

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

FALL 2026

Changing what's
possible for people
with disabilities!

INSIDE:

Deb's journey to the
Summer Games



Little City, **Big Life.**



A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Dear Friends, Families & Donors,

What a wonderful summer we enjoyed at Little City! Thanks to your generosity and ongoing support, the people we serve continue to thrive and live full lives.

We recently updated our mission statement to: **Building people up with the skills, voice, and confidence to navigate intellectual and developmental disabilities, behavioral health, and life.** This reflects the impact YOU make as a Little City supporter and the work your partnership makes possible every day.

This summer, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of our merger with **Countryside** and had the thrill of opening the **Bell Family Arts Center**, bringing our mission to life with daily opportunities for learning experiences, creative expression, and social engagement.

I hope you will join us for the 7th annual **Hero Walk** on Saturday, September 26, held at our Palatine campus. It will be a special day celebrating the people we serve, their families, our community, and our staff. Our

reimagined Casino Night, **Against All Odds**, will be held on Thursday, October 22, at Greenhouse Loft in Chicago. Mark your calendars!

Looking ahead, the giving season is almost here! We are eager to keep you connected to the impact of your support, whether you attend an event, share our story, or make a gift that will be matched dollar-for-dollar. Your engagement strengthens our community and expands what's possible for the people we serve. Thank you for your ongoing support for 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 March 1, 2026 – June 30, 2026.

Barrington Area Community Foundation • Barrington Township • Bloomingdale Township Mental Health Board • Charles and M.R. Shapiro Foundation, Inc. • DuPage Foundation • Elk Grove Township • Hanover Township Mental Health Board • Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity • Illinois Department of Human Services • Jackson National Life Insurance • Palatine Township • The RJN Foundation, Inc. • Schaumburg Township Mental Health Board • Wayne Township Mental Health Board • Wheeling Township Mental Health Board

HELPING HANDS: A special thank you to these businesses and corporations for their recent volunteer work since April 2026.

- EY
- MMA
- Perdoceo
- Zurich
- Knipex
- Omron
- Pleasant Hill Elementary



DEB'S JOURNEY: FROM THE SIDELINES TO THE SUMMER GAMES

Deb was struggling to get into the pool.

It was her first competitive race, and the pool had no stairs — only a ladder. As Little City coach Katlyn Schute watched Deb struggle for nearly 10 minutes to get into the water, **she wondered if her swimmer's journey to competitive sports would end before it ever started.**

"I was so worried she was going to feel embarrassed or that she was a bother and just say it wasn't worth it," Katlyn said. "But she never gave up. I always tell her I've seen her do hard things and know she can do it, and I just feel honored she trusts me in those moments and pushes through."

Deb went on to become one of the biggest success stories of Little City's Special Olympics season, going from never competing in a sport to qualifying for the state Summer Games as a swimmer.

Her journey began with small steps — trying a recreational bowling class and attending open swim during the day program. Those experiences gave her the confidence to take on a new challenge and join Special Olympics.

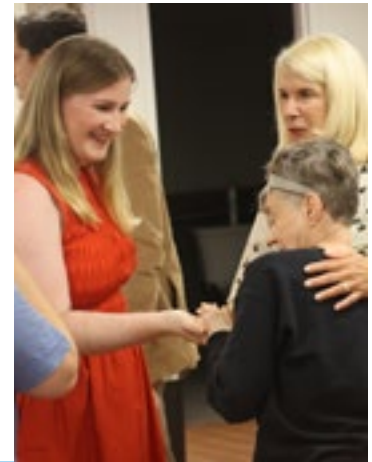
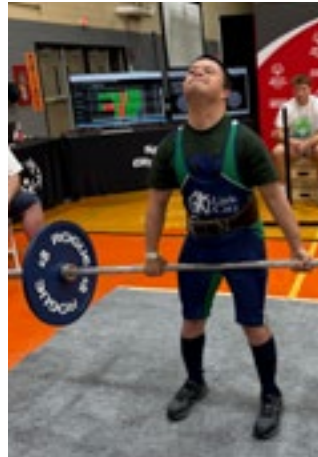
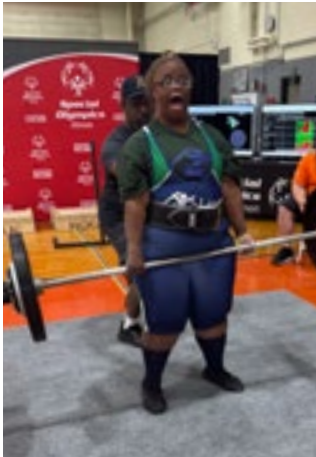
Katlyn watched Deb transform from struggling in her early swim races to competing at the state level. Even more inspiring, Deb kept pushing herself, signing up for track and bocce ball while continuing to step outside her comfort zone.

"I'm just so proud to see her confidence grow and all the effort she puts in. I can't wait to see what she does next," Katlyn said.

- ▶ **This is what your donation is doing to build up people like Deb** — providing them with the support and accessible resources they need to overcome their challenges, build their skills, and truly explore their unique identity.

A SUMMER OF CONNECTION, GROWTH, AND CHANGING WHAT'S POSSIBLE!

Nearly 20 athletes won more than a dozen medals during the **2026 Special Olympics Summer Games** in Bloomington. Athletes competed in track, golf, softball, powerlifting, and more as they represented Little City!



Little City officially opened the new **Bell Family Arts Center** thanks to incredible support from Julie Bell, IKEA and Middleby. The reimagined center gives participants new opportunities to explore painting, digital art, and textile art while also building vocational skills.

Learn more about the new center at www.littlecity.org/art



Little City celebrated **10 years of the Countryside Center** after the milestone merger in 2016. Friends and family celebrated what has become a foundational program at Little City that offers everything from community-based employment programs to specialized autism services.

ADAM IS FINDING NEW WAYS TO CONNECT

Screen addiction can be difficult for any young person to overcome, especially those with developmental disabilities. When Adam first arrived at Little City's Center for Education, he spent nearly six and a half hours each day on his tablet at his former school.

Breaking that dependency was a significant challenge. Adam would often run away, become aggressive, grab other students' devices, or attempt to eat inedible objects.



"We tried having him work toward time on his device for the first month or two, but it did not work at all," said Nicole Ruiz, Board Certified Behavior Analyst at the school. "We decided to remove it completely and we started to see a change."

Without the tablet, Adam began discovering new activities and ways to engage with those around him. One of his favorite activities has been music therapy, where he enjoys participating with others and exploring instruments like strumming guitars.

"We're excited for another school year with Adam," Nicole said. "He has already improved so much and now it's about building his attention span and figuring out his behavioral motivators. He has very fleeting motivators right now. What works one day might not work the next, so we want to build some consistency."

Adam's journey shows the power of your support and how you are helping him find new ways to connect.



LITTLE CITY'S HARVEST STAND IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS THROUGH OCTOBER

Come out and support our participants and their fresh produce!

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

LITTLE CITY HORTICULTURE CENTER
1740 W. ALGONQUIN RD, PALATINE



UPCOMING EVENTS



7TH ANNUAL HERO WALK!

Saturday, September 26, 2026
Little City Campus | Palatine, IL

Walk with the heroes of Little City at our annual community event to end the summer – the **7th Annual Hero Walk**. Presented by Sean & Megan Moran, this year's event takes place on Little City's Campus! Rally your friends and start taking big steps towards more opportunities for people with disabilities.

Start fundraising now at
www.LittleCity.org/HeroWalk

SAVE THE DATE: 2027 ANNUAL DINNER GALA

Saturday, April 17, 2027
Ritz-Carlton | Chicago, IL



AGAINST ALL ODDS: A UNIQUE CASINO & CULINARY EXPERIENCE

Thursday, October 22, 2026
Greenhouse Loft | Chicago, IL

Our casino night has been reimagined – grab your tickets today for **Against All Odds: A Unique Casino & Culinary Experience!** Join us at this one-of-a-kind event featuring the hottest restaurants in Chicago, drinks all night long, and signature activation stations. All while supporting this vital mission!

Get your tickets today or consider sponsoring the big night: www.LittleCity.org/Casino

SAVE THE DATE: 64TH ANNUAL LITTLE CITY INVITATIONAL

Monday, June 21, 2027
Twin Orchard Country Club | Long Grove, IL