



Together We Can



LAURA BAKER
SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Bringing the Power of Possibility to People with Special Needs

2024 ANNUAL REPORT





Letter *from the* Board President

RUTHIE NEUGER

I hope so ... how many times in your life have you said those very words? I hope it doesn't rain, I hope we win, I hope I pass the test, I hope I make the team. We all have dreams and aspirations that we "hope" will come to pass. Our friends with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) also have hopes and dreams and they need our help to realize them.

Have you ever held a clod of dirt in your hands and tried to blow it away? It is a challenge. If you break that clod of dirt into smaller pieces, it will be easier to blow it out of your hand. It seems obvious, but it is the same way with Laura Baker Services Association. Unfortunately, we need to fundraise each year to meet our financial budget. Oh, how I wish this were not true, but it is. If we had one donor who could donate one million dollars each year that would be lovely, but since that isn't our situation, we need to have many of us break the giving into smaller pieces to make it work. Please give generously to this incredible organization.

Our friends with IDD have a wonderful support system at LBSA. Our music programs, art programs and other programs provide opportunities that they could not have without LBSA. We cannot continue to exist, however, without financial help from our community. Our fee structure and our pay structure are legislated to restrict both our residents and our employees to live on a less than desirable income. Is the life of a person with IDD less important than the life of a person without intellectual or developmental disabilities? I don't think so.

Together we can build up LBSA and create an even stronger organization as we move forward. Please be active with and for us! Tell your friends about us, ask them to donate, contact your legislators and ask them to be mindful of their choices, and most importantly, please continue to donate to this life-changing organization. I hope you do.

Thank you,

– **Ruthie Neuger**
Board President



Letter from the Executive Director

SANDI GERDES

In our fragmented, fractious society, perhaps “Together We Can” seems “pie in the sky”. Certainly, it can be perceived as more aspirational than real. Some people might argue that it’s silly to think about collective action; that we should be focusing instead on individual efforts, actions and achievements.

In the disability services world, collective action and impact are the norm, a norm we would love to see replicated throughout our communities. We serve individuals as a part of a team.

The perspective, values, goals and dreams of the person and those closest to them are at the center of the planning and creation of support services. Other providers (like LBSA, doctors and other professionals) are invited to assist in creating those necessary supports to help the person reach their goals and dreams. It is often not the most efficient means, and it helps to ensure that the person is making progress toward their goals. Clashes in values among team members often create conflicts that take patience, time and skill to navigate and negotiate. In many ways, it’s a microcosm of our world.



As we at LBSA work on a personal level, with individuals, to negotiate service delivery and client-centered outcomes, we also need to negotiate services at every level beyond the personal, to ensure the necessary resources and supports are available for people to live the lives they choose.

How do we ensure that we have medical, mental health, and dental services and providers for clients? By building relationships with providers and, when needed, educating them on the specialties of working with the people we support.

Case managers (social workers), licensors and other county and state employees who are involved in client teams come from a variety of backgrounds and values and have differing charges from their employers. They view their duties, and the power associated with those duties differently. Impacting one individual’s perspective on their duties can mean negotiating with a county and state system, working to influence those values and perspectives on behalf of the person, without letting our own values impact the outcome.



As a service provider, we have little control over things like the prices we charge, the rules we are governed by, the values of the people we support or the values of our employees. We **CAN**, and do, work continuously to have a culture of dignity and respect for **EVERY** person, and to provide the very best value for the dollars that are invested in our services.

We need each of you to help us carry the message, provide support and help us connect to the people we need. We need each of you to believe in and be a part of our collective action, to see the best in the people around you, to be a voice of reason and respect as value clashes and positions threaten to impact the people we support.

In 2024, we continued to recover from the impact of COVID-19, and continued working to hire enough staff members to re-open households closed during the pandemic. We were successful in re-opening all of our households. With your support and help, we were successful in raising \$1 million. We continued our Family Navigation Services, supporting people with disabilities and their families in accessing services and supports that ease their way through the complicated system. We're providing regular respite for families who desperately need a break. We launched our Behavior Support Services with a Path Forward conference last summer. Now we've hired the program director and launched individual services in April 2025.

Each of our successes come with hundreds of hours of hard work and determination on the part of our clients and their support circles, our employees, our volunteers and our supporters (each of you). It takes a village that is united in the purpose of supporting people with IDD to reach their dreams and goals. No one person can do the work.

Together we can and we must.

In 2025, your support and your voices are critical. We can't afford the luxury of contentious fighting.

We must stand together, in partnership. Together we can.

– Sandi Gerdes
Executive Director



LBSA HONORS

2024 TEAM MEMBERS

On April 23, 2024, we honored our amazing staff at our annual Employee Appreciation Dinner. Congratulations to the following award recipients:

★ INNOVATOR:

Desiree McGeough, Iris Reyes,
Tammy Winch

★ COMMUNITY BUILDER:

Joe Brennan, Niishjaa Winter,
Valerie Voracek

★ TEAM BUILDER:

Torfinn Zempel, Lezly Rosas
Marcial, Elizabeth Garcia

★ CHEERLEADER:

Meg Diviney-Fearing, Albert Torres
Perez, Lisa Schmidt

★ ROLE MODEL:

Nikki Brennan, Ruth Morgan-
Malecha, Linda Castle

★ RISING STAR:

Jillian Moyer, Keri Pofahl, Joel
Eastvold

★ STEADY EDDY:

JoAnne Rietveld, Polly Hruza,
Penny Hillemann, Cindy Coffey

★ SPIRIT OF LAURA BAKER AWARD*:

Molly Halls

Our Administrative Team and the LBSA Board of Trustees would like to acknowledge **ALL STAFF** for their incredible dedication, compassion and persistence. **Thank You** for all your effort each and every day!

*The Spirit of Laura Baker Award is given annually to one individual who best embodies the mission, vision and values of LBSA – and the spirit of Laura Baker. Recipients care deeply for the people we serve and make a difference in their lives and in the life of the organization as a whole. Leadership and teamwork are the hallmarks of award winners' work in the organization.

Bob Gilbertson



Back in the day, a young attorney and his wife attended the LBSA Gala with neighborhood friends. The young attorney was impressed with the organization and wanted to learn more. He expressed an interest in joining the board. In 2012, Bob Gilbertson joined the LBSA board and began a journey that has provided wide-ranging benefits to the organization.

Bob is curious, and needs to understand, at a deep level, issues he cares about. He asks a lot of questions. Questions that create opportunities for thinking differently about things. Bob has a wide array of connections that he has called upon to help LBSA in a variety of ways. He is generous with his time, his connections and his treasures. He is passionate, and cares deeply about people's stories.

To ensure that our services' funding is stable and adequate to support our clients, including ensuring we can hire and retain staff members, LBSA needs to advocate with legislators and the public. Bob uses his voice to advocate. He uses his connections to ensure that the people who need to hear our messages are listening. Over the years, he invited the Secretary of State and the judge who is overseeing Minnesota's consent decree for the Olmstead Plan to attend our Gala. He got us repeated audiences with Governor Walz's office. When needed, Bob occasionally offered his legal advice to the Association, pro bono.

Bob served within the Association as a board member for 12 years, and an officer for six years. He worked to improve board processes. He reached out to friends and strangers to ask them to support LBSA. Bob is generally a voice of reason when issues are heated, helping to create solutions amenable to all parties. He also has a wicked sense of humor.

We are pleased to honor Bob Gilbertson with the 2024 Robert Bonner Distinguished Service Award.

The Robert Bonner Distinguished Service Award honors people who have been constant in their association with LBSA and who have made consistent and personally significant contributions of time, energy and resources.

Meet Holden



“Our college talks a lot about vocation, like what you want to do in life, but I think it’s more about what you’re *called* to do and what you’re passionate about. It’s about getting out of being comfortable and pushing yourself, which helps you be a better person.”

St. Olaf College senior Holden Luetkens has chosen to share his calling and passion on behalf of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Fortunately for our organization, Holden found his way to LBSA. As a member of the St. Olaf football team, Holden participated in the St. Olaf Student Athlete Advisory board. While involved there, he met several other Ole athletes who were volunteering in LBSA’s College Friends program, or with St. Olaf Special Olympics. It wasn’t long before Holden was a College Friend and met with his LBSA friend, Jim, regularly. Holden’s involvement has continued to grow. As of today, Holden serves as the President of St. Olaf Special Olympics, has volunteered at LBSA’s Saturday Fun Events and began working part-time as a direct support professional at LBSA in the summer of 2024!

Holden, a kinesiology major, wanted experience in direct care because he had learned that people with IDD are an underserved population in the field of physical therapy. Holden says working as a direct support staff has been an incredible learning experience and has helped him to prepare for his professional career. “I don’t think people realize how much work goes into this kind of work. You have to be ready to act on the fly. In any other job you will have in life, you will need to learn how to act on the fly too. Here, it seems even more important because you’re affecting people’s lives. So, your decisions carry more weight.”

Holden says that his involvement with the Special Olympics and LBSA haven’t just helped him prepare vocationally. His experiences working directly with clients have been incredibly rewarding. “What’s been the most beautiful part is working with

non-verbal clients.” He says that in some ways he feels a closer bond with clients who are non-verbal. “You learn how to communicate. I have to be more aware of how they’re acting.” He says when he first started working at LBSA he couldn’t understand why some of the clients were acting the way they were, and it forced him to further develop empathy and understanding. “I didn’t understand why she (one client) would hit the wall, but I tried to put myself in her shoes. I had respect for clients before, but now I have even more respect.”



Holden’s Household Director at LBSA, Zelene Castaño, says that Holden has been an amazing addition to her team. “We are so grateful and lucky to have him on our team. He is so calm, respectful, reliable, funny and most of all caring. His heart truly is in the right place.”

In July, Holden is off to the University of Iowa, where he will study physical therapy. Holden says his experiences with LBSA and Special Olympics have helped influence his future career plans.

“Originally, I thought I would do physical therapy in the sports field. Now I am hoping to have my own PT clinic that specializes in supporting people with IDD.”

For some, a vocation may be separate from a calling or passion. We wish Holden the best as he pursues his vocation **and** his passion to serve individuals with IDD!





2024 Highlights

We are grateful to YOU – our supporters, volunteers, board members, partners and **amazing** staff.

Together we can and will continue our mission. Our successes and achievements in 2024 give us confidence as we move forward in 2025 and beyond.

- We continue to focus on **hiring and retention**. In 2024 we hired a total of 61 people, which has now allowed us to reopen our last remaining Cottage (Elwell Cottage) that closed during the pandemic. We have had our first two clients move into Elwell as of January 20, 2025. We expect to have all six clients moved in by the fall of 2025.
- In **program satisfaction surveys** distributed annually to clients' family members and care teams, LBSA has maintained a 4.7 rating out of a possible 5.0 for overall service satisfaction.



- In April and May of 2024, we collaborated with Carleton College's **Poetics of Disability** class. Carleton students visited seven LBSA houses for several weekly visits to engage with LBSA residents, which resulted in a collaboratively created poem for each house. The class culminated with Carleton and LBSA participants gathering for a sharing event and the reading of their collaborative poem about the student's experience titled **Introduction to Togethering**.



- Our **Music Therapy** program continues to thrive. In April the LBSA Choir held a joint performance with the Troubadours Male Chorus. The choir also sang the National Anthem to kick off the annual LBSA Golf Tournament. In addition to our three certified music therapists, we have integrated a rotating music therapy internship into our program.
- Our **Family Navigation Service** (FNS) continues to grow. In 2024 the program conducted 28 FNS consultations, resulting in support for 14 family navigation clients. Those served live as close as Northfield, and as far away as Florida.
- In conjunction with FNS we restarted our monthly **Saturday Fun Respite** events. In 2024 we held 12 sessions of Saturday Respite with a total attendance of 82 participants and 43 volunteers.
- We partnered with the **American Red Cross** to host five blood drives in 2024 on our Oak St. campus.





- In the fall we started offering **creative art sessions** on Friday mornings with local artist and arts educator, Angie Ekern. The Friday sessions are free for participants and open to anyone in one of LBSA's residential or support service programs. Angie conducted 13 one-hour sessions between September and December with an average of five people attending per session.
- For over 30 years LBSA has hosted a free meal on Thanksgiving at our annual **Community Thanksgiving Dinner**. In 2024 we held our largest event yet. 22 turkeys, 35 volunteers and over 400 meals served!
- Our new **Behavioral Support Services** launched. As part of the launch in July, we hosted our first annual Path Forward Behavioral Support Conference. The event brought together over 50 family members, educators and health care professionals to discuss the intersection of mental health diagnoses and IDD. In December we hired **Malissa Parrott-Stahnke** to be our Director of Behavioral Support Services.



- We continued to offer special events with Carleton and St. Olaf throughout the year, including six events with **St. Olaf sports teams** (including an epic Halloween Party!) and three with **Carleton CCCE office** which culminated with our annual Friendfest in May over at the Carleton campus!
- We continued to onboard new individuals for our **College Friends** program for the 2024-2025 school year. By Spring semester, we had 12 local college students who engaged in activities with their LBSA friend.
- We received a “**Top Rated Nonprofit**” designation from GreatNonprofits and a Gold Transparency rating from Candid (Guidestar) for the eighth consecutive year.

Thank You for Your Continued Support!



Meet Our Good Neighbors

LBSA is a member organization of Providers' Network, Inc. (PNI). Each year PNI hosts a Good Neighbor banquet. This is an opportunity for member organizations like LBSA to nominate Good Neighbors (people and/or entities that have been good partners to our organization). On Wednesday, November 6, we honored our 2024 Good Neighbors with a dinner at the Signatures Restaurant in Winona.

Good Neighbor Award – Eleanor Monohon

Before she was a volunteer, **Eleanor Monohon** was a long-time, valued employee at Laura Baker Services Association. She worked for many years as a household director and later became director of one of our independent living programs. During her employment, she also took time to volunteer with Special Olympics and was a critical person to ensure that Special Olympics opportunities were possible for LBSA clients and for people with IDD in the Northfield area. She continues to help out with Special Olympics to this day.

When Eleanor decided to pursue other employment, she continued her connection to LBSA through volunteering. She stayed connected with former clients as a friend and a mentor. She regularly volunteers at LBSA events like Dinner Theater and Summer Fun Day. At our Community Thanksgiving dinner, which feeds over 300 people, Eleanor coordinates our volunteers and helps ensure that everything is running smoothly. She has been a consistent presence at our Golf Tournament, Flannel Gala and Gala, assisting us with



whatever we need help with. In fact, we believe that Eleanor has never said “no” to any request for help here at LBSA. She is generous with her time and has helped our organization year in and year out without fanfare. She is a doer and incredibly deserving of being an LBSA Good Neighbor! Congratulations, Eleanor. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do for our clients, our staff, our organization and the community!

Good Neighbor Award – Scotty Barvir

Scotty Barvir does more than make the best barbecue in Southern Minnesota! Scotty is by nature a generous person and gives a lot back to the community. LBSA first became familiar with **Scotty's Whole Hog Barbecue** when a member of LBSA's admin team visited a food stand at a local distillery four or five years ago.



When they arrived, there wasn't much food left that day because proceeds from the day were benefitting a local food shelf. Who doesn't want to eat great food **AND** support a worthy cause!

LBSA got connected with Scotty during the pandemic through one of our event volunteers. Through that connection, in 2020, Scotty generously donated the food and fixings for a "Backyard Barbecue" that we auctioned off at our annual December Gala. The event sold for nearly \$4,000 that year. Scotty has continued offering these events for us to auction off, and since that time, Scotty's Backyard Barbeques have raised more than \$38,000 for LBSA! Through his barbecue operation, Scotty has made a significant positive impact on the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities, not to mention other local causes in the community. He has become well known in Northfield and surrounding communities as a great human being and a Good Neighbor. Scotty has become a true friend of LBSA, and we are proud to honor him as a 2024 Good Neighbor.

Family Navigation Service Provides a Lifeline to Families

Laura Baker Services Association's Family Navigation Service (FNS) is designed to offer personalized guidance, resources and support to help families navigate the complexities of intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) services. Serving as a vital resource hub, FNS provides education, advocacy and support with the goal of relieving the burden so many families face while navigating these complex systems. Our navigators work closely with families and individuals with IDD to assess their unique needs, develop actionable plans and connect them with essential community resources, including housing, healthcare, financial support and support services.

Thanks in large part to the financial support of so many donors and supporters, we are thrilled to report significant growth in 2024. The program conducted 28 FNS consultations, resulting in support for 14 family navigation clients, a significant increase from 2023, when eight clients were served. Additionally, we proudly assisted seven Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) clients and provided services to 27 participants through our Saturday Fun/Respite program. To close out the year, we launched a Parent Support Group in partnership with Full Potential Therapy LLC, offering parents a platform for connection and collaboration.





SAMANTHA ENGELBY

Lead Family Navigation Specialist and Respite Manager

The program is now led by Samantha Engelby, our Lead Family Navigation Specialist and Respite Manager, who has done a tremendous job in growing the service in a short period of time.

Going into 2025, Samantha has grand goals for FNS this upcoming year, including:

- Breaking down financial barriers for individuals and families looking to access FNS who do not have waiver funding in place.
- Increasing our networking and collaboration with other organizations who serve the IDD community.
- Growing our Parent Support Group and making dependent care accessible during the meeting time.
- Increasing our respite attendance and capacity.

We extend heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff, volunteers and community partners for making this work possible. We are equally grateful to so many donors, whose generosity sustains Family Navigation Services. A special thank you to The Astrup Family Foundation and The Enterline Foundation, who have provided crucial financial support during the launch and early development of the program!

The Family Navigation Service at LBSA is more than a program – it's a lifeline. Our navigators hear time and time again from the families they serve that navigating the systems to acquire IDD support and services is confusing, frustrating and exhausting. Our mission is to ease the burden so all people with disabilities have access to the support and services they need to successfully reach their goals. Together, we help create opportunities, foster independence and build stronger, more inclusive communities.



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS

Shreya Ashok – Outgoing Student Board Member,
Cheryl Buck, Carrie Duba, Bob Gilbertson, Caroline Yaun
*We are missing our friend and recent board member **Phil Strom***

THANK YOU, DONORS

Thank you to all our donors for your generous support in 2024!

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Curtis Ingvaldstad	Bill McCabe	Lydia Quanbeck & Dagfinn Moe	Noel & Lois Stratmoen
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Michael Johnson	Bram & Lori Middeldorp	Amber Rasmussen	Simeon Teopaco
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Leone Larson & Tom Moen	J. Olson	Daina & Dimitri Sivanich	Alec Zender
Peter Larson	Dick & Carol Ostlie		
Steven Larson	Douglas Ouimette		
	Paul & Melissa Ousley		



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 Angie Ekern
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 Fette Electronics
 Firehouse Liquor
 Flaherty's Northfield Lanes

Forget Me Not Florist
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 Imminent Brewing
 Curtis Ingvaldstad
 Just Food Co-op
 Keepsake Cidery
 Sheila Kennelly
 KYMN Radio
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 LBSA Gala Committee
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 The Lux MedSpa

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 Marilyn Matta
 Jill Metz
 Chef Ingrid Norgaard
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 Northfield Golf Club
 Ally Oakes
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 Russel Franek & The Biscuits
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 Therese & Jeffrey Smiens
 The Rare Pair
 The Summit Golf Club
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 Tribute Wines
 Jane & Curt Valek

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In Honor of Sarah Goodwin

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Lydia Quanbeck &
Dagfinn Moe

In Memory of Betty Jane

Mary & Wayne Adriaens

In Memory of Steven Kelly

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In Memory of Dianne Kyte

Sandra Gerdes

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Mallory & Dan Faulkner

In Honor of Laura Baker Services Staff

Pastors Jonathan &
Lauren Davis

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Marlene & Robert Gustafson

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Judy Kaul

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Douglas Ouimette

Kris Parker

Virginia Paulson

M. J. Petersen

George & Judith Pinc

Jan & William
Stanton, Jr.

Mary & Arland Schwake

Elizabeth Truman

Robert & Donna Mae
Vanderhoof

In Memory of Doug Olsen

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Andrei & Wendy
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Dean Lins

Roland Lins

Dan Motzko

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In Memory of Burl Zorn, Sr.

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Thank you to our supporters who have included LBSA in their estate plan! Legacy Club members help create a lasting impact on LBSA's future.

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Thank you to our Lifetime Donors who have generously contributed over \$100,000 to Laura Baker Services Association during their lifetime!

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Financials

Statement of Activities
For the Year Ending December 31, 2024

SUPPORT AND REVENUE

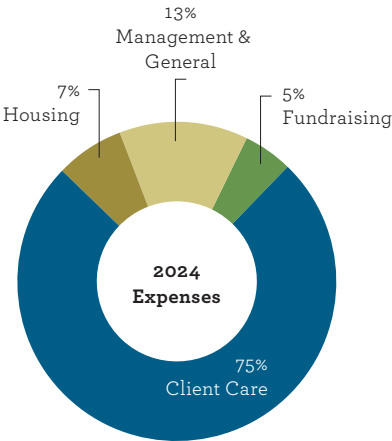
Client Services	\$5,714,024
Donations	\$1,219,729
Other Income	\$124,621
In-Kind Donations	\$63,045
Net Gain/(Loss) on Investment	(\$934)
Total Support & Revenue	\$7,122,353

OPERATING EXPENSES

Salaries & Benefits	\$4,906,844
Client Program Expense	\$198,288
Purchased Services	\$301,202
Housing	\$524,653
Food	\$242,583
Other Client Care Expenses	\$151,184
Total Program Services	\$6,324,754

Management & General	\$1,000,294
Fundraising	\$356,649
Total Support Services	\$1,356,943

Total Expenses	\$7,681,697
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Statement of Financial Position
as of December 31, 2024

ASSETS

Current Assets	\$759,173
Investments	\$3,426
Building & Equipment (Net)	\$3,354,193
Other Assets	\$432,533
Total Assets	\$4,549,325

LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities	\$687,792
Long-Term Liabilities	\$737,886
Total Liabilities	\$1,425,678

NET ASSETS

Without Donor Restrictions	\$3,103,327
With Donor Restrictions	\$20,320
Total Net Assets	\$3,123,647

Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$4,549,325
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2024 financial results audited by LB Carlson, LLP



Thank you to our corporate partners!

