

# COMMUNITY LIVING CENTERS CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF GIVING INDEPENDENCE

BY KIRSTEN BUYS  
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FARMINGTON — When Patricia Small was struck by a car at the age of 6, the brain damage she suffered left her with physical and mental impairments that would require her to be cared for by others for the rest of her life — or so her family thought.

Thanks to Farmington-based Community Living Centers, the now-48-year-old Small learned to cook, clean and care for herself, which has resulted in her living in an apartment and even having a job. As her aging parents are unable to care for her, Small's family isn't sure what they would do had CLC not taken her in more than 25 years ago.

"I have no idea what we would do without them," Small's sister, Susan Schantz, said. "She has her own life. She goes on vacations. She has a sense of pride about being independent that she would never have had without Community Living Centers."

Founded in 1968 by Mary Wagner, a local special education teacher and mother of a developmentally disabled son, CLC has grown from a single six-person group home to housing its current 125 adult special needs residents. Residents must be at least 18, and have mental or physical impairments that manifested before the age of 22 and are likely to continue indefinitely.

They enter CLC in a group home for men or women, and as they learn to care for themselves,



move to homes or apartments where they can have their own living quarters and roommate. Some of them move on to live in their own apartments with limited supervision. Some fall in love and marry.

"We make them as independent as possible," CLC Marketing and Development Manager Rob Weber said. "We stay involved with them, but want them to be a part of the community and functional in the community."

While some residents collect Social Security or other funds that contribute to the cost of their care, 60 percent of funding for their housing comes from the state and the other 40 percent comes from donations and the centers' own fundraising efforts. Community Living Centers will host its 16th annual Cookie Walk Dec. 6, when

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**Left: Susan Schantz, right, sits with her sister Patricia Small, who was left physically and mentally impaired after she was hit by a car at the age of 6.**

**Above: After years of family thinking Small would never be able to live on her own, she now lives in this group apartment home operated by Farmington-based Community Living Centers.**

Photos by Deb Jacques

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it will sell homemade cookies by the pound. Cookies and candy will be for sale 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Farmington Family YMCA, 28100 Farmington Road. Handmade jewelry also will be for sale, donated by Schantz, who often rallies support and funds for the centers.

"The staff has to have a calling or something to work with a lot of the residents — they're so patient," she said. "They are really amazing people."

The centers' staff of 94 creates an opportunity for a lot of hands-on, one-on-one interaction with residents. Funds raised through the cookie walk will help that ratio of staff-to-resident remain.

"We have a good program in place. We do a lot with our residents," said Dawn Thomas, CLC's fundraising coordinator. "Not just basic caregiving, but we also provide them with a good quality of life, take them places, interact and build relationships with them."

And that's something Weber says can have a positive impact on the entire community.

"These people can function and contribute to the community," he said. "They just need some supervision, some guidance, some nurturing. They're a really happy group."

For more information on Community Living Centers, visit [www.clchomes.org](http://www.clchomes.org). To donate baked goods to the cookie walk or for more information, call Thomas at (248) 478-0870.

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