

The Center for Independence will present its annual fundraiser on Sept. 26.



# A Sweet Celebration

*Fundraiser to help children and adults with disabilities*

By Nora Dudley || Photography by Cheryl Brown



**E**ach fall, the Center for Independence through Conductive Education hosts its signature fundraiser. The annual event includes a golf outing at Seven Bridges Golf Club in Woodridge, followed by dinner and dancing at Bobak's Signature Events.

The fundraiser brings together the community in support of children and adults with disabilities. All proceeds from the event benefit the center's intensive therapy programs.

The Center for Independence is a community-centered non-profit that provides intensive physical, occupational and speech therapy for children with cerebral palsy and other disabilities, as well as employment services for adults with disabilities.

Beyond therapy, the center offers a wide range of services that support the entire family. Staff regularly advocate alongside parents at school meetings and doctor appointments—especially when navigating major surgeries or complex treatment decisions. They also host equipment clinics where children can be properly fitted for braces, wheelchairs and adaptive car seats, ensuring safety, comfort and mobility. Free disability seminars and workshops with medical professionals empower parents with the knowledge they need to confidently navigate Medicaid, insurance systems and long-term care decisions.

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The annual fundraiser is vital to the Center for Independence's operations.

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What truly sets the center apart is its commitment to community at every level. Throughout the year, it hosts respite days around Mother's Day and Christmas, giving parents the rare gift of free childcare and allowing them time to shop or recharge. Meanwhile, the children engage in crafts, make ornaments and form friendships.

Josephine Boggs has dedicated more than 23 years to the center. As clinical director and director of programs, she shared a preview of this year's event and why community support is more critical than ever.

"In 28 years, the center has never turned a child away due to an inability to pay," Boggs said. "This fundraiser is integral to our mission, and will allow us to raise over \$1.2 million to make sure kids with cerebral palsy have access to intensive therapy."

Boggs reports that this is the center's major annual fundraiser, and it is essential to its operations.

"We provide high-quality, medically-necessary care, often filling a gap that insurance and public systems don't cover," she said. "Insurance companies are decreasing access to middle-income families. These are families who are working, but who have to decide between things like groceries, gasoline and healthcare for their kids, because they make too much to qualify for state-funded programs, but too little to easily afford therapy."

Many of these parents struggle to pay

high deductible rates ranging from \$2,500 to \$5,000 annually before insurance kicks in. The fundraiser directly supports those families.

"We offer a critical safety-net for families," Boggs said. "We are one of the only programs that accepts all types of Medicaid. We recognize that there are pockets of poverty in the western suburbs, and we advocate for low-income families—but middle-income families can fall through the cracks as well. It's so important to support those families experiencing the financial crunch."

Boggs shared that this year's fundraiser comes at a critical time for the center. With 68 percent of families relying on Medicaid, the path to receiving care has become increasingly complex. Insurance authorizations are harder to secure, and denials are on the rise, placing a growing burden on families already navigating the challenges of raising a child with a disability. Earlier this year, a temporary freeze in Medicaid reimbursements sent shockwaves through the community, threatening the stability of programs on which so many depend. The decision was reversed quickly, but it served as a reminder to the center and the people it serves how fragile access to care can be.

Uncertainty isn't limited to public funding. Boggs said traditional donor giving has declined as well, with market volatility impacting supporters. The ripple effect of economic insecurity is real, and that's why this fundraiser is more vital than ever. It serves as a lifeline, helping the center provide

charitable care, bridge gaps in insurance coverage and ensure that no child is turned away.

This year's annual fundraiser will take place on Friday, Sept. 26, with lunch at noon, golf tee times beginning at 1 p.m. and dinner at 6 p.m. In addition to golf, dinner and dancing, the event includes silent and live auctions, as well as a chance to connect with the families the center serves.

"The theme is 'Candyland: the path to independence is sweet,' and the event will include a life-sized Candyland board to make it fun and memorable for everyone, including the kids," Boggs said. "Attendees are encouraged to wear sweet colors."

The silent and live auction will feature a mix of packages from vacation experiences and sports tickets, to the event's signature "instant wine cellar" filled with wine and gift cards generously donated by families. There will also be games on the course like "split the pot" and opportunities for guests to make direct donations during dinner.

The event is open to the public. Tickets are \$100, and can be purchased through the center's website or by phone. Boggs said it's a family-friendly evening, and children with disabilities attend and participate, highlighting the community the center has built. ■

*To attend the fundraiser, make a donation or learn more about the Center for Independence through Conductive Education, visit <https://www.cfimove.org/> or call 708-588-0833.*