



EMPOWERED BY YOU



A New Model for Home:

Creating a vision for supported
independent living in Arkansas

Story starts page 11

A Letter to Our Community

As a new school year begins, we are inspired by the possibilities ahead and grateful for donors like you who make them possible.

Across Easterseals Arkansas, children, students and young adults are returning to our Preschools, Academy, ACCE, and SET programs ready to learn, grow, and achieve new levels of independence. Every classroom, therapy session, and vocational experience is part of a larger vision - to create pathways that empower individuals with disabilities to thrive, participate fully in their communities, and reach their greatest potential.

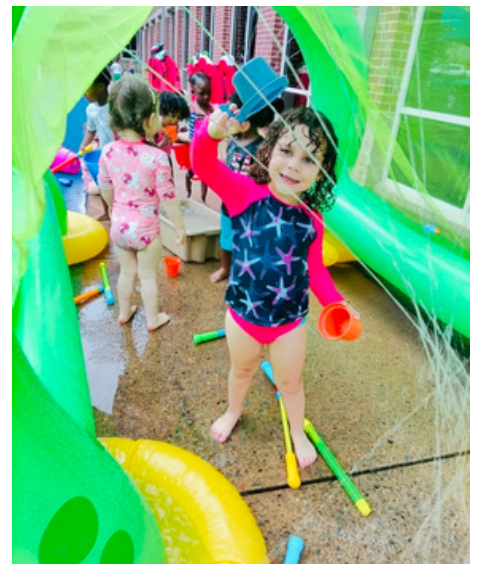
This year, we are also advancing important investments that support independence beyond the classroom. We are in the beginning phases of building a new four-bedroom demonstration home on our campus, expanding housing options for adults with disabilities and providing an opportunity for parents, donors and friends to see how Roommate Housing and smart home technology should exist in their neighborhoods.

Looking ahead, we are strengthening our role as a voice for individuals with disabilities and their families. As Arkansas prepares for a new legislative session, Easterseals Arkansas will continue working with policymakers,

community partners and advocates to pursue solutions that strengthen support systems, expand access to services and improve long-term outcomes. Advocacy is an essential part of our commitment to building a stronger future for the people we serve.

Together, these efforts reflect our vision of becoming the provider of choice for disability services in Arkansas while ensuring our mission remains strong for generations to come. Thank you for investing in the children, adults and families whose lives are transformed through your generosity!

“Advocacy is an essential part of our commitment to building a stronger future for the people we serve.”



A Night to Remember: Arkansan of the Year 2026

On May 14, we honored Lisenne Rockefeller as the 2026 Arkansan of the Year at the Little Rock Marriott. This prestigious award is presented annually to individuals who demonstrate an unwavering commitment to enhancing the state through their time, talent, and resources. Mrs. Rockefeller has served on the Easterseals Arkansas Board of Directors for 30 years. She is also the founder of the Academy, the organization's private K-12 school.

"For three decades, Lisenne Rockefeller has been a guiding force for Easterseals Arkansas," said Mac Bell, Vice President of Development and Communication. "Her vision, leadership, and unwavering commitment, especially in founding the Academy, have transformed countless lives. We are honored to celebrate her as our 2026 Arkansan of the Year."



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Passports Not Required

A look back at summer across Easterseals Arkansas

Nobody left Arkansas this summer. That did not stop us from getting around.

We turned our rooms into other places. The Academy transformed a classroom into Italy for a week of lasagna-inspired art, games, and a pizza party to finish it off. At the Center for Training and Wellness, our folks learned about Japan and celebrated Tanabata, the Star Festival, writing wishes on colorful paper strips and hanging them overhead until the ceiling filled up with them. Our Phase 2 Young Adult Program took on China, rolling their own spring rolls, building Terracotta Army soldiers, becoming experts on giant pandas, and heading to China Taste for lunch.

We cheered together. Watching the World Cup gave everyone a reason to gather around a screen and pick a side, pairing perfectly with a summer spent learning about the rest of the world.

We explored Arkansas, too. Our Stuttgart Preschool friends kicked off Foods Around Arkansas with the sweetest crop around, and the watermelon was a hit! PreK 4 at our Developmental Preschool visited the mountains of Arkansas without a single hiking boot, filling a bulletin board with paper peaks in every shape and color.

We got out into our community. The CTW Community Group walked the grounds at La Petite Roche Plaza, down to the Junction Bridge walkway to learn the story of the little rock that gave our capital city its name. A couple of weeks later they spent an afternoon at the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, taking in the galleries together.

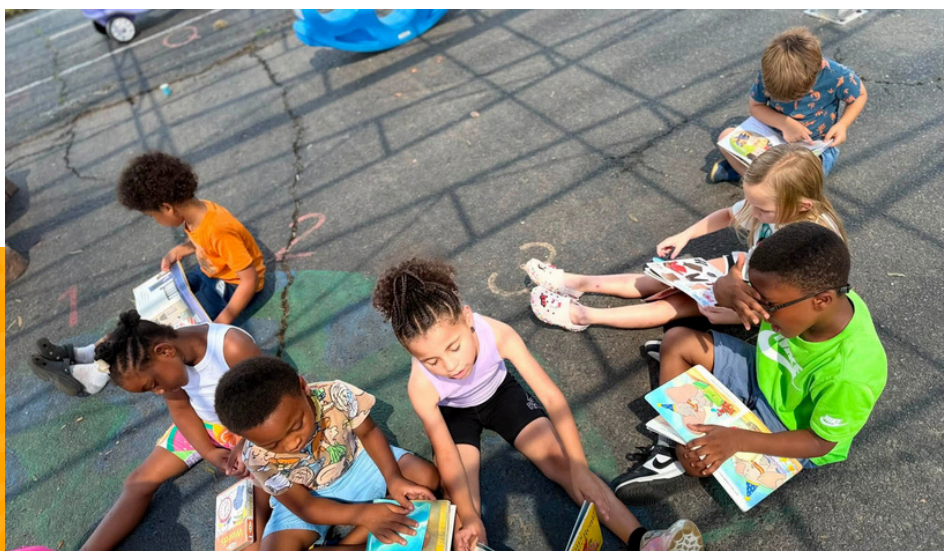


We made a joyful mess. Summer science at The Academy meant building volcanoes and watching the lava flow, and the countdown to each eruption was the best part. Preschool Water Days brought out the sprinklers and water tables all season long, right through our final splash of the year. And CTW traded an ordinary afternoon for mountains of suds on Foam Day, which produced bubbles in the hair, foam beards, and quite possibly the best photos of the entire year.

We were looked after. Stylists from Sport Clips donated a morning at CTW to cut hair for the folks in our program, sending everyone off with a fresh look and a great start to the day. Small acts of generosity go a long way here.

Underneath all of it, the reason we do summer this way: new foods tried, new places navigated, new friendships made, and skills practiced in the moments that feel the least like practice. A child tasting watermelon for the first time is working on more than lunch. A group finding its way through a museum together is building something that lasts past August.

Thank you to the teachers, direct support professionals, therapists, and volunteers who planned every craft, packed every cooler, and hosed down the parking lot afterward. And thank you to the families who trust us with these summers.



Art & Soul: Where Creativity Meets Cause

Thursday, October 15 | 5:30 to 8:30 PM | Midtown Event Center, Little Rock

An evening celebrating the artists of the Easterseals Arkansas A.R.T. (Artistic Realization Technologies) Program, featuring dinner, beverages, a silent and live auction of A.R.T. Program artwork alongside donated pieces from local artists, and a program highlighting the creativity, talent, and determination of the individuals Easterseals serves

Tickets and sponsorships are available now.

[Purchase Tickets & Sponsorships](#)

Questions about tickets or sponsorships?

Kathryn Norton, Development Manager

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"Not Only Surviving, But Thriving"

Nyla's first year at The Academy at Easterseals Arkansas

Nyla's mother calls her a miracle baby, and the record backs her up. Nyla was born at 28 weeks. She had open heart surgery at nine months old. She spent roughly six months of her first year of life at Arkansas Children's Hospital.

This year, she spent her days somewhere else: in a classroom at The Academy at Easterseals Arkansas, learning to sound out words.

"She is miraculous," her mother says. "Her vocabulary is just growing every day. I'm so impressed and amazed by her every day."

It starts with relationship

Ask her teachers how that growth happened and they don't start with curriculum. They start with trust.

"In order to see where our students are, we have to spend time developing a relationship with them," one of Nyla's teachers explains. "And so we spent a lot of time developing relationship with Nyla."

The Academy team keeps a line from educator James Comer close at hand: no significant learning can happen without significant relationship. It is a philosophy, but it is also a practical teaching strategy. Once a child feels safe enough to try, safe enough to be wrong, safe enough to answer out loud, the learning follows.





What a year of progress looks like

When Nyla started at The Academy in the fall, she needed a lot of assistance. By spring, her teachers were describing a different child. She counts to ten. She follows instructions. She answers questions and takes part in class. She's sounding out words. She engages with everyone in the room.

Some of the progress doesn't fit on a checklist. "Her pitch and her intonation and the way that she shares things is just my favorite thing," one teacher says. "And she started telling us that she loves us. It just means so much, because for these kids to be comfortable in their environment says so much. That relationship means that we're able to teach them. And from there, who knows what the limits are."

Every student arrives with a different starting point, so the team plans around the child rather than the grade level. Staff describe a second outcome that belongs to the families: giving them a realistic picture of what their child might be able to do in the future.

Nyla's mother puts it plainly. "I think it's every mother's desire for her child to be in a good environment that's nurturing, and that there's people that really care and are doing their best to make sure that this child is not only surviving but thriving. And that's what she's doing. She's thriving. We are so grateful, and we're looking forward to next year and seeing all the amazing things that Nyla will continue to do."

This year, The Academy grows by 40 students. Forty more children who will walk in one way in August and out another way in May.

Invest in these kids. Your gift helps one more child, and one more family, reach something they weren't sure was possible.





Corporate Partner Spotlight: iProv

The Little Rock agency behind the stories you've watched

If you have attended an Easterseals Arkansas fundraiser in recent years, you have seen their work. You may not have known it.

The video that played before the auction. The story of a child that made the room go quiet. The films that run at Art & Soul, Fashion Event, and Arkansan of the Year. Those come from iProv, the Little Rock digital marketing agency that has become one of our most involved corporate partners.

Telling the story is the work

Every nonprofit runs into the same quiet problem.

You can build an excellent program and still have empty seats, because the family who needed it never heard your name.

A parent searching at midnight for help for a newly diagnosed child. A high school senior's family wondering what comes after graduation. A direct support professional deciding where to build a career. A donor in a ballroom deciding whether to raise a paddle. What each of them knows about Easterseals shapes what they decide.

iProv produces the videos for our fundraisers and events, carrying a participant's story into a room

full of people who can do something about it. They also supported the capital campaign that funded The Academy at Easterseals. Capital campaigns depend on whether people can picture what they're funding, which is a communications problem before it is a fundraising one. The Academy exists now. Students are in it.

What corporate partnership can look like

Partnership does not have to mean a sponsorship line item. Businesses support Easterseals by sponsoring events, sending teams to volunteer, adopting families at the holidays, hiring our program graduates, serving on our boards, and lending expertise their industry takes for granted but a nonprofit rarely has in-house.

Whatever your company does well, there is likely a version of it that would make a difference here.

Interested?

Contact **Mac Bell**, VP of Development & Communication at (501) 227-3704, mbell@eastersealsar.com, or visit eastersealsar.com/get-involved.

Behind the Mission

Meet Bert Reynolds, Major Gift Officer

Bert Reynolds is the Major Gift Officer on our Development Team. He is also a parent: his son receives services through our programs.

"As the parent of a child who receives services from Easterseals, I love and live the Easterseals mission," Bert says.

As part of the Support Team, he focuses on major gifts that fund programs like The Academy at Easterseals. "My job is connection," he explains.



Thinking Beyond This Year

Increasingly, Bert has a different kind of conversation, one that imagines with donors the legacy and lasting impact they hope to create with Easterseals through a planned gift.

Annual gifts keep our programs running today. Planned gifts, the commitments donors make through their wills, trusts, and estate plans, empower the mission for the next generation and beyond.

Bert is quick to point out that these conversations are simpler than most people expect. There is no pressure, no obligation. Often it starts with a single question about what a donor hopes their giving will accomplish over time.

- A gift in your will or trust. A specific amount, or a percentage of your estate.
- A beneficiary designation. Naming Easterseals Arkansas on a retirement account, life insurance policy, Donor Advised Fund (DAF), or other account can be as simple as updating a form.
- A gift of appreciated assets. Stock and securities can carry tax advantages over cash.

Bert has lived in Little Rock for over 20 years. His son, a student at The Academy, calls him "Moldy Breadloaf," a jab at his graying hair. "It cracks me up too."

It is a reminder of what donors are really investing in: not a single year of programming, but a place that will still be here when the next family needs it.

Start the Conversation

Thinking about including Easterseals Arkansas in your estate plans? Bert would welcome the chance to talk, in confidence and with no obligation. Reach him at bert.reynolds@eastersealsar.com or 501-227-3708. If you have already included us, please let us know.

To learn more, **contact us** or explore the many ways to give.

This is not legal or tax advice. Please consult your attorney or financial advisor.

A New Model for Home

Creating a vision for supported independent living in Arkansas

Ask any parent of a child with an intellectual or developmental disability what keeps them up at night, and the answer is rarely about today. It's about the future.

If I am no longer able to care for my child, where will they live? Who will help them? Will they be safe, supported and surrounded by people who know them?

Safe, affordable housing with the right blend of support and technology is one of the greatest challenges facing Arkansas families. Easterseals Arkansas is working to demonstrate what a different future can look like.

The Roommate Housing Demonstration Home

Easterseals Arkansas is developing a demonstration home that will serve as a working model for supported, independent living.

The home will provide a safe, supportive residence for four individuals, staffed by Easterseals Waiver caregivers. It will showcase smart-home technology, including voice-activated controls, accessible appliances and safety monitoring systems.

But its impact has the potential to reach far beyond the four people who will call it home.

The residence will also serve as a demonstration site where families, policymakers and community leaders can walk through the door and see firsthand how thoughtful design, technology and support can create greater independence for people with disabilities.

This is more than one house. It is a replicable model, a proof of concept that communities across Arkansas can learn from and build upon. Most importantly, it gives families something they desperately need: a tangible vision of what a safe, supported and independent future for their loved one can look like.

The campaign goal for the Roommate Housing Demonstration Home is \$800,000.

Through the generosity of donors and community partners, we can build a home, and a model for what is possible.



Good News in Our Community



Phase 2 Expansion

Easterseals Arkansas' Phase 2 program, part of the Center for Training & Wellness, continues to grow to meet the needs of young adults seeking connection, purpose and opportunities to thrive. Now expanded to two classes, Phase II gives participants the chance to learn alongside their peers while building meaningful relationships and engaging with their community. Through continued learning, civic engagement and community involvement, participants are gaining experiences that foster greater independence, confidence and belonging.



CTW Community

Easterseals Arkansas' CTW Community provides older adults with meaningful opportunities to stay connected, engaged and active alongside their peers. Building on the same spirit of connection and community found in Phase II, the program offers experiences centered around social engagement, continued learning and involvement in the greater community. Through donor support, participants have opportunities to build friendships, explore their interests and enjoy a strong sense of purpose and belonging at every stage of adulthood.



Little Rock Developmental Preschool Graduation

It was a joyful celebration as Little Rock Developmental Preschool held its recent graduation at The Academy, recognizing a record-breaking class of 27 graduates — the largest in the preschool's history! Students performed for their families and friends, walked across the stage and proudly received their diplomas. Each moment showcased just how much they have grown and learned, and most importantly, their readiness to take the next exciting step in their educational journey.



ACCE Graduation

The ACCE program gives young adults a college-like experience designed to build independence, confidence and the skills needed to prepare for meaningful employment. Through classroom learning, hands-on experiences and opportunities to grow alongside their peers, students take important steps toward their goals for the future. This May, we proudly celebrated 11 ACCE graduates as they marked the completion of the program and prepared to take their next steps into employment and greater independence.



What Happens After the Bus Stops Coming

Inside Phase 2 and The Community at the Center for Training and Wellness

For eighteen years, the structure is built in. School buses arrive. Therapists are scheduled. IEP meetings get put on the calendar. Teachers know your child's name.

Then graduation happens, and all of it stops at once.

Families in the disability world have a name for what comes next. They call it the cliff. The services that carried a young person through childhood simply end, and what replaces them depends almost entirely on what exists in the community.

At Easterseals Arkansas, what exists is two programs under our Center for Training and Wellness umbrella, built for two different stages of adult life.

Phase 2: the bridge years

Ages 18 to 24 | 3724 Woodland Heights Road

Phase 2 serves young adults right at the edge of that cliff, in the building that once housed Academy West.

The program blends adult day services with CES waiver services, and that combination is what makes it work. During the adult day portion, participants receive physical, occupational, and speech therapy. On CES waiver days, the learning moves outside: community outings, practice with the activities of daily living, and job skills built in the places where people actually work.

One instructor described the year this way: "I've seen participants develop courage to try new things, build friendships, navigate change, and smile. Every day." The skills she listed alongside that include grocery shopping and volunteering. So do pickleball, dancing, and a competitive streak that apparently runs deep.

A parent put it more directly: "For those who know the many programs we've tried to help our son gain independence, Phase 2 has been so successful. In just 8 months, he's blossoming, gaining independence, and building skills for life."

Eight months. That's the part worth holding onto.

The Community: the years after that

Ages 24 and up | 14901 Cantrell Road

Independence is not a single achievement. It is a sequence, and the runway does not end at 24.

The Community serves adults past the Phase 2 years, meeting in the warehouse space at the back of our Cantrell Road campus. If Phase 2 is about building a foundation, The Community is about living on it. Connection, enrichment, and enjoying life together.



Both spaces are ready to grow

Right now, Phase 2 serves 16 participants and The Community serves 20. Both spaces were adapted rather than purpose-built, and both are already full.

We are working to change that. With renovations to the Woodland Heights building and the Cantrell Road warehouse, Phase 2 could serve **45** and The Community could serve **60**. That is 69 more Arkansans with somewhere to go on Monday morning.

That happens inside the room and well outside it. Members get out into Little Rock regularly, walking the grounds at La Petite Roche Plaza to learn how the city got its name, or spending an afternoon in the galleries at the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts.

This summer alone, the group learned about Japan and celebrated Tanabata by writing wishes on paper strips and hanging them overhead until the ceiling filled up. They traded an ordinary July afternoon for mountains of suds on Foam Day. Stylists from Sport Clips donated a morning to send everyone home with a fresh cut.

Ask a member what makes it worth showing up, though, and the answer is rarely the activity. It's the people who will be there.

Why both programs matter

Phase 2 and The Community exist at CTW because adulthood with a disability is not one experience. A 19-year-old fresh out of high school needs something different from a 45-year-old who has been working for two decades. Running both under one roof means a participant's needs can change without the participant having to leave everyone they know.

Volunteers make it work

Here is the honest math: the more community-based a program is, the more people it takes to run.

Every outing, every small-group activity, every one-on-one moment of encouragement depends on having enough hands. Volunteers serve as program buddies, help with activities and outings, support events, and work as trackers in our Artistic Realization Technologies program, where volunteers paint at the direction of artists with limited hand mobility.

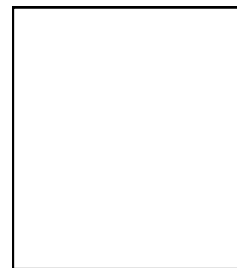
You do not need a background in disability services. You need to show up consistently and treat people like adults, which most people can do.

Ready to get involved?

Visit eastersealsar.com/get-involved/volunteer or call 501-227-3600.

Interested in Phase 2 or The Community for someone in your life?

Contact Shelley Moore at 501-367-1211 or shelley.moore@eastersealsar.com.



Upcoming Events

Art & Soul
Thursday, October 15

Fashion Event
Thursday, March 4

Annual Meeting
Wednesday, November 11

Christmas at CRC
TBD

24 Hours 4 Easterseals
Wednesday, December 2

TO EMPOWER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO LIVE, LEARN, WORK, AND THRIVE AS ACTIVE AND INCLUDED MEMBERS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES.

Stay in touch.

501-227-3600

eastersealsar.com

