

The Monarch Society

Making a gift to Ray Graham Association through your will is a thoughtful and easy way to empower people with disabilities to reach, grow, and achieve. A simple and straightforward sentence in your will can help the people we serve live rich and meaningful lives.



"I give, devise, and bequeath to Ray Graham Association for People with Disabilities, the sum of ____ dollars (\$____) for the benefit of its general support (or specify the program you wish to support)."

We honor people who remember Ray Graham in their will or estate plans as members of the Monarch Society. For more information on the benefits of the Monarch Society, call 630-620-2222.

Robert F. Spahn Memorial Golf Classic

Tee-up for a day of golf, drinks, and networking with other business and community leaders while raising funds to support people with disabilities in DuPage County and the surrounding area.



Monday, May 24, 2021 – Shotgun start at 9:30 a.m.
River Forest Country Club
15W468 Grand Ave, Elmhurst

Tickets and sponsorships are quick, easy, and convenient at [RGAGolf.org](https://www.RGAGolf.org).



[RayGraham.org](https://www.RayGraham.org)

The Events Calendar



Ladies' Night In (Previously Ladies Luncheon), virtually on Saturday, March 20 at 4:30 p.m., is a virtual happy hour for women and their friends who support people with disabilities.

Learn more and buy tickets at [RGAEvents.org](https://www.RGAEvents.org).

Robert F. Spahn Memorial Golf Classic

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Ray Graham
Association
*Empowering people with disabilities
to reach, grow, and achieve™*

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Ray Graham
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*Empowering people with disabilities
to reach, grow, and achieve.™*



Greetings!

Recently, I overheard someone discussing the differences between optimism and hope. Optimism, to them, is a passive belief that the world is getting better. On the other hand, hope seemed to be an active belief that, together, we can make the world better. This idea seemed to put an interesting frame around the events of the past year for Ray Graham Association. There were times at the beginning of the pandemic where we followed public health guidance, “sheltered-in-place,” and tried to remain optimistic. However, it soon became apparent that wishful thinking wouldn’t be enough to keep the people with disabilities that we support happy, healthy, and safe. So our team members sprang into action—hopeful that working together and following guidance from local and national health experts would make a difference.

Together, we balanced science with everyday life...and we succeeded. Ray Graham Association recently teamed up with the DuPage Department of Public Health and Jewel-Osco to provide 800 COVID-19 vaccinations to people with disabilities and the people who support them. People of all abilities and backgrounds, including you, come together day after day for a common purpose: to bring wellness to our community and wholeness to the lives of people with disabilities. This is what hope looks like—and we’re grateful for your active role in making it real.

Thank you, as always,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Zoeller".

Kim Zoeller
President & CEO

Tim at Work

Employment Services



“Tim is a conscientious and thorough employee. He is not afraid to work.”

—Employment Specialist Bob Griffin

Like millions of Americans, Tim found himself looking for a new job in 2020. Employment provides people with disabilities a sense of dignity and purpose, but interviewing for a new position can be daunting for any job seeker. Our team members discover each person’s strengths and interests so that their job not only provides financial stability, but also opportunities for growth and advancement.

“Tim is a conscientious and thorough employee,” said Employment Specialist Bob Griffin. “He is not afraid to work.” Those qualities came through in his interview at Goodwill, where Tim landed a new job. His self-esteem rebounded because he was once again earning a steady paycheck, but more importantly, the respect of his colleagues and friends.

Since Tim has been working, Bob has continued to provide support so that he can keep his new job. The eventual goal, however, is for Tim to be completely independent of job coaching services. Unlike other service providers, our eight employment specialists can assist the people we support and employer partners on weekends, holidays, and evenings.

Skills like interview training, resume writing, and learning to dress for success contribute to the 90% retention rate for Ray Graham Association employment seekers. Ray Graham Association partners with 150 businesses and institutions throughout DuPage and the surrounding counties to help people like Tim find a job and find the right fit.

Kim at Home

Residential Services

One of the most eagerly anticipated changes in the past year was closing the Specialized Living Center (SLC). When the SLC opened in 1980, it was a ground-breaking and in-demand living facility for people with disabilities. Forty years later, following the latest social research and the dreams of the people you help us support, we made the person-centered and financially sound decision to find a more suitable home for every person living at the SLC. Some people transferred to other organizations that offer 24-hour nursing assistance, and many moved into Ray Graham Association homes in neighborhoods just like yours.

Kim had spent her entire life living with her family until she moved into the SLC in 2015. Although she loved the extensive and supportive network of friends and staff at the SLC, her team members noticed she hoped to live in a neighborhood home again. When that opportunity presented itself in 2020, Ray Graham team members were eager to help Kim's dreams come true. Now she has the chance to wake up, head to the kitchen to help cook breakfast, have a chat with her neighbors, and enjoy the comfort and flexibility of home-life that many take for granted.

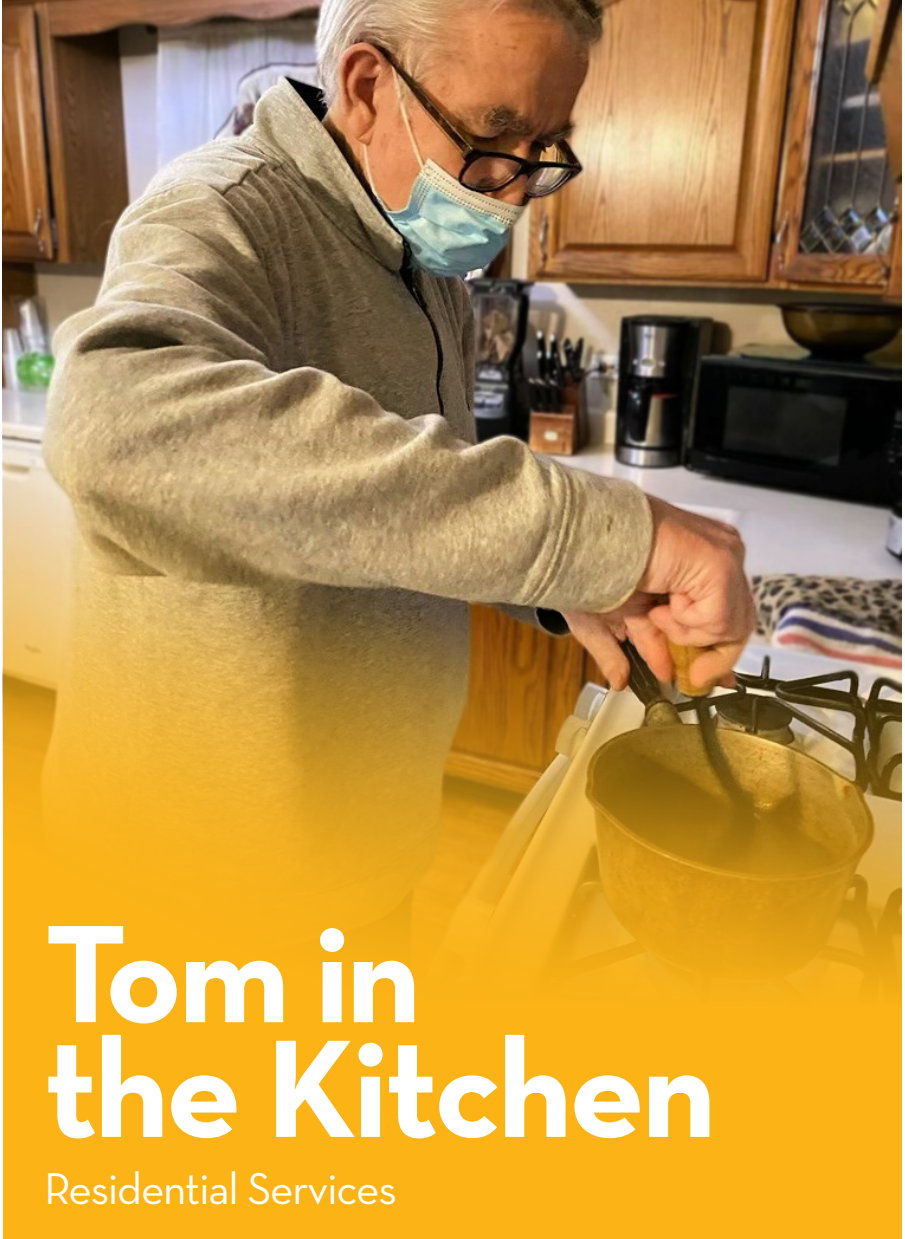
Ray Graham Association currently operates over 25 (and counting!) community-based homes and apartments throughout neighborhoods in DuPage County, most of which offer 24-hour support. Each home reflects the men or women who live there and features multiple bedrooms, baths, kitchen, dining area, and a family room. Team members support people with daily tasks like cooking, cleaning, shopping, and hygiene. Sometimes referred to as CILAs (Community Integrated Living Arrangements), Ray Graham Association team members point out that that term refers to a government licensure. The people who live in these houses do not call them CILAs—they call them home.

“When that opportunity presented itself in 2020, Ray Graham team members were eager to help Kim’s dreams come true.”



How do you like the Achiever?

Email us your thoughts at Development@RayGraham.org



Tom in the Kitchen

Residential Services

The heart of every home is the kitchen, and that is where you can usually find Tom. As someone who eats a gluten-free diet, Tom knows that the best way to learn about what you are eating is to prepare it yourself. Often, maintaining a gluten-free diet can be challenging. Not only does it limit what foods you can eat, but without special knowledge, it can limit social interactions.

With the help of Team Leader Naty Pe, Tom used knowledge as a gateway to independence. He spends time making various recipes for himself and the gentlemen who live with him, much to their delight. If you ask him how he feels about his latest culinary creations, Tom will say, "I am proud."

Pride and independence are two foundations of a life well-lived. Thanks to your support, Over 100 people with disabilities like Tom flourish in our 25+ community-based homes that promote independence and foster friendship. Whether working at their job, volunteering in their community, or learning new life skills like cooking their own meals, the people we support have greater control of their lives.

Kennedy at the Barn

Recreational Services

Kennedy began semi-private lessons at the Ray Graham Association Hanson Center two years ago and her progress has been astounding. She is now an independent rider and arrives early to groom and tack her horse before the lesson begins. Using grooming tools and saddling the horse are important bonding experiences for Kennedy, the horses she rides, and the other riders in her class.

Horseback riding is an effective therapy for her physical disability. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hanson Center barn was closed for the welfare of our riders, volunteers, and staff. During that time, her father noticed a regression in her ability to walk. That is why our dedicated Hanson Center team was eager to get people back in the saddle as soon as it was safe! “Kennedy is cheerful and upbeat,” said recently retired Horsemanship Administrator Cathy LeBeau. “She rides independently and can trot and canter complex patterns.”

The therapeutic horsemanship program uses 20 horses to provide opportunities for children like Kennedy and adults with disabilities to experience the joy and therapeutic benefits of riding horses. Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) certified instructors lead individual and small-group lessons with trained volunteers.





Carolyn at the Gym

Recreational Services

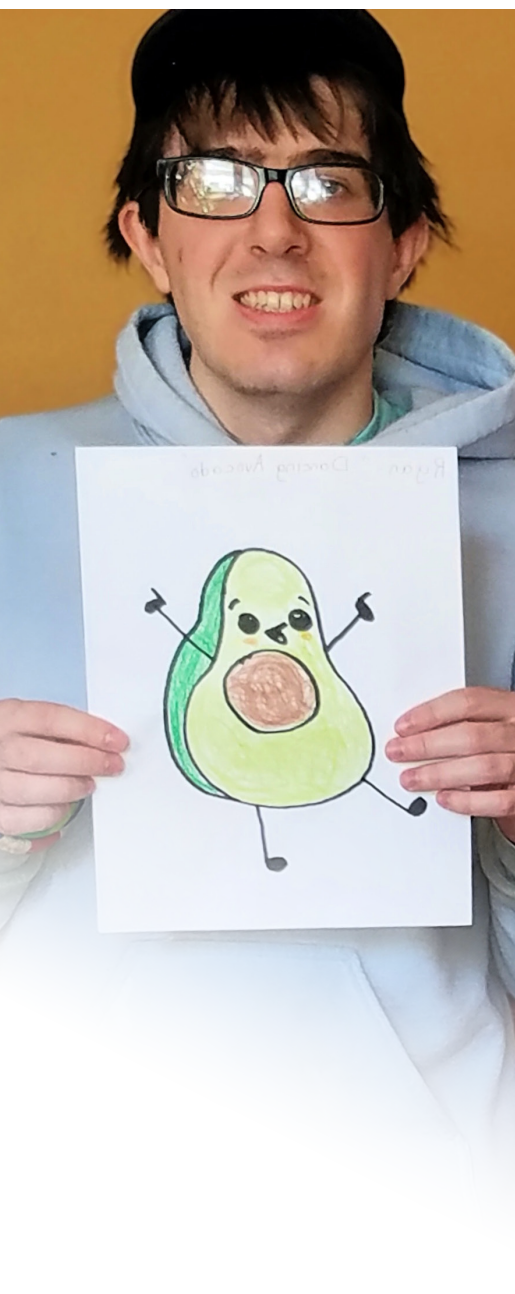
Carolyn has been participating with Gateway Special Recreation Association since she was ten years old. Today, she is a bright, athletic, and enthusiastic 20-year-old. Throughout the past decade, she has participated in several recreation, leisure, and athletic activities. Carolyn joined Gateway SRA like most kids, attending the Summer Spectacular Day Camp. She enjoyed the fun that summer offers, such as pool days, horsemanship lessons at the Hanson Center, arts and crafts, and field trips.

As Carolyn grew within Gateway SRA, her recreation interests and hobbies evolved into being a member of our Gators Golf, Tennis, and Bocce Team. As an athlete, she participates in various Special Olympic Illinois competitions, in which Gateway SRA team members coach and support her. Carolyn's wide variety of special recreation interests include Gator Fitness, health and wellness, tai chi, bowling leagues, social clubs, and several special events.

Her love for recreation and leisure is inspirational to her friends, who she stays actively involved with through Gateway SRA. With the help of our team members, Carolyn can make her own independent choices when it comes to exploring her recreation, activities, health, and free time—exemplifying what it means to be a Gateway SRA Gator!

Ryan on Zoom

Life Skills Services



“The drawing classes have reintroduced Ryan to an old hobby. He is quite the artist!”

—Nancy (Ryan’s mother)

Monarch Services offers five flexible programs that meet people—and especially young adults—where they are during times of transition. The newest service, Monarch Zoom, is a virtual experience that helps people make new friends from the safety and comfort of their home and focuses on reducing social isolation while fostering strong and meaningful human bonds. Ray Graham Association team members lead weekly check-ins to foster emotional growth, “how-to” demonstrations to develop personal strengths, interactive games to deepen friendships, and virtual trips to learn new skills.

Ryan joined Monarch Zoom, albeit hesitantly, in hopes of finding a creative outlet and practicing communication skills in a new, virtual format. “The drawing classes have reintroduced Ryan to an old hobby,” said Ryan’s mother, Nancy. “He is quite the artist!”

Now Ryan is excited to log on and see his friends four days a week. Through a varied schedule that fosters hands-on learning, his communication has become more engaged and direct. Team members and other participants are thankful for his joyful energy that lifts the spirits of his friends and staff alike.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Raising Funds and Safety Standards

Every dollar raised at our events promote self-esteem, self-confidence, and independence for thousands of children and adults with disabilities.

Because our highest priority is the health of the people we support, your family, and our team, our fundraising events are still adjusted for safety.



Ladies' Night In (Previously Ladies Luncheon)

At 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, Mar. 20, enjoy a virtual happy hour for women and their friends who support people with disabilities.

Learn more and buy tickets at RGAEvents.org.



Robert F. Spahn Memorial Golf Classic

At 9:30 a.m. on Monday, May 24 at the River Forest Country Club, enjoy a day of golf, food, and great conversation with other community and business leaders across our community.

Learn more and buy tickets and RGAGolf.org.

“Every dollar raised at our events promote self-esteem, self-confidence, and independence for thousands of children and adults with disabilities,” says Chief Development Officer Mark Langan. Participating in our fundraising events is a fun and social way to support an array of services that cater to people’s individual needs, strengths, and dreams.

Cami's Corner



Cami Smith is a Ray Graham Association Board Member and chairs the Advocacy Committee

“ March 2020 was the start of an uncertain year for everyone in the world. The virus not only put companies out of business, but sadly killed thousands of people. Vacations were canceled and so were weddings. I felt so bad for high school seniors who couldn't go to prom or walk across the stage to accept their diplomas.

My heart aches for teachers who are trying to teach kids on Zoom. It is hard to teach in a regular classroom, and I could only imagine how hard it is to teach through Zoom. My heart aches for parents who have to decide whether to send their children to school or not. Children don't always understand why they have to wear masks or why they can't sit close to their friends. My heart goes out to the teachers who have to go back to the classrooms worrying that the atmosphere isn't safe.

We had hoped that a new year would be a fresh new start. We looked forward to new adventures, considering new job opportunities, continuing education, traveling, and having big gatherings... perhaps not yet.

I want to thank the Ray Graham staff for putting the lives of the residents before everything else. They gave up their private time to stay in the Ray Graham homes for weeks at a time to keep the individuals safe from the virus. Since the individuals couldn't see family, the staff acted like their family.

What will the new normal be like? Will masks be the new fashion? When will we be able to go to plays, parties, sporting events, and weddings? Will the vaccine be a yearly shot like the flu shot?

No matter what the new normal is, remember... the whole world is in this together. Hang in there! ”



Ray Graham Association®

*Empowering people with disabilities
to reach, grow, and achieve.™*

Ray Graham Association is a nonprofit organization that serves nearly 2,000 people with developmental disabilities and their families in DuPage County and the surrounding area at over 35 locations through five service areas: residential, life skills, recreational, employment, and family support.