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# Annual Report

2023  
WillowsWay.com



# A Letter from Leadership

To our clients, families, employees, and community partners,

As we close this year and enter another, I want to take a moment to recognize all that was accomplished in 2023. I am pleased to share this report, which shows that we are in **better programmatic and financial health than at any other point in our agency's history, serving more clients, supporting more families, and making a more significant positive impact in the St. Louis community.** And I, for one, couldn't be prouder or more grateful to be a part of this amazing team.

This year has so many highlights, including census growth in every single service we offer.

Even though we did experience an increase in the number of clients we serve, we recognize that success isn't measured by numbers alone. It's measured in the quality of the services we deliver and the experiences we help make possible.

In 2023, **our clients saw more concerts, took more trips, hosted more parties, and had more community involvement.**

Additionally, the agency's Board of Directors committed \$100,000 to updating the clients' homes, including repairs, landscaping, furniture, and décor.

There was a lot of shopping (A LOT!), and our clients had a blast picking out what they wanted in their homes. This year further proves that we are more committed than ever to supporting our clients to live their best lives.

In addition to our ongoing residential, Realities, RISE, and Project Heart programs, we are most proud of creating our Mental Health Program in 2023. Willows Way has a long history of meeting the unmet needs of people with I/DD and their families, and we were able to accomplish that again in 2023. The COVID pandemic highlighted the increased need



for mental health services throughout the community, which resulted in a scarcity of available services, especially for those with I/DD. Willows Way recognized that gap in services and decided that our agency is in a strong position to help meet the demand. Thankfully, to help us start the service, Willows Way received a generous ARPA grant from the Developmental Disability Resource Board of St Charles County. This allowed us to begin offering mental health counseling services with a licensed therapist to people in St. Charles County with I/DD. Due to ever-increasing demand, we plan to add therapists in 2024. We are excited to see where this goes in the upcoming years.

Not only was this a year of growth for our programs, but it was also a strong financial year for the agency, allowing us to invest more for our clients and employees.

In recognition of the staff's contribution to the year's success, the agency's Board of Directors lifted the starting wage of our Direct Support Professionals to \$19/hour, **making Willows Way one of the highest-paying providers in the state**. We are proud of our ability to raise wages, but we also know that DSP pay is still far from where it needs to be. For this reason, we continue to be at the forefront of the fight to keep the spotlight on our DSPs. COVID showed the world what the clients and families of Willows Way have always known...the work of Direct Support Professionals is critical and deserves to be paid in a way that reflects the essential nature of the job.

This isn't only true during a pandemic, and it's up to all of us to ensure we continue to educate ourselves and the

community about the critical service our DSPs provide. This year has undoubtedly been one of many accomplishments, but it has not been one without loss.

This year, we lost three of our beloved clients, Terry, Colleen, and Fred, who have been with Willows Way for nearly our entire 33-year history. We also lost three longtime DSPs, Jolene Lamczyk, Fredrick Boone, and Gary Brinkman, and unexpectedly lost a dear senior member of our staff, Tom Bay, our Chief Program Officer. These losses have made us even more aware of the fact that **we really are a family here, in good times and in bad**. We celebrate our triumphs and grieve our losses together. And even though Willows Way continues to grow in numbers, both client and staff, nothing will diminish how important we are to one another. For that, I am forever grateful.

To our clients and their loved ones, **thank you for allowing us to be a part of your lives in whatever way we are**. To our staff, **thank you for choosing to join our team**. To our Board of Directors, **thank you for your vision and dedication**. To our community partners, **thank you for your unwavering support**. We are grateful for the successes of this past year, and we look forward to being on this journey alongside you for many years to come.

*Joy Steele*



# Programs

## ■ RISE

The RISE program welcomed **11 new clients** throughout the course of the year and is now serving **70 individuals**. With a commitment to community involvement, both in recreational activities and volunteer work, **RISE prioritizes connecting with the local community**. Recognizing the obstacle of transportation for families in St. Charles County, RISE tackled this challenge by implementing a shuttle-style transportation service. Currently, this service is assisting 8 clients, bringing significant relief to families.

### RISE Highlights:

- Volunteering with a local florist to bring flowers to a local nursing home
- Engaging in an advocacy training program
- Explored Busch Stadium, Sweetology, and Chocolate Chocolate Chocolate through guided tours
- Launched the Coffee Club, with regular gatherings at the Cat Zen Cafe and Lounge
- Enjoyed weekly summer swimming at Wapelhorst Park

## ■ PROJECT HEART

Project HEART held **10 sessions in 2023**, focusing on a variety of topics such as technology, drivers ed, and life skills.

### Project HEART Highlights:

- Organized a social gathering for the LGBTQ+ community, creating a space for open discussion on current issues, dancing, and facilitating connections among individuals with IDD
- Following the drivers education series, several participants successfully passed their permit tests



## ■ ISL/HOST

Individualized Supported Living (ISL) **welcomed 4 new clients**, extending **support to 31 homes**. Host **expanded by 2** and is currently **supporting 12 homes**. Committed to enhancing community engagement, ISL and Host enjoyed various outings, including season tickets to the Mundy, attending concerts, and embarking on memorable vacations to both Nashville and Branson.

### **ISL/Host Highlights:**

- After years of dating, two individuals celebrated with a commitment ceremony
- A determined client achieved a significant milestone by becoming a successful Elvis impersonator, drawing a sell-out crowd for her debut performance
- Support was provided to a client with getting her first tattoo, a meaningful expression of her heritage

## ■ ISLA

Independent Supported Living Assistance (ISLA) **supports 70 residents** in St. Charles County in maintaining their financial stability, medical needs, and additional support such as meal planning and grocery shopping. Emphasizing the importance of social connections, ISLA clients typically organize an average of 3 social engagements each month.

### **ISLA Highlights:**

- Art of Wine Club met weekly to create paintings to be showcased at the upcoming Art of Wine event
- Embarked on a camping adventure at Meramec State Park and enjoyed an extended weekend getaway in Branson
- Organized group excursions to venues such as concerts, Cardinals games, and Raging Rivers
- Facilitated the opportunity for a devoted fan to attend the KISS concert

# Human Resources Annual Report

- Tuition and Educational Reimbursement program: **Distributed \$33,988 to both Part Time and Full Time Employees in 2023.**
- **Maintained 280 committed and engaged employees.**
- **9,000 hours of classroom and online training** provided to employees in 2023.
- **\$6,250 paid to employees** who successfully referred candidates to Willows Way for employment.

## HISTORY OF STARTING WAGES PER HOUR

2000 - **\$6.50**

2002 - **\$7.77**

2007 - **\$8.75**

2016 - **\$10.25**

2018 - **\$11.50**

2019 - **\$12.25**

2020 - **\$12.50**

2021 - **\$15.00**

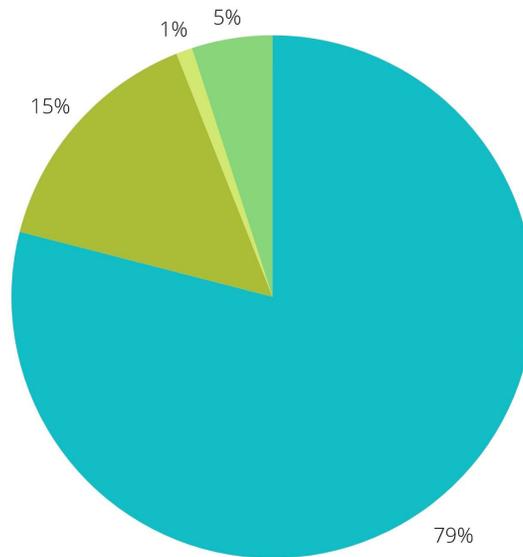
2022 - **\$16.50**

2022 - **\$18.00**

2023 - **\$19.00**

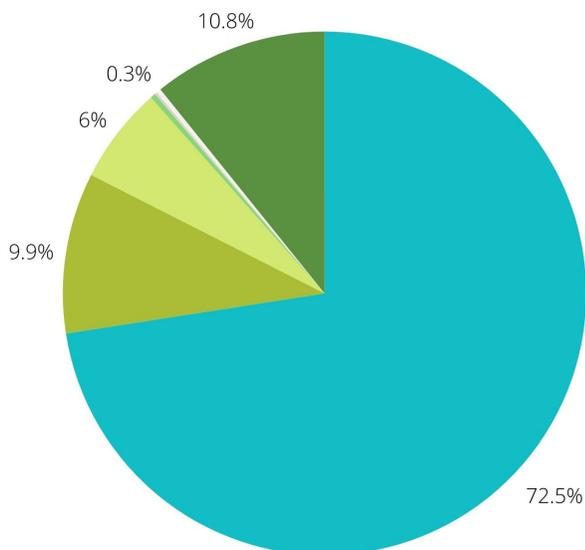
# Total Support AND REVENUE

Net Assets End of Year  
**\$13,428,003**



- MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH**  
\$16,698,248
- COVID 19 EMPLOYEE RETENTION CREDIT**  
\$3,184,457
- DDRB**  
\$1,100,262
- INVESTMENT INCOME**  
\$90,214
- ARPA**  
\$49,636
- CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DONORS**  
\$18,205

# TOTAL EXPENSES



- INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORTED LIVING (ISL, DMH)**  
\$ 11,157,170
- DAY HABILITATION (RISE, DMH)**  
\$ 1,526,293
- MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**  
\$ 1,659,196
- INDEPENDENT LIVING ASSISTANCE (REALITIES, DDRB)**  
\$ 919,621
- PROJECT HEART (DDRB)**  
\$ 50,860
- OTHERS**  
\$ 43,464
- HOME SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION (DMH)**  
\$ 22,987

Total  
**\$ 15,379,591**



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**MENTAL HEALTH**

