

2022



Aspire
of WNY
IMPACT REPORT



At Aspire of WNY, we live by creating and lead by innovating.

Walk into any of our homes. Attend any of our events. Speak to our employees. Work with the individuals we support. Participate in our programs. In every moment, in every way, our agency seeks out innovation. And 2022 was a year propelled by new, creative thinking from across the organization.

Since joining Aspire of WNY in late 2019, much of my experience at the agency has been through the lens of a global pandemic. Now, with the return to normalcy, we are excited to embrace the theme of innovation once again.

On September 19, 2022, the agency celebrated 75 years of serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the WNY area. Our 75th Anniversary Gala saw community partners, team members, and individuals dance the night away, celebrating all that has come before us and all that lies ahead.

In this report, you will see the brilliant work of all who call Aspire of WNY home. Please join me in admiring their creations and innovations. Cheers to the next 75 years!

Thank you, and be well,



Renee A. Filip
President & CEO
Aspire of WNY

LEFT

Artwork created through Aspire of WNY's iXpress program

RIGHT

Renee Filip & son, Marshall, at Aspire of WNY's 75th Anniversary carnival

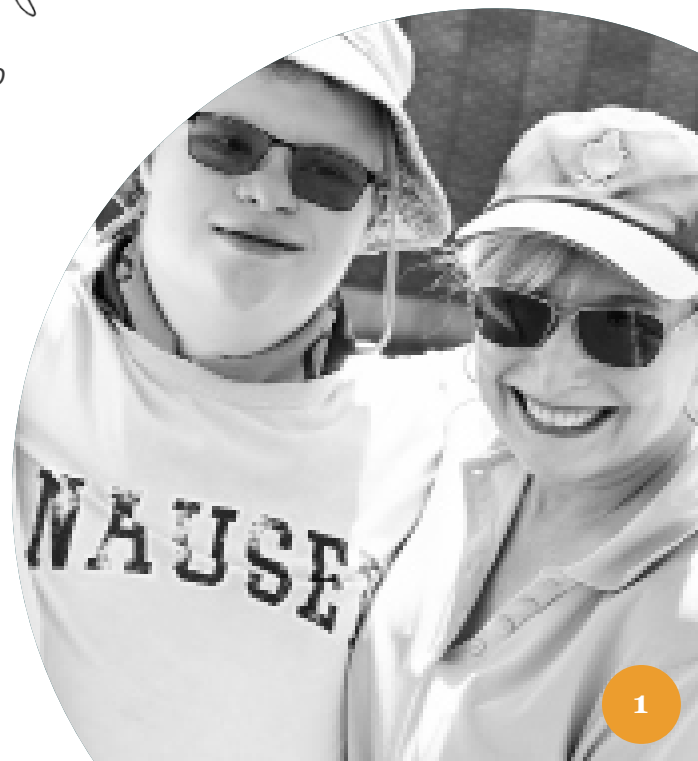


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Prepared by Jen Ball, Chief Financial Officer

IT TAKES courage TO BE K^{IND}ND

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On November 3rd, 2022, Aspire of WNY was proud to host a 1940's themed gala to celebrate 75 years of supporting individuals across the WNY community. Nearly three hundred guests flocked to the Admiral Room in the Marin building on downtown Buffalo's beautiful and historic Seneca Street. Guests were greeted with custom décor, delicious food, and beverage stations. Saxman Slim serenaded the crowds and Swing Buffalo provided authentic swing-dancing entertainment, bringing everyone out onto the dance floor.

During the event, Aspire of WNY honored Harrison Phillips, formerly of the Buffalo Bills and founder of Harrison's Playmakers, with the Man of Honor award, in recognition of his work with individuals with different abilities.

Renee Filip, Aspire of WNY's President & CEO, hosted the evening, paying special tribute to Sherwood Moss as a special guest, the man for whose cause Aspire of WNY was founded 75 years ago in 1947. Sherwood continues to receive services from Aspire of WNY to this day.

Jack Walsh, Aspire of WNY's Community Ambassador, took to the

CHEERS TO 75 YEARS!

Diamonds, glitter, elegance, old-world fashion, and over \$100,000 raised to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities at Aspire of WNY. Yes to all of this and more at the 75th Diamond Anniversary Gala for Aspire of WNY!



stage to auction off an assortment of fantastic prizes and packages. With auction paddles donated by Auctions International, everyone could join in the fun, bidding and raising thousands of dollars in support of Aspire of WNY. Special thanks to those who donated prize items including: The Praxiis Foundation, Jack Walsh, Reeds Jenss, Buffalo Holistic Center, Toshiba, Buffalo Bisons, Buffalo Bills, Buffalo Sabres, The New Era Cap Foundation, The Mansion on Delaware, the Aspire of WNY Foundation Board, and the Aspire of WNY Board.

Premiering at the gala, Aspire of WNY's 75th Anniversary video showcased the IMPACT made across the agency in a "day in the life" saga following individuals, services, Aspire of WNY team members, and leadership in both Erie and Chautauqua counties. Residents at group homes, children from the Center for Learning, community volunteers, and individuals in the workforce all made appearances to highlight how they are IMPACTED by Aspire of WNY and how they make an IMPACT in our community and the world.

After nearly a year of planning, the gala was a huge success in the eyes of Aspire of WNY, our guests, our

donors, and our sponsors. We'd like to acknowledge that none of this would be possible without sponsorship and partnership efforts from our supporters.

"We are blown away by the support we've received from our WNY

"I can't express enough gratitude for our WNY community, our corporate sponsors and partners, family members, and the entire team at Aspire."

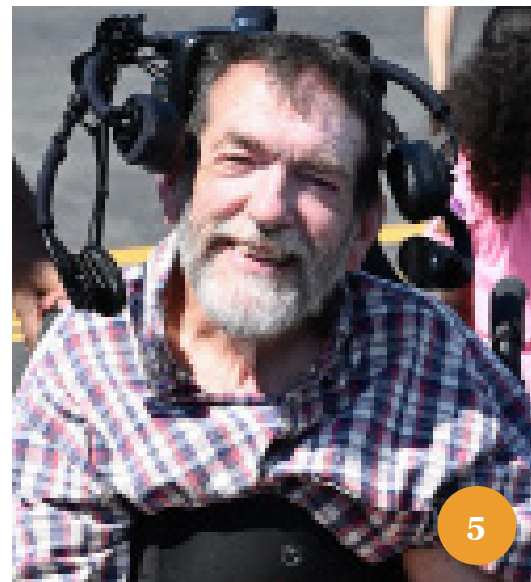


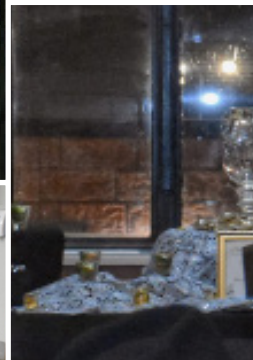
community in celebration of our 75th anniversary," said Renee Filip. "With individuals and corporations putting investments and support into our nonprofit, we will be able to continue to provide innovative and transformative services to the individuals we support. I can't express enough gratitude for our WNY community, corporate sponsors and partners, family members, and the entire team at Aspire."

In the summer of 2022, Aspire of WNY was also excited to host a 75th Anniversary Carnival that welcomed all employees at the agency as well as the individuals we support. Games and fun were had in the mid- July sun, with lots of prizes, dunk tank splashes, and friendship for everyone. Aspire of WNY was honored to have Kerri Neifeld, the NYS OPWDD Commissioner, in attendance of the carnival.

Aspire of WNY's 75th anniversary celebrations went off without a hitch. So what's next? Another 75 years of Aspire of WNY's core mission: supporting children and adults with developmental and similar disabilities, helping them to live their lives to the fullest by providing individualized assistance based on personal choices. ●

See the 75th Anniversary Photo Gallery on the next two pages!







INNOVATION THAT MAKES AN IMPACT!

When astronauts prepare to enter space, they spend months at the bottom of a pool. Why? Because water creates an antigravitational effect that simulates the space experience. On Earth, astronauts can learn how to make repairs, cook breakfast, and work together in an environment close to what they will experience after blast off.

At Aspire of WNY, we're doing the same thing.
Welcome to the Training Academy.

In a small, unobtrusive building set behind Aspire of WNY's Getzville headquarters, real-life situations and in-person trainings are taking place to prepare team members who support individuals with disabilities. "This home used to be utilized for respite services, but it was shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Carrie Spence, Vice President of Community & Independent Living Supports (CILS). "We knew there was a way we could repurpose the space and do something innovative."

Around the same time, Toni Sullivan, Director of Vocational Services and Adaptive Community Living at Aspire of WNY, saw a need for individuals to have professional outfits when going on job interviews. But, there was no inventory of items for them to select from, nor was there a way to customize clothing to fit everyone's individual bodies, depending on their needs.

Simultaneously, the Human Resources and Workforce Training & Development teams were looking for a way to bring new staff back to in-person training. "We started to notice that new staff members needed help learning tasks like

cooking and cleaning," said Melissa Roth, Chief Human Resources Officer. "We can't take for granted that people are coming to us with these skills; it is our responsibility to train them, not only to cook and clean, but also in every skill needed to support the individuals we serve."

As conversations bubbled up, a common theme emerged: an in-person space where new hires, individuals, and staff could come together and learn in an environment that mirrored the real-life situations they would encounter on the job, in the community, or during the workday. And the Training Academy was born.

Now, the former respite (support) home is the setting for hands-on training, a community closet for ADAPT Fashions!, and headquarters for Aspire of WNY's new Community BRIDGES program, where individuals take their social and vocational skills to the next level, becoming more and more independent with every day of participation.

ADAPT Fashions! where individuals can come and select professional outfits as they venture to job interviews, is open every other Friday and is managed by





Jenna and Brandi, two individuals supported by Aspire of WNY's Community-Based Prevocational Services. Jennifer Young, their support staff, assists them in helping pick out outfits for customers, managing inventory, and helping get custom tailoring done, if required, for garments to fit correctly.

"We love helping people look their best," said Brandi. "If someone loves an outfit, we cheer them on. If they need our help to look the best, we get them to feel confident in their new clothes. It is awesome."

Jennifer Young, a Senior Employment Specialist at Aspire of WNY, works with Brandi to help support her career goals and personal dreams. "Both Jenna and Brandi work together to manage the ADAPT Fashions! store, just like any other store. Their work experience applies to any other retailer in our community and shows the amazing skills that can be learned in the right environment."

Today, the Training Academy is operating in full force. New staff are tasked with working in situations that may happen when they enter group homes or day habilitation environments.

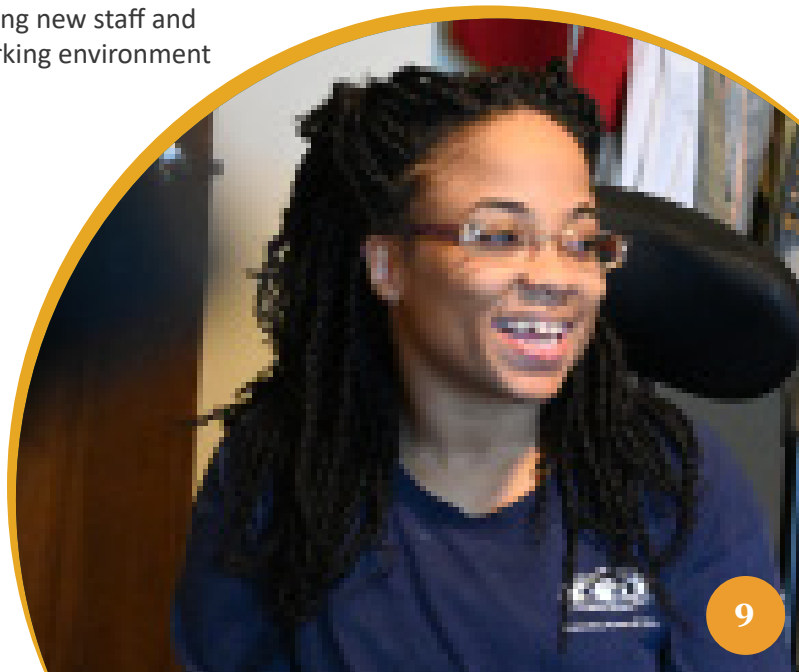
"We have a "what's wrong with this room?" test where we place items in the wrong area on purpose to help the team learn to identify the correct way to keep spaces safe and comfortable for the individuals we support," said Melissa Roth.

In 2022, at the Cerebral Palsy Associations of NY State (CP State) conference, the Training Academy and Aspire of WNY won the Innovation Award. "The recognition by our peers and CP State cement in our mind that the Training Academy is one stepping stone in our innovative future of supporting individuals with disabilities," said Renee Filip, President & CEO of Aspire of WNY. "Getting new staff and individuals into a working environment

that exemplifies real-life scenarios makes our team that much better. And it provides wonderful opportunities for skills and collaboration across the agency. I couldn't be prouder of the team!"

"The Training Academy is the epitome of innovation. We had the idea, created the vision, and put it into action. We're doing the work where the work will happen. And that is so important," said Toni Sullivan.

The Training Academy continues to tweak and improve its function within the agency. It looks forward to hosting an open house shortly—welcoming the community to see the innovative environment firsthand. And, of course, if NASA wants to come and take some notes, we're happy to let them know what Aspire of WNY is up to. ●





WELCOME BIRDS & FAIRIES

At Aspire of WNY, the art of connecting to the community in the summer of 2022 came down to art itself! The agency's Co-Op/iXpress program, operating out of Aspire of WNY's TriMain location, had the opportunity to work with TriMain's Community People's Park, located on Main Street in Buffalo.

The individuals we support were tasked with the creation of an outdoor art exhibit that would benefit the local community, along with providing a beautiful space to invite nature to coexist in the city.

Group members had the vision to build an immersive exhibit where art and bird lovers alike could visit People's Park and enjoy some of the most unique bird and fairy houses anyone has ever seen!

Each participant worked on bringing their ideas to life and allowing their personality to shine. Some birdhouses were simple, a minimalistic take with just a touch of color. Others were super fun for the maximalist birds and fairies to enjoy. The possibilities were as endless as imagination itself.

With the final birdhouse hung in People's Park, the exhibit and outdoor reception were set in motion. Between the artists, families, and local community members, the individuals were able to present their exhibit to a crowd of exuberant fans, all of whom were excited to enjoy the park with other community members, birds, and fairies alike.

Coming up next? The second exhibit with a focus on hot air balloons called: "Up, Up and Away!" ●





DIGITAL BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

Aspire of WNY supports over 3,000 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Each person, the people who support them, and the agency's administration team require hundreds of thousands of data points to track everything across our footprint accurately.

That's where Tom Matyas and Lisa Murdock come in.

In November 2020, Tom Matyas was hired to fill the Records Coordinator/Power Apps Developer position on Aspire of WNY's Quality Assurance & Compliance (QA) team. This was during the height of the pandemic, and providers were required to report COVID-19 events to the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Tom entered these events into the OPWDD Incident Report and Management Application (IRMA) dashboard.

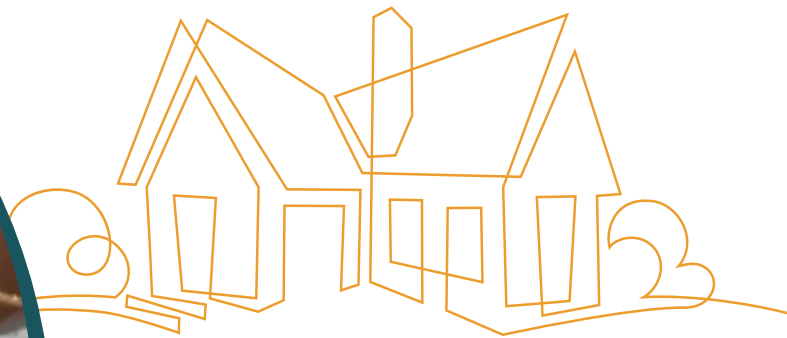
After understanding the full scope of this work, Tom took the initiative to create a Microsoft Power App for COVID-19 reporting. This app resulted in efficiencies for both the end user and the agency. The app was mobile-friendly, making it easier to complete and submit, and the automation that Tom built into the app auto-populated the COVID-19 tracking sheet when the app was submitted.

This led to an explosion of apps and dashboards being created that have simplified work tasks throughout Aspire of WNY and has provided an opportunity for that information to be analyzed in ways previously not seen at the agency.



Since then, Lisa Murdock has joined Aspire of WNY's App Developer Team as a Senior IT Project Manager, and numerous other employees have collaborated with Lisa and Tom on Aspire of WNY's journey toward Business Intelligence (BI) and Digital Business Transformation (DBT). BI and DBT are heavily represented in our strategic plan, The Moss Project, and will be part of our daily operations in the future.

With significant innovative steps in Business Intelligence, our ability to provide efficient and personalized services to the individuals we support continues to be a reality. ●



INNOVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

Consistency, collaboration, and innovation always come to mind in Aspire of WNY's Residential Opportunities Division. In 2022, the Residential Team set out to develop a training curriculum to train managers and Direct Support Professionals within the division to better support the individuals residing in Aspire of WNY group homes.

For years, the training documents within the agency have provided a foundation for consistent support. However, the Residential Team noticed an opportunity to fine-tune the training collateral. To begin, they established a work group focusing on reviewing and correcting the training documents, compiling information, and organizing all of the information on SharePoint, the agency's central information system. Having one location to house all of the information provides consistent access to training and an on-demand updated system so all documents can be as accurate as possible at any given moment.

After the SharePoint location was determined and all documents were updated and uploaded, the Residential Team implemented a new agenda format for Staff Meetings. This unique agenda style allows the Team Coordinators (TCs) to access the agenda in SharePoint, add their initiatives and questions, and have it reviewed by managers at any time. Then, the team reviews the information monthly and can work from any site to provide updates to the materials.

The Residential Team also recognized a need for consistent training of new Team Coordinators when they joined the team. Aspire of WNY's leadership team took this idea and created a team of trainers, collaborating with leaders in Quality Assurance and Human Resources, to create a new training model designed to train TCs in the Residential Division.

The next part of this innovative process? The creation of "Sister PODs!" These "pods" allow two Program Coordinators (PCs) to meet monthly with their site managers and create closer working relationships among PCs and TCs within Residential. The teams/PODs rotate each month. This increases the understanding and knowledge across the team, fostering more intimate relationships with peers and creating an environment in which best practices can be shared and new ideas can be generated.

Above all, recognizing areas to improve and innovating new and collaborative ideas will lead the agency to better support all individuals living in the residences supported by Aspire of WNY. ●



INNOVATIVE SUPPORT & SELF-ADVOCACY

Hayley aspired to do more.

Already a part-time employee at Paula's Donuts and a licensed NYS driver, Hayley, with the support of her mom, joined Aspire of WNY's Supported Volunteering and Lifestyle Enrichment (SVLE) program.

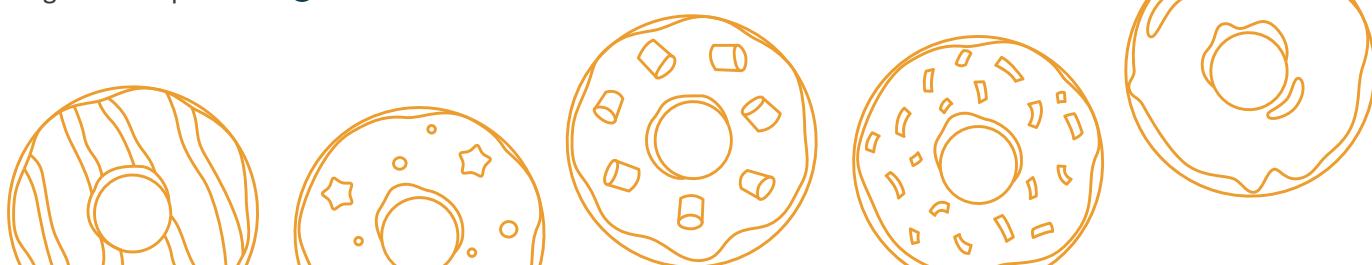
Initially, Hayley was shy. Her support team knew she had a wealth of practical skills, but she needed some coaxing to come out of her shell and show off her social skills and confidence. The SVLE team happened to be the right people for the job!

Every Tuesday, Hayley joined the Self-Advocacy group, where she could meet with like-minded individuals. At first, Hayley told her mom the group wasn't for her. But, with encouragement from her mom, and Liane Agro, Aspire of WNY's Coordinator of Day Service Opportunities, she decided to give it a shot and ultimately completed eight classes from the Self-Advocacy Association of NYS (SANYS U).

During the coursework, Hayley began to open up. She made new friends and shared her hopes and dreams for the future. One of her proudest accomplishments was creating a "hangman" game for her final presentation in preparation for graduation. She presented the game to a room full of people, something she would have never done before the program.

With her newfound confidence, Hayley expressed the desire to do more, realizing she had possibly outgrown her part-time job at Paula's Donuts. Through innovation and collaboration, the Aspire of WNY Human Resources and Day Habilitation teams created a position for Hayley right here at the agency! Hayley applied through the website, secured an interview, and was eventually hired as a relief Direct Support Professional (DSP) at Brock Day Hab, one of Aspire of WNY's Day Habilitation Program locations. On top of that, Hayley went through orientation and passed an intensive test, known as SCIP-R, with minimal help!

Success stories like Hayley's are only possible due to the innovative collaboration between the divisions at Aspire of WNY. The willingness of all teams to create a good fit for those we support is critical to their aspiration of living as independently as possible and realizing their full potential. ●



memoriam

REMEMBER THE INDIVIDUALS WE'VE LOST IN 2022

JAMES DUX

DANIEL
KRZYZANOWSKI

BRIE RITENBURG

JACQUELINE
HASTINGS

JAMES
MARTONE

MATTHEW
WITMER

KATIE
KORZENIEWSKI

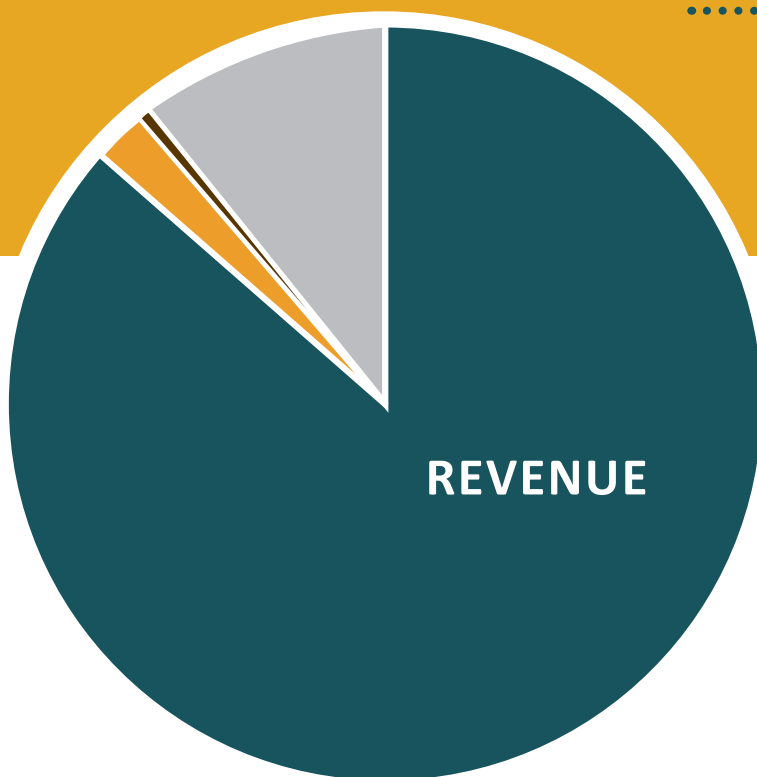
ALYSSA PANFIL



“I wrote your name
in my heart
and that’s where
it will stay.
Always.”

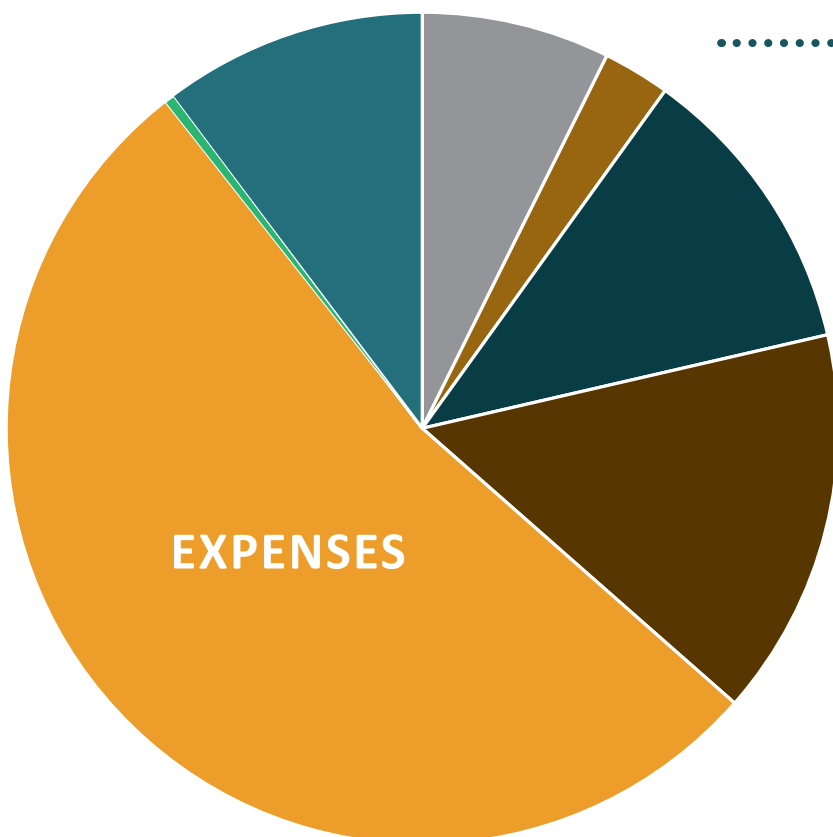
2022 FINANCIALS

Aspire of WNY leadership developed the information presented on this page based on information in the audited financial statements. 99% of the Program Service revenue comes from Federal & New York State Funding.



- Program Service**
\$88,697,006
- Fundraising**
\$260,175
- Government Grants**
\$2,622,606
- Other**
\$10,459,680

TOTAL
\$102,039,467



- Administration**
\$6,808,919
- Clinic**
\$2,419,635
- Day Habilitation**
\$10,660,019
- Educational**
\$14,035,892
- Residential**
\$49,435,944
- Grants, Outreach, Intake & Other**
\$43,224
- Community & Independent Living Supports**
\$9,584,536

TOTAL
\$92,988,169



thank you!

A huge thank you and appreciation to every single Aspire of WNY team member who goes above and beyond to help support the individuals we serve. Without you, we would not exist.

Additionally, thank you to our board members, leadership team, volunteers, community partners, and sponsors.

And, to the individuals that we support, we are thankful to work with you, live with you, and learn from you.

THANK YOU!

2022 BOARD MEMBERS

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 **Innovate**
THE SKY IS NOT THE LIMIT

2022

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