The mission of the Center for Independence is to help children and young adults with disabilities achieve their highest level of independence in the home, school, community and workforce. We provide therapy programs that develop life skills and motor function in a manner that promotes positive self-reliance, self-esteem and an “I Can!” attitude. Committed to breaking down barriers to employment, the Center also provides job linkage and placement for young adults with disabilities through our innovative program, Working Together Chicago.

What an incredible year! During 2019 the Center introduced new programs, hired new talented staff and expanded into our new site located in Chicago. This past year the Center had the honor and pleasure of serving more than 350 children and young adults with disabilities and provided over $885,000 in charitable care to ensure full participation regardless of income or insurance limitations. Most importantly, the Center’s children and young adults made exciting strides towards independence!

When children with physical disabilities start in our motor training program for the first time, there are often looks of fear and uncertainty – on behalf of the child and parent! There can be hard moments and sometimes difficult conversations, but at the end of the day, after spending hours and hours working on skills that most of us take for granted, the Center children feel accomplished and PROUD of the work they have put in. Children learn to rely on themselves and persevere when faced with a challenge.

Self-determination and an “I Can” attitude are the hallmarks of our program – and the most powerful factor in helping children recognize their potential and realize their dreams.

The Center’s Working Together Chicago program continues to break down barriers to employment for people with disabilities. Last year the Center helped more than 85 young adults with disabilities access and retain jobs. People with disabilities deserve the opportunity to improve their quality of life and financial independence – thank you for helping us open minds and doors!

Children and young adults with disabilities can have great success when they dream big! Thank you for your support and love. We look forward to many more years of learning, growing, working, planning and dreaming together!

Patti Herbst, Executive Director

Site Locations: The Center is proud to offer programs at the following locations:

- **Countryside**
  - (Main Site)
  - 100 W. Plainfield Rd, Ste. 100
  - Countryside, IL 60525

- **Brighton Park - Chicago**
  - 2701 W. 36th Place
  - Chicago, IL 60632

- **Northwest**
  - St. Francis de Sales Church
  - 135 S. Bueshing Rd.
  - Lake Zurich, IL 60047

- **Label Us Able**
  - Meet 1st Tuesday of Month
  - Flossmoor Library
The Center has been blessed with special angels throughout our history. Our dear friend and angel to the Center, Harry Langer, passed away this past October, 2019. Harry Langer was a savvy businessman growing his Chicago real estate holdings from a three flat in the late 1960’s to thousands of units in Chicago’s northside and Gold Coast by the early 2000’s. Harry was well respected by his peers in the industry and beyond.

Mr. Langer also cared for the Center and our families with incredible generosity. Mr. Langer and his loving family helped raise the funds to build our Countryside location – which remains debt free to this day due to their kindness. Harry leaves a huge hole in the hearts of the Langer family, and his loving wife Joyce, but his kindness and care lives on in the many children he has helped over the years.

The Center’s innovative program, Working Together Chicago, is opening doors to employment! WTC has been serving as a One-Stop Career Connections Center with the sole objective of fostering employment of people with disabilities through improved linkage between businesses, Social Service Agencies, DRS counselors and volunteer mentors.

In just three years, Working Together Chicago has placed over 85 people with disabilities in paid internship positions - 81% of those “interns” have retained their job and transitioned to sustained employment! People with disabilities bring value to the workforce and our community. Thank you for helping us open minds and doors.

For a person with a disability, obtaining a meaningful job changes their life. Ryan has a purpose, he tracks his hours (and wants more!), and he is quick to tell everyone about his work. His pride and happiness lifts every member of our family. We love to look in the restaurant window and see his face flush with determination.

-Parents of Ryan B.

Volunteer mentors are critical to the success of Working Together Chicago. Mentors matter! Not only do they foster “true” inclusion, mentors improve overall workplace productivity and help our young adults with disabilities through transition periods by acting as guides, sounding boards, and confidantes. Mentors increase employee job satisfaction, retention, and foster professional development of the WTC young adults.

Consider making a real difference in the world today. Volunteer to be a WTC mentor. For more information about our mentor program, contact Joanne Callahan at jcallahan@cfice.org or 312-995-3302.

For more information on the program, please visit www.WorkingTogetherChicago.org
**Gracias! Köszönöm! Merci! Danke! Thank you!**

The Center has a lot of generous friends to be thankful for, including:

Everyone that helped with the **21st Annual Golf Outing & Fundraiser!**

Katrena Card, Angela Cecchi, Kathy Foley, Camille Fulton, Herbert Fulton, Naheda Jablonski, Rebecca Kuntz, Sonja Lazarevic, Tracy Lewis, Megan and Mike Lindberg, Aneta Lojek, Charlotte Maloney, Beth Mann, Brooke Matteucci, Anne McSweeney, Jessica Miller, Kathy Olson, Tracy Olson, Joey Penachio, Ginny Prihoda, Lisa Rowen, Denise Scott, Irene Wolinski and Nicole Zwiercan. Our event would not be the same without you. You are each so appreciated!

**Thank you Nives and Joe Rizza**

*For hosting another Holiday Party for the Center children and families! Thank you for spreading Christmas spirit this season.*

**Your donations make a difference...**

It's not just low-income families who face barriers to therapy services...

High deductible insurance plans and HSA plans continue to shift the cost of therapy and healthcare to middle-income families.

The CDC estimates medical costs for children with Cerebral Palsy are **10 times higher** than typically-developing children. Middle-income families are struggling to pay for their child's necessary therapeutic services.

The Center has *never* turned a child away due to insurance or income limitations! Thank you.

March 2020
Financial Report

The Center considers it an honor to be stewards of the generous donations we receive. Per the December 31, 2019 Financial Statements, we are pleased to report that 90% of every dollar was spent on therapy and vocational programs that serve children and young adults with disabilities and 10% spent on Management and Fundraising Expenses.

Total Revenue + Public Support $1,661,438

Expenses

Program Services $1,469,907
Management/General 112,362
Fundraising 48,689

Total Expenses $1,630,958

Increase in Net Assets $30,480

Net Assets - December 31, 2019 $1,556,531

As a result of your kindness, and so very important to the families of the Center, during 2019 we were able to provide over $885,000 in charitable care, guaranteeing every child’s participation regardless of income or insurance limitations!
What is Conductive Education?

Conductive Education is an intensive method of teaching people with motor disabilities to be more functionally independent. It is founded on the premise of neural plasticity; with intensive focused practice, the brain is capable of creating new pathways despite significant damage.

Children with motor disabilities develop and learn in the same way as typically developing children do. However, what most children learn through assimilation, the child with a motor disorder must be taught as a skill, whether it be walking, toileting, or dressing.

Our talented staff of Conductive Education Teachers, Physical and Occupational Therapists work together to provide a comprehensive program to promote confidence and motivation in every child, so that life skills are achieved to the best of their ability. The peer setting encourages children to take responsibility for their learning with an “I Can!” attitude.

CE Testimonials from families of the Center

My 6 year old daughter just started taking her very first steps at CFI. We were told by doctors that we shouldn’t set the bar so high for her because it will only lead to disappointment. We are given disappointing statistics on a regular basis on the chances of her being able to walk, sit, or stand on her own. At Center for Independence statistics are kept away from her dreams of independence. I only ever hear positive “you can do it” attitudes, and I know that my daughter has the right team on her side! I have been looking for a community like the Center for Independence for a long time and we feel so blessed to have the guidance and dedication that the therapists give to us every week.

-Northwest Center Mother

The Center is the only place where I feel comfortable bringing my son. Everyone is always so happy to see him here!

-Countryside Center Mother

Improving Self-Determination and Self-Reliance in children with disabilities is the greatest influence in success at school, college, and ultimately, employment!
Board of Directors
Our sincere thanks to the Board for donating their time and talents to the Center!

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The Center meets all 20 Better Business Bureau of Chicago Charity standards, is rated Platinum by Guidestar Charity Navigator, and received a 2019 “Top Non-Profit” Award from Philanthropedia!

Save the Dates

• March 4th - CFI Parents Night (RSVP to Ani Hunt at ahunt@cfice.org)

• April 18th - Healthy Moms Healthy Families Workshop

• April 29th - Working Together Chicago Opening Doors Fundraiser at Chicago Cultural Center

• August 18th - Working Together Chicago Lagunitas Chicago Fundraiser

• September 25th - CFI 22nd Annual Fundraiser

Center for Independence is an Illinois nonprofit under section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code. For more information, contact Patti Herbst at pherbst@cfice.org or (708) 588-0833.
Donor List

Our programs could not exist without the generous donations from Individuals, Corporations, and Foundations. Thank you for helping so many children and young adults with disabilities achieve their full potential!

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