

SYNAPSE HOUSE 2025 FALL FUNDRAISER RECAP



On Friday, September 19th, Synapse House and its members, staff, and some volunteers were excited to host its biggest fundraiser of the year, the 2025 Fall Fundraiser. It was hosted at nearby Alter Brewing in Downers Grove, IL. It was a beautiful evening, the decorations were nice, and we enjoyed the night. There, attendees were treated to tasty appetizers, which included fried shrimp and spicy cauliflower. Then they were served a buffet style dinner and dessert. The thrilling silent auction included an appealing variety of items to choose from like travel bundles and gift baskets.

The main event was Will's presentation and it was also his birthday! After the initial introduction by the event speaker, the night's featured speaker, Will, was introduced and delivered his brain injury story to everyone present. His inspiring speech was an entertaining anecdote of how much this individual and his peers at Synapse House have been through, as the recovery journey for every brain injured individual is long, difficult, and varies, as his detailed speech did a great job of outlining.

At the end of the night we raised a lot of money for Synapse House which will help and support our mission! We all enjoyed the night and look forward to next year!



If you missed the Fall Fundraiser but would like to see Will's presentation, visit our YouTube page to watch his entire speech.

WWW.YOUTUBE.COM

SEARCH: SYNAPSE HOUSE

VIDEO: "FALL FUNDRAISER
2025 PRESENTATION"

PLEASE CONSIDER SERVING ON OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Impact our future & be a part of our growth

We Engage, Empower and Employ individuals affected by brain injury

INTERESTED?

Visit: www.synapsehouse.org
Events & Volunteers



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Join our Board of Directors or a volunteer committee.

Governance Committee · Gala Committee · Golf Committee

Synapse House continues to grow. Expanded program and service offerings are now available to members.

Interested? Please contact Deborah@synapsehouse.org

GIVING TUESDAY

Tuesday, December 2

Please consider making a donation to support
our mission to:

*"Engage, Empower & Employ those affected
by Brain Injury and Stroke"*

As we enter the season of giving and thanks, we cannot fully express our gratitude to our donors, members and families for the ongoing support that is provided to us year after year.

We have had one of our most successful years in membership growth and fundraising and that is thanks to everyone who is dedicated to our cause.

In one last push to close out 2025, we are asking you to consider a donation on Tuesday, December 2, 2025 for our Giving Tuesday campaign to raise \$5000 to support our to support our employment.



Save the Dates for our 2026 Fundraising events

If you can't join us in person, consider becoming a sponsor for our Golf Outing or making a donation directly through our website

Synapse House Presents

Bingo

Fundraiser

Sunday, February 15th

Doors Open at 2:00 PM

Join Us!

Bake Sale - Cash Bar - Food
50/50 Raffle, Prizes &
Extra Bingo Cards
All available for purchase at the event!

Scan the QR Code to get your tickets today

American Legion Hall, Post 80
4000 Saratoga Ave,
Downers Grove IL 60515
www.synapsehouse.org



BINGO

Sunday, February 15, 2026
American Legion Hall
Downers Grove, IL

To purchase tickets:

Scan the QR code on the left
OR visit our website at

www.synapsehouse.org

GOLF

Monday, June 15, 2026
The Preserve at Oak Meadows
Addison, IL

Details to come...



If you know someone in need of services or would like to share information about Synapse House with your healthcare provider, please contact

deborah@synapsehouse.org

ART INSTALLATION CREATED BY LAURA HARTRICH

Interviewed and written by Will B.

Laura is a former Employment Program employee of Synapse House that was generous enough to create a quilting art display that now hangs in our lobby. When it comes to those impacted by brain injury, Laura is most inspired and impressed by how people can put in all of the hard work necessary to get our lives back. The main message of Laura's art display here is to share the inspiring words she quilted with all of us and any observers. Laura also wanted to mention how much she enjoyed working here, and how sad she was to leave Synapse House in 2024. Laura made this quilted art for us to demonstrate the care and appreciation she has for all of us, as well as Synapse House in general. We're all happy to welcome Laura back, and accept

her gift, which will hang in our entrance lobby and remind all of us to remain inspired to continue coming here and work with the wonderful staff and day program that Synapse House has.

Besides this recent work of art, she created for Synapse House, Laura's most proud of a past piece she completed that's titled "Golden Delights." For this, back in 2023, Laura wrote down something delightful that she experienced or observed every day in 2023 (see photos on right).



The Cranium Chronicles is
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Downers Grove, IL 60515
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www.synapsehouse.org

Our Support Team

Deborah Giesler, Ex. Director, MS, CCC/
SLP

Vera Kramer, Development Director
James Farrell, Business Office

Clubhouse Work Unit Coordinators

Megan McClain MS, OTR/L
Erika Panatera MS, OTR/L
Angel Lucena-Johnson COTA
Samuel Saenz

Employment Services

Ashley Gieschen
Achkei "HK" Wilson

KNZ Neurofitness Gym

Gina Pizzoferrato

Transportation

LaShelle Morrow
LaTonya Davis

Veteran's Program

Tony Chairez
Darla Kucera
Austin Vongphasouk

2025 Board of Directors

Marilyn Dingens, Board Chair
Nancy D'Andrea, Treasurer
Secretary—**Actively seeking**

Irene Abrons
Joe Bretz
Matt Dingens
Megan Gassel
Melissa Johnson
John Leone
Kelly Snow



Visit our website to learn more about our programs,
volunteering and donating.

www.synapsehouse.org

Honoring a Visionary: A Heartfelt Thank You to Chris & Pattie Zinski

At the heart of every nonprofit lies a story of generosity, vision, and unwavering belief in a better future. Today, we pause to honor and express our deepest gratitude to Pattie & Chris Zinski, whose foundational support helped bring Synapse House to life.

In 2014, while placing another box in the moving van in Tampa, Florida, I received a phone call from a woman named Pattie Zinski. She explained that she had attended a support group meeting and poised the question of what was next for young adults following a brain injury when the rehabilitation program had ended. She was told that there was a person coming back to the Chicago area to start such a program. Pattie immediately suggested we meet for lunch the following week. We met and instantly Pattie embraced the idea. She and Chris stepped forward—not only with financial support, but with encouragement, an action plan, wisdom, and a belief in our mission that inspired others to join. Their gifts were more than a donation; it was a catalyst that transformed hope into action. From that initial meeting, within days we secured the use of space in a church basement to launch while we raised funds and scheduled dinners to introduce the project to obtain the cornerstone funding needed to obtain space.

Chris and Pattie fully believed in the project and understood greatly the need, not only for Chris, but for all those who had their lives uprooted following some type of stroke or brain injury.

Thanks to Chris and Pattie's involvement and their amazing circle of friends and coworkers, we were able to have our first Gala fundraising event with the largest attendance, secure funds for a security deposit and received the key to our new space just five months after our first meeting. Not only did Chris and Pattie's personal generosity outstand us, but it was also their circle of support. Friends, neighbors, the Zinski children, family, co-workers, parents at school and many who worked side by side with Chris in the professional arena became involved at many levels from giving, to volunteering, to holding fundraising dinners and to serving on our Board of Directors. The KNZ NeuroFitness Gym, an essential addition to our programming, embodies the enduring friendship between the Katt Natarajan and Zinski Families and is a lasting tribute to their generous support of Synapse House. Close connections assisted us in obtaining the funds for our two vans which are still in operation today.

It goes without saying that for people to have given us so much support, it was a testament to who Chris and Pattie are.

Their impact continues to ripple outward, touching lives and shaping futures every single day. Last year, our organization achieved our ten-year anniversary of serving individuals and their families who have been impacted by brain injury and stroke. Since the first days, our programs have grown from just the Clubhouse Day program to include veteran's services, an Employment program, a virtual caregiver book club and the KNZ Neuro-Fitness Program and gym. The need for our services increases each year as the number of young adults with stroke continues to rise, the length of rehabilitation continues to shorten and most recently, those with very early onset dementia.

We are proud to call Chris and Pattie Zinski, not just a founding donor, but a true partner in change. Their legacy is woven into the fabric of our organization, and we remain committed to honoring their vision through every step forward.

On behalf of our board, staff, volunteers, and countless individuals we serve—thank you. Your belief in us made all the difference.

With heartfelt appreciation,
Deborah Giesler, Executive Director, Synapse House



If you know someone in need of services or would like to share information about Synapse House with your healthcare provider, please contact

deborah@synapsehouse.org

12th Annual Autumn Fundraiser

Thank You Sponsors



THANK YOU

Thank you to all of our generous sponsors and donors who support our mission and the individuals who wake up everyday motivated to push through adversity and prove that we are all so much more than our brain injuries.



Diamond Sponsor

Susan & Tom Waldbuesser

Premier Sponsor

Morrissey Manorites

Reception Sponsor

Greg Dingens

Venue Sponsor

Michael & Mary Trotter

Thomas & Lucy Hayes

Supporting Sponsor

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Molly Shannon

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John Livingstone

Bob & Sue Welch

Auction Sponsors

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Gorjana
The Forge Lemont Quarries
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Revolution Brewing Company
Portillo's
Lynfred Winery
Capital Grille

Bubbly Side of Life
Fringe Boutique Salon
DeSoto House Hotel
Silver Oak Winery
August Hill Winery
Cooper's Hawk
The Growing Place
Pinot's Palette
Wine & Cheese Co
The Turf Room

A donation was made in honor of Matt Dingens by Dr. Anthony Puntillo

A donation was made on behalf of Matt Dingens by Kathryn & George Love Charitable Fund

A donation was made in honor of Matt Dingens by Tom & Lucy Hayes

A donation was made in honor of Matt Dingens by Douglas Groh

A donation was made in honor of Matt Dingens by Michele Girgis

A donation was made in honor of William Booth by The Lietz Family

A donation was made in honor of Will Booth by Maureen Schmitt

A donation was made in honor of William Booth by the Maes Family

A donation was made in honor of Will Booth by John Reedy, Uncle

A donation was made in honor of Kevin Bretz by Anne & Ray Capestrain

A donation was made in memory of Kevin Bretz by Richard and Jane Novotny

Visit our website to learn more about our programs, volunteering and donating.

www.synapsehouse.org

VETERANS PROGRAM UPDATES

Every year, the U.S. recognizes and commemorates a special military holiday on November 11th. This day is intended to honor military veterans that have previously served in combat on behalf of the United States, and this date also marks the end of World War I back in 1918. It is observed as a federal holiday, which means that traditionally, working employees across the country will have the day off to honor the memory, actions and dedication of those that served. For some this may include relatives and friends, and at Synapse House we have several friends who have served.

At Synapse House, we specifically choose to honor military service with an entire department that provides Life Skills Coaching (LSC) to our veterans. Their mission is to work with veteran with brain injuries at home, in our Clubhouse and in the community to best help reintegrate them into life and society. The work that we do with the veterans also includes employment practice and services, as well as regular outings to a local establishments to explore leisure interests, hobbies, and complete daily errands, for example. Pictured is a group of our veterans at the Clubhouse socializing and appreciating each other and the community that Synapse House has created with them.



EMPLOYMENT UPDATE



As the weather cools down, the Employment Team is heating up!

Three members have new jobs that began recently. Jobs range from a retail clothing store, to a school district and data entry.

Congratulations to all on your hard work and dedication to moving onto the next step in your journeys.

Synapse House is looking for job leads. If you would like to hire one of our members or know of a vacant position, please contact Ashley Gieschen at

JOB UPDATE & REFLECTION BY COLIN O.

I work at ABH which stands for Architectural Builder's Hardware. They provide door hinges on the industrial level, meaning they make contracts with construction companies and provide the door hardware for them. This includes skyscrapers, hospitals, schools, and really any large building that requires doors.

At ABH, I have been hired as a data analyst. My role, so far, has been copying data from sales orders into the computer as well as making sure that the correct forms are scanned into their computer systems. It's a new role in a new industry that I knew nothing about before.

Prior to working there, I was not aware of how much thought went into doors. My first week there consisted of me watching videos and taking notes about their product just so I knew what they provided for companies. It is a lot to learn, but they have been very accommodating to me. So far, my attitude is to take it one day at a time and to enjoy learning about a new industry.

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deborah@synapsehouse.org



Community Support Services has a new name! This service is now labeled as **Life Skills Coaching (LSC)** and is the core service of our Veteran's Program. We are proud to serve our veterans! Dustin Bellair has resigned from his role in our Veteran's Program. We wish him well in his endeavors and career with the Army Reserves. We welcome to the Team, Samuel Saenz. Samuel will fill Dustin's position and also work as a Work Unit Coordinator in our Clubhouse Day Program.

VETERAN LED ART CLASS

By Will B.



On most Mondays and Fridays at Synapse House, some of our members that are interested in putting their art skills to the test, join Tony, one of our valued military veterans that loves to paint, as he completes his latest project. These projects involve painting on canvas while following along with a YouTube tutorial that guides you step-by-step on which paint colors to use, which colors to blend and what each stroke should look like. This is extra helpful for any participating member that feels that they're not particularly talented at painting. Each video is longer, because the video creator is meticulous about demonstrating and explaining each step in an easy-to-understand fashion.

Tony was already a highly skilled and passionate painter before he started this group twice a week, but now he's helping inspire additional members to take up painting as a new hobby. Thanks to generosity from readers/donors like you, we're able to continue onboarding new members, especially those that are part of our military and have suffered brain injuries, as we have a specific department to support individuals like Tony.

Visit our website to learn more about our programs, volunteering and donating.

www.synapsehouse.org

CLUBHOUSE PROGRAM UPDATE

Pictured below: Members work individually and in small groups to accomplish Business Unit tasks. Here, Members are writing thank you cards to our Donors. Work tasks like this target specific Member goals areas such as sustained attention, visual scanning, fine motor skills, language, and following directions.



Pictured below: Members who enjoy art and creativity are invited to our weekly Wednesday art group. In this group Members are working on a fundraising project creating art for greeting cards. Be on the lookout for our creations to be on sale in 2026 (sneak peek below).



At Synapse House, there are a lot of new and exciting things that are happening! As of late, we have welcomed several new members, all of whom are bringing fresh and exciting mindsets, ideas, and personalities to our Clubhouse. Besides that, we are celebrating a lot of early Fall birthdays and work anniversaries for some of our staff that have been with us for a number of years. We continue to do this every month, as we have a large enough member attendance to recognize and celebrate multiple birthdays every month. For these, we sometimes pass around sweet treats like cookies or cupcakes, sing happy birthday to them, and wish them well on their big day.

Our Employment Program is working hard as ever to get some members job interviews, fill out applications, and progress further toward work readiness by honing and improving their work skills, like endurance, focus and organization, all of which are crucial for a traditional workday. The Employment staff here is focused on getting jobs for the members who are in our employment program. Recently, they have successfully helped three members secure jobs that they're engaged in now with satisfaction, especially for some of our members that haven't worked since their brain injury, as is so common amongst many of the members here. Going forward, we plan on and are excited to gain employment for more members in our program that attend here and work hard towards achieving this goal of working again.

In addition to all of this, the Clubhouse members have been enjoying the various outings that we plan every month. These include transporting members out into the community, whether it's for an activity, a sit-down meal, or an opportunity to volunteer, specifically at "Operation Support Our Troops," where our members gather to assemble care packages for the military troops abroad. Through your generous support, our members can continue to complete this important community engagement and volunteer work as our program is expanding rapidly. Check out some of our adventures on the next page!

If you know someone in need of services or would like to share information about Synapse House with your healthcare provider, please contact

deborah@synapsehouse.org

OUTINGS & VOLUNTEERING



SUBURBANITE
MAKE IT YOUR GAME **BOWL**



CANTIGNY

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Suite 520
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877-932-1120
www.synapsehouse.org

PLACE
STAMP
HERE



SYNAPSE HOUSE WISH LIST & FUNDRAISING

Set-up a donation drive or schedule a supply drop-off.

Email megan@synapsehouse.org for more information. Bold items we have a greater need for.

Copy Paper
White Cardstock
Hand Weights
Letter size Envelopes
File Folders (letter size)

Postage Stamps
Toilet Paper
Cleaning Wipes
C-Fold Paper Towels
Latex Gloves

Gas Gift Cards
Uber or Lyft Gift Cards
Gift cards to Wal-Mart, Jewel, Office Depot, & Mariano's



Wednesday, November 19, 2025

Synapse House will host the Young Professionals Networking Event of the Chamber of Commerce 630.

Event begins at
5:00 p.m. with light food and
beverages to be served.

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Synapse House will celebrate our ribbon cutting ceremony with the Chamber of Commerce 630. Light lunch and tour of the facility to be held.

Please join us: 11:30AM-1:30PM



For a snapshot of our Clubhouse programming, Employment training and Members in the spotlight, please follow us on Social Media:

Facebook: Synapse House
Instagram: @synapsehouseclubhouse
YouTube: Synapse House



For more information or to register for an event go to Synapsehouse.org