

FALL 2024

inspirations



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ABILITIES**

Creating Opportunities.
Changing Lives.

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Cover: Rick Malles shows off his catch
of the day during a recent fishing trip.

OUR MISSION

As a premier service provider, we passionately advocate on behalf of individuals with disabilities by creating opportunities for them to succeed, to achieve, to grow, and to be happy.





Embracing Inclusion

In our diverse society, every individual brings unique strengths and perspectives. Among us are individuals with intellectual disabilities, whose contributions enrich communities in profound ways. As stakeholders, it's our responsibility to recognize and celebrate the capabilities of these remarkable individuals, understanding that their involvement is essential for a truly inclusive society.

People with intellectual disabilities possess a wealth of talent and creativity. When given the opportunity and support, they excel not just in their

personal pursuits, but also in collaborative environments, enhancing team dynamics and fostering a culture of inclusivity.

Unfortunately, misconceptions about intellectual disabilities often lead to stigmas and barriers that prevent meaningful participation. It's crucial for stakeholders—educators, employers, community leaders, and policymakers—to challenge these stereotypes and create an environment where everyone can thrive. This involves advocating for inclusive practices in education and employment, ensuring that individuals with disabilities have access to resources that allow them to develop their skills and pursue their passions.

Consider the story of Rick, a participant and an artist who expresses his art through painting landscapes. Most people wouldn't look at Rick and think of him as a painter; however, his work has not only garnered acclaim within the Empowering Abilities family but has also opened doors for dialogue about inclusion in the arts. Rick's story exemplifies how embracing diversity can lead to innovation and inspiration. By providing platforms for individuals like him, we not only empower them but also enrich our own lives.

As stakeholders, we have the power to implement changes that promote inclusion. This could mean offering training for employers on inclusive hiring practices, or simply fostering environments where individuals feel valued and supported. It is time to embrace the idea that a society that includes everyone is a society that thrives. Let us commit to understanding and celebrating the capabilities of individuals with intellectual disabilities. By doing so, we not only enhance our communities but also pave the way for a future where everyone has the opportunity to succeed, to achieve, to grow and to be happy.

Together, we can build a more inclusive society that harnesses the full potential of all its members; especially those like Rick.



Jeff Ashcraft

Empowering Abilities President/CEO





A Quarterly Snapshot: Endeavor Living

Providing support to participants to help them live in and be part of their own community is the purpose of the Endeavor Living program. Staff help people go to stores, restaurants, sporting events, and entertainment venues. Within the participants' homes, staff help them learn skills like budgeting, cleaning, doing laundry, and getting along with roommates. Participants are encouraged to explore the community in which they live, but also go beyond their own home, their own state, or even their own country, as evidenced by a recent trip that several folks took to London.

"It was awesome!" said Mike Carnes after returning from his ten-day adventure to the home of Big Ben and royal palaces. Mike was part of a small group of Endeavor Living participants who saved, budgeted, and planned for their trip of a lifetime. Organized by a group who focuses on providing trips for people with special needs, the excursion allowed participants to experience this adventure. "I liked the castles the best," said Rick Malles, another London traveler. Endeavor Living staff are exposing participants to other opportunities to explore their world, with trips to places like Mall of America, Niagara Falls, and Washington D.C.

"We want to help people live their best life, and for some people, that means experiencing travel," said Natalie Wenzel, Endeavor Living Program Director. Wenzel supervises the program that supports 71 participants living at 19 sites of apartments or houses.

Getting out to explore the community, Karen Frutiger (left) and Marla Anderson enjoy a trip to Annawan, Illinois.

Natalie Wenzel, Endeavor Living Program Director



Performance objectives for Daily Discovery during the period July 1 to September 30, 2024:

Total number of persons served: **71**

Rated on a 4-point scale, performance objectives were achieved at the following levels:

- Individuals were offered access to community activities: **4**
- Participants increased their independence: **3.7**
- Individuals achieved at least one goal: **4**
- Participants were made aware of other service options: **4**
- Participants were provided choices: **3.7**
- Individuals were satisfied with the amount of access to community activities: **3.7**
- Participants' overall satisfaction: **3.8**
- Individuals received services in the least restrictive setting: **4**

Oohs and Aahs Fill the Halls

As Open House guests were guided through the Hickory Grove Road building, the exclamations of approval were heard everywhere. "This is so cool." "The participants must love it." "Did they paint all this on the walls?" Those were some of the most common questions and comments during the open house when the newly redesigned spaces were unveiled to the public. The tour guides responded with, "Yes, it is cool", "Yes, the participants love it", and "No, it isn't paint, it's vinyl."

From the time they stepped into the first corridor to view the new Hall of Fame, through each of the unique classrooms, and as they ended their tour in the jungle-themed multipurpose room, guests could not get over how fun, engaging, and thoroughly inspiring the new spaces are. Some favored the whimsical Mother Ship room with flying saucers on the ceiling, while others liked the dark and slightly mysterious Wizard Room the best.

Regardless of which space was their favorite, the consensus was clear. This redesign is something special and will be appreciated and enjoyed by participants and staff for years to come. When the idea was hatched, it was with the understanding that many participants will attend services for years. Unlike a school where students move through different grades and eventually leave a building, participants may attend services in the same space for a long time. That space needs to be somewhere they look forward to experiencing every day.

LEFT: *Sheriman Keltner sits among the Egyptians in his newly decorated room.*

RIGHT: *Activities just seem more fun in engaging surroundings that include a checkerboard floor and PacMan walls, like in the newly designed Game Room.*



One more question that was often asked during the open house was, "Are there plans to do this same thing at the Brady Street building?" The answer to that question is "Yes!" Empowering Abilities President/CEO Jeff Ashcraft said, "With the overwhelmingly positive feedback we've received from this project, we must do something at the Brady Street building. The participants in that program deserve it too."

Many generous donors helped make the project come to life. Now, we're asking for you to consider bringing that same joy to those at the Brady Street building. Help get this project off the ground by sending a check to Empowering Abilities, 3402 Hickory Grove Road, Davenport, IA 52806 or go to the website, www.empoweringabilities.org and make an online donation.

If you missed the open house and would like to utter some oohs and aahs of your own, just call to make arrangements and see how your support and the support of others has made a difference in the lives of many.

Scavenger Hunt Year 2: Another Great Success

Nearly 150 people on 27 teams raced around town for three hours trying to finish as many tasks as possible on the list of 50, in an attempt to win prizes at the 2nd Annual Scavenger Hunt fundraiser. Only two teams were able to snag the first and second place prizes, but everyone snagged some fun before they returned to the starting spot to partake in food, beverages, and the telling of scavenger hunt escapades.

A huge thank you goes to everyone who showed up and participated with enthusiasm and a friendly competitive spirit, and a special thank you goes to the many generous sponsors listed below for supporting this fun community event.



Empowering Abilities



Top: The Mighty Misfits capture a photo of some of their team members on a coin operated ride before racing off to complete the next task. The Mighty Misfits finished in first place.

Bottom: The Finding Fathers snap a photo at a required stop, Quad City Bank & Trust, before brainstorming which task to complete next. The Finding Fathers finished in second place.

Thank You to Our Sponsors



Endowment Fund Saves the Day

When asked, "How are you doing today?", Matt Crane will likely respond with, "The usual." However, Matt's 'usual' is not like most people's 'usual'. What sets Matt apart is an amazing gift and ability to recall dates that is nothing short of extraordinary. Some of those dates are personal milestones, like when he started working in the shelter workshop (October 24, 1983) or the day he moved into a group home (December 8, 1986). Other dates are much less personal, but can be recalled easily, nonetheless.

Matt also has an interesting way to occupy his mind when counting parts for his Enterprise job. To keep himself motivated, he visualizes covers of Life magazines that his parents collected or pages of his family photo albums.

When asked about these extraordinary abilities, Matt explains that it's because he has autism, which he describes as "... a lifelong brain disorder that impairs the way sensory stimulation is assimilated and causes me to have irregularities in learning."



If you are interested in contributing to the Empowering Abilities endowment fund, you can send a check to 3402 Hickory Grove Road, Davenport, IA 52806 or visit the website www.empoweringabilities.org to make an online donation.

Information on other ways to give is also available on the website or contact the development office at 563-391-4834.

Because Matt experiences autism and does not have an intellectual disability diagnosis, he does not meet the eligibility criteria for the state's waiver services; therefore, the county has funded his services for years. Unfortunately, that's about to end. With some upcoming changes, Matt will lose his funding for the support he receives to live in a home with his roommates. He's also not alone. Several other Empowering Abilities participants who have other diagnoses not covered under the waiver will also lose their funding.

Empowering Abilities has a commitment to these folks. People like Matt who have received services for 41 years will not be told, "Sorry, we can't serve you anymore." Instead, funds from the long-established Endowment Fund will be used to ensure they can continue to receive the services they and their families have come to rely on for years. The board of directors unanimously supported using proceeds from the endowment fund for this purpose. "There is no better use of these funds than to directly impact participants in this significant way," said Jeff Hassel, board of directors' chair.

Matt Crane sweeps up the production area after a day's work in Enterprise.

Our Thanks Goes To



Natalie Tigges, Jordon Herkelman and Nick Gerber get some exercise on the new walking path.



(From left) BJ Fifer, Nate Sanders, and Dwayne Coppage enjoy a break from fair food, rides, farm animals, and the heat at this year's Mississippi Valley Fair.



Tommy's Car Wash designated the month of July to support Empowering Abilities by raising funds through car washes at their Brady Street location. The Mary Iva Gittens Knouse Charitable Trust also granted funds during this period. Both donations, along with the support of many individual donors, provided funds to complete a new walking/bike path in the back of the Hickory Grove Road building.

Special Needs Day at the Mississippi Valley Fair is a day that everyone eagerly awaits. KLJB/WHBF shared their booth space so Empowering Abilities could pass out swag and spread the word.



Pilot Club ladies donated arts and craft supplies to the Residential Center.

A big thanks to the Pilot Club for donating supplies, so participants could use their creativity to construct some fun items.



The Boosters gather around to enjoy their own lunch after the rush of staff and participants.

The Boosters served up a delicious lunch to the staff and participants in the Daily Discovery program. This annual lunch is anticipated and appreciated by everyone.



Austin Schiffke sits among sharks and coral in the Reef Room at Daily Discovery West.

A special thank you goes to the nearly 200 people who attended the Hickory Grove Open House. Attendees were treated to tours, information, and a look at the newly designed spaces throughout the building.

31st Annual Booster Organization/Bob Ott Memorial Nut and Candy Sale!

The 31st Annual Booster Organization/Bob Ott Memorial Nut and Candy Sale is in progress. All the favorite items are back, and last year's prices are back too! Supplies are limited, so get orders in soon.

To order: contact Empowering Abilities at 563-391-4834 or email lexikeppy@empoweringabilities.org. Order forms are also available at www.empoweringabilities.org. You may also visit one of the following outlets:

- Simplicity Salon**, 2225 W 53rd St., Davenport
- Evergreen Artworks**, 3280 Middle Road, Bettendorf
- Dittmer's Service**, 1356 W. Locust St., Davenport
- Hair DeVine**, 1153 E. Kimberly Rd., Davenport
- K&K True Value Hardware**, 1818 Grant St., Bettendorf
- Main at Locust Pharmacy**, 129 W. Locust St., Davenport
- North Scott Family Hair**, 5 Lincoln Avenue, Eldridge
- Northwest Chiropractic Center**, 1707 Washington St., Davenport
- On the Avenue Salon**, 2484 53rd Ave., Bettendorf
- The Cut Above**, 5263 Jersey Ridge Rd., Davenport
- The Gentry Shop**, 5515 Utica Ridge Road, Davenport

	Price	Quantity	TOTAL
Whole Pecans	\$15.00		
Mixed Nuts	\$13.00		
Cashews	\$13.00		
English Walnuts	\$12.00		
Black Walnuts	\$16.00		
Roasted Almonds	\$12.00		
Sweet & Salty Trail Mix	\$10.00		
Spicy Party Mix	\$10.00		
Malted Milk Balls	\$10.00		
Chocolate Bridge Mix	\$11.00		
Chocolate Covered Cashews	\$13.00		
Gummi Bears	\$9.00		
Dark Chocolate Almonds	\$12.00		
	Total		

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Save the Date!

HANDS Auxiliary "Beat the January Blues" Trivia Night

Friday, January 17, 2025

**Hickory Creek Event Center
3504 Hickory Grove Road,
Davenport, IA 52806**

Doors open at 6 pm. Trivia starts at 7 pm.

*Full bar available for drinks. Bring your own snacks.
50/50 and raffle basket tickets available for purchase.*

*To register for a table, please call Lexi Keppy at
563-391-4834 or email lexikeppy@empoweringabilities.org.*

