

The image is a vertical poster with a dark blue, starry night sky background. A white crescent moon is in the upper right. In the center, there is a white, cloud-like cutout shape. Inside this cutout, two black silhouettes of people are shown in a field at sunset or sunrise. The person on the left has their arms raised, and the person on the right is in a similar pose. The bottom of the poster is a textured, brownish-orange area that looks like torn paper or a ground surface.

A Chance to Fly

**Bridging the gap to
independent living**

Introduction

No one prepares us for the challenges that come with parenting. Certain events in your child's development mark the times when you must let go and allow your son or daughter to take another step toward becoming the person they are meant to be. Whether it's watching them take their first step, the first day of kindergarten, starting high school, their first job or moving out on their own, each transition is difficult yet fulfilling.

At Friendship Ark it's always been about individuality (individual needs), about meeting each core member where they are and helping them reach for that next level or step to meet their goals and aspirations.

Prior to the pandemic, we had been working with a group of parents on a new pilot project. We identified that several individuals on our waiting list didn't need 24/7 support but weren't quite ready to live on their own through our individualized SCL program. We decided we should offer an option for those who were in that transitional phase.

In February of this year, we worked with two families to find and purchase our 7th home on Fletcher Blvd. We collaborated with Night Owl Support Systems to install technology (window/door sensors, two way calling, and a video doorbell) in this home that would provide support for safety overnight. FAI would provide in-person staff for approximately 4 hours each day to work directly with the members on goals to continue to increase their independent living skills. Fast forward to August 2021, when we opened our newest home. At this site we are currently serving two women, each of them coming from a different story. The Fletcher House has created an opportunity for these ladies to further develop their skills and grow into a lifestyle with more independence.

Chapter 1

Rediscovering My Abilities

After graduating High School, Diana moved into one of Friendship Ark's 24-hour residential sites in 2004. This was the first step for Diana to build skills outside of her parents' home. Diana continued to live with Friendship Ark until 2014 when she moved out and into an apartment with hourly services. Diana personally wasn't quite ready for this step and chose to return to a 24-hour program. In 2019, her parents started to seek a setting that would again bring her more independence, however, knowing that the previous placement wasn't quite right, they were hesitant about taking this step. A meeting with FA Executive Director, Jennifer, explaining the new service concept helped them to consider this new and innovative option as a way for Diana to continue to grow.

Since moving into the Fletcher House, Diana has done just that. Her journey to becoming more independent involves navigating the NOSS security system, being responsible for all lights to be turned off at night, understanding who to contact when the dishwasher overflows or guests show up at her door.



Diana enjoying some time at home with her parents.

Diana also continues to work on planning menus, cooking with her housemate, maintaining her home and her personal cares.

In visiting with Diana's parents and discussing the difference they see in Diana while living in a more independent setting versus a 24-hour site they shared: *She seems more joyful; she feels good when we tell her how proud we are of her and all the things she is doing. We know she had so many skills already that made this an easy transition for her. She still needs guidance and reminders, so it's a work in progress.'*

One of Diana's best qualities is connecting with people and her community. *We look forward to seeing Diana continue to grow and rediscover her potential while becoming more independent. Diana's parents' hope for her is that she continues to grow, functioning on her own with less and less reliance on us.'*

When we asked Diana what she loves about this next step, she responded with EVERYTHING!



In their new home, Diana and Chloe take turns cooking their evening meals with staff assistance but prepare their breakfasts and lunches independently.

Chapter 2

Reaching My Full Potential

Chloe graduated High School and continued to live with the assistance of her parents' supervision. After graduating, she attended Project Search on campus at Iowa State and took a job working in the dietary department in a nursing home here in Ames. In 2017, Chloe started working with staff at Friendship Ark through our SCL (Supported Community Living) program where staff would come to her home a couple of times a week to work on cooking skills and household chores with her.

In August of this year, Chloe moved from her parents' homes into the Fletcher House. This opportunity has given her the chance to see just how independent she can be. Chloe now manages her own daily schedule with fewer reminders and less guidance from her parents. She is also learning to live with other people who are not immediate family members. All of this is supportive of Chloe's personal growth and her capacity to reach her full potential as a member of the Ames community.



Chloe with her family, celebrating her graduation from Project Search.

It has been wonderful to see Chloe grow as she has taken this brave step to branch out on her own. Her parents have seen many areas of growth in her development already, from *keeping her personal belongings neat and tidy and doing her laundry on a regular schedule to cooking for herself and her housemate three times each week with structure and support provided by Friendship Ark staff . She is also successfully making her own breakfast and lunch by herself each day.*

With this new lifestyle for Chloe, her parents *dream that someday she might be able to live even more independently in the community, and that she lives a healthy and fulfilling life, flourishing in each of its stages.*



At the Fletcher House, Diana and Chloe are responsible for taking care of their home. Friendship Ark staff are available to provide guidance and assistance as needed.

Chapter 3

The Next Story

While Diana and Chloe are advancing their skills in their new setting and creating a new storyline for their lives, we need **YOU** to help us write the next story of greater independence for the next core member.

We feel blessed by the opportunity to work with our core members and their families every day and your investment in Friendship Ark will directly support the infrastructure that makes it possible for our staff to come alongside each core member on their journey, learning to navigate life to the best of their ability.

The quality of services we are able to provide as a result of your gift give our core member families the assurance of a life and home they had hoped their loved ones would be able to experience when planning for their future.

Without your help, innovative solutions such as the supports for Chloe and Diana in their new environment would not be possible. Together, we can continue to make a difference for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in our community. Thank you for your partnership.



Diana and Chloe are ready to welcome Caroline as their housemate at the Fletcher House in the near future. Caroline will be moving from one of our 24-hour homes and is excited to start spreading her wings.



I will speak for you,
I will fight for you,
I will advocate for you,
So that one day,
You can do it for
Yourself