

Annual Report

- 2024 -

Providing an innovative approach to services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities focused on independent living.



Celebrating the opening of our third location!



Letter from the Executive Director



A big year of celebrations!

I'm excited to share this overview of our 2024 year as it proved to be another significant one for the Village of Merici family.

This year marked the 10-year anniversary of our first affordable housing partnership with Merici Village Apartments. Adding to this year of major milestones, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of the opening of our North End location in Carmel. We rounded out the celebration theme with the completion of The Brunette Condominiums, our third affordable housing collaboration. It has been a lot of amazing progress over the last two years. We are most grateful to those who have supported us, making this rapid growth possible.

We have been involved in new community partnerships, award ceremonies, and tattoo parties.

We are utilizing more technology than ever before and perpetually seek new, innovative ways to offer a support model and community integration that maximizes independence for the individuals we serve.

The Cincy Hat Project continues to grow and evolve. What began as a simple concept by our friend, Ted Karras, Center for the Cincinnati Bengals, to sell Cincy hats in support of the Village of Merici, has transformed into a foundation that helps adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Within these pages, you'll find highlights of a wonderful year – we hope you enjoy.

With appreciation,

Colleen Renie
Executive Director

Leadership

Toby McClamroch*
Tim Specht*
Victoria Pierceall*
Jill Rusk*

Carl Becker
Ashley Dickerson
Barb Fleming-Cecil
Frank Hutnicke

PJ Loehrer
Dave McDowell
Loui Lord Nelson
Barney Quinn

Patrick Schaefer
Danielle Shockey
Jeffrey Yu

**denotes executive officers*

Indiana Affordable Housing Conference

This annual statewide housing conference brings together a variety of affordable housing leaders.

As recipients of the state's first round of Moving Forward 2020 funding, Village of Merici was asked to present on the success of the North End project, a partnership with Old Town Companies. Presentation topics included technology, social inclusion, and affordable housing for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This successful partnership created 40 attainable apartments within a larger integrated community, the largest project in the state. As a result of this amazing partnership, we received an Excellence in Affordable Housing Award from the Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority.



10-Year Celebration

In September, we celebrated the 10-year milestone since we opened the doors on Merici Village Apartments, our first location with 20 affordable apartments.

Deb Whitfield, Mayor of the City of Lawrence, declared September 12, 2024, Village of Merici Day.



The Brunette Condominiums

As the year came to an end, we were able to complete the large renovation project on The Brunette building and create 34 condominiums, representing our third partnership in affordable housing.

This project also gives someone with a disability the opportunity to own their own home.

Why Can't Someone with a Disability Own Their Own Home?

Now They Can!

Several years ago, many benefactors of the Village of Merici generously participated in a campaign to convert an old building in Lawrence into affordable apartments. The extreme escalation in renovation costs due to the pandemic forced a pause on the project. During this suspended time, the Village of Merici began to explore other options and began to question why individuals with disabilities didn't own their own home.



The hold on the construction project created the opportunity for a different school of thought, taking the model of affordable housing to the next level. Instead of affordable apartments with monthly rent and annual reporting documentation required by the state per occupant, The Brunette Condominiums offer a rather unique opportunity for affordable, permanent, home ownership (with no annual paperwork). A person with a disability can now own their own home.

Once again, the Village of Merici pushes the boundaries on traditional expectations of those with disabilities by creating an environment of true independence.

All 34 condominiums have been sold with residents of the new Brunette Condominiums eagerly awaiting to move into their new homes in early January 2025. We believe this is the largest home ownership opportunity for adults with disabilities within Indiana and are excited to welcome our new residents to our third location.



What we found out:

- Home ownership does not affect SSI/SDI subsidy
- Home ownership provides a permanent home
- Home ownership supports true independence
- Home ownership within a walkable area creates community

The Role Technology Plays with Independent Living

Just as Village of Merici established a new affordable housing model with The Brunette Condominiums, VOM sets out to challenge the traditional in-person model for direct services through the integration of modern technology.

Currently, most individuals with disabilities qualify for varying degrees of one-on-one, direct support.

Unfortunately, many who are eligible for services are stuck on a waiting list with the overall industry significantly short on direct support providers. There are over 80 individuals on the Village of Merici waiting list for services. Since this shortage seems to be the new norm, the Village of Merici has been looking for innovative ways to help provide support to more individuals.



With considerable advancements in modern technologies, VOM has intentionally incorporated individualized assistive technology into each affordable housing unit at both North End Apartments in Carmel and The Brunette Condominiums in Lawrence. The residents at each location have a wealth of assistive options at their fingertips. Additionally, the Village of Merici provides staff to help with individual assessment, personalization of each device, and training for utilization.

Through use of custom technology, we believe we can slightly decrease the amount of in-person service time, making it possible to support others still on our waiting list.

As an organization whose only mission is to serve adults with disabilities, it is time to expand the model of care and incorporate modern technologies in the support of those with disabilities. New technology is, in itself, innovative but bringing it into the field of adults with disabilities is truly transformative.



Technology has advanced considerably over the last ten years, especially in the area of assistive and adaptive technologies for those with disabilities. There are well over 700 service-based apps alone. There are technologies for seizure detection, self-care, fall risk, and medication management, overnight support, activity versus inactivity, sensor technology for movement, stove, bed, and windows.

There have been over 15,000 patents filed over the last four years specific to the category of emerging assistive technologies.

In Memory of Thomas Halberstadt



It was impossible to feel anything but happy when Thomas was around. He spread joy and light wherever he went. His smiles and laughter were rays of sunshine, as reflected in his gentle and kind demeanor. Thomas loved drumming, dancing, creating art, being on or near the water, and monitoring weather events. He was a talented artist, and his art evoked his strong sense of self, family, and love of nature. Being present when Thomas was drumming or dancing was an opportunity to experience his heart connection with music and movement.

Thomas was also an eager lifelong learner. Each day, he applied what he had learned to every aspect of his life. He took great pride in a job well done, both personally and professionally, as was evidenced in his meticulousness and attention to detail. Thomas valued time with family and friends, and very much enjoyed living independently in the home he and his brother Ned shared at Merici Village for the past 10 years.

He loved a good coffee or tea and was proficient in creating fancy versions of each. Among the many life lessons Thomas taught others through his actions were the value of taking one's time across the day, and in the bigger picture, taking the time to be an observer of life by watching, looking, and listening.

Thomas, you are greatly missed by many. As you shine down upon us, you continue to spread joy and light. You remain in our hearts. We thank you for being you.

Written by Jill Wood
Life Skills Coach

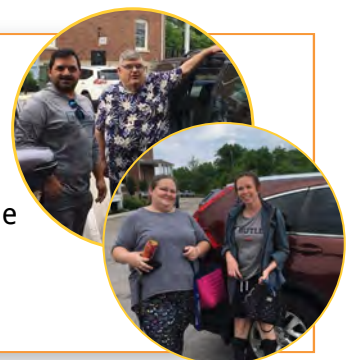
Sponsor a year of transportation for adults with disabilities.

The majority of adults with disabilities supported by the Village of Merici, are not able to drive. They rely on others for all transportation needs. The Village of Merici owns a fleet of vehicles that are in perpetual use each day, serving the needs of over a hundred individuals throughout Indianapolis.

Sponsor a Year of Transportation for \$500

By participating in the Sponsor a Year of Transportation project, your name or corporate logo will be placed on a Village of Merici vehicle for a year.

Email colleenrenie@villageofmerici.org to sign-up!





Cathedral Coffeehouse Partnership

A thriving hub of student creativity, entrepreneurship, and community spirit.

In the spring of 2023, Cathedral High School opened the doors on a new campus endeavor, the Johnny Mac's Coffeehouse. The initiative was an academic project for both business and entrepreneur students while also honoring the memory of a 1990 graduate, John McCormick, who served as a business teacher for many years.

Students spent a good portion of the first year building the operation by creating the drink menu, establishing the business inventory, understanding finances, and promotional marketing. Since students also ran daily operations, it quickly became apparent that availability of coverage hours was affected by the varying student class schedules, leaving the coffeehouse with unmanned shifts and inconsistent hours of availability when students were in class.

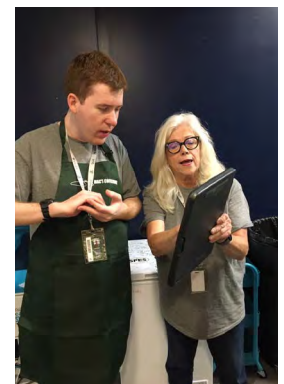
Recognizing that the coffeehouse was struggling to be able to offer consistent hours of operation, Cathedral leadership reached out to the Village of Merici with a partnership idea.

Earlier this year, some Village of Merici clients began volunteering at the coffeehouse to help bridge the gap in operational hours, allowing the operational hours to be much more consistent. The new staff members have been a great benefit to the coffeehouse and its community. The staff from the Village of Merici help with stocking inventory, sales, cleaning, and assist student workers who need an extra hand.

The volunteers from the Village of Merici have been a huge help and always make sure to embrace their work. From the start of their partnership to now, the staff have been extremely excited and energetic to help out at the coffeehouse. It has been a wonderful opportunity to learn new skills.

The coffee house is open every day of the week, from 8am until 1:30pm during regular school days.

Our thanks to Cathedral High School for this amazing partnership opportunity.



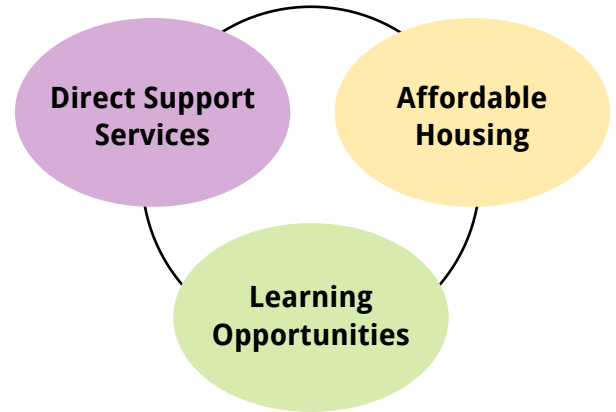
What Makes Integrated Communities Work

The Village of Merici Viewpoint

An integrated community is a place where people of all abilities, races, ages, economic situations, and beliefs are welcome and can fully participate. Individuals can feel like they are an integral part of the community and contribute to its development.

Over the years, the Village of Merici has developed a three-pronged approach to true independence, believing that it takes several components to create an environment that fully supports the individual.

- Direct support services where most needed to focus on goals and skills-building.
- Affordable housing in a safe and walkable community.
- The opportunity to learn and grow individually and with friends.



What's a Live-in Support Manager

Each of our three locations of affordable housing have a live-in tenant support manager who lives on site with regular office hours and availability for after-hours emergencies. Although the specifics of duties vary slightly by location, our support managers do an amazing job serving as a resource for questions and needs as many of our residents have never lived on their own before.



Technology Support

The use of modern technologies can play a significant role in independent living. With thousands of available assistance apps, personal devices can be programmed to individual needs. Village of Merici has been intentional with incorporating technology into each location.

We encourage everyone to take time to learn about the many technological options that are available. Staff members are available to help with personal needs assessments and to assist with customization of devices.



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The *Cincy* Hat Project Continues...



St. Tatty's Day

On St. Patrick's Day, we helped Ted Karras, founder of The Cincy Hat Project, host an amazing gratitude event at the Fowling Warehouse in Cincinnati for supporters of the project. Turns out, there were a large number of diehard fans that wanted a tattoo of the Cincy logo. It turned into a huge celebration of the brand with hundreds of attendees getting the famous logo tattooed, vendors, Cincy Hat sales and photo ops with Ted.



Joe Burrow, quarterback of the Cincinnati Bengals, donated \$25,000 as part of the event to thank the Cincinnati community for its support in winning the online voting portion of the Nationwide Charity Challenge.



Luke Combs Concert

The Cincy Hat was well represented when Luke Combs wore his hat on stage during each of his two concerts in Cincinnati this summer. Our thanks to Luke for embracing the mission behind the hat.



Cintas Partnership

Cintas jumped on the Cincy Hat bandwagon in a big way when they ordered 1,500 hats for its annual CPR training event at Paycor Stadium.



School Co-Branding

The Cincy Hat partnered with 10+ schools (and counting) in Cincinnati on custom Cincy Hats for their spirit wear shops.



Retail Expansion

Many local retailers in Cincinnati continue to support the mission through displays and promotion within their shops.



It's been another big year for The Cincy Hat project.



By the Numbers

Over the last two years, more than

60,000

hats and beanies have been sold and shipped to every state in the nation and other countries.

Thank you to everyone who has supported this project!

Thank You to Everyone Who Played a Part in Making 2024 a Truly Unforgettable Year!

We are grateful for your involvement and continued support.

2024 Impact

Number of individuals that Village of Merici supported = 130

Number of one-on-one, direct support hours = 47,873

Number of miles driven by coaches in support of individuals = 92,340

Number of affordable housing units (apartment/condo) offered by VOM for adults with disabilities = 94



Want To Get More Involved with the Merici Mission in 2025?

We're Hiring - Become a Coach

Lawrence • Carmel

Full and Part-time positions available • Flexible schedule • Competitive pay
To learn more or apply online: www.villageofmerici.org/employment

Become a Merici City Rides Driver

Lawrence • Carmel

One of the greatest obstacles faced by someone with a disability is not being able to drive. Not having transportation significantly limits one's ability to integrate into the community, leaving a large percentage of individuals feeling isolated and lonely. Consider giving a little time and sign up to be a volunteer driver today. For more information or to sign up: <https://villageofmerici.org/volunteer-merici-city-rides/>

- Easy curbside pick-up and drop off
- One-way or round-trip options
- Flexibility – volunteer a little or a lot, whatever works best for your schedule



Number of miles our volunteer drivers drove in 2024:

21,520



Volunteers Needed

Want to make a difference in someone's life?

We have lots of opportunities:

- Book Club moderator
- Help with events
- Teach a class or share a talent

For more information or to sign up: <https://villageofmerici.org/how-can-i-help/>

2024 Event Highlights

Thanks to everyone who participated in our 2024 events!



Mark Your Calendar for 2025 Events

Golf Event – Monday, June 9


Bingo Night – Friday, September 19



**If you'd like to support the mission,
please scan to make a donation.**



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