

## A NEW PLACE TO CALL HOME

### PROGRAM FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH AUTISM MAKES BIG MOVE

In 2006, downtown Bloomington welcomed The College Internship Program at the Bloomington Center.

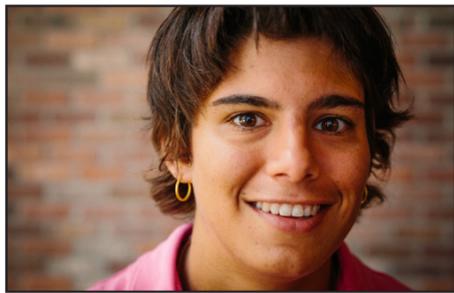
CIP Bloomington is a private, independent living skills, academic social skills and vocational development program for young adults ages 18 to 26 with documented diagnoses of autism spectrum disorders or learning differences. Diagnoses served include attention deficit disorder, dyslexia Tourette's syndrome and other unique needs.

CIP Bloomington students must demonstrate full developmentally appropriate expressive and receptive language abilities, emotional, behavioral and psychological stability and the potential to work in competitive, community-based employment or attend college independently. The College Internship Program also has other locations in Massachusetts, California and Florida. The Bloomington Center is the only center in the Midwest.

As the program's 10-year lease at 425 N. College Ave. recently approached expiration, the staff decided that instead of moving CIP Bloomington to another city, they needed to find another downtown Bloomington location to offer their programming and apartment living services to students.

They found it just a few blocks away, at 204 N. Morton St., which formerly housed the Relish clothing, home decor and fine furniture store until the fall of 2017. The 7,000-square-foot building features large, academic classrooms and study spaces with adjustable lighting to suit the specific sensory processing needs of student with autism and various learning differences. Private study rooms are available for tutoring sessions and test taking.

The building also offers a computer and technology lab, gaming and recreation space individual counseling and



This column is written by Adria Nassim.

psychotherapy office and full wheelchair accessibility. It officially opened Monday for student programming for the fall 2019 semester, according to an email from Jake Steinmetz, program director.

Other important factors in finding a suitable location for a program such as CIP Bloomington involved finding a spot within walking distance of a well-respected university that was also near restaurants, shopping, grocery stores, fitness and wellness options, volunteer opportunities and social activities. In addition, it needed to be connected to the city transit system and just a short ride to the local community college. All of these are integral factors when considering post-secondary programming, independent living and housing options for young adults with disabilities.

CIP Bloomington currently has 15 students enrolled for the coming semester. However, up to three additional students may enter the program later in the school year, in accordance with the company's rolling admissions process. A rolling admissions process is one in which students may submit an application and be accepted at any point in the school year, as opposed to at specific times only.

Although CIP staffers prefer students start either at the beginning of the fall or spring semesters, since that is when most new students tend to enter the program, the company does have a rolling admissions policy.



CIP Bloomington students practice social skills as they engage in collaborative activities. (Courtesy photo)

In addition to addressing a student's academic skills and allowing them to pursue a degree at either Indiana University, Ivy Tech Community College or a combination of the two, CIP Bloomington also focuses on increasing a student's independent living skills, both residentially and in the greater community.

As part of their residential living services, CIP students are paired up with a roommate based on mutual interests and similar developmental functionality level. However, not all students have a roommate. Some years, based on having an odd number of students, or if a student is older and farther along in the program, he or she may choose to live alone.

Formerly housed in Smallwood on College apartments, CIP Bloomington students were intermixed and living among approximately 850 other typically developing IU students. While this complex is safe and offers a good setup for typical college students, a living environment as expansive and sometimes loud as Smallwood on College may not be the best living arrangement for a college student with autism or learning differences who may often have unique sensory processing difficulties.

The new CIP Bloomington residential living services will be offered through The Mercury apartments, directly adjacent to CIP Bloomington's new location. The complex is otherwise only open to graduate students and young professionals, making it a quieter environment than Smallwood on College, which primarily serves undergraduates. The units will feature large, well-lit open floor plans ranging from 620 to 1,365 square feet, according to the property owner's website. A washer and dryer are included in each unit as well as limestone countertops, on-site recycling and 24-hour emergency maintenance.

Steinmetz said, "I am most looking forward to the ability to raise our expectations with the move. Our program works to instill a sense of pride and professionalism in our students. I am looking forward to having a fresh, professional new space to help them be successful."

For more information on any of the College Internship Program's locations, visit: [www.cipworldwide.org](http://www.cipworldwide.org).

For information on CIP Bloomington, call 812-323-0600 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and ask for Jake Steinmetz, Program Director.