

Fall 2024
**COVEY'S
FIRESIDE
READER**



Covey

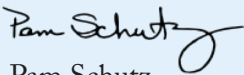
A Letter From
**OUR CHIEF
EXECUTIVE
OFFICER**

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to share that we have had another incredibly impactful year at Covey! *Our mission is to create opportunities that foster personal growth* for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Thanks to our participants, their families, our staff, and the community, Covey continues to grow our impact every day. This year, we have watched our participants' independence flourish more than ever before.

We look forward to continuing to build meaningful connections and create ever-evolving opportunities. Because when every individual is celebrated for their uniqueness, embraced for who they are, and empowered to live their best lives, they can discover their passions and pursue their dreams. Keep reading to learn about our exciting new initiatives, program updates, mission impacts, and participant success stories!

On behalf of everyone at Covey,
thank you for another wonderful year!
Much like birds in a covey,
we are stronger together.

Sincerely,

Pam Schutz
CEO

OUR CORE VALUES

Inclusion

We create more fair and equitable access to opportunities, by strengthening relationships to foster greater understanding between the broader community and those connected to Covey.

Integrity

We always do what is in the best interest of our participants, their families, and our staff.

Individuality

We see the person first. We relate in a way that recognizes and values the uniqueness of the individual, allowing all to feel safe to be who they are.

Imagination

We dream big and find unique solutions.



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Helping our world become a more inclusive, safe space for everyone!

Everyone has a need for connection and intimacy—it's in our biology. As we grow and change, interest in relationships is part of the natural course of life. Throughout this development, *it's important for everyone to be educated on how to engage in this area of life with safety, respect, and health in mind.*

Because Covey is devoted to the well-being, growth, and flourishing of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, we are advocates for educating this population on healthy relationships, sexual safety, and bodily autonomy. "Let's Talk About It" creates an opportunity to address these topics in a safe and inclusive environment with qualified instructors.

With the risk of these topics being viewed as uncomfortable or taboo, we believe that these discussions are paramount for people of all cognitive abilities. *When provided with this knowledge, individuals are more likely to live independently, retain employment, and foster meaningful relationships.* It's time to empower people with disabilities to build a foundation for the development of healthy decisions!

During these workshops, discussions may include topics pertaining to:

- Informed decisions about one's own body
Consent and autonomy
- Preventing abuse
- Sexual safety
- Internet, social media, and communication
- Healthy relationships
- Hygienic habits
- Appropriate behavior in public vs. private
- Advocacy tools
- And more!

Covey's "Let's Talk About It" initiative is modeled after Elevatus, an organization that empowers, motivates, and educates individuals with disabilities to lead sexually healthy lives. Threaded throughout their curriculum is bodily autonomy, boundaries, and healthy relationships. "Ignorance is not bliss," said Katherine McLaughlin, founder of Elevatus. *"Knowledge is power. Knowledge is protection."*

Our partnership with REACH enhances our understanding of the entire network of professionals who are dedicated to domestic and sexual violence prevention and support. They have included us in collaborative groups such as the Tri-County Sexual Assault Response Teams which helps us better understand the system and full experience of someone who experiences abuse, and gives us an opportunity to provide perspective on how individuals with disabilities are impacted by sexual violence. In turn, REACH uses us as a resource to connect us with individuals with disabilities who are having issues at school with boundaries and healthy relationships.

For more information on "Let's Talk About It," contact us at 920-292-1127 or info@covey.org.





ICAN SHINE BIKE CAMP

Reaching Milestones, One Pedal at a Time

We were thrilled to experience yet another year of challenge, empowerment, and fun at our iCan Shine Bike Camp! During this 5-day camp, individuals with disabilities (ages 8 and up) have the opportunity to learn how to independently ride a bicycle. For many participants, this is truly a life-changing experience—leaving them with a new sense of accomplishment, self confidence, and independence.

Thanks to our incredible iCan Bike supervisor, Lyndsey Fraser, and our wonderful volunteers, we were able to accommodate a total of 21 riders at this year's camp. Of those, 71% were Green Riders by the last day of camp, meaning that they were *able to consistently ride a 2-wheel bike at least 74 feet independently and without stopping!*

"It's heartwarming to watch the participants' smiling faces as their skills progress," said Sophie, second-year camp volunteer. Collin, another returning volunteer, added, *"I loved being able to experience the real impact Covey makes on people's lives!"*

Stay on the lookout for next year's iCan Bike dates! We're always looking for more volunteers.

Covey.org

MISSION IMPACT

Tyler's Dedication to Helping his Peers

Tyler has been a Covey participant for three years. Throughout his time here, he has grown particularly fond of Covey Connects' Friday night bowling nights.

As his bowling skills progressed, *Tyler developed a newfound passion for assisting his peers.* He has dedicated his time to helping fellow participants feel more comfortable and confident in their bowling abilities.

"I'm always happy to be there," Tyler stated. "Everybody appreciates the help."

Through volunteering at these events, Tyler has grown his confidence, communication skills, and friendships. Fellow participants trust and listen to Tyler when they are in need of advice or assistance. In turn, Tyler's help makes the bowling outings that much more enjoyable for everyone!

Tyler added, *"I love Covey because I've met my friends here. I love the staff, and hopefully I can be an intern here one day!"*

We are so grateful to have Tyler's involvement and contribution to our culture of caring. His enthusiasm has positively impacted the Covey community and the experiences of other participants!



ADULT FAMILY HOMES

At Covey, we understand the profound importance of creating environments where adults with disabilities can thrive, grow, and experience independence. When an individual feels ready to move out on their own, they may face many obstacles in the process. This is a significant milestone in one's life, and *we want to help our participants achieve this goal with comfort and ease.*

Covey is proud to have our very own Adults Family Homes—accessible houses that give adults with disabilities the opportunity to live amongst peers, while also receiving care and support as needed. Our goal is for residents to find solace, comfort, and a true sense of belonging in their new home—somewhere they can spread their wings and embrace life to the fullest.

Our primary goal at Covey is to help our participants live their life to its fullest potential. Our Adult Family Homes allow for a substantial step in that direction!

Breaking Ground on Eastman

Something exciting is coming to Eastman Street! Construction has begun on Covey's third Adult Family Home, and we anticipate that it will be licensed and operating in early 2025!

While our other two Adult Family Homes serve male residents, we are looking for this home to serve female residents—signaling progress toward expanding our services and support for individuals with disabilities. This is critical in an environment where more and more Adult Family Homes are closing. *Our homes truly focus on residents' independence and engagement in the community.* We are thrilled about this significant achievement for Covey and the community!

GROW TOGETHER: CULTIVATING CONNECTION

Our vision for our participants' well-being extends beyond mere housing; it encompasses the very essence of community living. Our goal is to create landscaping with purpose at our Adult Family Homes throughout Winnebago County—incorporating elements that foster natural connections and promote independence, fulfillment, and joy.

We envision vibrant gardens bursting with life, providing opportunities for therapeutic horticulture and sensory stimulation. Raised plant beds would allow residents to grow and care for their own plants. In addition, we imagine gazebos nestled amidst lush greenery, offering serene retreats where residents can unwind, socialize, and connect with nature. Charming birdhouses adorning patio areas would invite the melodies of nature to serenade our residents.

These elements are not just embellishments; they are essential components to surround our residents with the beauty of nature—enhancing their quality of life and empowering them to thrive on their own terms.

This dream is within reach, but we need your help to turn it into reality. We encourage you to become involved in Covey's campaign, Grow Together: Cultivating Connection.

Your generous contribution will enable us to fund the construction of gardens, gazebos, birdhouses, and natural vegetation. No matter the size of your donation, it will make a meaningful difference in building a brighter future for those we serve. A future filled with hope, possibility, and boundless opportunity for growth.

covey.org/cultivating-connections/



MISSION IMPACT

Marty's Cooking Classes

Marty has always loved cooking. Growing up, his mom and grandma taught him his way around the kitchen. Marty's passion for creating delicious food, coupled with his interest in history, lead him into discovering interesting, innovative recipes.

Since joining Covey, Marty has felt a sense of comfort and belonging amongst his peers. So much so, that he decided to start showcasing his cooking skills to fellow participants by leading our Covey Cooks classes!

"I got myself into learning how people ate during the Great Depression," Marty stated. "One of my favorite things we've made is mock apple pie, made with Ritz crackers. How they dealt with food scarcity fascinated me."

Marty's self confidence and personal growth has flourished throughout his leadership journey.

Covey has truly become his home away from home.

When asked about how it feels to lead these classes, Marty said, "It feels really good because there are recipes that I can teach the next generation. I want to give them a little something that they can pass on to the generations going forward."

Knowledgeable and kind, Marty has been a positive influence on his fellow participants. We can't wait to see what recipe he has in store for the next cooking class!

Covey.org

MEET OUR INTERN: REESE

Working at Covey isn't just a job. It's a passion. Our employees and interns are the heart of what we do.

Reese began her internship with Covey in January of this year. With a focus on our Community-Based Day Services Program, Reese helps our participants practice their independence, engage in the community, and advocate for themselves by volunteering at the local food pantry. This not only gives back to the community, but also provides Covey participants with the opportunity to develop real-world skills.

Reese enjoys getting to know each and every participant and forming deep connections with them. She recounts a heartfelt story of participants running up to her, hugging her with big smiles on their faces—proving to Reese that they truly trust and appreciate her.

"It's really the participants that have taught me the most," Reese explained. "They have taught me to have a brighter perspective. They have a zest for life that's truly infectious. I'm there to help them, but they're also there to help me."

Through weekly meetings, ongoing discussions, and endless learning, Reese has gained invaluable knowledge and experience from her internship with Covey.

Impassioned by our mission, she has recently transitioned into the role of Covey's Community Support Specialist!

Reese has brought her passion, kindness, and charisma to Covey, and we could not be more grateful for her hard work and dedication to our community.



RESPIRE CARE: OPENING DOORS TO INDEPENDENCE

Alex's Journey

Caring for a loved one is more than a full-time job—it's your life. Covey is here to support you, because we believe that when given respite, resources, and the opportunity to recharge, caregivers can renew their ability to nurture.

Covey participant, Alex, began attending our respite care program several years ago and quickly became a regular face. Alex's mom, Kathryn, explained that finding an organization that could cater to Alex's specific needs and lifestyle was a struggle. Discovering Covey gave Kathryn peace of mind that there was a place where her son would be happy and safe—taking “a huge weight off of them” as parents.

As Alex continued to attend respite during the day, staff watched his personality shine as he progressively became more comfortable. He began each morning by greeting each staff member by name. The building seemed to light up the second he walked in.

With time, Alex's journey with Covey continued to flourish. His progression in our respite services opened the door to an opportunity that he and his family never thought possible: Alex moved out.

In December of 2023, Alex took a huge leap and began to move into Covey's Adult Family Home in Oshkosh! With a bit of time to acclimate, he was fully moved in by early January of this year. Since then, he has created strong bonds with his fellow housemates, as well as the 24/7 caregivers and staff members. Alex treats his new home with care, regularly taking out the garbage and assisting with other household tasks. His animated personality and enthusiastic love for life has had a significant impact in making connections so quickly and effortlessly.

Covey has played a crucial role in Alex and his family's life. By giving him the space and opportunity to grow as an individual while fostering friendships and memories, we continue to watch Alex thrive and enjoy life to the fullest each and every day!

You are your loved one's strongest support network.

Let Covey be yours.

Covey

JOIN OUR TEAM!

Looking for a rewarding job that enriches people's lives on a daily basis? Covey is currently hiring knowledgeable, friendly candidates for positions that are consistently rewarded, not only financially, but also with gratitude and appreciation from our clients. If you're looking to contribute to our culture of caring, apply to one of our open positions at: covey.org/career. We can't wait to meet you!

Fall 2024 Newsletter

Covey

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