

Annual Report 2025

Empowering Independent Living

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



Letter from the Executive Director



This year marked an important chapter in our organization’s evolution. One of the most significant moments was the retirement of our founder. Colleen’s vision and dedication built the foundation we stand on today, and we move forward with deep gratitude for her leadership.

Stepping into the role of Executive Director has been both an honor and a deeply meaningful transition inviting reflection, responsibility, and a renewed sense of purpose. With this transition, we implemented our new strategic plan – a roadmap that reflects our commitment to stability, growth, and thoughtful stewardship of our mission.

This has also been a year of tremendous celebration. We officially opened The Brunette condominiums, expanding our housing opportunities to support 90 residents – a milestone that represents years of planning, collaboration, and persistence. We also increased our programs to three locations, allowing us to reach more individuals and families than ever before. And with the expansion of our technology initiative, even more residents now have access to the tools and support they need to stay connected, informed, and empowered.

Internally we welcomed a new administrative team that has already strengthened our operations and brought fresh momentum to our daily work. Their expertise, combined with the implementation of our strategic plan, positions us for thoughtful growth and long-term sustainability.

As I look ahead, I feel genuinely excited about our future. We are building on a strong legacy while embracing new opportunities to deepen our impact. With a clear strategic direction, a strengthened organizational structure, and a dedicated team, we are well-positioned for a future filled with possibility. Thank you for your trust, your partnership, and your belief in what we can accomplish together. I’m grateful to be stepping into this next chapter with you.

With appreciation,

Kristy Hayes
Executive Director

Board of Directors

Barb Fleming-Cecil*
Tim Specht*
Victoria Pierceall*
Jill Rusk*

Carl Becker
Ashley Dickerson
Frank Hutnicke
PJ Loehrer

Toby McClamroch
Dave McDowell
Loui Lord Nelson
Barney Quinn

Patrick Schaefer
Jeffrey Yu

**denotes executive officers*

A Few Highlights of the Year

Colleen's Retirement

2025 marked a significant transition for the Village of Merici as our founder, Colleen Renie, retired from her role. While we are saddened to see her step away from daily operations, we are equally grateful and excited for Colleen as she embraces more time with her growing family, opportunities to travel, and the chance to relax and enjoy the activities she loves. Her retirement is truly well-deserved after many years of extraordinary dedication and service to the Village of Merici.

We are honored to share a few words from Colleen:

"I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for the remarkable success of Village of Merici Inc. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire team over the past many years as Village of Merici, Inc. developed support services and housing opportunities for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to live their best life. As I retire and look to the future, I am genuinely excited that Village of Merici will continue to expand their programming in creative and innovative ways to help people with IDD shape their own futures with exceptional support and opportunities for inclusive communities.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Kristy Hayes for her inspiring leadership as Director of Services and know that as she begins her role as the new Executive Director she will continue the success. Her vision and commitment to the mission is invaluable as Merici embarks on the journey together with individuals with IDD, their families and Merici partners. I am confident that under her guidance, Merici will reach new heights and make a lasting impact on the lives of those she and her team serve. Together, let's continue to provide financial support, volunteer services, and prayers to create a brighter future for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the community!"



Meet our new Development Director:

We are excited to announce **Michelle Harker** as our new Development Director. Michelle has been part of the Village of Merici team for over three years, previously serving as a Staff Support Specialist. Her deep commitment to our mission and unwavering dedication to the individuals we serve make her an incredible asset in this new role.



Meet our new Director of Services:

We are excited to welcome **Chelsea Deel** as our new Director of Services. For more than nine years, Chelsea has grown with the Village of Merici—from coach to key leader—bringing significant expertise and a strong determination to advance our mission. In 2024, she also became an accredited CARF Surveyor, further strengthening the quality and value of our services. Her leadership will continue to advance our work and the lives of those we serve.



Brunette Condominiums

Brunette Condominiums officially opened at the start of 2025, becoming one of the first communities of its kind to offer a true condominium-style living concept specifically designed for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This innovative model not only provides safe, independent housing, but also creates a strong sense of ownership, belonging, and longterm stability for residents.

What has been most inspiring is how quickly the residents have bonded. Even in these early months, they've formed strong connections, built genuine friendships, and taken the lead in creating their own community traditions—including a monthly group dinner that they organize and enjoy together. The warmth and mutual support developing inside Brunette is exactly what we hoped this model would make possible.

Seeing these early successes has reaffirmed our belief in pioneering person-centered, forward-thinking housing options. Brunette isn't just a new location—it's a powerful step forward for inclusive community living and a model that is already showing how transformative this kind of environment can be.

To highlight the influence this new community is already having, here are some testimonials from parents of new condo owners and condo owners themselves, sharing in their own words what Brunette has meant to them. These personal stories speak powerfully to the sense of belonging, confidence, and independence that residents are experiencing in their new homes.



Parent Testimonials:



"As a parent of a son with IDD, watching my son move into his own condo has been the most rewarding milestone in our lives. Matt has lived with us his whole life, so at the age of 40, this was a huge step. Since his move 9 months ago, we have seen wonderful changes! Living independently has provided Matt with a sense of confidence, responsibility and pride in being able to make his own decisions. I have seen so much growth in him, from cleaning to doing laundry, making his own meals and managing his time. He has met his neighbors and made some new friends. He really loves his independence to do what he wants and is truly thriving.

For me, it's hard to explain the peace of mind this move has given me. The building is safe and secure, there is staff onsite who is available and responsive when needed. There is a community feeling with lots of activities scheduled. I have felt like I can step back and know he will be safe, has support if needed and he will be ok if he needs something. I am so thankful to have Matt a part of the Merici community." - Vicki Burns



"Catherine moving into the Brunette Condo community has provided her the opportunity to grow into independent living. As parents, isn't that what we want for all of our children. She is learning new skills such as time management and grocery shopping but also getting the chance to try out different activities with her new friends. Having a community all around her is just so exciting for her to experience.

The best part for Catherine living on her own is that she is making new friends, gaining independence and growing her self esteem. Thank you Village of Merici for making this happen." - Pat Wyman

People we support Testimonials:



"What I love about living on my own is having independence. I am proud of having my own condo." - Rachel



"What I like by living on my own is the freedom to do what I want and to have my own space in home I'm proud of that. I am doing good in my life. I got good loving support from my family, my coaches, the Village of Merici Team, Rachel and myself." - Jason



"Becoming a member of the Village of Merici and the Brunette community has been one of the most important and positive changes in my adult life. Living on my own in this community with all of these wonderful programs and support opportunities truly has improved my life. I love relying less on my family. Since moving to the Brunette, I have made so many friends. I also am grateful for the amazing staff here. I am happy to call Brunette home." - Libby



Merici Kitchen Project



Meet Will Worley, Our New Kitchen Manager

In March 2025, we were thrilled to welcome Will Worley into his full-time role as Kitchen Manager after spending a year coaching within the Village of Merici community. His passion for teaching, creativity in the kitchen, and dedication to supporting skill-building have already made a valuable contribution across our programs.

Throughout the year, Will has focused on expanding and leading cooking classes at both our Carmel location and the Merici Village Apartments, helping participants grow in confidence, independence, and practical kitchen skills. His classes continue to be a favorite, offering a fun, supportive environment where learning and community come together.

Will also works closely with a group of people we support to create products for sale at the Lawrence Farmers Market. From developing recipes and making the items to preparing packaging, setting up the booth, and selling directly to customers, participants experienced the *entire* process. This hands-on approach offered valuable opportunities in cooking, customer service, entrepreneurship, and community engagement.

We are excited to see what Will brings to the kitchen in 2026 as he continues to grow the Merici Kitchen Project with fresh ideas, new classes, and expanded opportunities welcoming not only the individuals we serve, but people with disabilities from across the broader community.



Technology

Village of Merici continues to rethink how support is delivered to adults with disabilities. With the success of our innovative housing approach at The Brunette Condominiums and North End Apartments, we've expanded our focus to integrating individualized assistive technology directly into each home.

Demand for services continues to grow, and the statewide shortage of direct support professionals has left many eligible individuals waiting for help. To reach more people, we've incorporated customized technology tools that empower residents, increase independence, and help reduce the amount of in-person support required.

Each unit is equipped with personalized devices, and our team provides assessments, setup, and training so residents can effectively use the technology that fits their needs. This approach allows us to extend support to more individuals on our waiting list while maintaining high-quality, person-centered care.

By pairing modern technology with our mission-driven support model, Village of Merici is paving the way for a more sustainable and inclusive future for adults with disabilities.



ATIA Conference and Indiana Affordable Housing

In 2025, our team continued to share our expertise and passion for inclusive housing and assistive technology on prominent professional stages. We were honored to present once again at both the Indiana Affordable Housing Conference and the ATIA (Assistive Technology Industry Association) Conference.

Our presentations highlighted the innovative ways we integrate housing and technology to support greater independence and quality of life for the people we serve. With the leadership of our Executive Director and the specialized insight of our two Occupational Therapists, we demonstrated how thoughtful design, adaptive tools, and person-centered planning come together to create real progress.

These conferences provided valuable opportunities to connect with other leaders in the field, share our approaches, and continue positioning our organization as a statewide and national resource for best practices in accessible, tech-enabled housing solutions.

Programs and Partnerships

Village of Merici Programs

Book Club

Merici Village Apartments, North End, and Greenwood

Music Therapy

Merici Village Apartments and North End

Knifty Knitters

Merici Village Apartments and North End

Grief Group

Merici Village Apartments and North End

Sexuality and Relationships Class

Merici Village Apartments and North End

Cooking Classes

Merici Village Apartments, North End

Walking Club

Merici Village Apartments and North End

Garden Club

Merici Village Apartments and The Brunette

Video/Game/Movie Nights

Merici Village Apartments, North End, The Brunette

Creative Connection

Merici Village Apartments, North End, and The Brunette

Healthy Living With Dr. Mary

Merici Village Apartments

Yoga

Merici Village Apartments

Jabbers

Merici Village Apartments

Nutrition

Merici Village Apartments

Merici Faith

Merici Village Apartments

Quillo

Merici Village Apartments

Arts and Talents Club

North End

Coffee Chats

North End, The Brunette

Meditation

The Brunette

Independent Pathways

The Brunette

Partnerships

Cincy Hat Foundation - We remain deeply thankful for the continued involvement and generosity of Ted Karras and the Cincy Hat Foundation. We were grateful to celebrate Ted as he was nominated by the Bengals for the Walter Payton Man of the Year Award. Their support not only uplifts our mission but also allows us to celebrate such incredible moments alongside them.

Brooke's Place - We are grateful for our ongoing partnership with Brooke's Place, which supports our Grief Group programming. This collaboration helps us provide compassionate, supportive space for individuals processing loss.

Johnny Mac Coffee Shop at Cathedral High School - Our collaboration with Johnny Mac continues to create valuable vocational opportunities. Several of the people we support work at the Cathedral High School coffee shop during morning hours, building employment skills and community connections.

North End Neighbors - The North End Neighbors, a dedicated group of volunteers from St. Christopher Episcopal Church, play a vital role in supporting our programs at the North End location. Their ongoing commitment helps foster connection, inclusion, and purposeful community engagement for the people we support. In addition to running programs, the North End Neighbors also provide volunteer drivers for our Merici City Drivers program, helping residents stay connected to the community. Throughout the year, they offer a variety of fun and engaging activities for residents—one of the most beloved being the annual pool party, which continues to be a favorite for everyone.

LACD - The Lawrence Advisory Council on Disabilities (LACD) mission is to positively enhance the lives of people with disabilities in Lawrence through providing engagement and awareness opportunities in the Lawrence community for people with disabilities, offering community support and resources, and addressing current challenges facing people with disabilities in Lawrence.



Thank You Volunteers and Coaches

We are grateful for your involvement and continued support.

2025 Impact

Number of individuals that Village of Merici supported = 150

Number of one-on-one, direct support hours = 51,938.25

Number of miles driven by coaches in support of individuals = 98,199

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 2026?

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



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/>

Merici 2025 Events



Euchre:

Our annual Euchre Night saw remarkable growth in 2025, almost doubling in size as more players, sponsors, and volunteers joined in to support the Village of Merici community. The event also serves as an opportunity to increase our visibility across the broader community and connect with a new generation of supporters.



Golf:

Our 2025 Golf Outing at Hillcrest Country Club was another standout event marked by perfect weather and an incredible show of support from our community. Golfers enjoyed a beautiful day on the course while helping raise critical funds to support the mission of Village of Merici. We are grateful to all who played, sponsored, and helped make the day a success.



Porch Fest:

In October 2025, we hosted our very first Porch Fest, bringing music, community, and celebration to Merici Village Apartments. Even though the weather was a bit chilly, everyone who attended enjoyed a warm and welcoming evening together. Staff, families, volunteers, and participants helped make the night a success—from coordinating shifts and setup to serving food and cheering on performers.

We're excited to build on this momentum as we look toward Porch Fest 2026, where we hope to welcome even more families, neighbors, and community members. This new tradition is already becoming a wonderful way to bring people together, strengthen connections, and celebrate the spirit of the Village of Merici.

Bingo:

This year's Bingo Night was another tremendous success for the Village of Merici community. Thanks to strong attendance, enthusiastic volunteers, and generous supporters, the event once again delivered an evening full of energy, fun, and connection. Bingo continues to be one of our most popular gatherings. In 2025, we introduced an exciting new element to the evening—a text-to-donate campaign to help fund a much-needed accessible van. Attendees were invited to contribute by simply texting, making it easier than ever to support mobility and independence for the people we serve.

Thanks to the generosity of everyone who participated, we raised enough during Bingo Night to purchase a used accessible van. This new vehicle will be used by our coaching staff to assist with transportation for the individuals we support, increasing access to community activities, appointments, and engagement opportunities. This achievement highlights what happens when our community comes together—small actions lead to remarkable results. We are grateful for everyone who contributed, volunteered, and attended. Your support helps us continue providing life-enhancing services that help the people we support thrive.



Thanks to everyone who participated in our 2025 events!



Upcoming 2026 Events

Euchre: February 20th

Annual Golf Classic: June 8th

Carmel Golf Outing: August 10th

Porch Fest: August 27th

Concert for a Cause: August 29th

Bingo: September 18th



Explore Our New Merchandise Store



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