

# THE Dispatch

Fall 2022

A PUBLICATION OF DISCOVERY LIVING, INC. 



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What Makes Us  
**Different**  
Makes Us  
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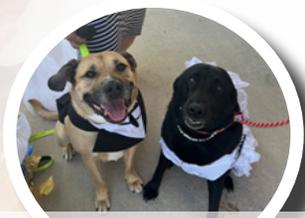
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# Autumn Adventures



Northbrook 2 Sunflower Experience at Pheasant Run Farm in Belle Plaine.

25th Street makes a return to meet the babies!



*Diamond and Frank's Wedding*



Let's paws a moment and reflect on a beautiful July day, in sunny Noelridge Park. Our resident DSPs (Doggo Support Professionals), Diamond and Frank, after a whirlwind courtship, officially tied the knot. May they know love (and prosperity of treats) everlasting! Congratulations, you crazy pups!



*"You may lick the bride."*



Mark Harvey rockin' his new Glow-in-the-Dark Vans from his Sneaker Tub subscription



*"What divides us pales in comparison to what unites us."*

*-Edward Kennedy*

## Powerful Memories Beget Powerful Art

Board member Denis Duppong used wood from downed trees in his yard from the derecho to create stunning, hand-crafted benches. Discovery Living was the proud recipient of two of these benches. He also created this art piece which will be on display at our office for a few weeks and then will travel to some other area businesses.



# IN IT TOGETHER

By Bob Hebl, Executive Director

Diversity, equality, equity, and inclusion are terms we frequently hear about, but what do they mean?

**Diversity** relates to different characteristics that make each of us unique. This may include age, gender, race, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, height, weight, and work style.

**Equity** means ensuring all individuals have what they need to succeed and participate fully, accounting for different access to opportunities, status, and rights.

**Equality** denotes how people are treated and focuses on making sure everyone gets the same opportunities.

**Inclusion** is creating an environment of belonging where everyone feels welcome, supported, respected, and valued, and provides an environment that encourages them to contribute their best work.

Discovery Living has spent over 40 years advocating for equity, equality, and inclusion for the diverse people with disabilities we support - who belong to one of the most marginalized groups

*"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."*

*-- Audre Lorde*

in the world. Given this, celebrating the unique and diverse gifts of others is part of our DNA here at Discovery Living. It is important to recognize that celebrating and respecting each other's unique identity and gifts is a practice that we need to consistently extend to our co-workers, families of people served, and everyone we encounter.

We are clearly stronger when we embrace the diverse nature of the people we serve, employ, and interact with. We can only get where we want to go if we remember that we are all in it together.



The [Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation's Spirit of Minnie Rubek](#) award is given to those in our community, with a spotlight on the non-profit sector, that go above and beyond. These are the people who really have a big impact on their communities, organizations, and colleagues. Bob Hebl, our executive director, was honored to be recognized among so many good people committed to the success of local nonprofit organizations.

# Discovery's 2022 Softball Teams



What a *great* season!



Click here to hear our own Scott Edgerly sing *The National Anthem* at the game!



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*As always, we want to extend a special "Thank You" to the world-class photographer, Jim Messina, who never fails to capture the dedication and joy expressed by these exceptional players.*



*"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."*

-- Benjamin Franklin



## Turnover – By the Numbers

Discovery Living has long benefitted from a top-notch direct support workforce that is a mix of long-term employees and talented newcomers. Recruiting and retaining quality employees has become more and more challenging in recent years. While we still have work to do in this area, the data below illustrates how blessed we are here at Discovery Living.

(1) In 2020, Direct Support Professional (direct care) annual employee turnover averaged 43.8% in the United States.

(2) In 2021, Direct Support Professional (direct care) annual employee turnover averaged 39% in Iowa.

**In FY22 (Jul 1, 2021-June 30, 2022), Direct Support Professional (direct care) annual employee turnover at Discovery Living was 19%.**

The numbers above are encouraging, and we strongly believe that our ability to recruit and maintain a stable workforce directly correlates to our reputation as an exceptional provider of services and supports.

In 2010, National PHI, an advocacy organization for direct support professionals, reported that there were 3.1 million direct care workers in the United States. By 2020, the number of direct care workers had grown to 4.6 million, 2.4 million of whom provide in home care, 675,000 are Residential Care Aides, and 527,000 are Nursing Home Aides.

In the years ahead there will be increased demand for employees, and we can and will continue to work aggressively to retain our most valuable asset, our employees.

### The Sky is the Limit

People with disabilities have long made invaluable contributions to our society. Listed below are a few historical icons who also had one or more developmental disabilities.

- George Washington had a cognitive disability that made learning a major struggle for him. Many people believed he had dyslexia, but he worked hard on his own to fix the problem, since there weren't many resources to help him during that time. Washington would go on to be a very successful general and the first President of the United States.
- Thomas Edison lost almost all his hearing at the age of 12, possibly because of scarlet fever or, as he believed, as the result of an incident in which he was grabbed by the ears and lifted onto a moving train. Despite his hearing loss, Edison had 1093 invention-related patents at the time he passed away. He invented the lightbulb, phonograph, movie camera, stock ticker, automatic telegraph, and dozens of other items.
- Harriet Tubman acquired a traumatic brain injury as a teenager when a slave owner struck her in the head. This resulted in her developing epileptic seizures and hypersomnia. Despite her health challenges, she formed the underground railroad, a secret initiative that freed dozens of slaves, and is also credited with saving thousands of lives by curing dysentery.

The above-mentioned people are just a handful of people with disabilities who have made a significant impact on the world around them.



**N**o one lights up a room brighter than our friend Hunter. Hunter is our fighter. She's overcome a lot of challenges to bring that smile to the masses. Keep an eye out for this one. Her inspiring story is coming your way this November. Our **Annual Appeal** is one of our most important campaigns of the year, and it's because of the generous support of people like you that we can do the work we do for remarkable people like Hunter.

## Celebrating the Americans with Disabilities Act

For over 30 years, the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) has changed lives. The ADA is one of America's most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life -- to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in State and local government programs and services. The ADA is an "equal opportunity" law for people with disabilities. The ADA would have never become a reality without the relentless advocacy of Justin and Yoshiko Dart.

Justin Dart, Jr., who is widely thought of as the "father" of the ADA, was born in 1930 to a very prominent family. Justin admits to misbehaving as a child, which contributed to his attending 7 different schools. He described himself as someone who had little regard for others.

In 1948 Justin contracted polio and was given three days to live. Justin survived but would utilize a wheelchair for the rest of his life. This experience changed his perspective, and he became deeply committed to helping others. He received his bachelors and master's degrees, and launched several successful businesses. He frequently hired women and people with disabilities to empower them.

Justin and his wife, Yoshiko, would soon devote their lives to empowering people with disabilities. In the early 1980's, Dart chaired the Texas Governor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities. In 1981, President Reagan selected Dart to be the vice-chair of the National Council on Disability.



*Justin Dart at  
President Bush's left*

At this time Justin and Yoshiko began a national tour, stopping in every state to gather stories from individuals with disabilities. Their goal was to collect accounts of injustices and hardships in order to create a piece of legislation that would finally address discrimination against people with disabilities in America. The Darts did all of this at their own expense, multiple times.

Justin and Yoshiko brought the stories they collected back to Washington, D.C. and began working towards legislation that is now known as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Upon receiving the information collected, Iowa Senator Tom Harkin worked with many other prominent leaders to author the ADA. Harkin referred to the ADA as "an emancipation proclamation for people with disabilities."

On July 26, 1990, George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act into law on the White House lawn, with Justin Dart on the stage beside him. The last words Bush spoke before signing the document into law were, "let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down."

Justin explained why the ADA is so significant for people with disabilities:

"The ADA is a landmark commandment of fundamental human morality. It is the world's first declaration of equality for people with disabilities by any nation. It will proclaim to America and to the world that people with disabilities are fully human; that paternalistic, discriminatory, segregationist attitudes are no longer acceptable; and that henceforth people with disabilities must be accorded the same personal respect and the same social and economic opportunities as other people."

Justin passed away in 2002 but not before seeing his vision become a reality.

## In Memory



Janet Wagner passed away on August 2, 2022, at the age of 88. For decades Janet advocated on behalf of people with disabilities, and was instrumental in the founding of Discovery Living. Janet and the late Dottie Cummins were two parents, who, along with representatives from the [ARC](#), relentlessly advocated for the development of community-based supports in Linn County. Larry Sharp, one of Discovery Living's founding board members, viewed Janet and Dottie's efforts as critical in convincing the [Knights of Columbus](#) to incorporate the organization we now know as Discovery Living, Inc. Janet's advocacy efforts resulted in many positive changes for hundreds of people with disabilities throughout Iowa. Janet is survived by her son, Wade (Ni); her grandson, Wayko; and daughter, Keely. Rest in peace, Janet, and know that you indeed made a difference.

We had the privilege of providing support services to Brook Wagner, Janet's daughter, and have been blessed by the strong support of her family. On October 3, Brook Wagner passed away at her Pennington home. Brook loved to charm people with her witty one-liners, but could show her sassy side along with giving you the sideways glance. She wasn't shy about flirting with handsome guys until she started dating Ray, who lives at the Aosse house. They loved spending time together and he loved showering her with gifts. Brook always had a tote bag or her favorite purse with a notebook and a pen. She loved writing letters and planning her guest lists for her birthday parties months in advance. Parties were a common thing at Pennington put on by her sister Keely. Her mom Janet and brother Wade also routinely visited, often bringing treats and spending time with Brook and her housemates. She commonly was found watching Wizard of Oz in her room so we all hope to see her again Somewhere over the Rainbow.

*“Somewhere over the  
rainbow, skies are blue  
And the dreams that you  
dare to dream  
Really do come true”*



**Ono**  
*...forever in our hearts*  
*- your family at Nemmers*



The **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** is now **LIVE! 988** is a suicide and crisis phone line that offers 24/7 access to trained counselors who can help people experiencing brain health distress. If you or someone you know is struggling, call or text **988**.



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*Helping adults with  
intellectual disabilities  
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community.*

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