



# Year in Review FY 2024

Elevating our commitment to provide premier quality services to the growing need of those experiencing developmental disabilities and autism





## Positioning to do More

The demand for the services Little Friends provides continues to grow. Whether for children or adults, we receive no less than 120 monthly referrals requesting help or support. While we try our best to provide guidance and direction when asked, the stark reality is that we can't help everyone who needs us. It is humbling and sometimes frustrating knowing the lack of resources compared to demand.

Seeing this, it has become our organizational challenge and focus to determine what we can do to expand the work and services we provide. Looking at this past year, our time and energy were spent positioning our different programs to grow and help more people through both investments in existing resources and expansion of new programs.

We share our organization's story and our work's impact in many ways. It starts with the over 360 full and part-time employees, as our story wouldn't be what it is without the incredible effort and compassion demonstrated by those who are part of our Little Friends team. I am so appreciative of what they do every day.

Little Friends also wouldn't be where we are without the generous support provided by the communities we serve. The support we received helps so many, and on behalf of the individuals we serve, their families, and our employees, thank you!

Please know that our plan is to help and support more families and individuals in the time to come.

*Mike*

Mike Briggs, Little Friends President & CEO

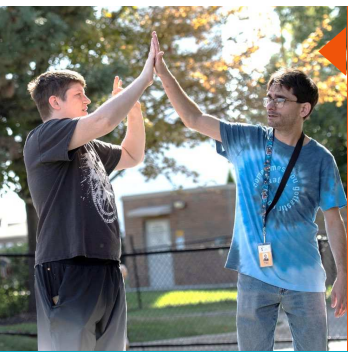


Little Friends mission is to **empower people** of all ages experiencing autism, intellectual and emotional disabilities, and their families **to live, learn, work, and thrive** in their communities.

## About Us

Little Friends suite of services extends from supporting a family through a young child's diagnosis and therapies to an adolescent in school, from a young adult's vocational training to an elderly resident's independent living.

**This continuum of care makes Little Friends a unique and lasting resource to the children, adults, and families we serve whenever they need us.** With a foundation based upon providing dignity and respect for those we serve, Little Friends strives to improve communication and life skills, develop independence and confidence, and provide a life of quality and meaning in a safe, healthy, and happy environment.



**100+**

Direct Support Professional Staff  
Working Across Little Friends  
Programs



**53**

Number of School Districts Served  
by Little Friends School Programs

**48**

Artists Welcomed to Include  
Studios, where the Artists Manage  
Studio Operations and Create  
Original Artwork



**1965**

Celebrating Almost 60 Years of  
Serving Those with Autism and  
Intellectual/Developmental  
Disabilities



**287,485**

Total Miles Traveled in Agency  
Vans Transporting Those We  
Serve to and from Activities in  
the Community



**200+**

Number of Parents, Educators and  
Professionals Receiving Training at  
Little Friends Center for Autism

# Those We Serve

Fiscal Year 2024

236

## Center for Autism

Children receiving therapies;  
professional and parents trained

166

## Educational Services

Students enrolled in Krejci  
Academy and Mansion High School  
during the 2023-24 school year

57

## Family Respite Services

Children and siblings attending  
weekly or monthly Respite sessions

141

## Community Day Services

Adults participating in our Community  
Day and Employment Services

110

## Residential Services

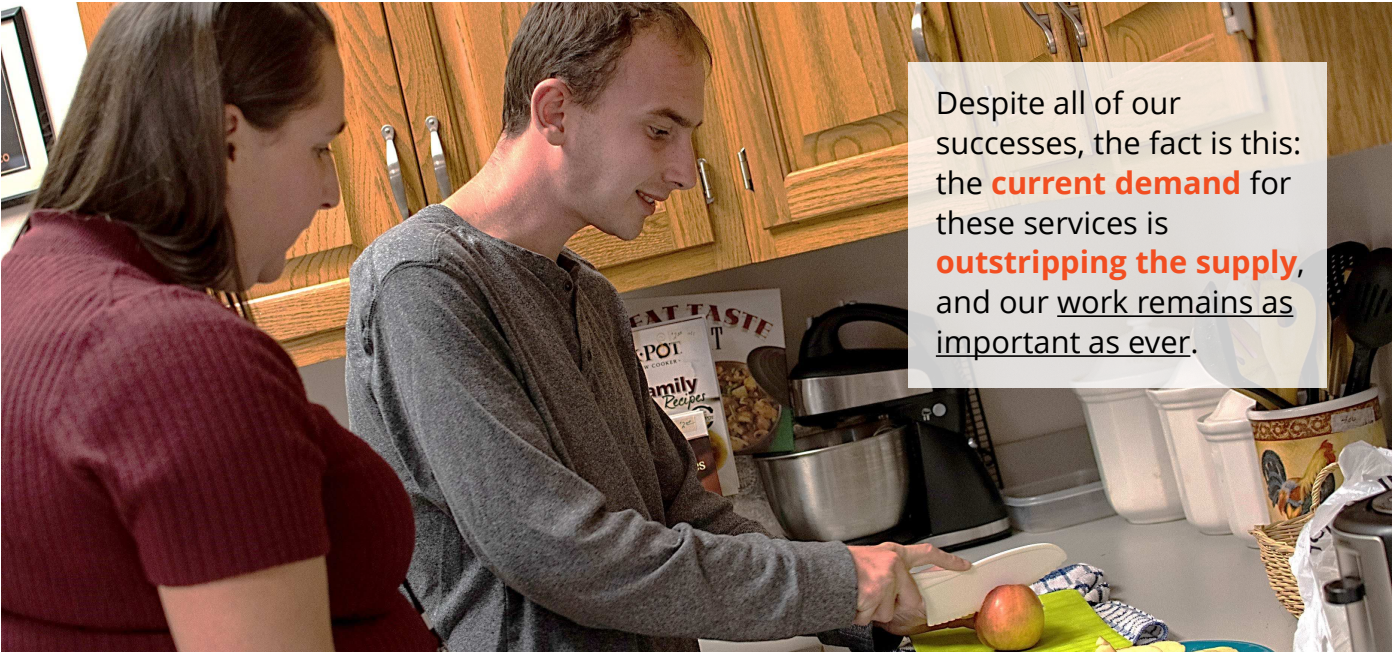
Number of individuals in community  
based living arrangements managed  
and/or owned by Little Friends



# What Sets Us Apart?

## Wide Range of Services

For almost six decades, Little Friends has been at the forefront of therapeutic, educational, and community services for those with autism and other developmental disabilities. The school we operate for students ages 5-22 has been nationally recognized for its excellence in special education. We provide high-quality, life-changing programs to adults with developmental disabilities through employment training, paid opportunities, social experiences, and housing.



Despite all of our successes, the fact is this: the **current demand** for these services is **outstripping the supply**, and our work remains as important as ever.



As we chart a course for Little Friends **to help more people, we are positioning to grow.** We are looking to increase our resources and expand our services.

## Charting the Course

**Through additional programming within our school curriculums to the added daily and life skills training at our community day services program, our staff looks to grow a more robust experience for those we serve.**

To support employee development, our organization offers continuing education opportunities as well as in-house training to equip staff for the unique needs of our population. Families are extensions of those we serve, and we continue to add resources and support to create a caregiving community.



# Increasing Need

## For Services



**44.1 million people in the US have some type of disability** - Including autism and other intellectual/developmental disabilities



**\$50 billion is spent on special education services in the US** - For millions of children ages 3-12 who qualify for individualized instruction and services to support learning in the classroom



**Autism affects approximately 75 million Americans** - Becoming one of the leading childhood development disorders in the United States, with 1 in 36 children in the US diagnosed



**Over 2 million adults in Illinois have a disability, only 50% of this population is in the workforce, with increased caregiving needs changing as this population ages** - There is an urgent need for long-term investments in programs and services



# Children's Services

## Positioning to do More



Purposeful growth of classroom sizes to increase student enrollment



Krejci Academy recognized as a NASET School of Excellence for five consecutive years



Tuition Assistance Program supporting teacher aides and paraprofessionals in earning their special education teaching degrees



Autism Friendly City initiative with the City of Warrenville, training first responders, districts, and staff



Doubled number of children served in our free Family Respite Services program







# Adult Services

## Positioning to do More



Successfully integrated adult programs into new larger and improved physical space



Implemented new community day activities programming totaling over 550 activities to encompass year-round engagement



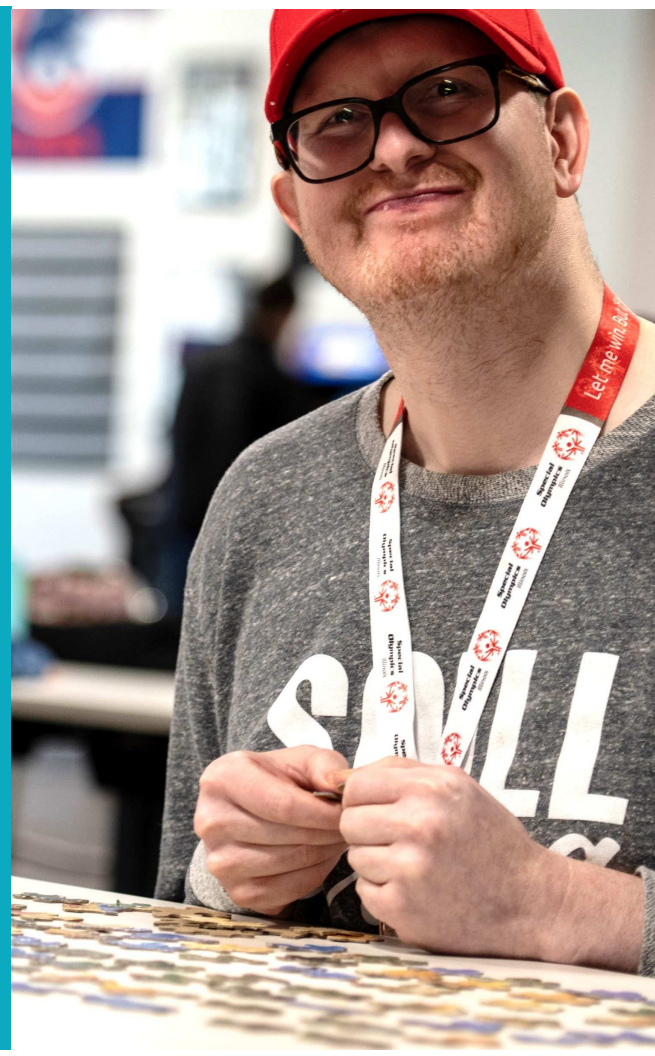
Opened new adult residential property and purchased second home to open FY2025



Expansion of employment services to young neurodiverse adults with Connecting Adults with Communities program

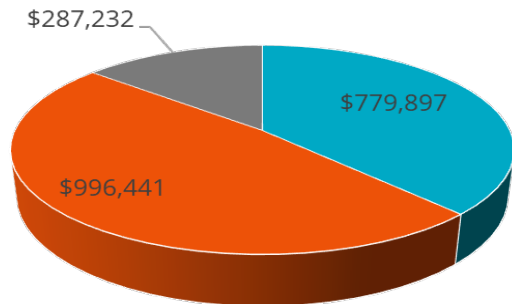


Addition of FUN Club providing social opportunities for young adults

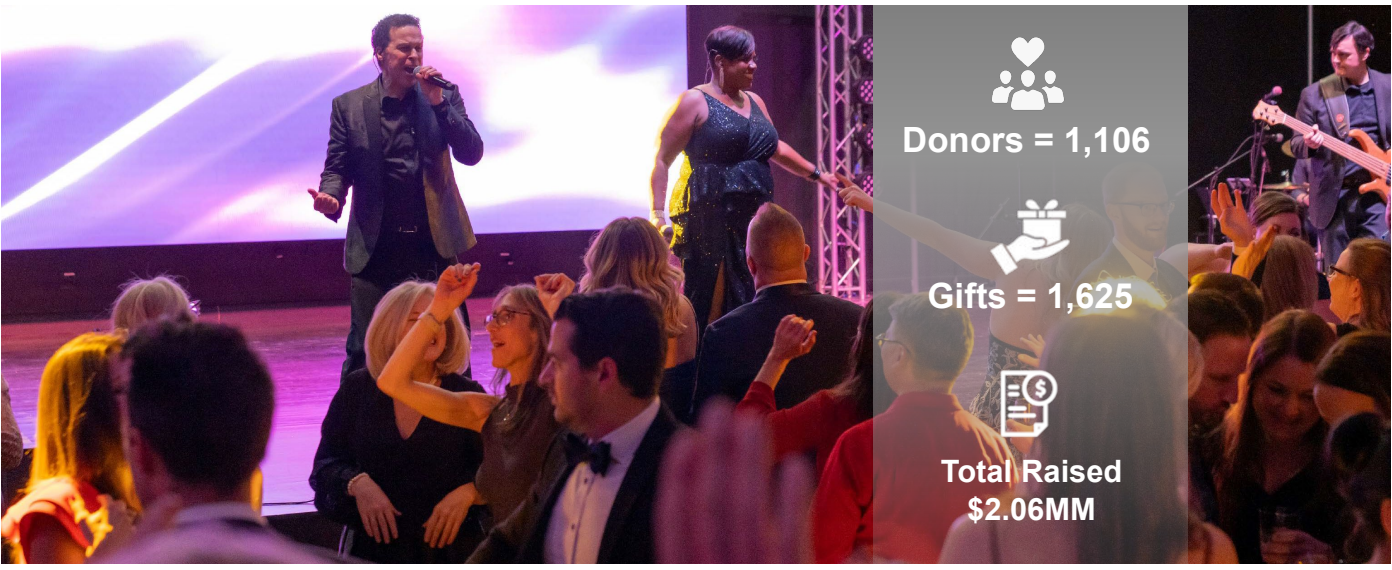


# Philanthropic Support

While the agency maintains a diverse funding portfolio totaling more than \$21 million, we must raise funds each year to help us cover all our expenses. We rely on your support to help us meet all our mission-related funding objectives, to which we are truly grateful. For every \$1 raised, we dedicate 92 cents towards our programs.



■ Events ■ General Contributions ■ Grants



Donors = 1,106



Gifts = 1,625



Total Raised  
\$2.06MM



## Board of Directors

Mike Briggs, President & CEO, Little Friends (non-voting)  
Thomas Connors, Chairman - Retired, Managing Director, Credit Suisse  
Ray Kinney, Vice Chairman - Partner, Blooming Color & MACLYN  
Kevin Kobe, Treasurer - Associate, Investment Properties, CBRE Capital Markets  
Matt Johanson, Secretary - Co-founder & Senior Partner of Just Act Partners

Pat Adamatis - Retired, Educator, Naperville CUSD 203  
Dawn Bridges, Ed.D - Vice President of Educational Affairs, Right At School  
Karla Harmon - Global Director, CBRE  
Eric Jones - Assoc. Dean, College of Aviation Science, Lewis University  
Molly Losh, Ph.D. - Professor, Northwestern University  
Anthony Losurdo - General Manager, Hugo's Frog Bar & Fish House  
Natasha Marriner - Vice President & Private Wealth Advisor, Busey Bank  
Raj Patel - President, The Hari Group  
Joseph Ruble - Managing Director, Caliber Advisors, Inc.  
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Brian Sieve - Partner, Kirkland & Ellis LLP  
Brooke Thompson - Managing Director, Merrill Lynch  
Adam Van Someren - President, Charleston Building & Development



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