

SUMMER 2024

inspiration



EMPOWERING
ABILITIES

Creating Opportunities.
Changing Lives.

THE PEOPLE POWERING OUR PROGRESS

MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Cover: Channeling her inner child, Mariah Cooke takes a turn on the curly slide at the Daily Discovery picnic.

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.



David Levsen (left) and Doug Case hang out during a break from their busy Daily Discovery schedule.



We All Have Our Reasons

At every one of our Board of Directors meetings, we start with something we call a “Mission Moment.” Before taking care of the agency’s business and housekeeping items, we take an opportunity for board and staff members alike to remember and re-center on the organization’s ultimate purpose – 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.

We have demonstrated Mission Moments in a variety of ways over the last 10 years, and we have even begun to share them every Monday in our staff Leadership meetings, as well as other areas of the organization. Sometimes we have produced videos that highlight a recent program, activity or individual. At other times, we have invited participants to a meeting to share in their successes. We can easily take for granted these moments that illustrate the organization’s mission, so whenever possible, we try to find those moments of grace that define who we are and why we are here.

At our June Board meeting, one of our officers shared why he has chosen to serve the agency as a volunteer, as a donor, and as a cheerleader. He reminisced about the neighborhood where he grew up in the 1970s, a very wholesome slice of Americana right here in Davenport. His gang of friends rode their bikes every day and played baseball throughout the summer. In the colder months they tossed a football and went sled-ding when it snowed. But this neighborhood also had something unique. One of their crew was a young man named, Doug, who did most everything all the other kids did, but Doug also was someone who had both intellectual and physical challenges. The board member shared that he spent hours and hours with Doug, playing, watching TV, and talking about things that only neighborhood kids would understand. For him, Doug had no disabilities. He was just one of “the guys”, normal in most every way, and they were the best of friends.

More than 50 years later this story was shared at a Board meeting with such genuine heart and clarity of purpose, that everyone in that meeting could clearly understand his reason for serving. And the best part of the story is that Doug is still a participant in several services here at Empowering Abilities, and even better is that they remain friends to this day.

Every person I have ever met who is involved with our organization has a unique reason for supporting what we do every day. For many of us, we have had family members who were born with special needs and may have received services. For others, they found a sense of purpose in being called to work in this field and have made it the capstone of their career. And for the luckiest of all, it is that connection to our childhood and those golden summer days playing with our best friends – especially those named Doug.

Jeff Ashcraft

Empowering Abilities President/CEO





(From Left) MaryBeth Hawley, Hannah O'Brien, and Samantha Harper are mesmerized by a magician's sleight of hand during Daily Discovery activities in the UFO Room at the west campus.

A Quarterly Snapshot: Daily Discovery

Summer in the Daily Discovery program is all about relaxing, hanging out with friends, firing up the grill, and enjoying a cold one (water of course). The east and west Daily Discovery campuses came together for the second annual West Lake picnic recently to celebrate all things summer. Over 120 participants from Daily Discovery East on Brady Street and Daily Discovery West on Hickory Grove Road had an enjoyable day of food, friends, and fun. Hot dogs were thrown on the grill while bean bags were thrown through holes. The high temperatures didn't stand a chance against everyone's high spirits.

With approximately 100 participants at each location and many staff to assist, there is never a shortage of ideas for interesting and engaging activities. From visiting mascots to visiting artists and from talent competitions to free throw contests, the range of activities matches the range of participants' interests.

Several additions to the grounds of the buildings have helped improve accessibility for everyone to further enjoy all these activities. Thanks to the generosity of many who helped with the funding of these projects, participants at both locations can enjoy multipurpose courts that accommodate anyone who wants to bounce a ball, shoot baskets, play pickleball, or even learn how to putt.

Activities are not always just fun and games though. Daily Discovery participants are also volunteering to help out in their community. They have sorted items at Tiffany's Treasures and delivered homemade dog treats and toys to Kings Harvest Pet Rescue Shelter.

Exploring the community is an emphasis for Daily Discovery. Trips to parks, museums, theaters, stores, and restaurants are a frequent occurrence. At the Special Kneads Bakery, participants learned about the bakery's operations and enjoyed a



Daily Discovery Mentors Nazhi Anderson (left) and Tim Liagre flank Jesse Fuller while celebrating National Picnic Day at West Lake Park.

delicious lunch. The River Action Scavenger Hunt had groups touring a variety of Quad City sites and learning some new facts about their community.

Summer is an especially busy time for Daily Discovery folks, as they use the good weather to get out and about. But every season is a time for learning, exploring, and for daily discovering.

Performance objectives for Daily Discovery during the period April 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024:

Total number of persons served: **East (102), West (125)**
Number of intakes: **East (2), West (2)**

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

Offered access to community activities - **East (3.6), West (4)**

Increased independence - **East (3.6), West (3.7)**

Achieved at least one goal - **East (3.2), West (3.9)**

Ensured participants are aware of other service options - **East (3.6), West (4)**

Ensured choices are provided - **East (3.4), West (3.9)**

Satisfied with the amount of access to community activities - **East (3.7), West (3.8)**

Overall satisfaction - **East (3.6), West (3.9)**

HANDS Golf Outing 2024: Another Great Year

The HANDS Golf Outing 2024 was a fantastic day filled with fun, friendly competition, and community spirit. Held at the beautiful Crow Valley Golf Club, golfers enjoyed perfect weather, a challenging course, and chances to win prizes for lowest scores, longest drive and closest to the pin.

The funds raised during the HANDS Golf Outing will support important projects at Empowering Abilities that would not otherwise be possible. These projects enhance the lives of the participants and help them lead their best life.

Thank you to everyone who participated, sponsored, and volunteered. Your support makes all the difference.

Congratulations to these event winners:

- 1st Flight: Paul Rouse, Jamie Crawford, Dyland Steil, Joe Hanlin
- 2nd Flight: Janelle Carter, John Nagle, Trish Townsend, Paul Schmidt
- 3rd Flight: Steve Arp, Gene Dobek, Glen Roebuck, Gerry Whyte
- Closest to the pin #3: Joe Hanlin
- Closest to the pin #5: Bob Noth
- Closest to the pin #9: Jamie Crawford
- Closest to the pin #11: Annie Stopulos
- Longest putt for men #16: Gary Prior
- Longest putt for women #16: Janelle Carter
- Closest to the pin #17: Trish Townsend

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RBar owners and golf outing sponsors Skip and Derek Fisher donated a bottle of wine for a golf outing door prize. Decker Ploehn, Empowering Abilities board member Greg Kautz, and Crow Valley staff Dave Arnago join Skip Fisher in celebration of a raffle win.

Join the Hunt

August 24, 2024

Doors open at 2 p.m. for check-in/questions, hunt from 3 to 6 p.m., and after-hunt festivities from 6 to 7 p.m.

The event will start and end at Empowering Abilities, Hickory Grove facility. 3402 Hickory Grove Road, Davenport, IA 52806.

Cost: \$30 per person. Up to 6 people per team (everyone must fit safely into one vehicle).

Registration includes a T-shirt (registration must be received by August 9th to guarantee a t-shirt), food, beverages, a chance to win door prizes, a chance at the first or second-place prizes, and of course, lots of fun! Check-in early to avoid a delay in your team's start. Rules will be explained 15 minutes before the event starts.

This event is a task-oriented Scavenger Hunt. On the day of the event, teams are given a list of tasks to complete. Each task is worth a specific number of points, so some will be worth more than others. Some tasks are required to be eligible for prizes (these are some of our generous sponsors' stops).



Register at: <https://p2p.onecause.com/hunt24> or use the QR Code. For questions, contact Lexi Keppy at 563-391-4834 or lexikeppy@empoweringabilities.org.



Performing one of last year's Scavenger Hunt tasks, Brad Gill hangs on monkey bars.

Empowering Abilities



Thank You to Our Early Sponsors



Donor Dollars at Work

Thanks in part to the generosity of donors who made gifts to this project, the courtyard at the heart of the Residential Center is set to undergo a significant transformation, marking the beginning of a new chapter for this communal space. The planned revamp promises to enhance the aesthetic appeal and improve the area’s functionality, making it a vibrant and inclusive environment for all residents.

One of the most striking changes will be the introduction of new tile and turf flooring, designed to create a visually appealing, weather resistant, accessible surface that will meet the needs of the residents. The easy-to-care-for surface will also be a breeze to maintain, which will make the space usable for many years to come without the worry of deterioration.

The revamp also includes the installation of two covered eating areas, convenient wheelchair-accessible tables, engaging new sensory stations,



Cathy Skibbe peers out into the courtyard, anxious to see the transformation begin and eager to enjoy the space once again.

and an automatic door opener, all designed to ensure the residents, regardless of mobility, can comfortably and safely enjoy meals and activities outdoors. A storage shed will house equipment and supplies for recreational activities, ensuring they are well-organized and easily accessible.

Currently, the underutilized area is an uninviting environment that was always difficult to maintain, with a floor that was uneven and unsafe to navigate. The manual door and step leading to the courtyard made it impossible for residents to access it. By enhancing the courtyard, a pleasant outdoor space will be a welcome addition for residents to enjoy in their home.

As the renovation progresses, excitement is building among residents and staff alike. The transformed courtyard is set to become a favorite gathering space at the Residential Center, offering a vibrant, inclusive, and engaging space for all to enjoy.

Thanks to the support of many generous donations, construction at the Residential Center for the new courtyard has started.



Barb Schulz and Jamie Gerten keep a close eye on the cars they walk behind during their morning exercise routine.

Paving the Way to a Better Solution

Now that summer is finally here, imagine this.... you’re walking in the morning before it gets too hot; you’re soaking up the sun’s natural source of vitamin D; you’re feeling good about your efforts, getting some exercise and reducing your stress.

Then, bam! You’re jolted back with the honk of a horn. A car is trying to park and you’re right in their path, because you’re walking in a parking lot. In an effort to get out of the way, you slip on some loose gravel and barely save yourself from falling. An otherwise nice walk has just taken a turn. This scenario recently played out in the parking lot of our Hickory Grove Road building. The joy of walking that the participants were experiencing was suddenly overshadowed by an unsafe situation.

After this, some folks suggested walking in the grassy area behind the building, but that excluded people using wheelchairs or otherwise couldn’t walk on the grass due to the uneven ground.

But the good news is there is an answer to this problem: “Paving the way to a better solution”. Plans are underway to install a dedicated walking path that weaves through the open grass area in the back of the Hickory Grove Road building and it will be accessible to everyone. The multi-purpose court and gazebo are available for all, and now this new path will provide another safe haven from the dangers of the parking lot and surfaces unable to be traversed by those who are unsteady or use wheelchairs.

You can help get this paved pathway project started before the walking season is over for another year. To make a gift to this project, send a check to: Empowering Abilities, 3402 Hickory Grove Road, Davenport, IA 52806 or visit the website empoweringabilities.org to make an online donation.

Our Thanks Goes To



Booster members (from left) Crista Ashcraft, President Jody Mapes, Barb Schloemer, Kathy Gerber, and Linda Wescom helped serve a staff appreciation lunch at Hickory Grove Road.

The **Booster Organization** expressed their gratitude to all employees who support their friends and family through Empowering Abilities programs. The Boosters hosted a staff appreciation lunch for those staff who could attend and provided pizza gift certificates to the rest of the staff. The Boosters also made their annual year-end donation to Empowering Abilities. In addition to sponsoring various activities for participants throughout the year, and supporting the golf outing, they contribute funds for special projects. This year's donation will be used to provide new technology equipment for the Daily Discovery program.

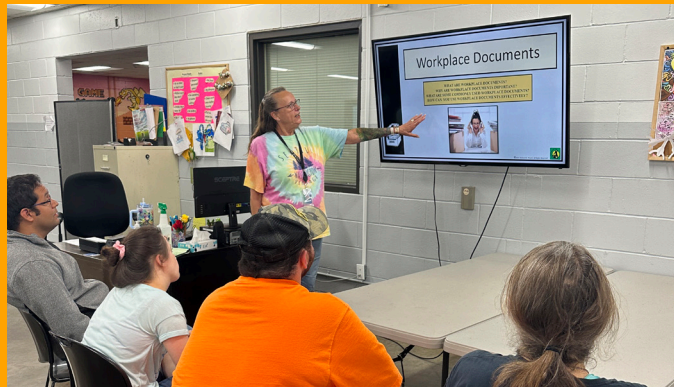
The **Quad City Housing Council** helped secure funds from the Scott County Regional Authority. These funds are being used to update bathrooms in the group homes to improve safety and functionality.

The **Scott County Regional Authority** has generously granted funds to Empowering Abilities for the acquisition of new technology equipment. This support enables participants to benefit from the latest technological advancements.



Participants from Empowering Abilities and event runners did a break-out to kick off the Cities Spring Classic events.

The **Cities Spring Classic 5K** was a reinvented race with a fun new twist. **Race Director Brian Doerrfeld** put on the Cities Spring Classic race adding a kids' race and adaptive athletes' race. Proceeds from this event were donated to Empowering Abilities and will be used to help construct a new, safe walking path for the participants behind the Hickory Grove Road building.



Prevocational Supervisor Jayna Buchholz gives instructions to participants who are learning how to obtain a job in the community.

The **Regional Development Authority** has also generously granted funds for new technology. Inclusive technology plays a vital role in fostering independence, improving communication, and enhancing the overall quality of programs for participants.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR IN KIND DONATION

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Ms. Sue Gall

Donations listed were received from April 1, 2024 to June 30, 2024. Every attempt is made to accurately recognize all gifts; however, if you spot an error or omission, please contact the development office at 563-391-4834. Thank you for your generosity.





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Hickory Grove Road facility,
3402 Hickory Grove Road,
Davenport, IA 52806

Thursday, September 12th
from 11 AM to 2 PM

*See the newly updated, vibrant, and
exciting environment. Tour the building
with new themed classrooms and a new
Hall of Fame. Lunch will be provided.*

See you there!

*Daily Discovery Mentor Steven Cargill
escaped from his carnival-themed room to
take a break with Michele Schaefer in the
jungle-themed multipurpose room.*

