



VILLAGE OF PROGRESS

SERVING ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES FOR OVER 50 YEARS

The Village View - Fall 2025

Volume LVIII Number 4



Director's Note:

In the novel, *Jayber Crow*, by Wendell Berry, Jayber is an old man who recounts his life growing up in the early to mid-1900s as a barber in a fictitious small Kentucky town.

Jayber says that as he was busy living his life, it looked like there was no real pattern or plan to it. Then, looking back, he says, "But now it looks to me as though I was following a path that was laid out for me, unbroken... and I have this feeling, which never

leaves me anymore, that I have been *led*."

Like many of Jayber's observations throughout the book, this one rings true to me.

Those of you who know me know that my life has had many turns. Each of them leading me unexpectedly from my former career as a lawyer in Michigan to, eventually, my current position as the executive director at the Village of Progress. And now that my tenure is coming to an end, I am so truly grateful that I was ultimately led here.

During the past 11 years at the Village, I have been honored to work with, and learn from, the men and women who attend here every day. They have introduced me to different ways of seeing and being in the world around me.

I have also been honored to work alongside, and learn from, the men and women on the staff of the Village. Each of them shows so much dedication to the Village's mission and so much kindness and respect to those they serve. (I only wish that more organizations would show the same level of compassion and commitment.)

I have also appreciated the wisdom and maturity of our two boards of directors – for the Village and the Foundation. Their meetings were always professional and their comments insightful. They spent much more energy building up rather than tearing down; asking "why not?" instead of "why?"

There have been several events that have shaken the Village: a years-long state budget impasse, the great flood of '17, and Covid. But there have also been many opportunities for celebration: the Village Bakery, the Attendance Grant Program, the Summer Thrive Program, Hill Street Neighborhood.

THE VILLAGE VIEW

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Director's Note continued:

In January Angie Martin-Bakener will be stepping in as the new Executive Director. The board's decision was unanimous and enthusiastic (see the article introducing Angie inside this newsletter). I am excited to see what new directions the Village will travel in its next chapter under Angie's capable leadership.

Finally, I am so grateful to you, whether you live down the street or in another state. Your support for our mission is something that has continually renewed and energized me, as it has our staff.

The Village has shaped me more profoundly than I shaped the Village. But in a grace-filled world, that is how it should always be.

Brion Brooks

Village Bike Club

This summer we logged over 650 hours in our Village Bike Club. Over two dozen volunteers rode specially designed side-by-side tandems with individuals from the Village. Our bike club is immensely popular and a great way for the community and the Village to regularly engage in a shared activity.

Thank you to all the volunteers that make this program possible each year. Our folks are sad every year when the weather makes us stop and are already looking forward to next year!

Additional volunteers are always welcome, the commitment can be flexible. We always need subs and folks that just ride for part of the season. Call 815-732-2126 and talk to Sherri for more information about cycling.



New Village of Progress Director



Angie Martin-Bakener has been unanimously approved by the Village of Progress Board of Directors to become the Village's next Executive Director. She will step into that role upon the retirement of the Village's current director, Brion Brooks, at the end of the year.

Angie's entire professional career has been dedicated to serving those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. After graduating from Western Illinois University, Angie worked as the residential services director for Stouffer Terrace, a local group home. From there, she moved to Sinnissippi Centers as their Ogle County Family Care Coordinator, a job which included providing developmental screenings for children.

In 2013 Angie joined the Village of Progress as a Qualified Intellectual Disabilities Professional (QIDP). QIDPs function as case managers for agencies serving people with disabilities – tracking the services they receive and ensuring that their plans are being met. She was later promoted to Manager of QIDP Services.

In 2023, Angie implemented the Home-Based Services' Self-Directed Assistance Program (SDA) at the Village. This was in addition to her role as QIDP manager. The SDA program has proven extremely popular and has been growing each year.

Angie supported and helped implement her staff's vision of evolving the Village from its traditional work-focused role into an agency that focuses more on encouraging social and volunteer experiences in the community.

Board President, April Glosser, commented that "It's an exciting time for the Village. The board is impressed with her talents and her vision for the future. We are excited to see Angie grow into this new leadership role."

Brion agreed, adding, "Angie is everything you'd want in someone to lead the Village. Not only is she well versed in Illinois' disabilities rules, but she is creative, competent, and has tremendous compassion for the men and women we serve."

IMPORTANT DATES AT THE VILLAGE OF PROGRESS

WINTER BREAK
DECEMBER 24 -
JANUARY 2

SPRING BREAK
MARCH 30—APRIL 3
2026

**THE JOHN
HERRMANN GOLF
PLAY DAY**

JULY 13, 2026

**PRAIRIE VIEW
GOLF COURSE**
BYRON, IL

TOSOC
**TOUR OF SCENIC
OGLE COUNTY**

SEPTEMBER 26,
2026

**CYCLING EVENT
AT THE VILLAGE**

Summer Thrive 2025: Building Connections and Exploring Possibilities

This summer, Village of Progress launched Summer Thrive, an engaging new program designed by Mark Probasco, QIDP, to support young adults in Ogle County as they transition into life after school. The goal of Summer Thrive is simple yet powerful: to give participants and their families a glimpse of what adulthood in the community can look like.



“Summer Thrive opens doors to experiences and connections that many young adults may not otherwise have access to during the summer.”

— Mark Probasco, QIDP



Over the course of three weeks — one in June, one in July, and one in August — participants came together to connect, learn, and have fun. Activities included hiking, zoo visits, cooking classes, gardening projects, museum tours, cookouts, and sports. These experiences not only created joyful memories but also highlighted the importance of social interaction, community involvement, and skill-building beyond the classroom.

Summer Thrive is more than just a summer program — it is an investment in the future of adults with developmental disabilities in our community. By offering opportunities for



meaningful interaction and exploration, we aim to support independence, confidence, and friendships that last well beyond the summer months.



The Village of Progress is excited by the success of this first year and hope to continue Summer Thrive for years to come, ensuring that individuals in Ogle County always have a welcoming place to grow, connect, and thrive.

Help Us Welcome Some New Faces



Mark Mathieu joined the Village of Progress in October. Mark will be stepping into the QIDP position left open as Angie transitions to become our next Executive Director.

Mark has a master's degree in Elementary Education. For the past eight years, Mark has worked as a fifth grade teacher in Rochelle. He has educational experience in Autism Spectrum Disorders, Trauma Informed Classroom, and Youth Mental Health.

When the transition is complete our three Q's will work side by side in providing Q services to our men and women and our Program Manager, Mindy Johnson, will manage Q services.



Danielle Coyne joined the Village of Progress in October. Danielle has dedicated the last 7 years to working in a residential care setting.

Danielle enjoys organizing and participating in community outings. She has a natural patience and attentiveness that will make her a valued caregiver.

Danielle takes pride in building meaningful relationships with the individuals in her care, creating a supportive and nurturing environment where they feel safe, respected and empowered.



Denison Moseley joined the Village of Progress in October. Denison brings with him several years of experience working as a caregiver.

His background reflects a deep sense of compassion, patience and dedication - qualities that align perfectly with our mission and values.

Denison has already shown a genuine kindness and readiness to connect with those around him and a desire to become actively involved in the community.

Help Us Welcome Some New Faces



Isak Kivisto - Isak is a transition student from Forreston High School who started at the end of last school year. Isak participated in the Thrive program this summer going on hikes and the zoo. Isak is quiet and coming out of his shell and starting to talk to staff. He is very easy going and is a wizard on the ipad.



Ashley Powell – Ashley joined VOP in September through our Attendance Grant Program. She lives in Rochelle and enjoys caring for her two chihuahuas. Some of Ashley's favorite hobbies include drawing, singing, and arts & crafts. She is friendly, upbeat, and brings a wonderful positive energy to VOP. Welcome, Ashley!

Special Olympic Competition Update

HOCKEY— Eight Village of Progress athletes participated in a Special Olympic hockey skills competition in Lisle, Illinois.

This is our first time participating in hockey skills. Chris Otten and Cameron Mabrey received gold medals and will be advancing to the state competition.



GOLF— We had five individuals participate in our first ever golf skills Special Olympics competition in Lasalle Il.

We had one gold medalist (Megan Voss) advance to the state games in Decatur and she ended up winning a gold in state.



Donations to the Village of Progress & Foundation

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Special thank you to Martin & Company for selecting The Village of Progress as the beneficiary of the 50/50 drawing at **Martinfest.**

Township • Ralph Papke • Joanne & Steve Pennock • Patricia Piwonka • John & Lori Richardson • Jennifer



Rodriguez • Jim & Vada Rosenbalm • Anne Putnum Smith • Steven Raine • Rochelle Chiropractic • Rochelle Kiwanis Golden K • Sharon Russell • Arnie Schelling • Terry Schuster • Terry & Micki Smith • Pam Steele • Sheryl Stern • Lora Stevens-McKee • Taryn Stewart • Stillman Valley Lions Club • St Paul Lutheran Church, Oregon • Bill & Kay Tallyn • Sharon Thunberg • Ben Wagner • Kathy Wilson • Margaret Wolf • Sheryl Pitts Wolff • Karen Young • **In Honor of:** Brion Brooks Retirement • Sue Croft •

In Memory of: Virginia Cates • Carolyn & Maurice Koebler • Di Anna Rundle • Lorretta Sigler • **In Kind:** Oregon United Methodist Church – Food • Banquet Donations from Steve & Dixie Hammer • Snyder Pharmacies • David & Dawn Fitzgerald • Merlin's Greenhouse & Hagemann Horticulture.

THANK YOU.... Our ability to maintain meaningful and effective programs for Ogle County adults with disabilities depends on your donations & volunteer efforts!

Exploring Our Community!

In an effort to increase our exposure in the community, the Village of Progress continues to create a variety of small group outings. Our goal is to promote and improve self-advocacy, informed decision making, budgeting/money skills and greater life experiences. Everyone is able to choose the activities they want to participate in each time.





The 10th annual TOSOC – the Tour of Scenic Ogle County was on Saturday, September 27th. Riders started pulling into the Village’s parking lot to unload their bikes and pump up their tires about 6:45 a.m. – registration opened at 7:00 a.m. By the time registration closed, about

300 cyclists had signed up and were out on the road. TOSOC was developed with the help of Oregon resident and cycling enthusiast Scott Stephens. Stephens was instrumental in developing a number of biking routes around Ogle County, including the TOSOC routes.

TOSOC has three cycling routes to choose from. The first is a **10 mile family ride** through Oregon. Developed with the help of the Oregon



Park District, this ride tours a number of the city’s parks. A **32 mile route** takes cyclists through Grand Detour (stopping at the John Deere Historical Museum) and the Nachusa



Grasslands for Bison viewing; a **62 mile loop** adds in some of the scenic areas north of Mount Morris and west of Daysville.

By the end of the day, TOSOC netted almost **\$14,000** for the Village’s Attendance Grant Program. Attendance Grants were developed by the Village in 2014 because so many people with disabilities, people who are entitled to services, but cannot receive them due to Illinois lacking the

funding. TOSOC proceeds will provide over 160 days of attendance. Attendance Grants are awarded to men and women in Ogle County, enabling them to attend the Village on a part time basis. Search TOSOC on Facebook for more pictures.

Special Thanks to our awesome sponsors & volunteers who make the entire event possible.



Abby’s Wolff Pack
Brad & Donna Bauer

Gary & Susan Davis
Joyce & Larry Groenhagen
Robert & Diana Hanson

Frank & Dianne Swingel
Mark & Kathi Tremble

The Hill Street Project Breaks Ground

After over five years of dreaming, brainstorming, learning, and planning, the Hill Street Neighborhood is becoming a reality.

Hill Street Neighborhood, located in Mount Morris, will be an exciting new concept in disabilities housing. It creates an environment where those with developmental disabilities will have the resources to truly become “part of” the community where they live.



Breaking the mold of what traditional disabilities housing looks like, the Hill Street Neighborhood will be comprised of 12 duplexes, half of which will be occupied by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

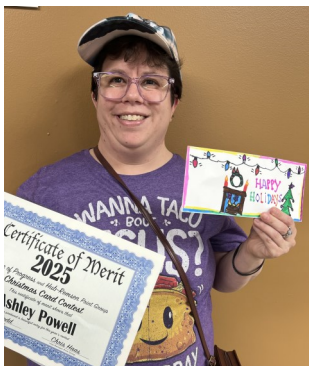
In addition to intentionally integrating into the community, Hill Street will allow those with disabilities to create their own unique combination of supports that will best help them live more independent lives.

This project is headed by the Village of Progress in Oregon, Illinois, and Kreider Services in nearby Dixon. The Village of Progress' Executive Director, Brion Brooks, said, “Truly integrated living for those with disabilities has been a dream of mine since graduating from seminary in 2007.”

The Village and Kreider began working in earnest on the concept in 2020. In 2024 they received funding approval from the Illinois Housing Development Authority. A groundbreaking ceremony was held on October 7. Construction commenced the following week. The project is expected to be completed in 14-16 months.

Christmas Card Contest

We held our 53rd annual Christmas Card Contest, open to entries from all the men and women that attend the Village. For the last 31 years Chris Haas and Tim Remsen of Hub - Remsen Print Group, have awarded



certificates of participation and a

small cash prize to all entrants. They also print each year's winning card for use as both the Hub - Remsen Print Group and the Village of Progress Christmas cards.



This year's judges looked over thirty entries before selecting a design by Ashley Powell as the 2025 winning entry. Sam Guzzardo took 2nd place and Dylan Nagy received 3rd place.

VOP Annual Banquet

In October the Village held its Annual Banquet! We recognized several individuals for their outstanding service to the Village.



Sherri Drew received the Robert Stahl Friendship Award. Two personal achievement awards were given: The John Herrmann Distinguished Improvement

Award was given to **Daniel Norris** and the Robert Moehle Personal Achievement Award went to **Sue Croft**.



Rachel Brooks was singled out to receive the Carly Heller Special Olympian Award and **Tim Koebler** was

acknowledged for his good sportsmanship with the Coach Cookie Warren Memorial Award. **Jeremy Reynolds** was honored with the Fred Smith Competitive Employment Award for his work at Crest Foods, The Village of Progress and The Village Cleaning Service.



The Village was honored to extend the Janie Etnyre Volunteer of the Year award to **Kristy Eckardt**. Finally, the

Robert Stouffer Special Recognition Award was given this year to the **The Herrmann Family** for being such a dedicated family and true friend to the Village. The Annual Banquet is more than a night of awards given and received. It's a night of thanks extended and gratitude returned. And that is what makes it such a wonderful place to spend an evening.

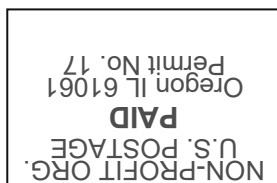


The Village is funded in part by the
Ogle County Community Mental
Health (708) Board), United Way,
Etnyre Foundation & Rochelle Area
Community Foundation



Special thanks to Brad and Donna Bauer
for donating a trailer with benches. We
have used it many times this summer
and fall. It is a fun new addition that our
folks will enjoys for year to come. The
trailer initially belong to Dr. Howes and
was donated in his memory.

**THE
VILLAGE
BAKERY
IS OPEN
7AM — 2PM
7 DAYS A
WEEK**



Village of Progress
PO Box 418
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