

# RACHEL'S STORY



**Before CEL, Rachel felt isolated and lonely.**

## **YOU CAN END SOCIAL ISOLATION!**

*Social isolation is one of the most critical issues facing people with developmental disabilities. CEL has depended on donors like you to combat social isolation with opportunities for social enrichment, continued learning and community engagement for youth and adults.*

**R**achel loves music and, like many 21-year-old women, adores Taylor Swift. She enjoys cooking and hanging out with friends. Rachel was born with Spina bifida, which caused a series of medical crises including meningitis and emergency brain surgeries – resulting in developmental and physical challenges.

Throughout middle school, Rachel's developmental challenges didn't stop her from participating in numerous activities. She joined Brownies and Girl Scouts; loved theater and art camp; attended parties and always had friends to sit with at lunch.

Rachel's life changed when she entered high school – her non-disabled peers began to expand their world. Isolated and lonely, Rachel was left behind with no friends to call or be with. Her phone never rang. Rachel's parents were frustrated and saddened to see their daughter's world get smaller.

## **ENTER THE CENTER FOR ENRICHED LIVING**

When Rachel and her family received a CEL brochure from her teacher, a new chapter opened up for her, with cooking classes, Center Idol and Teen Scene. Soon

weekends were filled with Saturday programs and summers at CEL's Adventure Camp. Finding CEL was better than her family could have hoped for, as Rachel found new friends, experiences and opportunities.

## **THE CRISIS OF POST HIGH SCHOOL LIFE**

As she turns 22, Rachel now faces a new phase in her life. In Illinois all students with disabilities transition out of the school system on their 22nd birthday. For many families, this is a crisis because there are few options for daytime engagement and continued learning. Yet this has caused almost no stress for Rachel's family.

After years researching and visiting area day programs, many of which couldn't – or wouldn't – accommodate Rachel's physical and medical needs, Rachel's family knows that CEL's REACH Adult Day Program is ready to warmly welcome Rachel.

“Not only will Rachel be safe and happy at REACH, she will thrive,” says Rachel's mom, Amy. “She will be surrounded by the most amazing people who are devoted to her in a way you hope for your child, but aren't always able to find.”