



2016 COMMUNITY REPORT



Imagine a world in which people of different abilities are celebrated for their unique contributions. Where communities provide people with disabilities every opportunity to achieve their fullest potential. Where human compassion inspires innovative solutions that help everyone experience living in a welcoming community. It's a world that requires creative approaches, changes in attitudes and an uncompromising commitment.

*That's what drives the work of AWS Foundation.*



Growth and opportunity were central themes this past year. AWS Foundation awarded a record number of grants and dollars – 96 totaling over \$3.6 million. To optimize funding and help expand our impact community-wide, we established five Priority Initiatives. We've highlighted grantees representing each initiative in this report.

We also celebrated the contributions of Ian Rolland and Ben Eisbart who transitioned from the Board of Directors after 47 combined years of service. Their dedication and leadership leaves a lasting imprint. Additionally, Patti Hays was appointed CEO, with the experience and passion to carry our mission forward.

As a board member since 2008, I am continuously inspired by the many people and organizations who work daily to remove barriers to inclusiveness. Yet, as I witness a community evolving, I recognize that more needs to be done.

I challenge you to think differently about disabilities and join us in identifying new opportunities that promote greater inclusion in education & employment, early diagnosis & system navigation, housing, social enrichment and transportation. As I end my term as Chairman, I am pleased to hand the gavel to Tom O'Neill whose thoughtful leadership and experience in the disability field, as an executive and parent, will guide us to even greater achievements.

Don Steininger  
Chairman, AWS Foundation



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS** Front Row (left to right)  
Patti Hays, Ian Rolland, Ben Eisbart, Risé Taylor *Treasurer*  
Back Row (left to right)  
Don Steininger *Chairman*, Tom O'Neill, Tracie Martin *Secretary*  
Mike Cahill, Andy Brooks *Vice Chairman*, Dick Teets, Joe Doust



## EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Getting ahead in life is often attributed to a good education, the right job experience and connections. It is no different for a student with special needs. That's why AWS Foundation supports schools and organizations that create optimal learning environments, provide practical job training and help open doors to opportunity.

# QUALIFIED

## A GROUNDBREAKING TEACHING HOTEL

The Arc of Indiana Foundation set out to design the most extensive on-site training program to prepare students with disabilities for employment in the hospitality and healthcare fields. They ended up with a model for the industry! At the Erskine Green Training Institute and Teaching Hotel in Muncie, students enroll in nine-week courses combining classroom and hands-on learning that lead to certifications. Residing in the fully accessible hotel during their training also prepares the students for a more independent future, building their skills in financial management, transportation and community involvement. AWS Foundation funding provided scholarships and research development to track graduates' employment and life success.



*“The partnership we have with AWS Foundation has allowed us to go outside of the box in developing interventions that improve student outcomes and meet their diverse needs.”*

Jennifer Snyder  
Manager of Special Services  
East Allen County Schools

## LEVELING THE LEARNING FIELD: SENSORY ROOMS SUPPORT LEARNING

East Allen County Schools educate more than 1,300 students with special needs. Committed to an inclusive classroom concept, district educators recognized that student sensory needs could be best addressed with comprehensive sensory rooms. Grants to New Haven Middle School and Prince Chapman Academy equipped rooms that help students learn to self-manage their sensory needs through interaction with a variety of visual, tactile and movement tools. Teaching students how to identify and manage a sensory need and equipping teachers with strategies to support students in the classroom results in a more beneficial learning environment for everyone.

## A GREENHOUSE EDUCATION: GROWING OPPORTUNITIES

A new 3,000-square-foot greenhouse will be home to Ivy Tech Northeast's aquaponics, hydroponics and food science programs, as well as a job-training program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. With a farm-to-table focus, the greenhouse will be a thriving environment. Curriculum tailored to the students' learning styles and on-campus support services will help them succeed in a growing and competitive job market.



What would the future look like if the workplace were a level playing field, including people of all abilities?



# REVEALED



## EARLY DIAGNOSIS & SYSTEM NAVIGATION

Ensuring children have access to appropriate diagnostic and screening resources is critical to their development and potential. AWS Foundation supports organizations working to improve early diagnosis and the timely and effective implementation of therapies.

## DEDICATED AFTERCARE CONNECTS A MISSING LINK

Easter Seals Arc of Northeast Indiana recognized that the follow up care of clients recovering at home from a major illness or hospitalization was a missing component of the organization's otherwise comprehensive medical care. With the support of AWS Foundation, they addressed the unmet need by creating a Care Transition Nurse position to coordinate health care between family caregivers, direct support professionals and health care providers, educate clients about their medical needs and monitor overall care compliance.

*“AWS Foundation is a true partner as we strive to make profound, positive differences in peoples’ lives every day.”*

Donna Elbrecht  
Chief Executive Officer  
Easter Seals Arc of Northeast Indiana



What would the future look like if early screening was available that ensured better outcomes and greater independence for thousands?



# SUPPORTED

## MORE HELP FOR VULNERABLE HOMEOWNERS

Indiana supports qualified individuals with disabilities living at home, but as family members age and the nature of a disability changes, adjustments may be necessary. Thanks to organizations like NeighborLink, a volunteer-based service providing free home modification and repairs, families and individuals with disabilities are more likely to remain in their homes. AWS Foundation's grant will enable more community volunteers to provide those fixes necessary to keep "Home Sweet Home."

*"Our desire is to be an organization that champions the cause of revitalizing neighborhoods where all neighbors are known, respected and valued as contributors."*

Andrew Hoffman  
Executive Director  
NeighborLink Fort Wayne



## HOUSING

A safe, accessible home is a basic necessity. Factor in a disability, be it intellectual or physical, and accommodations are necessary to assist the individual to live how they choose...whether it is independently, with others or with family.



What would the future look like if all homeowners had the support they needed to maintain functioning, healthy households?





# INCLUSION

## SWIMMING WITH THE CURRENT: AN INCLUSIVE POOL FOR A BRAND NEW YMCA

AWS Foundation's generous capital campaign grant for the new Jackson R. Lehman Family YMCA will fund the accessible natatorium, complete with a warm water therapy pool, six-lane competitive pool, larger family changing rooms and ongoing support of adaptive services. The pool will be able to accommodate Special Olympics swim meets and other activities in an effort to pass along the many benefits of physical activity and integrative socialization, community-wide. Another great example of an inclusive community resource.



## SOCIAL ENRICHMENT

Connecting with one's community contributes to quality of life and overall wellbeing. Whether at the mall, a restaurant, park or a friend's home, social and recreational activities add interest and dimension to a person's life. And a community welcoming to individuals with disabilities can be more interesting in itself.





*“There are many ways that inclusion can benefit our entire community that go far beyond the doors of a YMCA.”*

Nicole Hansen  
Director of Mission Advancement  
YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne

### AWAKENING AWARENESS: NEW DIRECTOR ROLE BENEFITS MEMBERS OF ALL ABILITIES

Many regions in Northeast Indiana count on their area YMCA for recreation. It didn't take long for the YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne to recognize the opportunity to be more intentional in serving individuals with disabilities in their communities. With an Adaptive Services Director, a new position funded by AWS Foundation, the YMCA implemented disability-focused staff training topics, sought input from families on adaptive programs and launched several new programs as a result.



What would the future look like if our community embraced inclusion to the extent that every individual felt a sense of belonging?





# MOBILE

## REALLY GOING PLACES: MORE ACCESS AND MORE INDEPENDENCE FOR THOUSANDS

Community Transportation Network (CTN) is known for its exceptional door-through-door round trip transportation service, connecting riders to the community. Providing nearly 48,000 passenger trips annually, AWS Foundation's support ensures affordable and dependable transportation in Fort Wayne to destinations including workplaces, medical appointments, recreational outings and fieldtrips. Safely transporting riders to their destinations is what drives CTN.



*“Each trip is an immediate success story for that rider to reach a desired destination.”*

Becky Weimerskirch  
Executive Director  
Community Transportation Network



## TRANSPORTATION

Independence is something many of us take for granted. Having the ability to hop into a car or onto a bus to get where we wish to go isn't possible for thousands of area residents with a disability.



What would the future look like if people with disabilities could come and go as they pleased, with the whole world at their disposal?



# FINANCIAL



Patti Hays  
CEO, AWS Foundation

At AWS Foundation we strive to make a measurable financial impact, community wide. Without the steadfast efforts of our extraordinary grantees, we would not be able to fulfill our purpose to reach and enhance more lives. We are pleased to report a record year of giving to 72 deserving area organizations.

## GENERAL GRANTS

Total Grants Awarded: 77  
Total Gift Amount: \$3,565,707

## MIGHTY MONEY

Total Grants Awarded: 19  
Total Gift Amount: \$42,000

## COMBINED TOTAL

Total Grants Awarded: **96**  
Total Gift Amount: **\$3,607,707**

Five key initiatives are identified for the allocation of funds. Our community reach is wide but targeted to specific areas of need.



# IMPACT

## 2015-2016 GRANTEES

- About Special Kids
- Achieva Resources Corporation
- Arts United of Allen County
- Autism Society of Indiana
- Bluffton Harrison Elementary
- Bowen Center
- Byron Health Center
- Cahoots Coffee Café
- Camp PossAbility
- Camp Red Cedar
- Canine Companions for Independence
- Cardinal Services
- Carey Services
- Caring About People
- Children's Choir of Huntington County
- Citilink Access
- Community Transportation Network
- CORE, Inc.
- Dare to Dream Youth Ranch
- Deer Ridge Elementary School
- East Allen County Schools
- Easter Seals Arc of Northeast Indiana
- Erskine Green Training Institute
- Family Service Society
- Forest Park Elementary School
- Fort Wayne Ballet
- Fort Wayne Children's Choir
- Fort Wayne Civic Theatre
- Fort Wayne Community Schools Foundation
- Fort Wayne Curling Club
- Fort Wayne Dance Collective
- Fort Wayne Housing Authority
- Fort Wayne Museum of Art
- Fort Wayne Park Foundation
- Fort Wayne Youtheatre
- Gigi's Playhouse
- Glorious Gate Rowing Association
- Greater Fort Wayne, Inc.
- Headwaters Counseling
- Hearcare Connection
- Interdisciplinary Community Autism Network
- IPFW Community Arts Academy
- Ivy Tech Foundation
- Junior Achievement
- Lafayette Meadows Elementary School
- McKinney-Harrison Elementary School
- McMillen Health
- Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana
- NeighborLink Fort Wayne
- Parkview Huntington Family YMCA
- Passages, Inc.
- Pathfinder Services
- PBS 39 Fort Wayne Public Television
- Price Elementary
- Riverfront Fort Wayne
- Sara's Garden
- SCAN
- Scherer Resources
- Science Central
- Society of St. Vincent De Paul
- Summit Equestrian Center
- The Arc of Indiana Foundation
- The League
- Town of Waterloo
- Turnstone
- University of Saint Francis
- Volunteer Lawyer Program
- Washington Center Elementary
- Waterloo Elementary School
- Wellspring Interfaith Social Services
- Whitley County Consolidated Schools
- YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne



## OUR MISSION & VISION

Through our grant making, we help children and adults with enduring intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities live as independently as possible, be included in the community and function at their highest potential.

We envision a community in which people with enduring disabilities are engaged fully and meaningfully in all aspects of community life.

[awsfoundation.org](http://awsfoundation.org)



8515 Bluffton Road  
Fort Wayne, IN 46809