



# Adults Independent and Motivated

*Making Independence Possible*

December 2023

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## Rotary Gives AIM a New Minivan

To say we are thrilled would be an understatement. The AIM board was questioning how to afford an additional vehicle to serve our growing community when the Rotary Club of Lakeway/Lake Travis provided the answer. They gave AIM a brand-new Chrysler Pacifica minivan and also purchased a wrap for it, spending \$50,000 for this incredible gift.

We want to extend a special thanks to the following members of Rotary who made this possible: Club President Dick Rundell, Foundation President Jeff Lamb, Brian Besch who was part of the purchase team, Amy Weldon who helped with the wrap, and Patrick Easter who coordinated it all.

On November 26<sup>th</sup> at HCI Sports & Fitness, Rotary presented the keys to "Thunder" (that is the name bestowed upon the vehicle by AIMers) during a joyful ceremony.

The gift of transportation is, in fact, the gift of independence. Without reliable transportation to work and AIM activities, AIMers would not be able to move out of their parents' homes. That is why Rotary and AIM chose for the message on Thunder to proudly proclaim, "We make independence possible."

This gift from Rotary of Lakeway/Lake Travis is transformative, and we are profoundly grateful.



## AIM Core Principles

1. Safety
2. Employment or Meaningful Regular Activity Away from Home
3. Lifelong Learning
4. Healthy Living
5. Social Activities
6. Family Engagement and Family Commitment
7. Increasing Independence
8. Continuity

## 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Tutus and Ties Fun Run Raises \$70,000



Great energy. Camaraderie. Happiness. Fun. And very successful fundraising. On October 1<sup>st</sup>, AIM's 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Tutus and Ties Fun Run, skillfully chaired once again by Julie Buchanan, delivered in a big way, **raising over \$70,000 to help AIMers live their best lives.**

Everyone seemed to be in great spirits and to have a wonderful time. The morning began with a crisp hint of fall but gradually became bright, warm, and sunny. The crowd was large. Some opted to do the self-timed 5k, while many others instead participated in activity stations such as Flickin' Chickin, badminton, hippity-hop races, corn hole, and more.

## AIM Socials

AIM has socials for people who are taking the next step in exploring whether AIM is the right fit.

Recent socials have included Party Barge, Pumpkin Nights, Friendsgiving, Bunco, Lakeway Trail of Lights, volunteering at Querencia Nursing Home, and Trunk or Treat at HCI.

Numerous sponsors, silent auction donors, and fun run volunteers made this incredible outcome possible, as did those who bid and joined the fun run. AIMers made tutus and contributed some of the most popular auction items, such as Gracie's Helping Hand-- her service to help with household chores and cleaning. Their parents took on huge roles such as coordinating the online auction and uploading all items, finding sponsors and auction items, and taking on all of the logistics from t-shirt and tutu delivery to coordinating and setting up the fun activity stations.

AIMers have a variety of intellectual and developmental disabilities such as autism and Down syndrome that have presented them with numerous challenges throughout their lives. This year's event made it abundantly clear how much their families, long-time friends, and supporters throughout greater Austin are willing to help them defy the odds by living surprisingly typical adult lives.

## Board Members:

- Ashley Sanchez, President
- Ronda Phillips, Vice President
- Julie Buchanan, Secretary
- Barb Lucido, Treasurer
- Darla Jones
- Kim Eudy
- Matt Cafrelli
- Paul Clarke
- Meredith Clarke

THANK YOU to everyone who helped make this year's Tutus and Ties Fun Run such an incredible success.



## Welcome 2 New AIMers

Sydney and Bethany are ready to take on the world! This duo is “tiny but fierce.” They share a love of pop music, show tunes, card games, and hugs. The girls have jumped right in with the other AIMers, and they love their new community and their new independence.

### Meet Sydney

Sydney enjoys listening to all kinds of music—she can sing along with almost any song on any radio station! She enjoys eating at restaurants, watching her Texas Stars buddies hit the ice, singing on stage at church, participating in Special Olympics, watching the Merrell Twins on YouTube, and hanging out with her parents and brothers. She is very excited to become part of the AIM community where all participants have the similar life goal of proving to the world just how capable young adults with IDD's can be!

### Meet Bethany

Bethany also enjoys a variety of music, with her current favorite being Taylor Swift (she can tell anything original from Taylor's versions within a couple of notes). Having been a gymnast for most of her life, Bethany enjoys anything to do with gymnastics, and she is currently using those skills with the Cheerabilities Rebelz cheer squad. When not doing handsprings or flips, Bethany enjoys catching up on the latest from the cast of Stranger Things, volunteering with the children at church, watching Battle Bots with her dad or lounging in the pool with her mom. Bethany is also very excited to become a part of the AIM community and to begin this chapter of independent living.



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## Why We Do It Ourselves

AIM runs our own transportation program. We own the vehicles, maintain and fuel them, hire a Transportation Coordinator to generate the master schedule of weekly AIM work rides, and hire drivers to take AIMers to work. In addition, AIM families utilize the vehicles to get AIMers to social and fitness activities, including the Sparks Special Olympics basketball practices and games.

Because of their disabilities, most AIMers don't drive. The area of Austin where they live does not have public transportation, so without AIM, the only other option for them would be Lyft and Uber.

## Why We Do It Ourselves (continued)

Although some AIMers are able to use rideshares when an AIM vehicle isn't available for some reason, the families of others have determined that the safety concern of having each new rideshare driver learn where a vulnerable person lives precludes that option. In addition, the cost of commuting by rideshare could easily consume a prohibitively high proportion of AIMers' wages.

Aside from the reasons why the alternatives aren't viable, there is a reason why operating our own program is the best way to serve our participants: D-R-I-V-E-R-S. We could not ask for a better team of people to help AIMers thrive. AIM drivers develop a relationship with AIMers, offering a pep talk or a sympathetic ear when needed or looping in parents when warranted.

In addition to connecting with AIMers on a personal level, drivers often advocate for our program and for the individual AIMers. As an example of the former, AIM driver Charlotte Stachour introduced Patrick Easter, a member of Lakeway Rotary, to AIM, and that introduction led to the gift of the new minivan from Rotary. As a recent example of the latter, when driver Ann Kupper arrived to pick up an AIMer as his shift ended, he told her with alarm that his phone was missing. Ann helped him remain calm, called his mother, went into the store with him while his mother used Find-my-Phone to help track it down, and helped him successfully recover it. The evidence suggests that the person who took the phone intended to steal it, but Ann's quick response prevented that from happening and reunited the AIMer with his phone.

Because of AIM, participants achieve a remarkable level of independence balanced with the right support. AIM drivers are an essential support, and we appreciate them all immensely.

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## Navigate Life video

In 2022, Texas Parent to Parent and Mighty Citizen asked to feature AIM in a video for Navigate Life, a statewide resource for families who have a child with a disability. Megin Boyles-Poppoon and her team at L.A.M.P. Media Productions filmed in August of 2022, and the video was posted in August of this year. We are THRILLED with the results and invite you to watch it to learn more about what AIM means to our participants and their parents. <https://tinyurl.com/4sct64v5>

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## End-of-the-Year Giving or 2024 Monthly Donations

If you will be making donations as this year draws to a close, or if you would like to set up monthly donations for 2024, we would be honored if you would consider AIM. Because AIM does not charge a fee for our services, we rely on donations to make independence possible for the very capable young adults living their best lives as part of our community. Get the details here:

<https://www.aimtx.org/support.html>

## Recent Activities

Trunk or Treat at HCI



Pumpkin Nights



Lakeway Trail of Lights



AIMers having a turkey of a time celebrating Friendsgiving



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