

*Like an open road,
windows down, the wind
blowing through your hair.
More a journey than a destination,
freedom is kinetic.
Freedom brings ease.
A sense of self-confidence. Choices.
Freedom is a voice. Freedom is a right.
Freedom is worth fighting for.
No one knows this better than Hunter.*

Freedom



“Hunter – She’s been a fighter. Her whole life.”

From the moment she arrived, Hunter has been tested. Nourishing herself was a challenge. BREATHING was a challenge. Her survival seemingly at risk, her neonatal team swung into action, fitting her with a feeding tube and attempting to assist the flow of oxygen with a ventilator. Still, she fought - fought to do it all on her own. And she succeeded – time after time. Over the years, she outpaced expectations. Expectations that she’d need a heart and lung transplant. Expectations that she wouldn’t survive her early childhood. With steadfast persistence and an unwillingness to accept defeat, Hunter and her family marched forward.

time with her friends at the sensory center. She makes sure to fill her days with some of her favorite things: the wind, water, and loud music. A trip to a local splashpad or park can bring all three, with a rolled down window, some car tunes, and some quality time at the pool.



“Every single obstacle they’ve thrown out there, she beats.”

Fast forward several years. Hunter and her father have worked hard – developing new skills, building bonds, and exploring the world around them. As Hunter approached adulthood, Dad began to consider the limitations of being a working, aging parent and wanted to ensure Hunter had access to every opportunity available for continued



Dad visits often so that he and Hunter can enjoy her love for camping and the outdoors. “It’s a rare occurrence,” he says, “that I arrive to visit and *don’t* hear her laughing inside before I’ve even reached the front door.” It’s music to a parent’s ears to know their loved one has found that level of joy in their independent life. Though bittersweet, it means something to him when Hunter tells him “Good-Dye!” (That’s “good-bye



growth and self-discovery. After carefully considering all of the options, he and Hunter chose Discovery Living.

“When the placement is right, you know it.”

Today, Hunter is thriving. Hunter speaks with her own voice, chooses ways to spend her time in ways that are meaningful to *her*, and spreads enthusiasm and kindness wherever she goes.

Known for her friendly hellos and her burgeoning assertiveness, Hunter has really taken control of her life. She looks forward to



in ‘Hunter-ese.’) to tell him she’s ready to go home and by “home” she no longer means Dad’s house. He tells us he knew he had the right place when Discovery Living made the distinction of indicating “they work in Hunter’s home,” not “Hunter would be living in their (the provider’s) home.” It’s a subtle shift in perspective, but “That makes me feel good.” Hunter has fought hard to get to where she is today. And she continues to explore the benefits of the freedom she has won.



Freedom is worth fighting for.

The fight to survive. The fight to outlive expectations. The fight to surpass what some didn’t consider possible. The fight to shape her own identity. The fight to thrive. These markers lined the paths that led Hunter to where she is today – experiencing autonomy, finding her personal zeal, and stretching her freedom beyond its limitations.

Discovery Living’s mission is to provide supported community living services so adults with developmental disabilities can live successful, satisfying lives in the mainstream of society.

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Dear Friend,

Stories like Hunter's remind us that some things are worth fighting for. The freedom to grow beyond expectations. The freedom to thrive. The freedom to find your voice. ...The freedom to pursue a dream – like providing exceptional services. The last five years have challenged us in ways no one could have predicted. We are thankful that the last several months brought relative peace.

Even as the dust settled, YOU were there at our side. YOU were our partner in service. YOUR support meant we could continue to follow that dream and get back to basics.

Here are just some of the things we accomplished together:

- Met our goal of 100% member community integration
- Completed \$470,000 in home improvements
- Built two new homes at a cost of \$850,000
- Began providing support to 15 of the more than 100 people waiting to receive our services
- Expanded membership at our life centers to 51 since the opening of our community center this past year
- Increased focus on member health screening and assessments
- Recruited 45 new caregivers
- Maintained annualized employee turnover at 19% (less than half the state average)

We are truly GRATEFUL for the role you played in helping us accomplish so much!

YOUR DONATIONS will HELP us continue our GOOD WORK for individuals with disabilities and their families. Here are a few examples of how we will use your generosity to empower others this year:

- **Home modifications that make member homes more accessible and safe**
- **Providing residential support services to at least 10 individuals from our waiting list**
- **Supporting an additional 20 members at our three centers**

Rest assured, 100% of your gift will be used to directly support the people we serve in Linn County.

Your generosity makes it possible for Discovery Living to continue carrying on our mission. YOU fuel our ambition to do so! YOU make a difference in the lives of many individuals like Hunter! Thank you!!

Warmly, your partners in service,

Pat Schmitt, Board Chair
and sister of Discovery Living member

Robert Hebl, Executive Director

P.S. Journeys like Hunter's inspire us every day at Discovery Living - and hers is just one of more than 150 equally compelling stories. Wouldn't it be worth the investment to know that YOU played a critical role in empowering any one of them to flourish with such freedom and self-fulfillment?

YES! I believe people of all abilities deserve an opportunity to pursue and fulfill their dreams - their personal freedom. **I am pleased to enclose my tax-deductible contribution.**

Giving is as easy as **1... 2... 3!**

1 Verify your Contact Information:

2 State Your Gift Amount

\$90 \$30

\$60 \$12

\$36 Other:

 \$ _____

3 Maximize Your Impact

Matching Gifts - Check with your employer, as your gift could be doubled!

Eliminate Tax Implications - Making a charitable gift directly through your required distribution from an individual retirement account yields **zero** tax implications!

Do you wish for your gift to be given...

In **memory/honor** (circle one) of...?

Name: _____

Thank you

...for your gift to Discovery Living.