

“Tiny Friends” Takes Off with a Big Dream!

By: Brenda Swoboda, TIG Western Regional Coordinator



“All Kids Have Dreams” was the title of the conference proposal where I met Carly Friess for the first time. She and her mom, Heather, wanted to share a part of their transition story that started with Carly’s dream of owning her own store. After many years, a strong network of support from her family and friends, a building price that finally fell within their budget after watching it for years, and a whole lot of heart, Tiny Friends was born. Carly was ONLY 15 years old and a business owner! (Happy Belated Birthday Carly who turned 16 on February 12th)

After looking at the future and taking into account Carly’s medical needs and disability, Carly and her family pursued the dream of her owning a business. Carly is involved in every decision, making most of them herself, on anything from paint colors, store design, the purchasing of goods, and the hiring of her 3 employees! She’s learned that early morning shopping is hard, requires car naps, and a guaranteed coffee stop – but that it’s all worth it!

Two of three of Carly’s employees also have disabilities and they needed some accommodations. Therefore, much consideration was given to the break room. It holds a bed, a refrigerator, a microwave and a table so that if employees need to rest, the options are there. Heather commented that regardless of the medical need, often times people don’t need to go home and quit working but just get the needed rest to reboot for the rest of their work day. The store houses small villages and a reading corner where Carly can be found reading to the kids that frequent her shop.

Tiny Friends is expanding on what they sell and started with children's clothes that they found on clearance racks. They now have mommy and me outfits, children's accessories, a candy bar, toys, shoes, and are always looking to add new items. Carly runs all of the Facebook Live sales and that just might be her favorite part – along with the shopping for clothes at Gymboree! The future looks bright for Carly and Tiny Friends and in a couple of years, you might just see an ice cream shop opening in part of the building to continue to build on a dream. I think Carly has a passion for fashion and her mom supports whatever happens! If down the road, she wants to move on from owning a business that will be a decision they make together and support her. Now, you can help Carly fulfill a dream. You can find Tiny Friends on Facebook and learn more about their business and hours. You can find them in Cumberland, Wisconsin at 1316 2nd Avenue or by calling at 715.671.0260 to check on seasonal hours. "When you support a small business, you support a dream." No truer words to Carly and her family!

