

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



MANAGING A PANDEMIC TOGETHER



One-of-a-kind services
for one-of-a-kind people.

ASPIRE LEADERSHIP

Welcome to Aspire of Western New York's 2020 Annual Report!

2020 is, without argument, literally one for the record books. I am not certain any of us ever thought we would find ourselves living through a worldwide pandemic. As an agency, we were faced with not only responding to the immediate needs of the people we support while remaining poised and in control; but also anticipating next steps and related responses. We also found ourselves engaging every operational, financial, and employment strategy to ensure that we had the resources to meet the challenge.



I am proud to state that we met our mark...and then some!

It is difficult to address anything that happened in 2020 without some component of it having been touched by COVID-19. In February, we started our conversations about change management and using change as a driver of growth. We discussed the idea of entrepreneurial thinking in an industry that is beholden to many governmental agencies and regulations. On March 10th, we held the first of several planned Strategic Planning retreats. We all know what happened in the following days. We found ourselves in the throes of a worldwide health crisis.



Without hesitation, intuitively if you will, we switched gears. It would take volumes of annual reports to share all the challenges we conquered. What is most noteworthy is how staff from every corner of Aspire came together to ensure the continuity of services along with the health and wellbeing of the individuals we serve. Further in our annual report, you'll get a better understanding of some of the work that was completed all while addressing COVID-19 and running the day-to-day activities of the organization.

It is my hope that you have navigated 2020 as best as possible and that you are looking forward to a bigger and brighter horizon.

Stay well,

Renee A. Filip
President & CEO

John Earshen
Board Chairman

SUPPORTS NEVER CEASED



Justin receives services through Aspire's Self-Directed Services (SDS) program. Justin and his SDS staff, Deanna, have continued to deliver for Meals on Wheels during this difficult time. Justin wants to continue to volunteer and he decided that, with extra precautions in place, he could safely continue to deliver meals and his staff agreed to continue supporting him.

Zach participates in Aspire's Supported Employment program. Zach was hired as a kitchen helper at the Cassadaga Job Corps Academy right at the start of the pandemic. During his time at home, Zach and his Employment Specialist, Jennifer, worked together on recipes he would need to learn. He also earned his ServeSafe Certification. Zach is now back at work and cooking up something good everyday. This pizza smells like success!!!



Todd is very involved in his church and was heartbroken when services were cancelled due to the pandemic. Todd lives in Aspire's Canterbury group home. One of the staff knows how important church services are to Todd and found a link to online seminars so he can still be involved! Todd's roommate, Billy, was also interested and they now spend time together daily watching these services.

Harry lives at Aspire's Park Lane Group Home. On a normal day, Harry attends Aspire's Day Habilitation program at Mall Blvd in Jamestown. Every morning, Harry would take time to visit his friends and staff in the building to have them sign his signature book. Due to COVID-19, he was unable to enjoy his favorite activity. In honor of Harry, the staff at Mall Blvd arranged a drive-by for Harry so he could safely see all of his friends. Harry's day hab staff also created a signature book with sweet messages to let him know how much he was missed!



Ali participates in Aspire's Supported Volunteer and Lifestyle Enrichment (SVLE) program in the Southern Tier. Ali is so happy be back in her program after it was stopped due to COVID-19. She normally enjoys finding new and/or different volunteer opportunities; but due to the COVID restrictions, her former volunteer sites were not accepting anyone. That did not stop her! Instead, she began helping out in the lobby of UCAN chapel. She takes great pride in her work and has enjoyed meeting new friends while there; making sure she is utilizing social distancing and keeping her mask on.

During the pandemic Aspire employees had to think of creative ways to interact with the people supported through the Day Services program. Staff from Mall Blvd. Day Habilitation and Supported Volunteer and Lifestyle Enrichment(SVLE) programs in the Southern Tier worked together to create some amazing activities they could do from their homes over Zoom! These activities helped everyone stay connected. Some activities included crafting, painting rocks, yodeling, dress up fun, and so much more!



"A crisis often brings out the best in you and you discover qualities that you never knew existed within."

- Rajeev Siddhartha

AN ENGAGED AGENCY

In spite of challenging circumstances, Aspire employees have been working hard to engage, support, and appreciate one another.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in order to support the staff in our group homes, Aspire created two Meal Prep groups to help prepare meals for the residents in some of our group homes. One group worked out of Aspire's Center for Learning and one out of our Mall Blvd Day Habilitation site in Jamestown. Staff from across the agency participated in the cooking and preparation of these meals which were then delivered by our drivers.



Several members of Aspire's staff went to work cutting and sewing cloth face masks in order to keep everyone protected. Many gathered in the cafetorium at our Center for Learning location to complete these masks. Additionally, several masks were donated by family members, our neighbors, and the community.

Aspire's Environment & Safety (E&S) team is responsible (among many other things) for managing and delivering needed supplies to all of Aspire's residences, buildings, and off-site locations in both Erie and Chautauqua Counties. In an effort to spread positivity and lift spirits, the E&S team put some special "surprises" in their deliveries. Needless to say, the response was a "viral" showering of gratitude and smiles.



Erin, one of Aspire's Senior Employment Specialists, hand folded origami hearts with personalized messages and placed them in a jar in the Vocational Services offices for her team. Aspire's Vocational Services continued to support people in their essential jobs on the front lines to ensure their safety in the workplace. Here's the message she sent to the Team: "For anyone needing a little boost or just wanting a fun secret message: I've put this jar of origami hearts at the office. Each message is different; no repeats. Hopefully it gives you a little something fun to look forward to at the office. If you take one, feel free to share what you got. May the odds be ever in your favor. What positive messages are you sending and receiving? Every little message counts!"

Aspire's Celebrations Committee hosted a "Chopped" Competition for the entire agency. Participants were asked to submit recipes and pictures of their breakfast, lunch, or dinner creation that included a meat, a starch, a vegetable, and leftover Easter candy. There was no taste testing; submissions were judged on presentation and creativity.



Aspire's Employee Celebration Event would have been held in November 2020. However, the event needed to be canceled due to the pandemic. Not to be deterred, we decided instead to celebrate our amazing employees with a weeklong event of fun activities and giveaways.



Aspire's E&S department drove around spreading some Holiday Cheer to residents and staff throughout Western New York, bringing smiles and joy to everyone.

Renee Filip, Aspire's President & CEO, has been so proud of the Aspire Workforce for how they have come together to assist in supporting the needs of the individuals we support. To recognize Aspire's frontline heroes, she donated signs to be displayed in the lawns of our various sites.



As an agency, Aspire has come together during this challenging time and has proven that anything is possible when we work together. Thank you to all of our employees, who work so hard every day to help support the people we serve.

SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS

Amidst the COVID pandemic, Aspire is still finding reasons to celebrate the incredible individuals we support. One celebration was for Ryan, who has lived in one of Aspire's certified apartments for the last 14 years. He has now "graduated" from this residence and moved out into the community to live independently.



Noah participates in Aspire's In-Home Respite Program within our Community and Independent Living Division. Patty, his staff, wanted to make his birthday extra special. She wrote him an extra special message and enjoyed the outdoors with him so his parents could take care of things at home, knowing their son was safe with Patty.

One of Aspire's World Of Work (WOW) students, Caleb, celebrated his 21st birthday! Aspire's WOW staff collaborated with Caleb's home district teachers to arrange a Happy Birthday Caravan to drive by his house!



CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES

Congratulations to our 2020 Center for Learning graduates: Taisha, Marissa, Damoni, and Jacob! Their amazing teachers made their day with a graduation parade for all four graduates. We are so proud of the hard work that our graduates have put in over the years!



REMOTE LEARNING MADE POSSIBLE

Aspire's innovative IT partners at Accessium Group, Inc. found a way to reuse old laptops so some of the children in Aspire's Commons Group Home could virtually engage with their teachers at Aspire's Center For Learning! Accessium Group took the old operating systems that were no longer supported by Microsoft and were able to replace them with new ones that could access the internet. This was very successful and the kids had a blast! Thank you to the amazing and dedicated staff at Commons who supported the children to make this happen.



NEWS OUTSIDE OF A PANDEMIC

A New Website

Aspire of Western New York is proud to announce our new website brought to you by J. Fitzgerald Group! It is our intention that you find this website helpful and we invite you to take a look around and explore.

You can visit our site at <https://www.aspirewny.org/>

An Artist Represented

Eric is an Aspire Co-Op member, as well as one of Aspires resident artists. Over the years Eric has created and has been recognized by many of his fellow artists at Aspire, as well as in the Buffalo arts community. Buffalo Arts Studio (BAS) has worked with and mentored Eric on several projects over the years. It was no surprise when they asked Eric to be interviewed and participate in a video to highlight BAS and everything that it represents.



Uplifter Video is a video production company with a mission to create great stories for people who do great work, to connect organizations to communities, and to inspire people to act, contribute and share. Ultimately, the video appeared on the BAS home page to introduce artists from all walks of life, having them ponder the question.....

“What if there was a place...

- where being different is the norm?
- where art and the community become one?
- where meaningful art is accessible to everyone?
- where the diversity is a reflection of its community?
- where artists create, grow, and make an impact?”

Kudos to Eric!

Equal Employment Recognized

Aspire of WNY's Director of Vocational Services, Toni Sullivan, presented Jackie, owner of Ashville General with the National Disability Employment Award for their outstanding achievement in equal employment of people with disabilities. Thank you for creating a supportive environment where anyone can be successful! We also would like to thank ACCES-VR and the WNY Employment Consortium for sponsoring the awards and making this year's celebration so very meaningful!



NEWS OUTSIDE OF A PANDEMIC

Helping Hands

David found himself in an unfortunate situation when his lawn mower was stolen from his shed. His care coordinator reached out to our Agency Intake & Outreach Department requesting assistance. Our Home Service Director/ Intake Outreach Coordinator, Tracy, was able to utilize outreach efforts and located a slightly used lawn mower, generously donated by Artina Ellsworth, who is a special education teacher at Aspire's Center for Learning. David was ecstatic to receive this mower and is now back to mowing the lawn of his home that he has proudly owned for the past 11 years.



Giving to Others



When the community is in need, Aspire's Co-Op and Tech Today members are always ready and willing to help out any way they can. The Resurrection Food Pantry was in need of food donations to make some Buffalo families Thanksgiving complete. With everyone working together and donating the items for the Bags of Hope, the Co-Op and Tech Today members were able to gather enough donations to fill 12 bags for 12 families to be delivered. Regardless of our current situation there is always the opportunity to give to others and be thankful for all we have.

Community Support

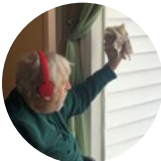
On 11/3/2020, Aspire's Portland Group Home received a generous donation from a local business, St. Stephen's Cafe. Stewart and John from St. Stephen's Cafe presented the check to Team Coordinator, Scott Johnston, and Acacia, one of the residents at Portland. It was specifically noted that this donation was made possible by the generous donations and tips received from local patrons which allowed the Cafe to make donations to Non-Profits in the Brocton/Portland community. Thank you to the St. Stephen's Cafe and our fellow community members for your kindness and generosity.



**"In the midst of this catastrophe,
more than looking in to find serenity,
we need to look out for one another to practice humanity."**
- Abhijit Naskar

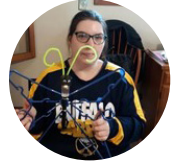
STAYING BUSY AT HOME

The staff and individuals in many of our programs and residences have been finding creative ways to stay busy. Cards were decorated and delivered to families and to other members of the community who could not receive visitors, such as the local Nursing Home Community Partners and Heritage Green Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing in Chautauqua County. Special sayings, like “the warmest thoughts make the sun a little brighter”, were written to let them know that everyone was in our thoughts.



Several of Aspire’s residents colored Easter eggs and made decorations, and other festive craft projects, like a “concert in the park for bunnies” and “playground for the Easter Bunny. They have been exercising, playing games, and doing chores. They are showing their artistic side by crafting rainbows, jellyfish, tee-shirts, and solar light butterflies. They have held indoor picnics and spa nights. Also, Aspire’s Center for Learning staff helped keep the individuals in our residences busy during this challenging time by sending out Play-Doh kits.

Aspire’s Technology Today & Co-Op programs held many FaceTime calls to see each other during the pandemic since they couldn’t be together. Senior Employment Specialist, Kelly, started using Zoom with the people she supports in Aspire’s Community Based Prevocational Services to provide “Alternate Supports” during this time of crisis. The staff of Aspire’s Supported Volunteering and Lifestyle Enrichment (SVLE) program lifted spirits by sending out letters to all of their participants since they couldn’t be together. They even included a game they could play with their families at home!



MEET GLADYS

Gladys’ mom is Kelly McDermott, the Director of Residential Opportunities at Aspire. Gladys was rescued from a puppy mill and has congenital defects of her front legs, a dislocated hip, and rides in a stroller. Like many of the amazing individuals supported by Aspire, Gladys never lets her disabilities slow her down!

Gladys knew that everyone had been feeling a little down so in order to lift spirits, Gladys created a contest in the Residential Opportunities division where every week all of Aspire’s residences were entered into a random drawing for a chance to win lunch or dinner of their choice for the whole house. Gladys chose the winner on Wednesdays and helped her mom deliver and commemorate the winners on Fridays.

Gladys had a great time meeting some very enthusiastic dog lovers and loved being greeted so warmly!

Thank you to everyone who followed Gladys’ around to some of our amazing group homes. Both Gladys and her mom had a lot of fun getting out and about to see so many amazing individuals and staff.



A YEAR IN REVIEW

A Reflection by Renee A. Filip

I keep trying to think of life before COVID. I often realize that during conversations I'm referencing things as pre-COVID. I believe that we are now closer than ever to life post-COVID, whatever that might look like. Vaccines are being put in arms. We still need to follow all of the safety recommendations, but we ARE that much closer.

No doubt this past year has been stressful for all of us. We have worked to achieve a sense of "normal" while balancing work and home; stayed connected while staying distant; found joy during uncertainty.

Aspire has accomplished a great deal. Thinking back to all that we have done for the people we support, it didn't matter whether you are a DSP or work in the administrative side of the house; We all did our best.

- We made masks.
- We cooked meals.
- We leveraged technology.
- We changed our work environment.
- We disinfected.
- We wrote policies.
- We wrote procedures.
- We made videos.
- We quarantined.
- We went ON protocol.
- We went OFF protocol.
- We suspended programs.
- We unsuspended programs.
- We reported.
- We taught differently.
- We stepped into jobs we had never done before.
- We delivered supplies and packets.
- We deep cleaned and disinfected.... again!
- We purchased PPE.....A LOT of PPE.
- We counted the PPE.
- We stored the PPE.
- We delivered the PPE and the cleaning supplies.
- We developed a vaccine plan.
- We tweaked the vaccine plan.
- We restricted visitors.
- We welcomed visitors.
- We took our temperatures.
- We marked off safe distances.
- We saw patients.
- We taught students.
- We did therapies.
- We hired doctors.
- We did open enrollment.
- We worked from home.
- We didn't work from home.
- We worked A LOT.
- We hired new Aspire colleagues.
- We celebrated the people we support.
- We celebrated each other.
- We budgeted.
- We reallocated money.
- We lobbied.
- We graduated students.
- We stayed on point.
- We stayed focus.
- We have been nothing short of awesome!
- We delivered surprises.
- We leaned on each other.
- We followed Executive Orders.
- We followed regulatory guidance.
- We waited patiently for updated Executive Orders.
- We followed DOH.
- We followed CDC.
- We followed State Ed.
- We collaborated with our partners.
- We created a QDPI Committee.
- We listened to each other.
- We challenged each other to do our best.
- We were so good that Santa paid us a visit to many of our locations!

WE MET OUR MOMENT!!! It wasn't always easy. But WOW!!!!

My hope for you is that you are good to yourself. I hope you are able to do some of your own Spring Cleaning; release what no longer serves you to make room for the new.

Stay well, (elbow bump)



Renee

IN MEMORIAM

Individuals served by Aspire who passed away in 2020

Michael Dinsmore
Katherine Helen Elinski
Timothy Godwin
Jennifer Goodyear
Dennis Gromada

Vanessa Janine Keith
Ashanti Miller
Michael O'Connor
Laurie Swanson
Larry E. Washburn



*"Wiggle Worm Garden"
by Sharlene Williams*

"Soon Too Long"

- Sharlene Williams

***A strange evolution
A time to remember
But you can't forget it
Like Pearl Harbor in
December***

***That time is illusion
Of perpetual motion
If you could just feel
The sensation of the ocean***

***You can't have everything
You can't have nothing
Everybody's got something
Unless the something is
missing***

2020 Donors

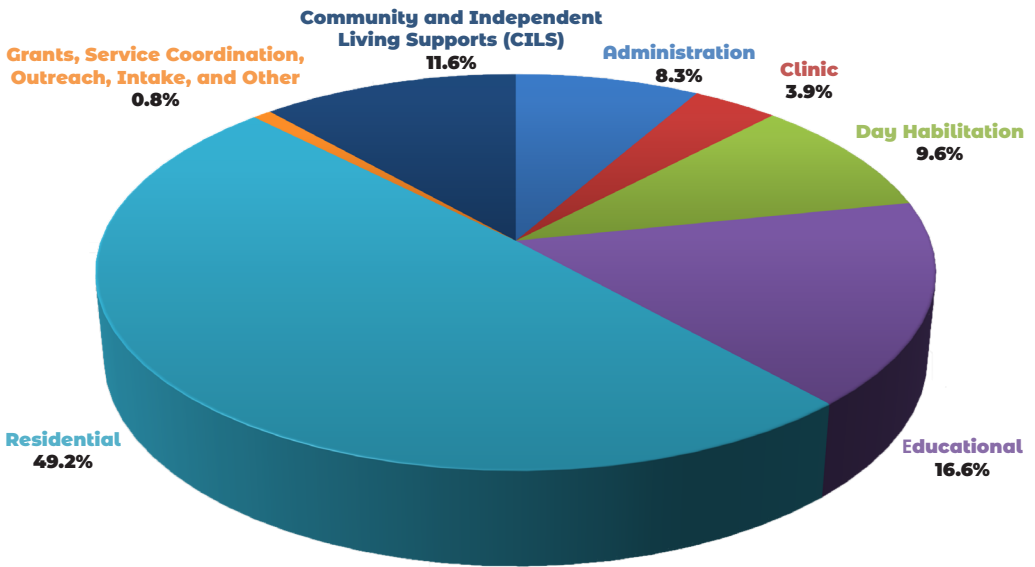
For a listing of all of our generous 2020 donors, please visit our website at <https://www.aspirewny.org/donors/>

Aspire would like to take this moment to say thank you.

During this time of great uncertainty we've been comforted, encouraged, and humbled by the outpouring of generosity and support from our community.

And thank you to our amazing workforce, at every level, who, in the face of a global pandemic, has persevered and remains dedicated to continuing to provide the best care they can to the individuals we support.

2020 FINANCIALS¹



Aspire of WNY & Affiliated Entities – Results of Operations Per Audited Financial Statements

Revenue	2020
Program Service Revenue ²	\$69,784,052
Government Grants	\$2,454,854
Fundraising	\$246,450
Other	\$1,326,084
TOTAL REVENUE	\$73,811,440

Expenses	2020
Administration.....	8.3%
Clinic.....	3.9%
Day Habilitation.....	9.6%
Educational.....	16.6%
Residential.....	49.2%
Grants, Service Coordination, Outreach, Intake, and Other.....	0.8%
Community & Independent Living Supports (CILS).....	11.6%
TOTAL REVENUE	100.0%

¹ The above information was developed by management based on information in the audited financial statements.

² 99% Federal and New York State Governmental Funding



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For more information about our programs and services:
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