



## Merger Updates

May 2025

### Video Interview From the CEOs

As we look to the future as one organization, John Estrem, CEO, Hammer & NER and Tom Gillespie, CEO, Living Well Disability Services share their thoughts and excitement about the 9 priorities of the merger Leadership Work Groups and what each are most excited about our future together.



[Watch the Video](#)

[Click here](#) to View the 9 Leadership Work Group Priorities

### "New Org" Brand Identity Kick Off Underway - by Rich Stoebe, Hammer & NER Board Member

On May 1, The Brand and Identity Work Group and our agency partner, Haberman, launched the branding process for the merger of Hammer & NER and Living Well Disability Services. This work will lead to a new organizational name, logo, visual symbols, and brand story in preparation for the merger on January 1, 2026.



*"A team of board and staff members resolved that the new name would represent a future of dependable care for people and a great workplace for employees," stated John Estrem, CEO, Hammer and NER. "The brand will honor the legacy of each organization while supporting our vision for the future."*

The branding process will take about six months, aligned with integration planning by

functional work groups. The first milestone, creating and trademarking the new organization's brand name, is already underway.

*"Haberman's brand insight and experience will help us effectively communicate our work in creating more choices and opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities," said Tom Gillespie, CEO, Living Well Disability Services. "We look forward to sharing more information with people we support, family members, staff, and advocates, while inviting new friends to join in our mission."*

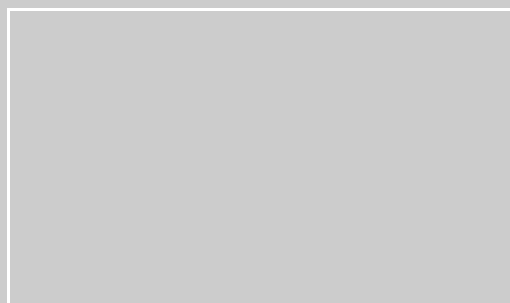
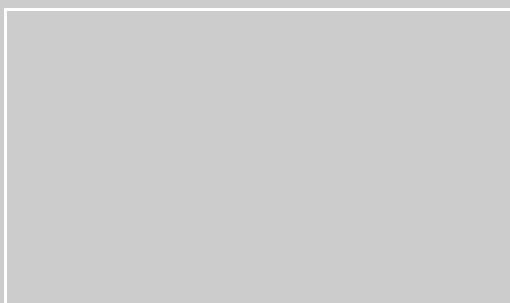
Haberman is a full-service marketing communications agency with a mission to "tell the stories of pioneers making a difference in the world." For more than 30 years, the Minneapolis-based agency has worked on behalf of purpose-driven organizations, nonprofits and foundations to drive positive social change. Haberman is also the agency of record for the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games that will take place June 2026 in the Twin Cities.

*"We are truly honored and excited to help develop the brand story that will represent the powerful union of Living Well and Hammer & NER," said Brian Wachtler, President and Partner at Haberman. "Both organizations possess remarkable histories of supporting people with disabilities, empowering them to live with as much independence as possible. We are eager to collaborate closely with the passionate individuals within and connected to Living Well and Hammer & NER. Together, we will bring their authentic and impactful story to life."*

For questions about the branding process, please contact Barbara Brandt, Director of Communication for Hammer & NER, [Barbarabrandt@hammer.org](mailto:Barbarabrandt@hammer.org) or Heather Heier, Events and Communication for Living Well at [Heather.heier@livingwell.org](mailto:Heather.heier@livingwell.org).



The Brand & Identity team was warmly welcomed at Haberman's offices during our kick-off meeting on May 1, 2025.





Beginning the exciting journey to become one organization.



Meet & Greet home tours at our Sumac home in Eden Prairie.

## Finance Team Update - by Kristin Pyka, CFO, Hammer & NER

The Finance Teams from both organizations came together for an engaging and successful afternoon of collaboration. It was a lively session filled with laughter and teamwork, as participants shared processes and gained insights into each other's systems.

Comparing the systems revealed different approaches, leading to interesting discussions about likes and dislikes. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, reflecting the strong connections formed and the valuable exchange of ideas.

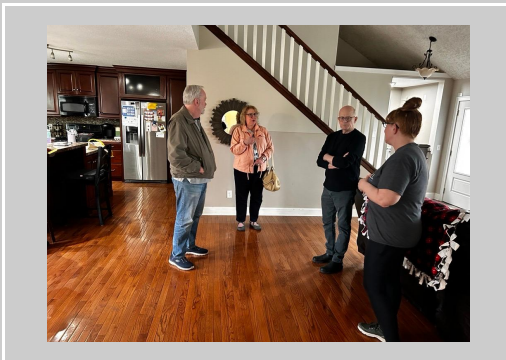


## Cloman Home Tour - By Heather Heier, Events & Communication Manager at Living Well Disability Services

On April 24, members of the Brand & Identity group toured the Living Well offices and Cloman home. Nestled in a cozy Inver Grove Heights neighborhood, Cloman is one of three houses opened after the decision was made to close the Victora Road home serving 12 individuals, to create smaller, more intimate home settings for four people in three new houses. After years of planning, and in response to the growing understanding that people often thrive best in smaller homes, the Cloman, Mears, and Selkirk houses were bought and remodeled, staff teams were assembled, and the houses were opened.



Program Manager, Sam Subah and Advanced Assistant Program Manager, Mel Jones, showed the Hammer & NER team what makes Cloman special. With lots of lifts, an elevator, and adaptive kitchen utensils, Cloman is the perfect example of an accessible home.



[Click Here](#) to watch a video tour done for the 2021 Transforming Lives Gala that highlighted the expenses that come with outfitting a home to comfortably serve people with disabilities.

Sam and Mel, along with DSP Dolphine Momanyi, were featured in a documentary called “How to Care,” starring artist Dan Stallworth, who lives at the home. Look for a link to that documentary soon.

## **Program Update - by Rod Carlson, Chief Operating Officer, Living Well Disability Services**

The Program team, consisting of three members each from Hammer & NER and Living Well Disability Services, has met approximately ten times since early February. Initially, the meetings focused on building rapport and understanding the gifts that each member brings to the group. Recent meetings have focused on key job description recommendations as well as learning about each other’s program documentation, eMARs (Electronic Medication Administration Records) and other tools with the intent of sharing recommendations and providing requested input and support with various departments about what might best support a growing organization.



Ongoing work following established timelines to support identified interdepartmental work group priorities will continue. This ongoing collaboration is energizing, enlightening, and educational for members of the group and we continue to look forward to working together in the days, weeks and months to come.

## IT Update - by Dan Bottiger, Director of IT, Hammer & NER

The IT Work Group has been focused on supporting the other Work Groups, as they discuss and evaluate the current systems currently in place. They will then move towards making decisions on what systems will be used when we are one organization. The highest priority decision currently is deciding upon which electronic health record system to use (eHR). This decision impacts multiple other systems as we use that as our single source of truth for many other systems. As these decisions are made, we are also identifying what gaps are present as we move towards trying to automate as much as possible – what we are calling interoperability. This will make us a much more efficient organization.



## In the News - Op Ed by Tom Gillespie, CEO, Living Well Disability Services



Read the Op Ed, written by Tom Gillespie, CEO of Living Well Disability Services, in regards to the drastic cuts proposed for Disability Services.

Click the button below to read the full story.

[Read the Full Story Here](#)

[Livingwell.org](#)

[Hammer.org](#)

The Board of Directors of Hammer & NER and Living Well Disability Services have entered into a formal partnership agreement. The intent of the partnership is to combine our expertise, experience and resources to create an innovative and sustainable organization that provides exceptional support to people with disabilities throughout their lifetime.

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