

# ladd Look

WINTER 2024

*Find-A-Way resident  
Joe Laage and his  
mother, Beth Laage*

## FINDING *a* WAY

INSIDE

**Celebrating  
Find-A-Way  
Apartments'  
40th anniversary  
and the future  
of independent  
living opportunities  
at LADD.**



**OVER-THE-RHINE  
INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL**

organized by ladd

**Over-the-Rhine International  
Film Festival Recap and  
2025 festival preview**

**Empowering Adults with Disabilities since 1975**

## Finding a way

“I had no idea that not only would I find a safe home; I also found a community that encourages me to demand more, to advocate to be fully seen and included. We stand on the backs of others – disability advocates, their families and supporters who throughout history have demanded more.”

– Kristen Saul, Find-A-Way resident  
and LADD Empowerment Committee member

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### MISSION STATEMENT

LADD is guided by the belief that every person has ability and value. We empower adults with developmental disabilities to live, work and connect.

### TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- 2** Funding the Future: Historic Hamilton County investment leads to 9 new Smart Homes
- 4** Cover Story: Find-A-Way Apartments Turn 40
- 6** LADD MEANS JOBS: Meet LADD's Inaugural Visit Cincy Hospitality Leadership Program Graduation Class
- 8** Taking Flight 2024: An Evening of Celebration
- 10** Third Annual State of Disability Town Hall: Accessibility, Safety, Funding, Wages & Affordable Housing
- 12** Celebrating the Seasons with LADD
- 14** Save the Dates! 2025 Community Events Calendar Set
- 16** Over-the-Rhine Film Festival Returns with New Date in March 2025
- 18** Over-the-Rhine International Film Festival: That's a Wrap!
- 20** 2024 Margaret B. Geier Society Dinner Recap



# Historic Hamilton County investment leads to 9 new future Smart Homes

**O**n Oct. 8, Hamilton County Board of Commissioners, Living Arrangements for the Developmentally Disabled (LADD) and the Cincinnati Development Fund (CDF) gathered in front of LADD's Heidt Smart Home in Anderson Township to announce a historic \$4 million investment by Hamilton County to increase affordable housing options for adults with developmental disabilities.

"We are honored to partner with our friends at LADD, which addresses a critical need for more housing options for those with disabilities in Hamilton County," said Hamilton County Commission President Alicia Reece during the announcement. "What LADD is doing is unique and has never been done before. This is something that others will be looking to replicate throughout this country."

Thanks to the county's support, along with assistance from the Cincinnati Development Fund, LADD's \$8.5 million plan to open nine new Smart Homes in 2027 is now fully funded.

"This \$4 million investment provides dignity for our residents who want independence," said Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus. "By partnering with LADD, we are not just creating homes; we are empowering individuals with developmental disabilities to lead fulfilling lives within their communities."

By the time of the announcement, Jessica Knight, LADD 3603 Developers executive director, along with LADD board member Kim Vincent and Kim's colleague Kathy Landstra at Sibcy Cline Realtors, secured nine properties located in Colerain Township, Springfield Township and Hyde Park for LADD's three future Smart Home clusters. Plans to renovate six of those properties and build three new houses on the other properties are currently underway.

"Alicia Reece and the rest of the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners have given people an opportunity to not have their life scripted and laid out before them, but instead to be fully engaged and participate fully in the communities in which they live," said Susan Brownknight, LADD CEO.

Or as Matt Chaffin, a Smart Home resident shared during the announcement about living in a Smart Home himself, "I love living in my house in this community, which is near the neighborhood which I grew up in. I am a member of the HOA board. I'm excited that my work will help other people."

Matt moved into his "Heidt House," LADD's pilot Smart Home in 2020.

Once work is completed on the nine acquired properties, LADD will offer the same level of support, service and independence to an additional 36 adults with developmental disabilities in Hamilton County.

LADD's innovative Smart Home model consists of clusters of three or more homes located within a five-minute drive of each other in walkable neighborhoods and close to bus stops that lead to places where people can shop and work. Each smart home within a cluster features state-of-the-art technology paired with in-person LADD staff to support residents' independence.

LADD currently operates Smart Home clusters in Blue Ash and Anderson Township, which includes the Heidt Smart Home. In 2023, Zero Project, an international organization tasked with pursuing the goals of Article 32 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognized Smart Living Systems, the technological backbone of LADD's Smart Home model, during its annual gathering in Vienna, Austria.



L-R: Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus, LADD CEO Susan Brownknight, 3603 Executive Director Jessica Knight, Hamilton County Commissioner & Board President Alicia Reece and Cincinnati Development Fund General Counsel & Chief Strategy Officer Luke Blocher.



L-R: Commissioner Driehaus, Luke Blocher, Susan Brownknight, Commission President Reece, Jessica Brownknight and Matt Chaffin, along with Commissioner Stephanie Summerow-Dumas.



Members of the media gather video of the Heidt House during a tour.



Members of the media and others listen as Hamilton County Commissioner and Board President Alicia Reece addresses the gathered crowd.



L-R: LADD CEO Susan Brownknight, 3603 Executive Director Jessica Knight, Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Driehaus, Cincinnati Development Fund General Counsel & Chief Strategy Officer Luke Blocher, and Chip Gerhard, President of Government Strategies Group, address media and others gathered in front of LADD's Anderson Township Smart Home.



L-R: Jessica Knight, Commissioner Reece and Smart Home resident Matt Chaffin pose for a photograph during a tour of Heidt House after the press conference.

For more information about LADD's Smart Homes or how to become a Smart Home resident and other services LADD provides, visit: [www.laddinc.org/services/live/](http://www.laddinc.org/services/live/).

Scan the QR code to read WVXU's announcement story





# FIND-A-WAY APARTMENTS TURN 40

CELEBRATING THE FOUNDATION FOR A BETTER TOMORROW



Clip from a Cincinnati Post article about Find-A-Way published in November 1983.

While sitting in a comfortable recliner in his apartment one afternoon in late October, Joe Laage shared why he enjoys living at Find-A-Way apartments in Oakley.

"I've lived here for 12 years," Joe said. "I really like the neighborhood."

Joe's mom, Beth Laage added, "He really likes being able to walk to places nearby."

Joe also described LADD-organized trips and other activities he enjoys while living at Find-A-Way, including recent cooking classes

with fellow complex residents and going on a group ghost tour in Clifton before Halloween.

"It was really cool," Joe said of the tour.

In the spring of 2023, Joe planted a monarch butterflies garden in Find-A-Way's residential patio area inspired by similar gardens at LADD's Victory Parkway location and the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, where he worked for more than six years before retiring recently to seek other job and hobby opportunities.

And Joe's brother Mike lived in his own Find-A-Way apartment before Mike passed away at age 45 on April 2, 2024, surrounded by family.

In Mike's obituary, his family wrote, "Mike loved his apartment and all the residents, as well as his support staff from LADD. The past five years at Find-A-Way were the best in his life, as he had his own apartment and freedom."

Joe and Mike's love of Find-A-Way, along with other current residents, including LADD co-founder Margaret "Peggy" Geier's daughter Sis Geier, are testaments to the longevity and intent behind why LADD opened Find-A-Way in July 1984.

"It is marvelous because people who live there, even those in wheelchairs, will be able to go to town to shop, and have transportation to jobs," explained Peggy Geier in an Aug. 22, 1983, Cincinnati Enquirer article. "It will fill a big need."

That same year in a November 1983 Cincinnati Post story announcing the groundbreaking for Find-A-Way, then LADD president, Polly Strauss explained why building the apartment complex on the site of the former Oakley Elementary School in Oakley was so important to LADD's mission.

As Strauss noted, construction on Find-A-Way began less than nine years after she, Peggy Geier and their fellow co-founders established Living Arrangements with Developmental Disabilities in 1975 and started LADD's independent living training program at the nonprofit's first apartments for disabled adults that opened in 1977 at 3603 Victory Parkway.

"Almost 90 persons have graduated from the program since 1977. They are able to live independently with minimum assistance. But finding 'barrier free' housing for our graduates has always been a problem. That's why we developed the concept of Find-A-Way," Peggy stated.

She also shared that once finished, Find-A-Way would feature individual apartments with their own kitchens and bathrooms, shared laundry facilities and indoor-and-outdoor community areas – including the patio space where Joe would plant his butterfly garden 39 years later. Additionally, all spaces at Find-A-Way were intentionally designed with accessibility in mind.

In their interviews, Peggy and Polly emphasized how Find-A-Way was a continuation of LADD's pioneering passion to change how society viewed adults with developmental disabilities and how those individuals received support in the United States. The predominant model of support for adults with disabilities in 1983 still centered on large, sterile, inhumane and dehumanizing institutions.

LADD's founders established their nonprofit model guided by the belief that all people can develop skills necessary to live independently and be empowered when given the opportunity. That belief in shared humanity and the dignity of all individuals continues to guide LADD's mission today as the organization prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2025.

"Mom and dad were thinking out of the box," shared Rodney Geier, brother of Sis Geier and son of Peggy and Eugene Geier. "They felt like if you could give people support to help with some of the small things, there could be an avenue for them to accomplish more by themselves. But for anyone to be independent, you can't just say 'okay, go be independent.' All of us have to learn how to do that. I think that's what LADD is great at doing – empowering people to learn how to accomplish their own goals."



Joe and fellow Find-A-Way residents celebrate completing a six-week cooking class by making healthy Sloppy Joes, roasted broccoli, and a celebratory angel food cake in the complex's community room.

Sis Geier, who has lived at Find-A-Way since its opening also reflected on the importance and positive impact her mother, LADD and the opening of Find-A-Way apartments continues to have in the lives of adults with developmental disabilities.

"I see its growing and there are a lot of nice people," Sis said.

The growth Sis referred to for Find-A-Way residents includes LADD programming and opportunities for empowerment and advocacy that did not exist in 1984.

In July of this year, Kristen Saul, a member of LADD's Empowerment Committee, a board-level group of individuals served by LADD who advocate on issues important to those with disabilities, delivered a powerful speech on the importance of recognizing and advancing the rights and opportunities of adults with disabilities in front of Cincinnati's city hall during the city's first-ever Disability Pride Month flag-raising ceremony.

**"Before coming to LADD, I had been in some rough living situations. I had no idea that not only would I find a safe home; I also found a community that encourages me to demand more, to advocate to be fully seen and included."** Kristen Saul

In her speech, Kristen emphasized how significant it was for her personally that Find-A-Way existed.

"Before coming to LADD, I had been in some rough living situations. I had no idea that not only would I find a safe home; I also found a community that encourages

me to demand more, to advocate to be fully seen and included," Kristen said in front of a crowd of elected officials, representatives from other organizations similar to LADD, members of the media and fellow adults with disabilities. "We stand on the backs of others – disability advocates, their families and supporters who throughout history have demanded more."

Of the work and vision her mother Peggy Geier, LADD's other co-founders and supporters had in creating spaces such as Find-A-Way Apartments, Sis Geier simply had this to say: "She would be proud of everybody,"

Kristen Saul, a LADD Empowerment Committee member and Find-A-Way resident addressed a crowd attended by City of Cincinnati officials, social service agencies, and arts and community organizations to kick off Disability Pride Month in the Queen City with an official Disability Pride flag-raising ceremony.





Laura Grimes and Ryah Harrison

Audrey Hobstetter, Joe Laage, Drew Jones, Sydney Gibson, Rosa Metz

Audrey Hobstetter, Ryah Harrison

# LADD MEANS JOBS

## MEET LADD'S INAUGURAL VISIT CINCY HOSPITALITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM GRADUATING CLASS

In late August, LADD hosted a pinning ceremony in its Center for Community Engagement at Victory Parkway to celebrate the accomplishments of five individuals served by LADD who completed a 12-week course that taught them skills essential to seek jobs in the region's hospitality industry workforce.

The program led by Visit Cincy's Dan Lincoln Institute for Hospitality Leadership (IHL) was the result of an innovative partnership between LADD's supported employment program and Visit Cincy, which promotes the region through tourism and supports local businesses.

"This partnership with LADD is a testament to our commitment to inclusivity and providing meaningful opportunities for all members of our community," said Julie Calvert, President and CEO of Visit Cincy. "We are proud to see these students develop their skills and contribute to the city's tourism landscape."

Participants recognized during the ceremony included Sydney Gibson, Audrey Hobstetter, Joe Laage, Drew Jones and Rosa Metz.

Over the course of their training led by Ryah Harrison, Visit Cincy Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Program & Education Specialist, the participants gained a comprehensive understanding of the five key components of hospitality: Food, Lodging, Transportation, Recreation/Attractions, and Conferences/Conventions.

"I was interested in learning more about the hospitality world and more about Cincinnati," explained Sydney Gibson, a front desk assistant at LADD. "I really like the class. It's really interactive."

Sydney, along with the rest of her inaugural hospitality training class, received an official Cincinnati Ambassador pin and Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) certification. CTA is a nationally recognized hospitality industry certification that reinforces

customer service excellence and the important role of tourism in the community.

The success of the partnership between Visit Cincy and LADD also led to LADD's supported employment program director Laura Grimes and Sydney presenting at Hamilton County Developmental Disabilities Service's "Employment Spotlight Breakfast" on October 25. At that event, Sydney received one of HCDD's first Spotlight recognition awards on behalf of LADD for supported employment.

"We are honored to have partnered with Visit Cincy and IHL for this groundbreaking initiative," said Laura Grimes, LADD Supported Employment Program Director. "This program has not only equipped our participants with essential skills but also opened doors to new career opportunities in the hospitality industry."

**"This program has not only equipped our participants with essential skills but also opened doors to new career opportunities in the hospitality industry."**



Ryah Harrison and Joe Laage

Julie Calvert, Joe Laage, Ryah Harrison



# THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS!

Through the generosity of our corporate partners, LADD empowers more than 800 adults with developmental disabilities to live their best lives with independence and dignity.



For more information about becoming a corporate partner, please contact Sarah A. McManus, Director, Development at [smcmanus@laddinc.org](mailto:smcmanus@laddinc.org) or visit [laddinc.org/corporate-partners](http://laddinc.org/corporate-partners).

# TAKING Flight 2024

## AN EVENING OF CELEBRATION

On Thursday, September 12, LADD staff, supporters and individuals the organization serves came together inside the Bally Sports Club at Great American Ball Park for our 2024 Taking Flight Awards banquet.

Taking Flight recognizes the accomplishments of adults with developmental disabilities and those who have supported them on their journey to independence. The evening was filled with celebration and fellowship.

Learn more about the award winners by scanning the QR code or visiting [laddinc.org/videos](http://laddinc.org/videos).



Tim Valerius celebrates receiving the 2024 Spirit of Independence Award with family and friends cheering for him.



Tim Valerius poses for a photograph with Sydney Gibson, LADD front desk assistant, and John Anzalone from JP Morgan Chase & Co after they presented him with the 2024 Spirit of Independence Award.



LADD resident Annie C. hugs Direct Support Professional Blair Whitt after presenting Blair with the 2024 Above and Beyond Award. Annie and fellow Forever Home residents Jenny and Sarran, whom Blair supports, nominated Blair for the award.

Ohio Senator Bill Blessing with Tennille Raines from Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services and Kristen Saul, LADD Empowerment Committee member after Tennille was presented with the 2024 Excellence in Housing Award.



Ohio Senator Bill Blessing greets those gathered for Taking Flight at the Bally Sports Club inside Great American Ball Park. Sen. Blessing presented the 2024

Tim Valerius poses for a picture with his mother and sister after receiving the 2024 Spirit of Independence Award.



Christine Schuler, Stephanie Withers and Bo Hubbard from JS Held pose for a picture after Christine and Bo presented Stephanie with the 2024 Provider of the Year award.



The 2024 Taking Flight Award statues.



Jenny Crowe, Ashley Miller, Sarran Hoffman, Blair Whitt and Annie Callan pose for a picture they presented Blair with the 2024 Above & Beyond Award.



Ohio Senator Bill Blessing greets those gathered for Taking Flight at the Bally Sports Club inside Great American Ball Park. Sen. Blessing presented the 2024



Sis Geier, the daughter of LADD co-founder Peggy Geier, shares a moment with LADD CEO Susan Brownknight.



Jenny Crowe, Ashley Miller, Sarran Hoffman, Blair Whitt and Annie Callan pose for a picture they presented Blair with the 2024 Above & Beyond Award.



Brian Dershaw from Taft Law Firm, along with LADD Smart Home residents Matthew, Margot and Lindsey, poses with Marc Fried, aka Cinemarcus, after presenting Marc with the 2024 So Others May Fly Award. Marc was recognized for his volunteerism and other contributions in helping others.



Matthew Worten from NextStep Networking Solutions and LADD resident Jenny pose with Sheila Hinton from the YMCA after Sheila accepted the Employer Excellence Award on behalf of the Y.



Patrick Frambes from Barnes Dennig, Jenny Crowe, Annie Callan, Blair Whitt, Sarran Hoffman and Ashley Miller pose for a picture after Blair was presented with the 2024 Above & Beyond Award.



L-R: LADD board member and marketing committee chair Emily Geier Vollmer and LADD resident Braxton Thomas pose with Kathy Landstrada, who accepted the 2024 Legacy Award for her contribution to securing residential Smart Homes on behalf of LADD. Kathy also received the award for her co-honoree, Kim Vincent.

### Tim Valerius, 2024 Spirit of Independence Award Winner

Tim began living at Find-A-Way Apartments in 2005 and is currently employed as a front desk assistant at LADD's Victory Parkway office. Tim was recognized for his determination and positive approach to life, advocating for himself and through his participation on the LADD Way advisory board. In everything he does, Tim demonstrates the spirit of this award by realizing his independence.

### Marc 'Cinemarcus' Fried, 2024 So Others May Fly Award Winner

Marc was recognized during the 2024 Taking Flight Award ceremony for his compassion and dedication to others. He's volunteered at VITAS for 12 years as well as being active in the TALL program and his Cinemarcus venture, among his many activities. Marc is an idealist and way-paver for others that want to branch out in being a member of a vibrant community.

### Sheila Hinton and Cincinnati YMCA, 2024 Employer Excellence Award Winner

Sheila has been working for the YMCA for 34 years, starting as a part-timer. She was drawn to the YMCA's mission to work with the full family, from children to seniors. Her personal connections with the disability community drove her further to create an inclusive world and workplace. Since 2021, she has helped LADD-served individuals in being employed and empowered at the YMCA and beyond.

### Tennille Rains, 2024 Excellence in Housing Award Winner

As a housing coordinator at Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services, Tennille works tirelessly to obtain and maintain housing vouchers for individuals with disabilities. Tennille operates with a doors always open policy in providing this very necessary education and coordination. Her philosophy is that Fair Housing is extremely important, and she strives to educate and advocate for those that need housing support.

### Stephanie Withers, HLADD Provider of the Year Award Winner

Stephanie started as a DSP for LADD but stepped up to fill in the necessary gap of full-time caregiving to Neil Roncker. She has helped Neil gain confidence, and trust over the years she's spent with him. This step felt very natural to Stephanie as she has fierce passion for helping others and loves to see them succeed.

### Blair Whitt, Above & Beyond Award Winner

Before LADD was in Blair's life, she spent her time working for Visionaries and Voices. It was there she met Phyllis, Sarran, and Jenny from Timberlane. Blair then applied to be a DSP and has been serving at Timberlane going on 10 years. Blair helps the ladies of Timberlane advocate for themselves and strive for their independence.

### Kim Vincent and Kathy Landstra, Legacy Award Winners

Kim and Kathy were drawn into LADD after seeing the culture of inclusivity, diversity and community taking place at the organization. Kim Vincent currently serves on LADD's board. She and Kathy worked alongside Jessica Knight, LADD 3603 Developers Executive Director, to secure nine properties that will open as Smart Homes residence for individuals with disabilities starting in 2027.



Senator Ingram and Representative Thomas share a laugh during the town hall.



Representative Thomas answers a question posted by Empowerment Committee members Sydney Gibson, Jenny Crowe and Annie Callan during the town hall.



L-R: Chris Harding, representing Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Drehaus; State Representative Jodi Whitted, State Senator Catherine Ingram and State Representative Cecil Thomas.



Representative Whitted chats with Empowerment Committee member Annie Callan at the end of the town hall.

## THIRD ANNUAL STATE OF DISABILITY TOWN HALL

### ACCESSIBILITY, SAFETY, FUNDING, WAGES & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The evening of Tuesday, Oct. 1, LADD's Empowerment Committee hosted its Third Annual State of Disability Town Hall, where committee members once again engaged elected officials in a discussion on topics important to not only committee members, all of whom LADD serves, but also other voters with disabilities in Hamilton County.

Officials who took part in the 2024 town hall included Chris Harding, State Representative Cecil Thomas, District 25; State Representative Jodi Whitted, District 28; and State Senator Catherine Ingram, Senate District 9.

"It is so important we are heard," said empowerment committee member Kristen Saul, who moderated the town hall. "As voters, the town hall gives our elected representatives a chance to address important issues not only us but also others with disabilities in Hamilton County."

Fellow empowerment committee members Annie Callan, Jenny Crowe, and Sydney Gibson joined Kristen as panelists who asked elected officials attending the event about issues important to the committee.

**When asked by Jenny Crowe during the town hall why the elected officials agreed to take part in the evening, Representative Thomas said, "I am seriously concerned about the quality of life of people, people in general and anywhere I can be of assistance in addressing those matters and concerns, whether I'm a voice at the state house or voice locally here in the city, I am open to do that. That's why this matters so very much because I need to hear from you all exactly what your concerns are."**

Issues addressed included sustaining fair wages for direct support professionals, increasing funding so individuals with disabilities can take more trips with their DSPs, subminimum wages, barriers related to public transportation and affordable housing for not only individuals with disabilities but also those who support them.

Before the question-and-answer portion of the town hall began, committee member Matt Chaffin kept things light by asking elected officials fun questions for social media videos. Matt's questions ranged from asking elected officials about their favorite scary movie, animals and pizza toppings.

"All my goodness, everything. "I like a pizza with everything on it." shared Senator Ingram when interviewed by Matt.

Additionally, committee member Don Cameron kept time, while Michael Webber registered people to vote.

LADD'S Disability Town Hall was made possible through a grant provided by the Murray and Agnes Seasongood Good Government Foundation.



"LADD's Disability Town Hall is exactly the type of event that the Seasongood Foundation was created to support," said Liz Blume, Foundation president. "We are so happy to see the number of public officials participating in this year's town hall and engaging with those they serve."



Matt Chaffin smiling with Representative Whitted after he interviewed her before the town hall began.



LADD Empowerment Committee members (l-r): Michael Weber, Kristen Saul, Jenny Crowe, Annie Callan, Matt Chaffin and Sydney Gibson.



Empowerment Committee members Jenny Crowe and Annie Callan welcome guests to the town hall.



Empowerment Committee member and town hall moderator Kristen Saul thanks Chris Harding for participating in the town hall.



Scan the QR Code to watch a recording of the Town Hall

# Celebrating the Seasons with LADD

Individuals served by LADD, their family and staff, along with volunteers and community groups had a hauntingly good time celebrating "spooky season" in October followed by gathering and reflecting on what they are grateful for at LADD's annual Thanksgiving Potluck in early November.



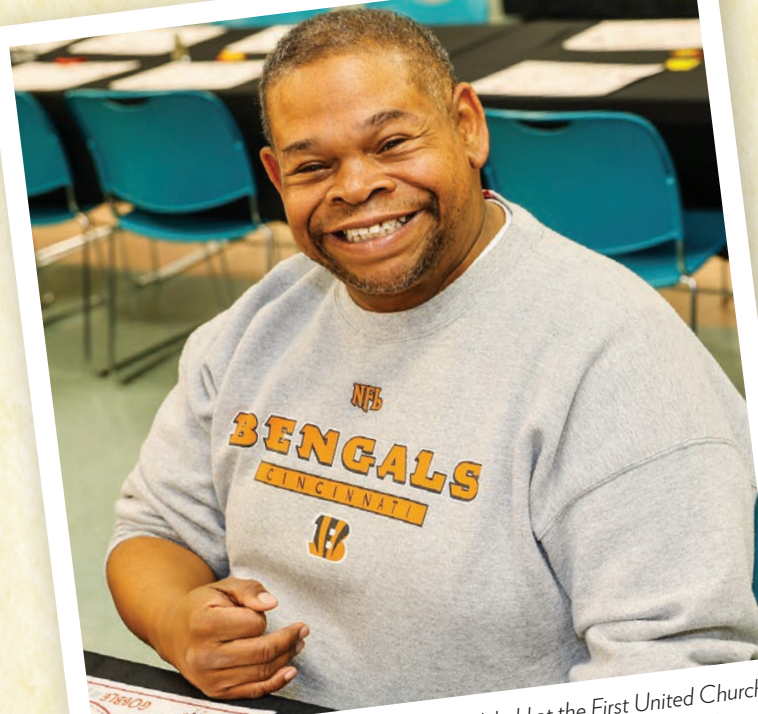
Earlier in October, seventh-and-eighth-grade Mariemont Middle School students joined LADD Community Connections program participants and residents from Geier Apartments for a Halloween-themed "Sip & Paint" held at Find-A-Way Apartments and Victory Parkway's Center for Community Engagement.



Beyond dressing up during the LADD Halloween party, those LADD supports also decorated pumpkins displayed at the event held at VP.



Meet the new sheriff in town. Matthew xxx, along with Lori Tharp, director of programming, enjoyed the spooktacular Halloween party (held on Halloween) at LADD's Center for Community Engagement at Victory Parkway.



During LADD's annual Thanksgiving Potluck held at the First United Church of Christ in College Hill, Don Cameron shared that he was grateful for his family, his new job, the Lord and each day his Lord gives him to spend time with family, friends and give back to others.



Sis Geier, daughter of LADD co-founder Peggy Geier, shared that she was grateful for family, staff and LADD at the Thanksgiving Potluck.

## GATHERING IN GRATITUDE: 2024 THANKSGIVING POTLUCK



Blue Ash Smart Home resident Marc Fried shared that in 2024 he is grateful for everyone who has either supported or he interviewed for his film-focused podcast, "CinemarcusLive!" during the Thanksgiving Potluck.



Ann Gerhart, who lives in LADD's Anderson Smart Home cluster, said she was grateful for staff such as LADD Health & Wellness coordinator Olivia Moore, her family, friends and shared she missed, but very grateful for the memories she had of one of her grandmothers who recently passed away.

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..... Save the Dates! .....

## 2025 COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR SET

LADD's mission is one dedicated to creating a more inclusive community for all. The organization does that in big and small ways with year-round events for individuals it serves, their families, staff and the broader community. Make sure you have your calendars handy to set reminders for these 2025 events.



LADD CEO Susan Brownknight addresses individuals either receiving or interested in LADD services, along with their family members during family orientation.



Individuals served by LADD, staff, family and friends posed for a photo at Smale Park before the start of the Flying Pig Rock, Run & Roll 5K in May.

### LADD FAMILY EVENTS

LADD held its first quarterly family-focused event for individuals LADD serves and their families in October 2024. Led by Community Engagement Coordinator Kimberly Bolden, these new quarterly events are designed to inform, connect and introduce individuals served by LADD, their family members and anyone interested in LADD services.

Below are the dates for the first two family events of 2025.

- Tuesday, January 14, 2025
- Tuesday, April 15, 2025

### LADD COMMUNITY EVENTS

For those who have been involved with LADD for a while now, the following events should be familiar gatherings. They cover a range of opportunities – from getting fit to food to advocating.

SATURDAY, MAY 3, 2025

#### LADD Flying Pig Run, Walk & Roll

Get your squeal on as LADD once again hosts this annual event where friends, family, individuals served by LADD and staff take to the streets during the Flying Pig Marathon weekend. Participants in our Run, Walk & Roll event will once again receive a special LADD-branded t-shirt AND a free lunch after finishing the Flying Pig 5K the morning of Saturday, May 3, 2025. Make sure to register for the 5K through LADD's website to receive your T-shirt, lunch and more information soon.

THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2025

#### LADD Annual Community Picnic

In June 2024, LADD hosted its annual community picnic at xxxx Park in xxx. Everyone enjoyed the space so much, we decided to host the picnic there again in 2025. Come out and enjoy grilled bites, sides, music and time with LADD staff, those served and their families.

THURSDAY, JULY 10, 2025

#### OTR Film Festival Disability Pride Month Screening

Join fellow film lovers, individuals with disabilities, their families, friends and supporters for a film screening honoring Disability Pride Month in July. The film festival screening is an official Disability Pride Cincy event.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2025

#### Fourth Annual State of Disability Town Hall

LADD's annual State of Disability Town Hall hosted by the Empowerment Committee, a board-level group made up of individuals LADD serves, is always worth attending. In 2025, Committee members will once again invite elected and public officials to take part in an evening of conversation regarding issues that affect them, along with other people with disabilities who vote in Hamilton County.

SEPTEMBER 7-13, 2025

#### Direct Support Professional Appreciation Week

Each September, social service organizations from across the country, including LADD, take the time to show appreciation and honor the front-line staff who wear many hats in support of those they directly serve. In 2024, individuals served by LADD, their families and co-workers at LADD thanked direct support professionals with thank-you gifts, T-shirts and other goodies. LADD plans to do the same during DSP Appreciation Week 2025. Look for ways you can get involved in the months ahead.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2025

#### LADD 50th Anniversary Celebration

Save the date now! LADD is celebrating its 50th anniversary in a big way in September. We're busy working on the details of the organization's celebration gala now and we want to make sure you don't miss out.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2025

#### LADD Thanksgiving Potluck

To kick off the holiday season, LADD is once again organizing a potluck gathering that is sure to leave everyone with full bellies and warm hearts. Individuals served, their families, friends, staff and LADD supporters will gather for a heaping serving of cheer, goodwill and gratitude. The exact time and location of the LADD Thanksgiving Potluck will be announced in the coming months.



Hamilton County and state-level elected officials answered questions posed by LADD's Empowerment Committee during its third annual State of Disability Town Hall in October.



Niki Kiser, Neil Ferencak and Ben Brown enjoying LADD's Thanksgiving Potluck in 2023.



LADD Community Engagement Coordinator leads the family orientation event hosted at LADD's Center for Community Engagement in October.



Marc debuted his branded merchandize for his "CinemarkLive!" podcast before the screening of "The Remarkable Life of Ibelin" at the Kenwood Theatre.



LADD Residential Program Director Lori Tharp and Sam McCoy, served by LADD, take a moment to cuddle Smart Homes Director Hannah Eldridge's baby during the 2024 LADD Community Picnic in June.



Lara Johnson and Sarran Hoffman enjoy at the 2024 LADD Community Picnic.

Visit [laddinc.org/events](http://laddinc.org/events) to register and learn more about each event as details become available.



# 2025 Film Festival LOOK AHEAD

## SAVE THE DATES



### OVER-THE-RHINE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

organized by ladd

## Returns March 6-8, 2025

#### OTHER KEY DATES:

JAN. 10- FEB. 28, 2025

#### Film Festival Street Teams

The Film Festival will kick off 2025 by building the buzz about the full festival's return in March. If you are interested in joining one of our street teams visit [otrfilmfest.org/volunteer/](http://otrfilmfest.org/volunteer/).

JANUARY 30, 2025

#### Film Announcement Party

Join us as we announce the full film lineup for the 2025 festival. Time and location will be shared on the OTR Film Festival website.

MARCH 6, 2025

#### Film Festival Opening Night Gala at Music Hall

Kick off the film festival in style with us at Cincinnati Music Hall the evening of Thursday, March 6, 2025.



OTR Film Festival artistic director tt stern-enzi did an interview with Local 12 reporter Annie Brown promoting the festival's February 2024 screening.

A group of volunteers selling merchandise during the festival's 2024 Disability Pride Month screening in July.



For more information, early bird ticket information and upcoming announcements visit [www.otrfilmfest.org](http://www.otrfilmfest.org) or scan the QR code below.





# OVER-THE-RHINE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

organized by ladd

# THAT'S A WRAP!

## A LOOK BACK AT 2024

Even though Over-the-Rhine International Film Festival did not host its regular three-day festival in 2024, the year was still a busy one. As organizers prepared to transition to a new festival date (March 6-8, 2024, instead of July like previous years), OTR Film Festival held four quarterly events throughout the year.

Check out our retrospective programming, beginning with the most recent below.

## OTR FILM FESTIVAL BLINK OPEN HOUSE AT THE ART ACADEMY OF CINCINNATI

To end the 2024 programming season, the film festival hosted an open house at the Art Academy of Cincinnati during the first night of BLINK on Thursday, Oct. 17. The event was filled with food, drinks and fun while offering a chill spot for supporters to gather and relax before the main attraction of the evening.



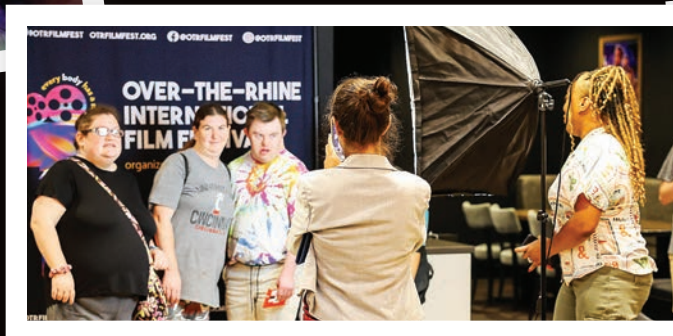
Verna Smith, LADD program manager, was completely blinged out for BLINK during the open house.



Christopher Riehl, OTR Film Festival leadership board member, started out BLINK festivities with his mother at the Art Academy.



In September, the film festival promoted and attended the inaugural Avondale Film Festival. Organized by the Avondale Development Corporation (ADC), the Avondale festival highlights the Cincinnati neighborhood, student filmmakers and celebration of diverse voices. Here tt takes a picture with ADC consultant Russell Hairston Jr.



Susan Brownknight, LADD CEO, snapped pictures of individuals LADD serves who attended the documentary screening.

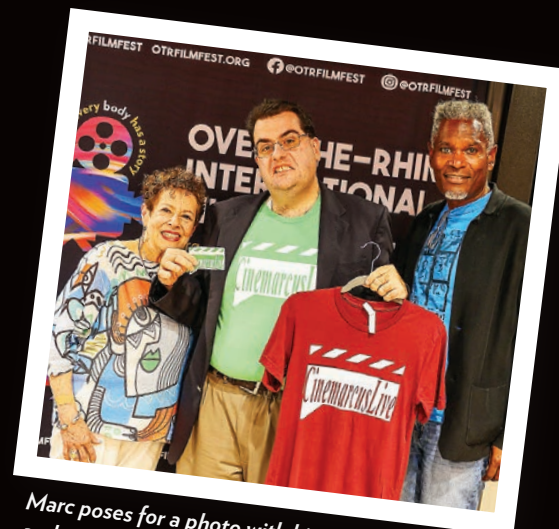


The audience watching one of many clips of Julie Reichert at the CAC in April.

## SHOWING PRIDE IN JULY

Four months prior to the BLINK open house in July, OTR Film Festival held a screening of "The Remarkable Life of Ibelin" at the Kenwood Theatre as an official Disability Pride Cincy event honoring Disability Pride Month.

Marc "Cinemarcus" Fried, a resident in one of LADD's Smart Homes and "CinemarcusLive!" movie podcast host, unveiled his line of merchandise and delivered opening remarks before the screening of the Norwegian documentary focused on gamer Mats Steen and the profound connections Mats made online as "Ibelin" in the open-world video game "World of Warcraft."



Marc poses for a photo with his mother, Ava Fried and tt stern-enzi, Over-the-Rhine International Film Festival artistic director during the Disability Pride Month event.



The documentary screening also helped amplify and explain the importance of Disability Pride Month, an annual celebration of the Americans with Disabilities Act in July 1990, to a larger audience. Rob Festeinstein, Independence Alliance executive director and tt stern-enzi joined WLWT Channel 5 anchor Sheree Paoletto on-air to discuss the month and the importance of diverse representation in popular culture.



After screening "Is That Black Enough for You?!" at the Freedom Center, tt stern-enzi interviewed famed film writer and the documentary's director Elvis Mitchell inside the Harriet Tubman Theatre.

## CELEBRATING GROUNDBREAKERS

OTR Film Festival kicked off its 2024 quarterly programming by hosting two screening events.

The first was a screening of "Is That Black Enough for You?!" a Netflix documentary exploring Black cinema's history in America at the National Underground Railroad Museum during Black History Month in January. Elvis Mitchell, acclaimed film writer and documentary director, and tt held an in-depth conversation after the screening.

Then in April, the film festival hosted a "Celebration of Pioneering Filmmaker Julia Reichert" at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) during Women's History Month. Reichert's filmmaking and life partner, Steven Bogner, along with Women in Film Cincinnati president Jaime Meyers Schlenck and Shawnee Turner, Chief of Interpretation and Experience at the CAC, discussed Reichert's legacy after her passing in December 2022.

## SHARING THE LIMELIGHT

Beyond its impressive series of 2024 quarterly events, the film festival also supported film makers and festivals in Greater Cincinnati.



In April student filmmakers from the University of Cincinnati, Xavier University, Cincinnati State and Northern Kentucky University competed in the 2024 College Movie Festival at the AMC Theatre in West Chester. Artistic director tt stern enzi was on hand to announce he selected the Cincinnati State student short "Fishbowl" to show at the upcoming Over-the-Rhine International Film Festival in March 2025.



Rodney Geier, George Vincent, Florence Koettters and LADD Board Director Kim Vincent



Kathy Weber, Jeffrey Geier and LADD Chief Development Officer Molly Lyons.

Rob Anning and LADD Empowerment Committee member Matt Chaffin.

Jim Meyer, LADD CEO Susan Brownknight and LADD board director David Zimmerman.



Molly Smyth and LADD Board Vice President Maggie Palazzolo.

Leanne Rosenfeld and Beth Meyer.

Vallie Geier and Shelly Goering



LADD board member Holly K... Lidel and his partner

## Margaret B. Geier Society 2024 Dinner

In October, Betsy and Harrison Mullin opened their home to members of the Margaret B. Geier Society, their families and those served by LADD. Named after LADD's founder and first board president, Peggy Geier, the Society recognizes donors who contribute \$1,000 or more annually to empower adults with developmental disabilities to live, work and connect.

Learn more about the Margaret B. Geier Society, visit [laddinc.org/donate/margaret-b-geier-society](http://laddinc.org/donate/margaret-b-geier-society).

Or scan the QR Code below



LADD board director David Zimmerman, George Vincent and LADD board president Aaron Haslam.

Dulany Anning and LADD advisory board member Alison Zimmerman.

Rob Anning and Kim Vincent



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

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Guided by the belief that every person has ability and value, we empower adults with developmental disabilities to live, work, and connect.



*This is what empowerment looks like. Chad Meyer, who received services through LADD's Supported Employment, is thriving and contributing to the Greater Cincinnati community. For 16 years, Chad has been a valued employee at KMK Law. Learn how you can help empower individuals such as Chad by visiting [laddinc.org/ac/](http://laddinc.org/ac/) or scanning the QR code below.*

