



FAITH • FAMILY • FRIENDSHIP

Celebrating 25 Years

The year 2025 is a milestone in the history of Friendship Ark. Twenty-five years ago, our organization started when a group of likeminded community members spearheaded by Joe and Lois Johans created Friendship Ark. In November of 2000, we began serving our first two core members in our first home on South Duff Avenue. Today, we not only have homes, but have also added two additional programs, Supported Community Living and Day Habilitation to support our core members in achieving greater independence.

We have always been blessed to have a robust board of directors with over 75 very involved community members helping to guide our organization and further our mission over those 25 years. Friendship Ark has been lead by four Executive Directors: Denny Hoyt from 2000-2002, Annette Larson from 2002-2004, Mary Beth Oostenbrug from 2004-2014, and myself from 2014 to the present. We have gone from a staff of just a handful to a staff of over 80. We've grown from one home to nine homes and from 2 core members to 55.



Friendship Ark's first home on South Duff Avenue in Ames.



Friendship Ark's newest and ninth home in West Ames.

The world around us in general and disability services specifically have changed as much as Friendship Ark has over those 25 years, but one thing has remained the same . . . our overall mission. We continue to celebrate the uniqueness of adults with intellectual disabilities by providing homes and community services and help our core members reach their fullest potential through faith, family, and friendship. It is those three things: faith, family, and friendship, that will ensure Friendship Ark is here for another 25 years.

By Jennifer Ellis, Executive Director

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Recruiting and Community Engagement Corner

We've had a bustling few months at Friendship Ark! December kicked off with networking events like the Holiday Business After Hours hosted by Friedrich Realty and a coffee mingle hosted by TS Bank, helping us connect with our amazing community. Later in the month we helped celebrate new business openings, such as the Piece & Freedom Bakery and The Bridge Home. Leadership Ames also started back up again with Class 38 where our Marketing Manager, Beth Lucht, is a co-chair this year. We also made sure to attend this year's Legislative Breakfast put on by the Ames Regional Economic Alliance.



We brought holiday cheer at the Beautiful Land Market and held our Friendship Ark Hot Cocoa Bar for the 3rd year in a row, where Natalie, Beth, Stephen, Erin, Caroline and Madi delighted visitors with tasty treats and cocoa. Some other core member activity highlights included the annual Christmas party (complete with carols and a surprise visit from the Grinch!), a ride on the Santa Express with the Boone & Scenic Valley Railroad, crafting at the



Memorial Union's Workspace for MLK Day, and a trip to the circus.

Staff with milestone anniversaries include: Katy Coburn (1 year) and Kim Miles (5 years).

Please help us in welcoming the following new staff this quarter: Isaac Helbling, Hamida Mohamed, Emily Walker, Courtney Aden-Colburn, Hunter Clemann, Becky Schubert, Carlie Spore, Claire Daly, and Darcy Lamp.

By Beth Lucht, Marketing Manager

Professional Development Training by M&D Best



This winter, our leadership staff participated in a four-week training consisting of 21 customized modules focused on various aspects of professional development presented by Dariana Glasco-Boyd, M.Ed., co-founder and Director of Learning and Development with M&D Best. We appreciate the personalized resources and enhanced skills M&D Best provided for our team.

Our Business Partners

Help us to thank our 2025 Business Partners at the Family Level of \$1,000 and above for their generous support of adults living with intellectual and developmental disabilities in our community. Business Partners at this level are recognized in various ways, including a quarterly mention in our newsletter. If you find yourself interacting with them or visiting their offices, let them know you appreciate their contribution.



Advocacy and Accessibility Task Force

In keeping with Friendship Ark's mission of helping our core members reach their fullest potential, our Advocacy and Accessibility Task Force has been active in several areas. Our purpose is to advocate for the rights, supports, and opportunities for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the state, local, and even national level. We strive to educate our community in order to reduce stigma and endeavor to increase awareness and inclusion for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities so the value of their input in our community will be recognized. We also work to make spaces more physically accessible, such as when we collaborated with other local entities on projects including securing funding for the adult changing table at the Ames Public Library and playing an integral role in the purchase of the water wheelchair at the Furman Aquatic Center. We also send representatives to events held at the Iowa Capitol that help promote inclusion and accessibility for our core members.



Core members and staff visit with Representatives at the State Capitol.



In order to help our core members participate successfully in the community, our task force spends a great deal of time focusing on life skills trainings for our core members, including training on relationships and healthy living. Our most recent trainings have focused on various areas of health and hygiene. Our first training consisted of oral and hand hygiene. We secured a very large set of teeth that we took from site to site educating core members on proper tooth brushing by having them work hands on in this fun way. We then had larger group sessions to continue focusing on proper oral hygiene. This training also included hand hygiene. Core members were able to wash their hands, apply Glo-Germ, which when shown under a blue light displays the places you've missed, and then rewash and check again. This was a fun way to demonstrate where we needed to become more thorough in our hand washing. Our next training focused on personal hygiene skills with one session for females and one for males. As our trainings develop, we intend to continue focusing on these skills while adding ways to be safe online, in friendships and other interpersonal relationships. We feel that fun ways to educate will help cement these skills, which also helps with community accessibility and inclusion. It is our hope that one day everyone will see the value in our core members that we see. They have so much to contribute and so much to teach all of us.

By Cindy Campbell, Direct Support Professional and Advocacy and Accessibility Task Force Member

Save the Date



2025 Bill Bergan 5k on the 4th



Make plans to join us for our signature July 4th run/walk at Ada Hayden Park in Ames. Start your day with some movement at this popular and scenic Ames location while supporting Friendship Ark's mission. You'll

be done in time to attend the Ames 4th of July parade or participate in other holiday activities.

A Day in the Life of a Core Member in a 24-Hour Home

When you enter a home at Friendship Ark you are most likely to be greeted at the door by smiles and friendly faces. There are a million reasons why Friendship Ark is a great place to work, but have you ever wondered what it might be like to live in a Friendship Ark home? Follow along to learn what a day in the life of a core member in one of our homes is typically like.

Our core member is usually asleep when staff arrive. They will wake up and ask staff to assist them with getting ready for the day through their two-way monitor. Staff will then help them with using their electric lift to assist them out of bed and into their wheelchair. Once in the chair, they will independently take their trash out to the garage and come to the kitchen to eat breakfast and have a cup of coffee. Staff assist our core member in administering their medications. They then will independently eat at the table.

After breakfast our core member will get ready to leave, utilizing HIRTA to attend Mainstream Living Day Habilitation three days out of the week. The other two days are spent attending Friendship Ark Day Habilitation and volunteering at Reiman Gardens. While volunteering our core member will dust the spider webs from the windows and wipe down the dirt and water off the planters in the main building. They also sign up to greet everyone who attends Spirits in the Gardens every Halloween season!



The core members lead active and busy lives even if they use a wheelchair for transportation.



When our core member arrives home, they enjoy watching videos and playing games on their cell phone. They also enjoy following along to reading audiobooks and have quite the collection! They will call friends and family to chat until dinner time. Our core member loves helping out in the kitchen and cooks with staff once a week on Fridays. After dinner they typically help with cleanup in the kitchen following a chore chart and then will go back to their room to hang out until overnight staff arrive. Overnight staff will assist our core member with administering their nighttime medications and getting changed for bed. When they are ready to go to sleep, the staff will use a lift and sling to get them transferred into bed.

Our core member works on goals daily while participating in their everyday life. They have worked hard on becoming more independent and the things they work on throughout the year are tailored to their needs. They continue to grow through learning, whether it is a new cooking skill or understanding emotions. We are always excited and happy to assist our core member in gaining more independence and could not be more proud of their accomplishments!

By Jennifer Pohl, Site Coordinator

Supporting Good Boy



This winter the story of Good Boy, a dog that was rescued after having been shot, circulated around Ames and Camille really took his story to heart. She and staff followed his progress

diligently as he was recovering at the Ames Animal Shelter, and Camille was inspired to donate her pocket change to help with Good Boy's care. Together with her housemate, Adam, she and staff visited the Animal Shelter to drop off her contribution. Their timing was perfect as they caught Good Boy just before he was leaving to stay with a foster family. Camille and Adam were able to meet Good Boy and spend some time with him, which made for some very special moments.

Fundraising Gala



Our hearts are full of gratitude, for everyone who helped to make our third annual Tropical Sangria Escape fundraising gala possible and for everyone who supported it and made it a success. Whether you are a sponsor, business partner, donor of funds, auction item donor, vendor, attendee or participant in our auctions and gala games, gala committee member, volunteer or Friendship Ark staff member, please know that your contribution makes a difference in the lives of our core members each and every day.

Therapy Dog Visits Brighten Our Days



As you can tell from the story to the left, Camille has a heart for animals, so she and Ben were very excited to meet our newest volunteers, Kendra and her daughters, who brought their

therapy dog, Miles, to one of our homes. The group will be coming to see the core members regularly and we already know that everyone will anxiously look forward to their visits. Thank you for bringing joy into the lives of core members and staff alike.

Employee of the Quarter and Employee of the Year

We are excited to be able to announce Friendship Ark's Employee of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of 2024 and our Employee of the Year for 2024 at the same time.

Congratulations to Misty Miller for being selected to receive both of these awards. Misty's Employee of the Quarter award recognized her for being a dependable and uplifting presence, always offering calm, encouragement, and unwavering support. She brings a positive outlook to even the toughest situations and is her site's steady rock, providing strength and reassurance.



Misty was recognized as our Employee of the Year because she embodies the spirit of teamwork and leadership. Her dedication to putting the team first and fostering a positive, collaborative environment is truly inspiring. We are fortunate to have Misty and the incredible energy she brings to our team.

We appreciate Misty's faithful commitment to the core members and to Friendship Ark. In recognition of her awards, Misty received a gift of \$100 for her Employee of the Quarter Award and a gift of \$250 for her Employee of the Year award. Nominations for Employee of the Quarter awards can be submitted by any staff of Friendship Ark and winners are selected by a diverse committee of staff peers. All Employee of the Quarter winners for a year are eligible to be selected as the Employee of the Year.



Friendship Ark

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Make a Donation

Name _____

Address _____

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Yes, I/we would like to help Friendship Ark continue to serve persons with intellectual disabilities in a faith-based family home environment.

Amount donated: _____

Please apply my/our donation to the following:

- General Operations New House Core Member Outings
- Transportation Fund Rose/Lois Johannis Educational Fund (Staff Training and Education)
- I would like to learn more about making a planned gift.
- Friendship Ark is a part of my estate planning.

You may use your credit card to make a one time or recurring monthly gift by going to our website and clicking the "Donate" button.

Donations to our Endowment Fund should be made out to Story County Community Foundation and sent directly to SCCF at P.O. Box 1666, Ames, IA 50010-1666, indicating Friendship Ark Endowment Fund in the notes section of your check.



This newsletter provides limited space for us to share all of the exciting things happening at Friendship Ark. Find more stories, news and pictures on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Don't miss a thing, follow us today!

Wish List

For your convenience, we have created a Wish List on Amazon. You may select the items you would like to donate and have them shipped directly to us by using the QR Code.

If you would like to place an order for items from our Wish List scan here:



If you would like to make a donation by credit card scan here:

