

# Year in Review FY 2025



Celebrating 60 Years of Impact



# Honoring our Past, Shaping Our Future

The year 2025 marked a historic milestone for Little Friends, Inc., as we celebrated our 60th anniversary. For six decades, we've stood alongside children, adults, and families navigating the challenges of autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and more. This year, we didn't just honor our legacy; we expanded it.

In 2025, we launched several new initiatives to deepen our impact:

- We became the first organization in Illinois to partner with Ken's Krew, providing job placement, training, and support for individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities seeking employment in customer service roles at Home Depot.
- We merged with the Illinois Independent Living Center (IILC), expanding our reach to include adults living with physical challenges.
- We opened the Little Friends Wellness Center, offering counseling services to support emotional and mental well-being.

At the same time, we continued to invest in our core programs — educational services, vocational training, community-based residential living, respite programs, and our Center for Autism — ensuring that every individual who walks through our doors is met with compassion, expertise, and opportunity.

As we look ahead, our commitment to innovation, inclusion, and excellence remains strong. We're expanding our impact, strengthening resources, and forging new partnerships to meet the evolving needs of our community. Entering our seventh decade, we do so with renewed purpose and a bold vision for the future.

Thank you for being part of our journey. Whether you are a parent, partner, donor, staff member, volunteer, or advocate, your support fuels our mission and transforms lives.

With heartfelt appreciation,



Mike Briggs  
President & CEO  
Little Friends, Inc.

# A Legacy of Impact

Founded in 1965 by passionate educators and advocates, Little Friends has evolved into a premier human services agency dedicated to supporting individuals with autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities, physical challenges, and social-emotional needs.

Today, our comprehensive services include educational and vocational programs, residential support, autism services through our Center for Autism, and respite care for families. Serving nine counties and more than 50 school districts across Illinois, Little Friends is proud to be accredited by The Council on Quality and Leadership—an acknowledgment of our unwavering commitment to improving quality of life for those we serve.



# MISSION

Empowering people of all ages experiencing autism, intellectual, emotional, and physical disabilities, and their families, to live, learn, work, and thrive in their communities.

# VISION

To be recognized as a leading provider in Illinois for comprehensive services supporting children, adults, and families with autism and other developmental, emotional, and physical disabilities—delivering whole-person care through direct services and strategic partnerships, with robust clinical and research expertise in autism.





# Celebrating

1965

1970

1971

1973

1976

1986

1995

Teacher and special education advocate **Dottee Krejci** began **Little Friends** school

The **Naperville Sheltered Workshop** merged with **Little Friends**

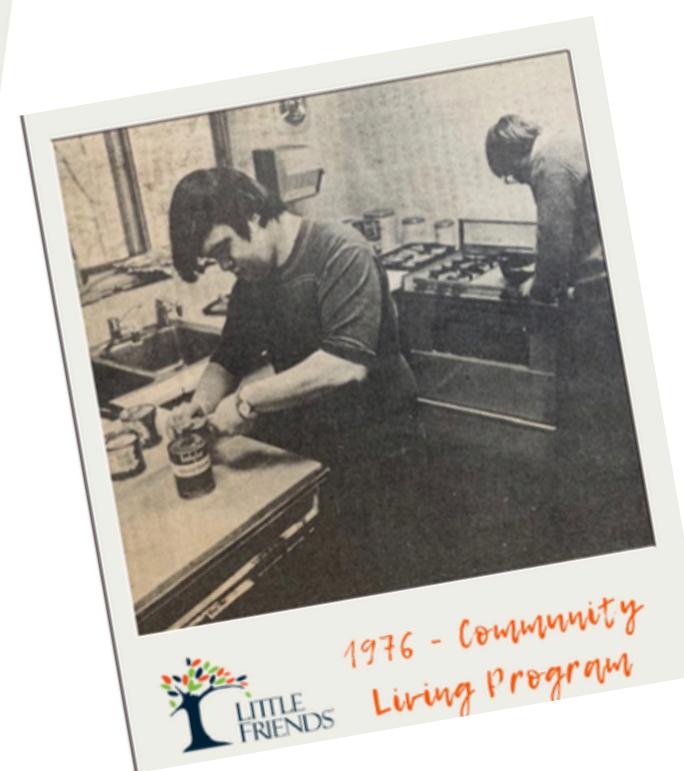
The Ladies Auxiliary group opened **Serendipity Resale Shop**

**Little Friends Parent Infant Program** established to support children under 3

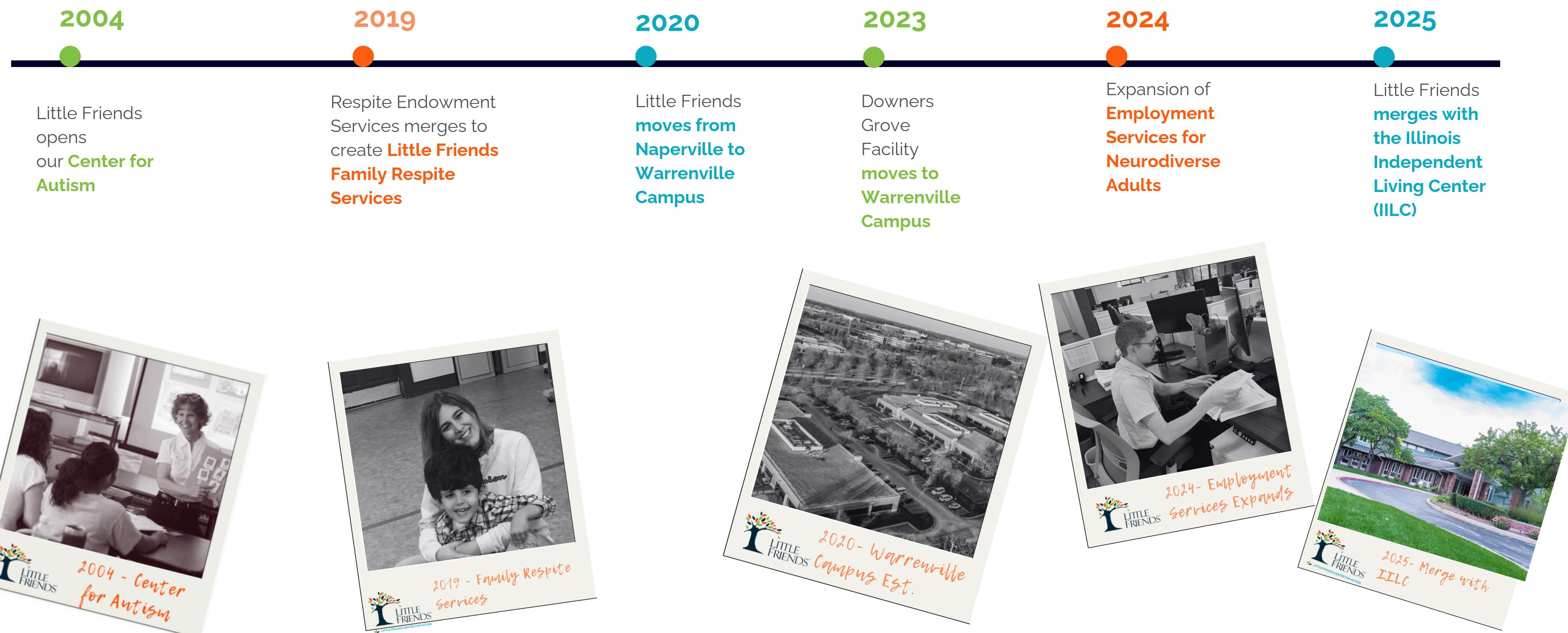
Little Friends **Community Living Facility** opened serving adults with developmental disabilities

The building housing **Community Day Services** was purchased in Downers Grove

**Residential Services** overhauled to move participants to individual residences, with own bedrooms and 3 housemates



# 60 years of impact



# Those We Serve

By The Numbers: Fiscal Year 2025 .... Over 2500 families & individuals served



400+

## Center for Autism/Autism Friendly City

Children receiving therapies, professionals, and parents are trained

131

## Krejci Academy & Mansion High School

Students enrolled in Krejci Academy and Mansion High School during the 2024-25 school year

100+

## Residential Services

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

63

## Family Respite Services

Children and siblings attending weekly or monthly Respite sessions

190

## Community Day Services

Adults participating in our Community Day and Employment Services

60

## FUN Club

Providing monthly social opportunities for young adults as they move forward into adulthood, while also fostering personal relationships between peer buddies

1462

## Family Care Team

Supports the initial interactions with families, public entities, and advocates to learn more about our programs

50+

## Family Support Network

Socializing opportunities for families along with the information, resources, and support they need to make informed choices for their loved ones

# Our Programs

## 60 Years of Empowering Lives with Dignity and Respect

For six decades, Little Friends has been a trusted leader in providing therapeutic, educational, and community-based services for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities. With a foundation built on dignity and respect, we strive to improve communication and life skills, foster independence and confidence, and create lives filled with quality and meaning in safe, healthy, and happy environments.

Our nationally recognized school serves students ages 5 to 22, offering excellence in special education that nurtures personal growth and lifelong learning. For adults, our programs deliver high-quality, life-changing opportunities through employment training, paid work experiences, social engagement, and supportive housing, ensuring every individual has the chance to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their community.

### Children

[ABA Therapy](#)

[Occupational Therapy](#)

[Speech Therapy](#)

[Krejci Academy](#)

[Mansion High School](#)

[Counseling Services](#)

[Family Respite Services](#)

[Residential Services](#)

### Adults

[Community Day Services](#)

[Employment Services](#)

[Inklude Studio](#)

[Counseling Services](#)

[FUN Club](#)

[Residential Services](#)

### Families

[Family Support Network](#)

[Family Care Team](#)

[Family Respite Services](#)



# Increasing Need For Services

**1 in 31** Children are being diagnosed as being on the spectrum

Children born in **2018** were **1.7 X** more likely to be diagnosed with autism before Age 4 compared to children born in **2014**

In the next **10 years**, **500K** neurodiverse teenagers will be looking for work

**5M** adults (**>2% of the population**) are on the autism spectrum

**36%** of all autistic adults admitted into a hospital were tied to mental health issues

**28.7%** of adults in the US have some type of disability

An estimated **5800** residents in Illinois Community Integrated Living Arrangement (CILA)

**16K** people on the State Priority List (PUNS) requesting residential services

**50K** people who are caregivers to individuals with a disability are over the age of 60



# Expansion of Services

## Addressing Growing Needs with New Initiatives



### Ken's Krew

Through our partnership with Ken's Krew, we provide job placement, training, and ongoing support for individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities pursuing careers in customer service.

This collaboration strengthens our mission to empower neurodiverse individuals by equipping them with the skills and opportunities needed to thrive in the workforce.

### Illinois Independent Living Center

We broadened our focus to provide comprehensive care by incorporating support for adults living with physical challenges following our recent merger with the Illinois Independent Living Center (IILC).

The IILC provides fully accessible, barrier-free residential spaces that empower residents to manage their daily needs effectively.

### Wellness Center

We opened the Little Friends Wellness Center, offering specialized counseling for individuals and families. The center is designed to support the unique needs of those with autism, intellectual disabilities, and developmental challenges, providing compassionate and tailored care in a welcoming environment.

# 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Benefit Auction

Creating Meaningful Change Through Community Support



The Annual Benefit Auction remains a cornerstone event, blending friendship, advocacy, and generosity to ensure those we serve lead fulfilling lives within our community. We are deeply grateful to our individual donors and corporate partners whose unwavering support has made this gathering a cherished tradition and a powerful force for good.

The 48th Annual Benefit Auction brought together 675 guests, with an inspiring 48% attending for the first time—a testament to the growing reach and resonance of our work.



1985 Little Friends Annual Auction

# Serendipity Resale Shop

Local Volunteers, Lasting Impact

For over 50 years, Serendipity Resale Shop has been solely operated by a team of dedicated volunteers. More than just a resale shop, Serendipity plays a vital role in supporting the mission of Little Friends—empowering individuals to live fulfilling lives. Every purchase, donation, and hour volunteered directly benefits the programs and services that make a meaningful difference.

**Total Revenue  
FY 2025  
\$159,646.00**



Serendipity Resale Shop Opened in 1971 in Downtown Naperville

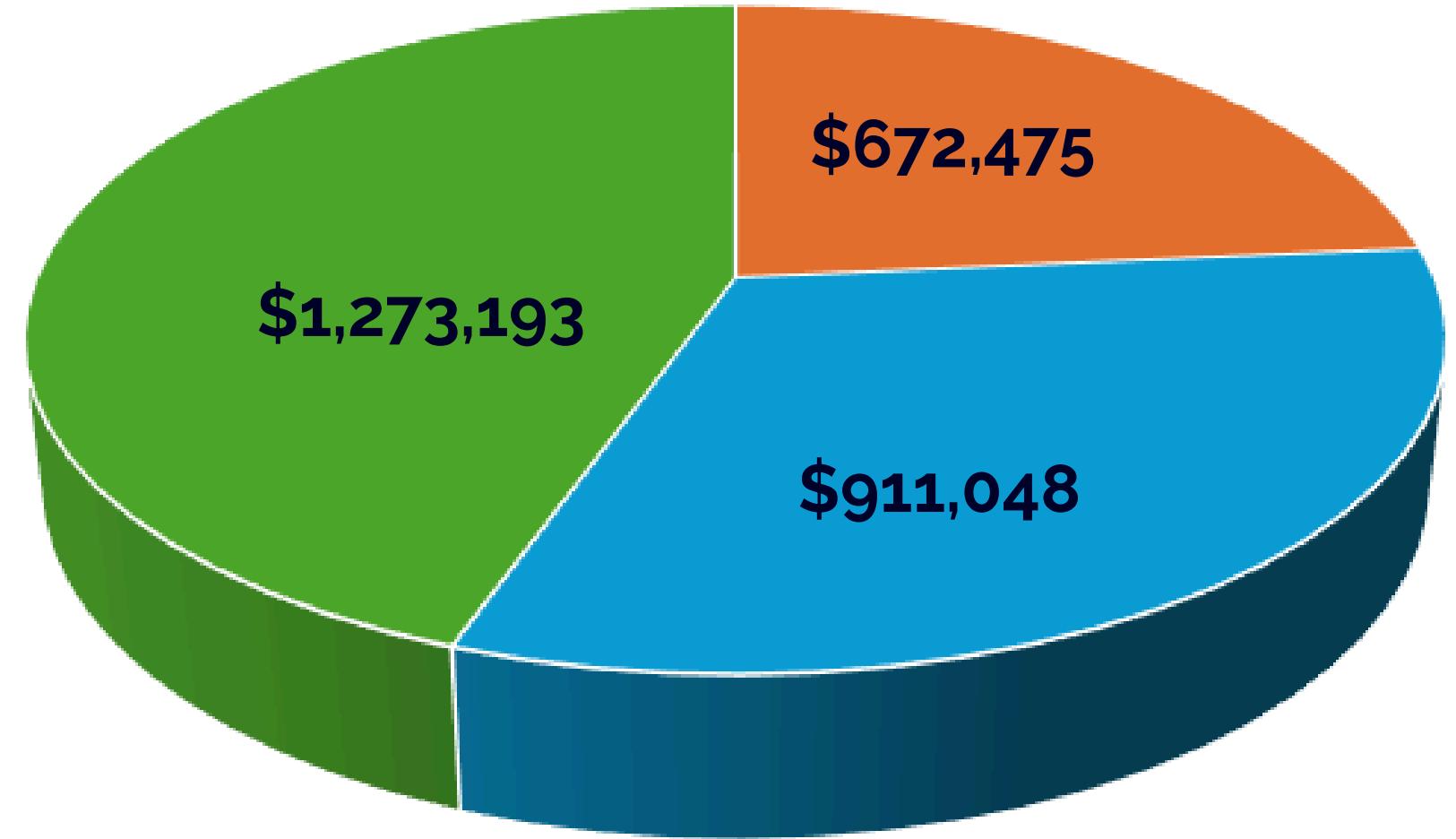


Serendipity Resale Shop is now located at 461 S. Route 59, Aurora.

# Philanthropic Support

As we celebrate 60 years of Little Friends, we remain committed to stewarding a strong and diverse funding portfolio. Yet, it is the annual generosity of our community that continues to be the heartbeat of our mission. Each year, your support plays a vital role in sustaining our operations and expanding the reach of our life-changing programs.

Thanks to your contributions, we are proud to report that 92 cents of every dollar raised goes directly to our programs—ensuring that every gift makes a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. Your belief in our work fuels progress, hope, and opportunity.



● General Contributions   ● Events   ● Grants

**TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS:**  
**\$2,856,717**

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mike Briggs, President & CEO Little Friends (non-voting member)	Thomas Connors, Chairman Retired, Managing Director, Credit Suisse
Ray Kinney, Vice Chairman Partner, Blooming Color & MACLYN	Kevin Kobe, Treasurer Senior Associate, CBRE
Matt Johanson, Secretary Co-Founder & Senior Partner, Just Act Partners	
Pat Adamatis Retired, Educator, Naperville CUSD 203	Dawn Bridges, Ed.D Vice President of Educational Affairs, Right At School
Brady M. Brosnahan Regional Vice President, Rubrik	Karla Harmon Retired, Global Director, CBRE
Paul Koretke Retired, General Manager, Pockets	Anthony Losurdo Managing Partner, Gibson's Restaurant Group
Natasha Marriner Vice President, Busey Bank	Raj Patel President, The Hari Group
Matthew Render Head of Finance/Accounting, Citadel	Joseph Ruble Managing Director, Caliber Advisors, Inc.
Stephen Scharafin Director, Brown Gibbons Lang & Company	Brian Sieve Retired, Partner, Kirkland & Ellis LLP
Brooke Thompson Managing Director, Merrill Lynch	Adam Van Someren President, Charleston Building & Development



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