with our fields and doing a lot of the hard work that some of the others can't physically do."

The horticulture program is known for its greenhouses and beautiful plant arrangements, but much of the work happens in two large outdoor fields. Jimmy quickly became an integral part of planting and harvesting, using equipment such as land rollers, wheelbarrows, and shovels to prep fields, move soil, and tackle tough digging.

Jimmy's enthusiasm has him spending nearly all day on Wednesdays in the program, contributing to everything from planting hundreds of pounds of tomatoes for the Harvest Stand to preparing fields for pumpkin season. The second field posed particular challenges this year, including concrete and deeply rooted invasive weeds. Jimmy's physical ability and dedication made it possible to get the work done safely and efficiently.

"It can be such a physical job, and Jimmy has a unique ability to handle that and a passion for doing the work," Wayne said. "He did some planting with his family in the past, and this has given him a chance to do that kind of work again and he really loves it and has been great to work with."

Jimmy's success in horticulture has even opened doors to potential community-based work. Wayne has already connected with Goebbert's Farm, a large family farm attraction in the area, to explore opportunities for Jimmy in planting and harvesting.

With Jimmy's energy and dedication, 2026 is shaping up to be one of the most bountiful years yet for Little City's horticulture program!

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Recurring Giving = Recurring Impact

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Our Circle of Love donors are those who have committed to recurring giving. We are so grateful for these individuals who give endlessly to change lives all year long at Little City.

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Transforming through Time, Talent, and Treasure

In-Kind Gifts & Volunteering

In 2025, volunteers and in-kind donors played an essential role for Little City. From lending their time and talents to providing much-needed resources, their generosity enriched programs, supported participants, and helped create transformative experiences – proving that every act of giving makes a meaningful difference.

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The Visionary Society recognizes and honors the lifetime individual givers of over \$50,000.

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(\$500,000+)

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Legacies & Bequests

We are deeply grateful to the individuals who include Little City in their wills and estate plans. These transformative gifts help secure our future, allowing generations of children and adults with disabilities to learn, grow, and thrive – leaving a lasting legacy of hope and transformation.

Realized Legacies & Bequests

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Family Charitable Trust
Ulfur & Carol Thors
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Your Legacy Can Transform Lives

You can plan a gift that changes lives for years to come. By including Little City in your will or estate plan, you provide significant support for programs, services, and opportunities that empower children and adults with disabilities – ensuring this mission continues to change lives well into the future because of your generosity.

To learn more about planned giving, contact Tina Maraccini at tmaraccini@littlecity.org

* indicates donors and supporters who are deceased

In Loving Memory

This past year, Little City suffered the loss of several beloved residents. Their lives had a profound and lasting impact on our community, and their spirits live on in all who had the privilege of knowing them.



Luke Tauber

b. August 8, 1946

Luke, a beloved Little City resident for over 50 years, was an acclaimed artist and cherished friend to countless residents, participants, and staff. Inspired by his parents and his own experiences, Luke's creativity and spirit left an indelible mark – here are reflections from those whose lives he touched.

"Luke's passion, humor, determination and belief in himself was always inspiring to me. Witnessing his ability to blend all his interests and follow his curiosities (no matter how divergent they may seem) was especially inspiring to my own studio practice."

- Jennifer Mannebach, Former Art Facilitator

"While Luke was known to many as an amazing artist, those lucky enough to have spent time with him knew him as an even more amazing person. Luke was a gentle soul with a huge heart who was a dear friend to countless residents and staff during his more than 50 years at Little City. He will always be a part of who we are."

- Rich Bobby, Little City CEO



Ed Green

b. September 19, 1953

Ed, a Little City resident for over 40 years, was a cherished friend and constant helper throughout campus. Known for his kindness, generosity, and dedication – from supporting maintenance to caring for the horticulture program – Ed's quiet spirit touched countless lives. Here are reflections from those who knew him best.

"He was such a sweet and kind person and always wanted to do what he could without ever asking for anything in return. Ed was really a friend to everyone he met, and we will miss him so much."

- Erika Edwards, Quality of Life Coordinator

"One of my favorite memories is when he brought me a box of baking soda from his 'ice box' because earlier that day I told him I had a toothache. He said he had rinsed with it after every meal and it helped him, so he hoped it would help with my toothache. He really had a heart of gold."

- Jackie Kenyon, Horticulture Specialist

Valerie Green

b. June 23, 1954

Valerie, a longtime Little City resident for over 50 years, was a beloved presence in day programs, the Plum Grove Home, and the community. Known for her warmth, curiosity, and love of puzzles and nature, Valerie created lasting friendships and left a meaningful impact on all who knew her.

"The women at Plum Grove Home were very close to each other and great friends, but Valerie also loved spending time at the park on her own working on her puzzles. She loved being over there more than anything. She was always great to work with and is going to be missed."

- Ceci Barber, DSP

"When Valerie moved into the Plum Grove Home, she ran in through the front door and was excited to see everything. It only took her moments to choose a chair in the living room that would become her favorite chair."

- Cathy Kraft, Administrative Coordinator for Adult Services

Impact + Advocacy

The Reach of Your Generosity

913
individuals served

20+
programs & services provided

Reaching individuals in
8
counties

89¢
of every dollar donated goes to programs & services

New Programs!

Life in Motion

90 community-integrated outings provided
seven active participants

Behavioral Health Clinic

98.5% of clients were supported without requiring higher levels of care
132 individuals served in 2025
4,755 hours provided in 2025

Grayslake / Countryside

24 new participants joined our community day programs
235 total participants served at our Countryside & Grayslake community day programs

Art

167 participants engaged in our art program
650 art class hours provided

Horticulture

24 participants in the vocational program
162 participants in the general horticulture program
2,150 plants sold at the Annual Plant Sale
Over **8,375** pounds of produce sold at the annual Harvest Stand

Recreation

15 first-time athletes participated in sports competitions
one state champion basketball team
75 individual medals achieved
80 athletes competed in Special Olympics competitions
Over **440** hours of practice and competition supported
122 recreation sessions provided



School

nine students graduated
six students moved to a less-restrictive classroom
14 students transitioned back to their home districts, thanks to you
61 total students served in 2025
Over **1,221** instructional hours provided

Children's Residential

54 children living in residential units
13 new children placed in residential units

Adult Residential

123 adult residents living in homes supported by you
four new adult resident placements
19 supportive housing units for adult residents
27 years: average length of time adult residents have called Little City home

Foster Care & Adoption

33 new foster care placements
36 guardianship or adoption permanency placements
76 exits - including return to home and emancipation
225 total youth in Little City foster care

Employment Services

32 individuals actively employed in community jobs
13 new community employment placements
58 participants actively worked towards employment in 2025
Over **5,200** hours of job coaching provided



Brady Helped Me Find My Voice

By Lisa Pollard

Little City has been a transformational force in our son Brady's life, and for our family. He has learned new skills and lives a fulfilling life that we never thought possible. Through it all, I have learned to make my voice heard through advocacy, including visiting Springfield to tell Brady's story. Little City has been a game-changer for Brady. I can't thank the team or the donors enough for the impact they have made on him and our family.

Listen to Lisa's guest spot on the Little City Big Voices podcast here:



2025 Events

2025 Annual Dinner – Little City’s Masterpiece Gala

Last year’s gala was a huge success thanks to so many of you. Nearly 400 families, supporters, sponsors, and friends in this mission made it a night to remember as we honored Jimmy and Eleni Bousis with the Vernon Carson Luminary Award, Citi as our Corporate Partner of the Year, and raised more vital funds to support people with disabilities at Little City.



62nd Annual Little City Invitational Golf Classic

The 62nd Annual Little City Invitational Golf Classic was another great day on the links for over 140 golfers and friends who joined us to help support this vital mission. This special day was capped off by honoring Jack George with the Morrie Kellman Humanitarian Award.



Poker Tournament & Casino Night

Our Poker Tournament & Casino Night made a return in 2025 and was a night of going ALL IN for this mission. Over 150 sponsors, donors, and attendees joined us for this special event and enjoyed an exciting poker tournament, casino games, and opportunities to raise more funds for those who call Little City home.



6th Annual Hero Walk

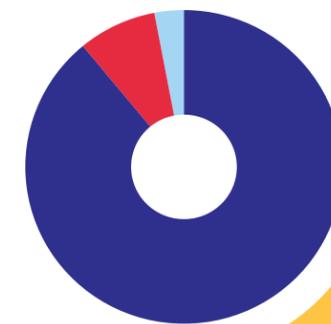
On a beautiful day in September, hundreds of donors, families, and supporters joined us at Busse Woods for our 6th Annual Hero Walk. Thanks to you, this community event took the biggest steps towards creating more equity and opportunities for our friends with disabilities.

FY25 Financials

Little City provides innovative programs and services that foster development and personal fulfillment for the individuals we serve. To do so, Little City relies on government funding and direct contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

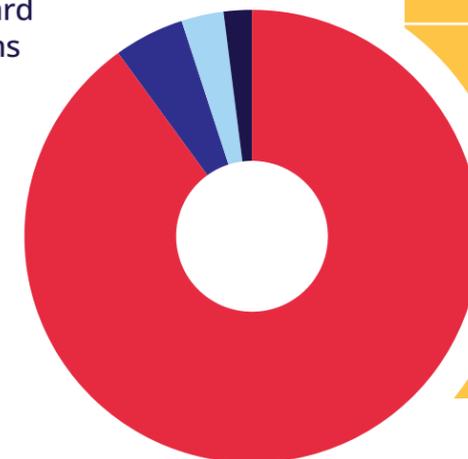
Little City’s quality-of-life standards go beyond the state-required minimal standard of care to encompass programs and services that foster a life of health, recreation, education, skill-building, and culture that protect one’s rights, beliefs, choices, and aspirations.

The charts to the right provide a glance at Little City’s operating expenses and revenues for Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30 2025).



How Funds Are Used:

- Programs & Services: 89.2%
- Management & General: 8.4%
- Fundraising: 2.4%



Where Funds Come From:

- Government Funding: 90.1%
- Private Donations: 4.3%
- Corporate Foundations & Grants: 3.5%
- Investments & Other Income: 2.1%

Together, We Can Transform More Lives in 2026

As we continue through this year and beyond, the need for your support has never been more important.

The challenges facing people with disabilities remain real and ongoing:

- Government funding for community-based programs continues to fall short.
- The costs keep rising to provide the high-quality care and skills development our participants deserve.
- And the waitlist for essential services at Little City continues to grow.

While the road ahead may feel uncertain, it has always been your significant support that has been foundational and steadfast in moving this mission forward for hundreds of children and adults with disabilities every single day.

It's your generosity that ensures children and adults with disabilities have access to the programs, therapies, and opportunities that allow them to learn, grow, and thrive.

With your commitment today, we can continue to meet these challenges head-on, expanding services, enhancing care, and creating transformative experiences for every participant and resident who calls Little City home.

Here's how you can make a significant & lasting impact right now:

1. Send your best gift today using the enclosed reply envelope that will go to work tomorrow in changing the lives of people with disabilities.
2. Join the Circle of Love by starting a monthly donation today that will impact lives all year long.
3. Make a planned gift to not only leave a legacy but to ensure Little City's mission endures for generations to come.

Your commitment today empowers lives tomorrow. Together, we can transform challenges into opportunities, and ensure that hope, care, and possibility continue to flourish at Little City.

**Will you help
make 2026 a year
of lasting impact?**



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Little City, **Big Life.**