



2025 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT:
TURNING OPPORTUNITIES INTO OUTCOMES

GROWING WITH PURPOSE

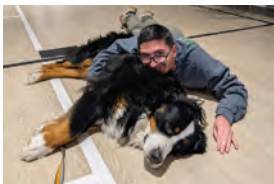


JOURNEY21 



Mission

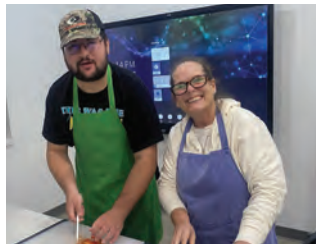
To provide safe, supportive, and enriching living and learning options for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD).



2025: The Year that Changed Journey21

It was a year of doors opening. Of momentum building. Of adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) stepping into opportunities that once felt out of reach.

This year, Journey21 grew in ways that matter most. **We served more individuals. We strengthened partnerships. We expanded employment pathways. We built our team. We deepened programming.** Not for the sake of growth itself, but because families and adults with IDD asked for more opportunities to learn, work, connect, and belong... and we listened.



One of the most powerful moments of the year came when our first Life Academy graduates walked across the stage. Their graduation was a declaration of what is possible when time, structure, and belief come together, reflecting years of commitment from students, families, staff, and community partners who chose to walk this journey together.

Journey21 exists because of trust. Families trust us with what matters most. Employers trust our students with meaningful work. Donors trust that their support creates real, lasting change. We hold that trust with care.

As we continue forward, our purpose remains clear. To create opportunities that lead to independence. To grow thoughtfully and responsibly. To maintain a standard of excellence to build a community where adults with IDD are seen for their abilities and their potential.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we are **growing with purpose.**

Judie Taylor
President and CEO

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Firsts at Journey21 in 2025

2025 marked a series of firsts that reflected Journey21’s responsiveness to need and commitment to forward-thinking growth.

Major Firsts and Milestones

- First Life Academy graduating class
- Launch of the Life Enrichment Program (LEP)
- Expansion of the Life Academy with a third-year, now named LAUNCH Academy
- First Journey21 Special Olympics basketball team
- First intergenerational Girl Scout troop in the country
- First IDD robotics team
- Reimagined CORE Program with expanded community-based experiences
- Staff doubled to support growing programs
- Three new vans added thanks to grants and community support
- Recognized as one of the *Best Places to Work* by the Milwaukee Business Journal, honoring our incredible team



In May 2025, twelve students completed two full years of coursework, internships, volunteer service, and independent living skill development.

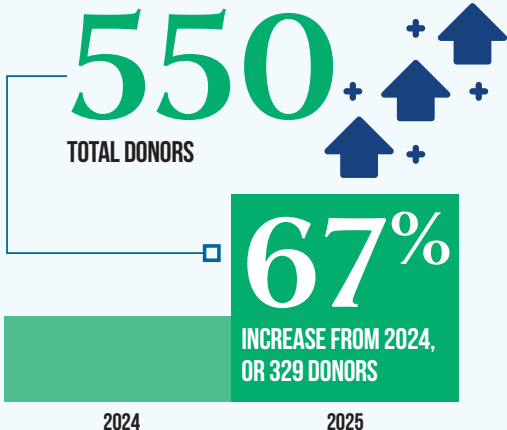
Giving Highlights and Philanthropy

Journey21’s impact is made possible through the generosity of families, foundations, businesses, and community partners.

This significant growth in philanthropic support reflects increased trust in Journey21’s mission, a standard of excellence from our team, and the expanding impact donors see in the community.

Philanthropic support allowed Journey21 to expand programming, strengthen staffing ratios, and increase access to community-based learning.

Giving by the Numbers



\$200,000 IN RESTRICTED GRANTS AND GIFTS

\$150,000+ IN UNRESTRICTED GIFTS AND GRANTS

857 TOTAL DONATIONS



184 NEW DONORS

\$150k IN IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS



\$568,060 IN EVENT GROSS REVENUE AND \$459,000 net

The Programs Powering the Impact

Journey21 delivers structured, community-based programs that build independence, confidence, and belonging for adults with IDD.

System-Level Impact

Journey21 is helping reshape what long-term services can look like for adults with IDD. As individuals build skills in communication, confidence, daily living, and employment readiness, they rely less on formal supports and more on their own abilities and community networks.

This shift leads to meaningful outcomes, including:

- Reduced long-term caregiver burden
- Expanded inclusive hiring across business partners
- Reduced reliance on long-term support services
- Strengthened family stability
- Increased workforce participation

In 2025, Journey21 also completed a three-year strategic plan focused on growing with purpose, committing to intentional growth that prioritizes quality, sustainability, and long-term outcomes.

Over the past year, growth in internships, partnerships, volunteer engagement, and academic programming reflects not only increased demand, but a model that is working, with a **98% average net promoter score among families**.



Life Academy

The Life Academy is a **highly structured, two-year post-secondary program** designed to **provide a college experience** for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Through **32 carefully designed courses**, students develop essential skills in independence, employment and community engagement.

The program focuses on **preparing students to lead fulfilling, productive lives** by enhancing their personal, academic, and professional growth. Through hands-on learning, real-world experiences, and individualized support, Life Academy students gain the tools they need to become confident, contributing members of their communities.

In 2025, Journey21 created LAUNCH, a post Life Academy third-year option, to deepen skill development and employment readiness.

4
SIXTEEN-WEEK
SEMESTERS



32
COURSES

275
HOURS
PRE-VOCATIONAL SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT

86
HOURS
VOLUNTEERING

140
HOURS
INTERNSHIP WORK
EXPERIENCE



Summer Academy

A **one-of-a-kind in the country**, this intensive, 3-week long summer program serves students from across Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota. The Summer Academy **provides a structured, social, and skills-focused environment** during months when few comparable options exist nationwide.

The curriculum emphasizes life and independent living skills, creative learning, and engaging community outings—all within a welcoming, supportive environment where students are encouraged to grow, connect, and form lasting friendships.

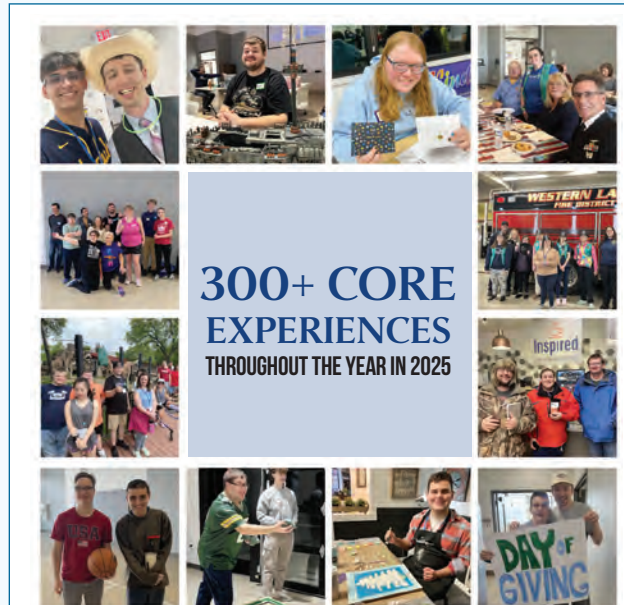
This program's predictable routine **supports regulation and growth**. There were three cohorts of 15 participants each or 45 individuals served each month for a total of **135 participants served in 2025**.



Life Enrichment Program

Launched in 2025, the Life Enrichment Program serves adults who need **meaningful daytime programming** focused on community participation, volunteering, wellness, and social connection.

The program quickly reached capacity for adults with IDD whose needs are not met by traditional employment or academic models.



CORE

CORE offers **two-to-three-hour experiences** that focus on social, recreational, and life-enrichment opportunities for adults with IDD. In 2025, the program was intentionally re-imagined to expand community-based experiences far beyond traditional programs and outings.

Activities include community outings, classes, fitness, creative experiences, and social events designed to **reduce isolation and increase belonging**. CORE is often the entry point for new participants and a long-term connection point for adults seeking meaningful social engagement.



18-21 Transition Academy

Designed for young adults **transitioning out of high school**, this program bridges the gap between school-based services and adult life.

By combining hands-on learning, career exploration, and social skill development, this program prepares students with the tools and confidence they need to lead more independent, connected, and fulfilling lives.

With **guidance from experienced staff and support from school districts**, each student builds on their strengths while exploring new possibilities.

Skills: Turning Opportunity Into Outcomes

At Journey21, impact is not measured by attendance or participation alone. It is measured by what adults with IDD are able to do, say, and carry forward into their lives.

Skills are the truest measure of progress. The confidence to speak up. The ability to navigate a workday. Independence to manage daily routines. The willingness to try something new, even when it feels uncomfortable. These are the changes that last.

In 2025, Journey21 experienced meaningful growth that reflects both rising demand and deeper impact. More individuals were served. More internships were completed. More volunteers showed up. More community partners leaned in. Each increase represents expanded opportunity, not just expansion in size.

What follows is a reflection of how **opportunity, offered with intention and care, becomes lasting impact.**



Skills: Outcomes

- CONFIDENCE AND SELF-AWARENESS
- COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND SELF-ADVOCACY
- SOCIAL SKILLS AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
- INDEPENDENCE AND DAILY LIVING SKILLS



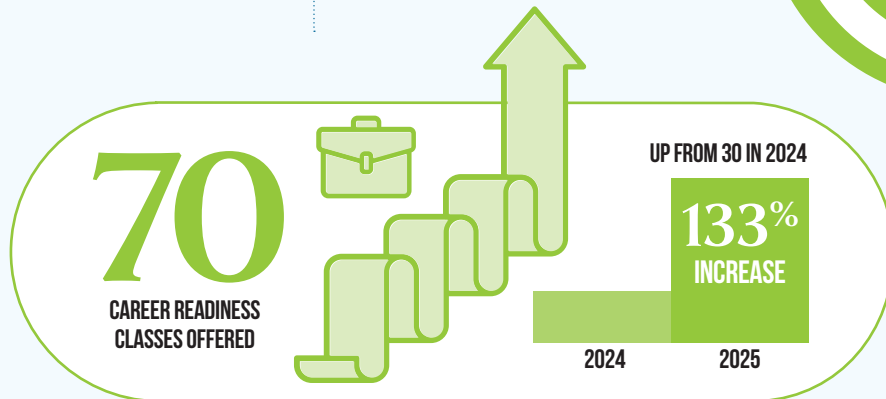
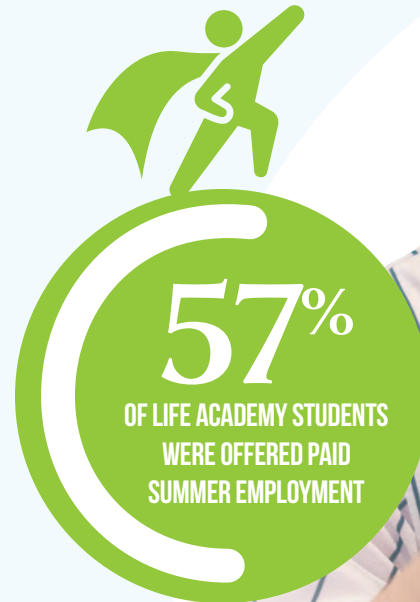
Confidence and Self-Awareness

Confidence is often the first change families notice and the one that touches every part of adult life. Confidence shows up in small moments and big ones. Walking into a room. Speaking up. Trying again after something feels hard.

At Journey21, confidence is not taught directly. It is built through opportunity. Through showing up day after day. Through being trusted with responsibility. Through discovering strengths in real-world settings.

From 2024 to 2025, participation in internships and work experiences increased by nearly 30%, giving more adults the chance to test their abilities, gain pride in their work, and see themselves as capable contributors.

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Mason is more confident in a workplace setting and takes pride in what he contributes.
-Family Member
Life Academy

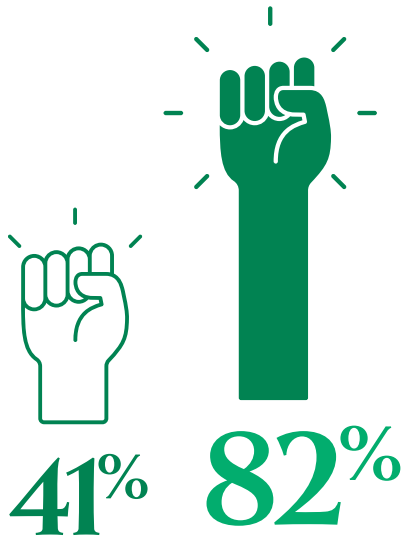


Communication and Self-Advocacy

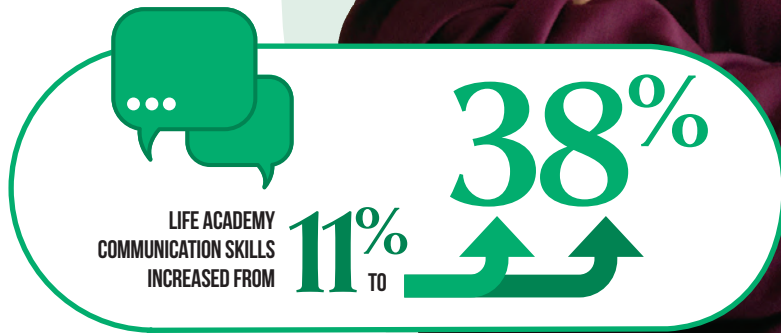
Finding one's voice is a turning point. Communication and self-advocacy allow individuals to express needs, make choices, and participate more fully in their own lives.

As Journey21 programs expanded in 2025, the **number of individuals served grew by nearly 20%** compared to the prior year, allowing more adults to build these foundational skills.

Being able to express needs, preferences, and feelings is foundational to independence. Communication and self-advocacy give adults with IDD a voice in their own lives.



SUMMER ACADEMY SELF-ADVOCACY CONFIDENCE INCREASED FROM 41% TO 82%



“ I advocate for myself more. I am more aware of my feelings and more self-aware. ”
-Life Academy Participant

Social Skills and Relationship Building

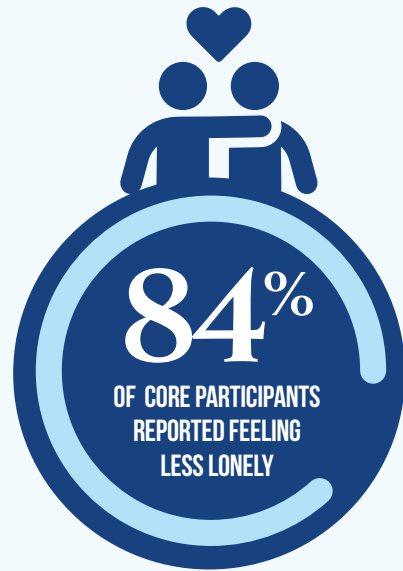
Belonging grows in small moments. Shared lunches. Group activities. Trying something new together. Social connection weaves through every part of life at Journey21.

Community engagement strengthened significantly in 2025, supported by a **56% increase in community partnerships** compared to the previous year.

Friendship and belonging are essential to quality of life. **Social connection reduces isolation and builds confidence** that carries into every other area of adulthood.

“ Friends are very important to her. She has become more outgoing, more confident, and more comfortable being herself around others.

-Parent of Life Academy Student



Independence and Daily Living Skills

Independence is built at home as much as it is in the community. Daily living skills allow participants to take pride in contributing, making decisions, and caring for themselves.

Growth in this area was reinforced by increased staffing, expanded weekday programming, and a growing volunteer base that rose by more than 18% year over year.

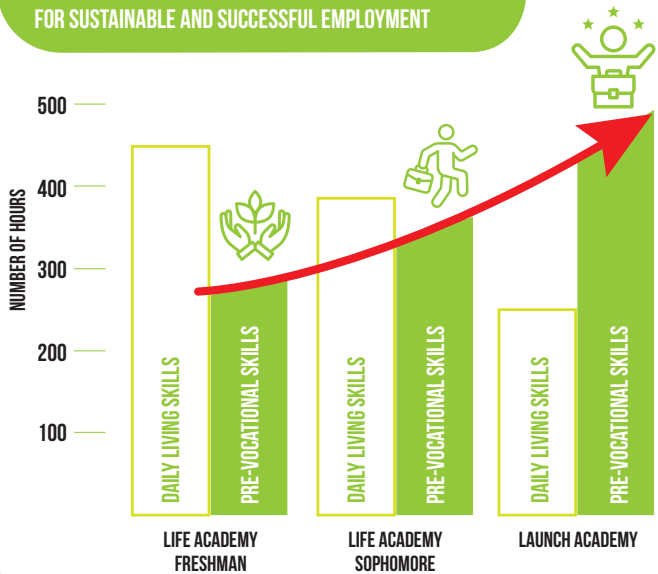
Daily living skills allow adults with IDD to contribute at home, make choices, and participate more fully in community life. These skills also ease long-term caregiver burden.

Journey21 is demonstrating how community-based skill development can shift outcomes for adults with IDD while strengthening families and communities.

“ We are seeing independence we never thought possible. He is proud of what he can do on his own.

-Family Member
18-21 Transition Academy

AS STUDENTS MOVE THROUGH THE LIFE ACADEMY PROGRAM, PRE-VOCATIONAL SKILLS BECOME THE FOCUS FOR SUSTAINABLE AND SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT



86%
OF 18-21 STUDENTS
REQUIRED LESS SUPPORT
WITH DAILY LIVING TASKS





GRATITUDE



Every statistic represents a person gaining confidence, independence, and belonging. **THANK YOU** for making this impact possible. Together, we are growing with purpose.



Thank you to our 125 wonderful partners and 168 volunteers who bring our mission to life.

Leadership

- Judie Taylor
President and CEO
- Heidi Hamilton
Enrichment Center Director
- Caty Bulgrin, MS, CRC, LPC
Director of Operations
- Jessica Greb
Director of Residential Life

Board of Directors

- Pat Boelter
- Michael Budisch
- Filippo Carini
- Sheila Frisinger
Co-Founder
- Jon Herreman
Treasurer
- Susan Marriott
Co-Founder
- Adam Puzach
Chair
- John Schlifske
- Lucine Spheris
Vice Chair and Secretary
- Lynda Welsh



The true heroes of Journey21 are our teachers. 100% of our direct teaching staff are licensed, along with our occupational therapist and recreational therapist. Day in and day out they make a difference in the lives of the students and participants that we serve.



CONNECT

Visit Journey21.org to sign up for news and updates.

DONATE

Support our mission at Journey21.org/donate.

JOIN US

Register with us at Journey21.org to join our community events.



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