

LITTLE CITY, BIG

P I C T U R E

N E W S L E T T E R

SPRING 2026

Enclosed: Walter is blossoming beyond expectations

Meet Jim and Sue Ann: 26 years of monthly giving



Little City, **Big Life.**



A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Dear Friends, Families & Donors,

Spring is in the air at Little City!

I'm always reminded of hope at this time of year – and supporters like you make hope possible for those we serve.

You will see throughout this newsletter stories of hope and possibility for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental health challenges. From Danny's success in our Autism Spectrum Engagement (ASE) program, to Walter, who gained life-changing skills through a passion for gardening, you have helped people learn and thrive.

On the advocacy front, we have recently joined with other children's residential services providers and IDD advocacy organizations across Illinois to form the Together for Youth with IDD Coalition, seeking continuity of care, funding, and support for young adults when they age out of services at 22. You can learn more about the Coalition here: tfycoalition.org.

There are so many opportunities to get involved in our mission. Please consider joining us for our Little City Invitational golf outing in June or save the date for the Hero Walk in September. See the back of this newsletter for more information.

While we celebrate our progress in many areas, the need remains great, and we ask for your continued support for people like Danny and Walter. We simply couldn't do it without you!

Together, we are helping fulfill our vision of community, friendship, opportunity, and learning for every individual we serve. Your support helps make this possible, and we deeply appreciate you!

Sincerely,



Rich Bobby
Chief Executive Officer



CIRCLE OF LOVE STORIES: 26 YEARS OF MONTHLY GIVING

Meet Jim & Sue Ann, Circle of Love monthly donors who have been providing a steady heartbeat of support for nearly three decades.

"The power of the Circle of Love isn't in the size of the individual checks; it's in the collective consistency of the people who care. When a lot of people commit to a little bit every month, it creates a safety net that is incredibly strong and dependable."

Read more of Jim & Sue Ann's story and join them in the Circle of Love!





Danny is Reaching New Heights

Danny, a longtime participant in Little City's Autism Spectrum Engagement (ASE) program, has faced challenges for years as a result of his autism diagnosis.

Hyperactivity and a short attention span often made it difficult for him to engage in activities or go on community outings. But thanks to the expanded and renovated ASE space at Countryside Center – *funded last spring by generous donors like you* – Danny is making remarkable progress and reaching new heights.

Since the new space opened, Danny has shown a growing ability and desire to follow structured routines and transition between activities. Ade Dayo-Abatan, a Direct Support Professional who has worked with Danny for years, says the array of options hasn't overwhelmed him; instead, it has helped him focus.

"Danny has always been very smart and has enjoyed things like working on puzzles, but now you can give him one and he will focus on it and really work to finish it," Ade said. "He just always needed to move around a lot and had a hard time focusing on anything, but you can see how this new space has helped."

The renovated room offers a variety of mental, physical, and social activities – from a foosball table and oversized Connect 4 games to a Wii station that

encourages movement and concentration. Life Skills Supervisor Glenda Dike notes the space is still evolving. "New furniture like L-shaped tables will encourage more partnership work, and an entire sensory room still to be built will give participants like Danny an outlet for mental and physical breaks," she said.

The changes also extend beyond the room itself. With a reduced staff-to-participant ratio for outings, Danny can now enjoy more frequent and longer community experiences. Glenda says the combination of space, resources, and staffing is transforming participants' lives.

"We are already seeing so much progress with everyone in our program, and Danny has really started to increase his attention span and get into a routine," Glenda said. "The more we use this space, the more we see people take big steps forward, even those who have been here for a very long time."

Because of donors like you, Danny and others in the ASE program have the space, tools, and support to reach milestones once thought impossible.

AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH: BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF UNDERSTANDING

April is Autism Acceptance Month – a time to deepen understanding, celebrate neurodiversity, and champion meaningful inclusion.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental diagnosis that affects how individuals communicate, interact, and experience the world around them. At Little City, the vast majority of the children and adults we support are diagnosed with ASD, making this month especially meaningful. Each individual brings unique strengths, perspectives, and potential, and we are proud to walk alongside them – advocating not just for awareness, but for true acceptance and opportunity.

THE REALITY IN NUMBERS



◀ **26.7%** of people with ASD have profound autism.

15.8% increase in the number of 8-year-olds identified with ASD in 2025 compared to 2020. ▶



STUDENTS WITH AUTISM VS. ALL STUDENTS

High School Graduation Rate:



Students with Autism: **74%**



All Students: **86%**

Employment Rate:



Students with Autism: **58%**



All Students: **85%**

Independent Living (21+):



Students with Autism: **23%**



All Students: **78%**

THE NUMBERS ARE GROWING & FUNDING GAPS ARE WIDENING.

It's your donation today that helps provide critical programs, resources, and opportunities for individuals with autism to overcome their challenges and reach their unique potential.

*Source: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP, COMMUNITY, AND IMPACT!

Thank you to all those who attended our Ladies in Leadership Luncheon on March 12th to network, be inspired by our keynote speaker – Roxanne Parikh – and support the mission of Little City. It was an empowering day and we're so grateful for those who joined us and continue to believe in this important work we do together.

And a special thank you to our sponsors: Siren Betty Design, Marsh McLennan/Horton Group, and Heather Ritter!



WALTER'S STORY: BLOSSOMING BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

Little City's Horticulture program is where individuals like Walter go to grow.

Walter is one of the newer participants in Little City's adult day program, having started in 2025 while still living in a Community Integrated Living Arrangement (CILA) through a different agency.

The transition was not always easy and Jenny Boland, Director of Employment Services at Little City, said Walter would struggle to engage in most activities at Little City's Center for Employment & Business Opportunities.

"Walter is not always the most eager to try new things or get involved with activities," Jenny said. "But when he discovered horticulture, he was like a whole new person. Any time he goes to horticulture he is in his element."

Walter's passion for horticulture was so strong he quickly became part of the vocational program that requires a higher level of skill and commitment. Jackie Kenyon, Horticulture Specialist, said the first time Walter came to the program he already had the rare ability to identify plants and was comfortable with basic planting skills.

His enthusiasm for the program has been contagious, especially during any given holiday season, where Walter does as much work as he can with displays, crafts, potpourri, and the like to embrace the holiday through horticulture.

"He's always so excited about getting to work with all the different things we do, especially during those holidays," Jackie said. "It's still cold outside and he comes in ready for spring and asking when we can start outside. It gets me excited."

Wayne Johnson, Horticulture Manager, said the spring season should give Walter even more opportunity to develop new skills. The annual Plant Sale is one of the biggest events for the program, having sold over 2,150 plants in 2025 and looking to do even more this year.

Wayne said the sale will give Walter an opportunity to create big displays and gain some experience in customer service by interacting with customers and learning how to process orders.

Walter's story is a reminder of what's possible when the right opportunity meets the right support.

Programs like horticulture don't just teach vocational skills – they unlock confidence, purpose, and pride. With every plant grown and every display created, participants like Walter are building brighter, more independent futures.

UPCOMING EVENTS

63RD ANNUAL LITTLE CITY INVITATIONAL

Monday, June 22, 2026

Twin Orchard Country Club | Long Grove, IL

Honoring Alex Gianaras with the Morrie Kellman Humanitarian Award

Join us for one of the signature charity events of the summer, the Little City Invitational! Come out for a day of golf while helping Little City raise much-needed awareness and funds for children and adults with disabilities!

Register or sponsor at LittleCity.org/LCI

7TH ANNUAL HERO WALK

Saturday, September 26, 2026

Little City Campus | Palatine, IL

Walk with the heroes of Little City at our annual family and community event to end the summer – the 7th Annual Hero Walk, this year on Little City's Campus!

Rally your friends and start taking big steps towards more opportunities for people with disabilities.

Start fundraising now at LittleCity.org/HeroWalk



SHOP THE ANNUAL PLANT SALE & SAY 'HI!' TO WALTER

May 1 - June 27, 2026

1740 W. Algonquin Rd. Palatine, IL
The Dorothy Rose Horticulture Center

HOURS:

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

Help Walter and so many other participants grow and brighten your day by shopping our Plant Sale!

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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 December 1, 2025 – March 15, 2026.

Bloomington Township • Elk Grove Township • Hanover Township • Illinois Department of Children and Family Services • Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity • Illinois Department of Human Services • Palatine Township • Rotary Club of Palatine Foundation • Township of Schaumburg • Village of Schaumburg • Wheeling Township

HELPING HANDS: Little City extends its appreciation to the following businesses and corporations for their recent volunteer work with us since December 2025.

- Motorola
- Perdoceo
- Zurich
- IKEA
- Gallagher
- Omron
- Wintrust
- Schaumburg Boomers
- NHS Students
- Vistex