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Fiscal Year 2023

Financial Results

Expenses:

Salaries, Fringe & Provider Payments	\$67,076,806
Occupancy Costs	5,485,168
Professional Services	2,905,525
Technology, Advertising, & Office Expenses	2,626,978
Travel & Vehicle Expenses	2,126,911
Client Expenses	1,006,280
Interest, Depreciation & Misc. Expenses	674,162
Conferences & Education	440,180
Insurance	375,586
COVID-19 Purchases	78,638
ARPA Purchases	74,867

Total Expenses:	\$82,871,101
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A Message from Our CEO



As winter's brisk embrace settles in and families gather to celebrate and appreciate one another, I find myself reflecting on the impact of Aspire's person-centered approach in 2023. Throughout this year, we've been on a journey of exploration, posing questions and fostering curiosity in every encounter, with the knowledge that we're bound to uncover something we didn't know before. We've discovered that genuine understanding is a catalyst for transformation, benefiting both the seeker and the one who is understood.

The power of that transformation can be seen in the deep connections forged between the people Aspire supports and the communities who embrace them. They are discovering their passions, unlocking potential, and thriving. When I hear their stories, I know that the initiatives we championed this year helped move this culture of belonging forward. I hope that, like me, you will be moved by their stories.

My heartfelt gratitude extends to every person in the Aspire community, from the dedicated employees to the caring shared living providers, the individuals we support, and their families. It is your collective commitment that has made this possible.

This year, Aspire took great strides in advancing three strategic initiatives focused on learning, integration, and impact. Our efforts aim to strengthen a compassionate, engaged workforce ready to carry out our person-centered mission of connection and transformation.

Integration of Aspire's many programs and locations continued. The new intranet, iAspire, created a forum for employees and shared living providers to swap ideas, offer solutions, and celebrate the accomplishments of everyone at Aspire.

We expanded our commitment to learning. Aspire completed the design and final preparations for the All On Board program, which offers employees a space to share their professional journeys and welcomes the newest team members with open arms and hearts. As people bring their unique experiences, we learn more and come closer to each other every day.

The impact of Aspire's efforts remained squarely in our sights. The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) committee ramped up its work this year, initiating the review of the impact of all Aspire policies on inclusion and outcomes.

We want Aspire to be a place where caring is supreme, where every member of our community is cherished and valued equally, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. We want our communities to be places where no one is excluded and where everyone belongs. No one of us can do this work on our own. We need each other. I wholeheartedly believe that the issues of narrow-mindedness, inequality, exclusion, and disconnectedness, whether systemic or personal, are what hold us back from realizing our humanity.

I embrace and cherish the enormous value of the differences we bring to our shared mission. Together, we will see the eventual triumph of equality, the graceful embrace of inclusion, and the delightful fulfillment of belonging.

Let's journey into this new season – together.

Best regards,
Lou Giramma, CEO

Board of Directors

Larcina Carrington-Wynn

Edward Denmark

Jennifer Emens-Butler

Andrew Feinstein

Katie Franco

Heather Higdon

John MacLeod

Christine Meehan

Susan Sheckley

Arlene Silva



Thanks to Our Generous Supporters

Champion (\$2,500 - \$9,999)

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Eventide Foundation
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Mentor (\$500 - \$2,499)

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Society of Italian American Businessmen, Inc.
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Rachel Shannon
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Sullivan Tree Care
Zanetta Wetzel



Gary Luckhardt
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 Sherry Lynn MacNeil
 Christina Fensore Martinez
 Melissa Mayville
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 William & Janette Sustache
 Texas Roadhouse
 Geoffrey & Francesca Turner
 John Whittemore
 Sandra Williamson
 Jennifer Yeziarski
 Laura Young



SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS:



87%
OF STUDENTS REPORTED
HAVING FRIENDS

HAVE FRIENDS IN THEIR
SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
77%



87%
OF ADULTS REPORTED
HAVING FRIENDS

ADULTS "DO THE
THINGS I WANT"
91%



BUILDING INCLUSION AND BELONGING IN MARYLAND THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



In the heart of Bel Air, the Day Options program at Aspire is making waves by building strong connections with local businesses to nurture inclusion and create a sense of belonging. The results have been nothing short of extraordinary, with people discovering new skills, showcasing their talents, expanding their social circles, and, most importantly, having a whole lot of fun.

Many local businesses in Bel Air have joined hands with Aspire through fundraising efforts. Restaurants like Texas Roadhouse and Fortunato Brothers have been instrumental in supporting the cause. On designated nights, these eateries allocate a portion of their proceeds to Aspire, and these occasions serve as more than just fundraising events. They bring together members of the Aspire community, their families, and friends for shared meals, laughter, and the joy of supporting their favorite activities.

The spirit of generosity extends to the self-advocacy group, Voices of U.S., with discounted food and other support for their events. Knowing that the community is behind them gives self-advocates confidence to ask for what they want.

Point of Light offers complimentary yoga classes twice a month to everyone in the Aspire community, promoting wellness and bonding. Horizon Cinemas has played its part by reducing ticket prices and providing meeting space for Aspire's use. Various sports franchises have been exceptionally generous, donating season tickets that grant individuals the opportunity to watch their favorite teams in action. Regular visits with team mascots have become highly anticipated events.

Over time, these relationships have deepened, with companies offering behind-the-scenes experiences that introduce the people we support to new passions.

The Baltimore Ravens, the Baltimore Orioles, and the local farm team, the Aberdeen Ironbirds, have welcomed people to tour their fields and locker rooms. Fortunato Brothers and Pizza Hut have invited Aspire for tutorials where people can observe the pizza-making process and try their hand at crafting their own pies. Horizon Foods, a supplier to Aspire, has opened its doors to their wholesale operations, and Sephora has provided facility tours along with complimentary beauty products.

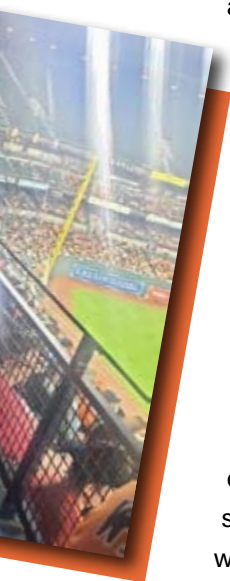
Smoking Shields Inc., a fraternal order of law enforcement, has donated funds and connected Aspire with a company that donated a 3-D printer. The printer will be installed in the new technology center for creating original content and artwork at the Bel Air office.

These connections have opened doors for individuals to unlock their potential. Two Aspire artists have left their mark by designing logos displayed in local businesses, giving them a chance to promote their services as commercial artists. The community's appreciation for their work is a source of immense pride. In fact, one of their paintings now graces the ticket office of the Baltimore Ravens.

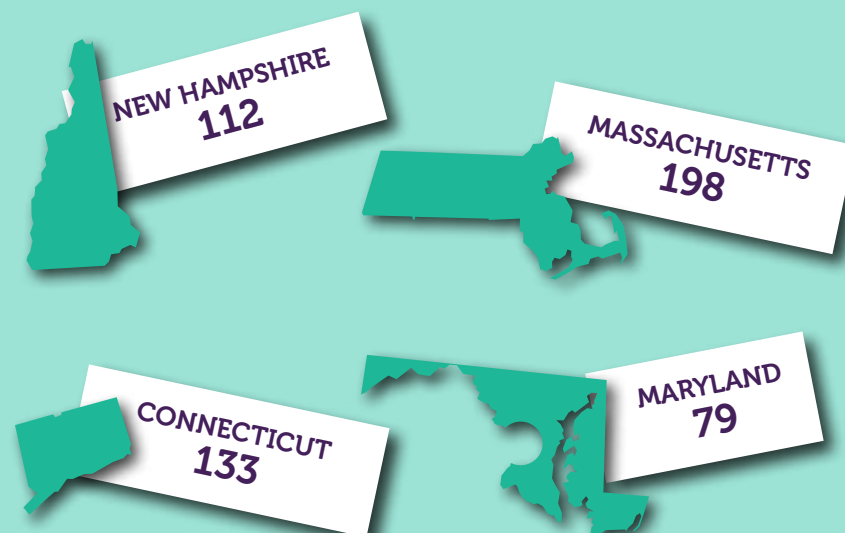
Community partnerships also play a role in Aspire supporting individuals in finding employment with local businesses. From warehouses to commercial food preparation to retail stores, people are thriving at work. Recently, Aspire made a connection to the Walgreens training program, which readies trainees with disabilities to apply for permanent positions in just eight weeks.

When people truly belong in their communities, the opportunities multiply rapidly. Aspire is thankful for its community partnerships and takes pride in its role in helping people establish the connections and relationships that lead to a genuine sense of belonging.

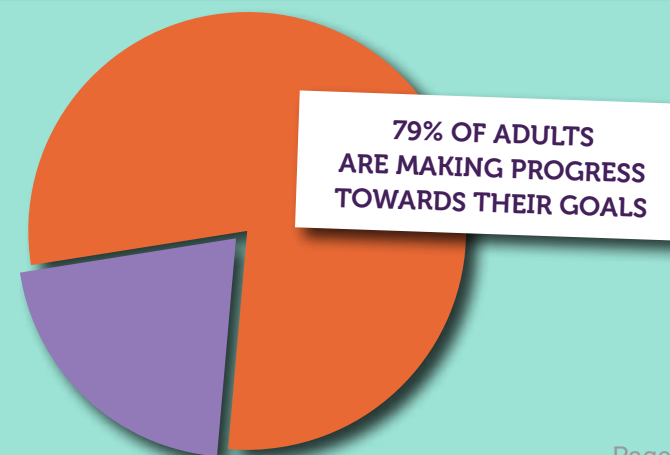
In Bel Air, the future looks brighter, more inclusive, and filled with endless possibilities, all thanks to the power of community and collaboration.



ADULTS SERVED BY ASPIRE IN EACH STATE:



ADULTS MAKING PROGRESS:



TRANSITION PROGRAM'S GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES PIVOTAL TO CAREER READINESS

Students at Aspire Living & Learning (ALL) Academy are making the move from high school to higher education and careers at the transition program. When students have finished high school but need more time to explore their options and gain skills, the transition program offers several opportunities for growth, including internships.

Internships are offered across a variety of settings. According to teacher Tammy Magnano, "We follow the students' interests. One year we developed an internship at a local bakery, Lovely Cakes, for students who were interested in baking." Currently, internships are offered at Hudson Paper Supply, Burlington Stores, and the Beardsley Zoo.

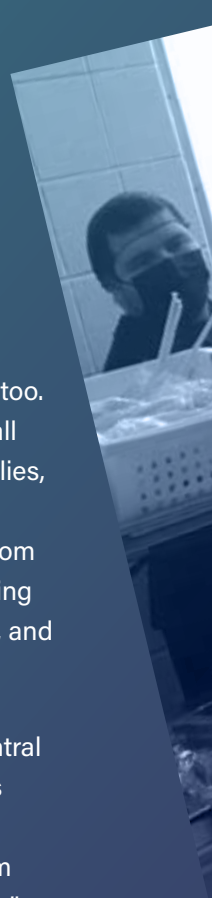
Supervisors at those companies set and oversee job tasks, while ALL Academy teachers and behavior therapists support the students with social skills and communication. Students attend their internships in the morning and come back to school in the afternoon for other programming.

Growth opportunities are available for students right at the Academy too. The Bee's Nest snack bar gives students the opportunity to run a small business from start to finish. Students select the menu, shop for supplies, cook, and sell and serve snacks. The offerings have expanded from prepackaged foods to freshly prepared entrees and desserts. Classroom learning is put to practical use—writing marketing materials, negotiating with co-workers, working quickly and accurately, pleasing customers, and keeping the books.

For one student, Zach Krzykowski, the internship experiences are central to his growing identity as a responsible, successful adult. Zach points to everything he has learned beyond the specifics of each business, including how to work as part of a team and how to lead. He says, "I'm learning how to be responsible for myself and the people that I'm with."

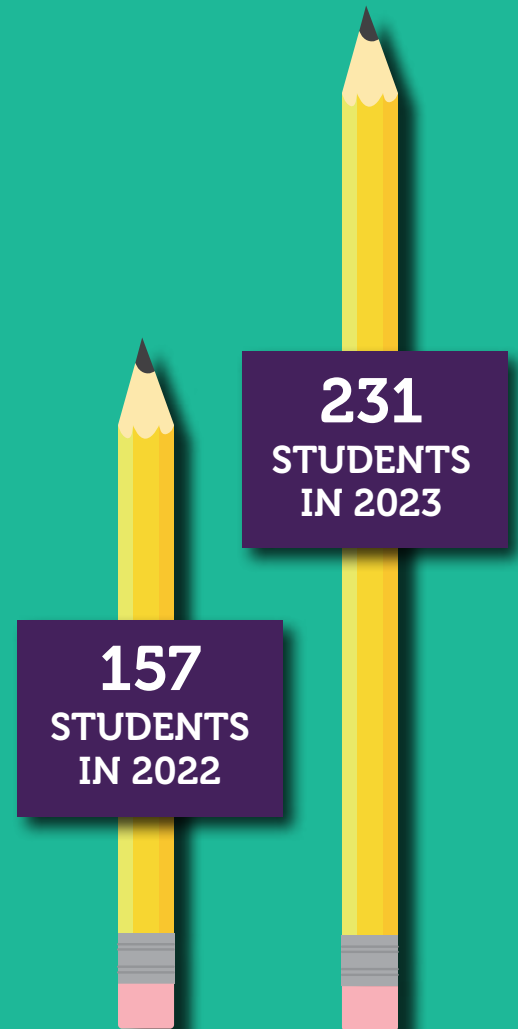
By having a variety of experiences, Zach has discovered his passions, along with some preferences, for a future job. While he discovered he enjoys organizing the stockroom at one site where he works, he finds it frustrating when he returns for his next shift and the stockroom is cluttered again. The landscaping work at another site is more satisfying because he can see his efforts build over time into a beautiful space for others to enjoy. At the Bee's Nest, he's discovered passions for both cooking and the quick pace of change.

Zach's plan is to head to community college when he finishes the transition program. He's looking at two possible careers – one as a blogger, bringing diverse voices together and the other, as a chef. He sees the internship and transition programs as pivotal to his success by helping him become "someone who makes an impact."





CHILDREN'S SERVICES ARE GROWING



ROB'S STORY: MILESTONES IN A BIG WORLD



Rob celebrated two milestones in 2023. He moved out of his parents' home and into shared living ten years ago. That same year he got a job working at Triangle Credit Union, supported by an Aspire direct support professional (DSP). From this stable base, Rob has spread his wings.

During the past ten years, Rob has dramatically increased his language and social skills, become an active and contributing member of his household, and earned a reputation as a hardworking, reliable employee.

The first insight into what was possible for Rob came with his job at Triangle Credit Union. Even when he was struggling in other areas of his life, he rose to every occasion at work. He was courteous, responsive, and dedicated to his tasks. For Rob, employment is where he first made the leap into adulthood. Ten years in, his work at the credit union is still a vital part of his week.

Rob shares a home with Sarah, her husband, and their two boys. Sarah is a contracted home provider through Aspire. She recalls that during those first years, people were reluctant to nudge Rob out of his comfort zone: "For a long time, we would do the exact same things to avoid the 'what ifs.'" So much has changed.

The pandemic created many hardships, but for Rob it turned out to be an opportunity. With the trust established by years of support for his decisions, Rob was able to meet the challenges of the pandemic. "We had no choice but to do things differently during the lockdown, and then everything kept changing. It broke a lot of rigidity. Now we welcome days that don't all look the same, and we have one flexible guy on our hands." These days, Rob takes change in stride and approaches new experiences with more excitement than anxiety.

You can see the impact of that openness on how much Rob's world has grown. A few years ago, he had taken on a second job in the Aspire office doing shredding. In 2022 he added a third job: maintenance at the local McDonald's. "I clean the chairs and tables. I also sweep the lobby floor. I fill the ice and help with the trays and happy meals if needed." Working every day has given him not only more income, but also pride in his ability to learn new tasks and work alongside many different people.

**For Rob, employment
is where he first
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adulthood.**

Last winter, Rob went out on his first date without a DSP present--taking his girlfriend to a Valentine's dance. Surprisingly, they met during the pandemic when everyone was stuck at home. Rob was feeling lonely and told Sarah about it. Sarah had a friend whom she knew was feeling the same way. She introduced them by phone, and soon they were facetimeing regularly. What started as a friendship has now blossomed into romance. Rob can't help but smile when he talks about her, "We went on a sleigh ride at Charmingfare Farm."

Meeting his girlfriend hasn't been the only serendipity in Rob's life. Last spring Rob and his father headed to Australia for a tour of the country. Rob originally won the trip in a contest back in 2019 through the Dreamride Experience in Connecticut, but the trip was postponed until this year because of the pandemic. They were beyond excited to explore the other side of the globe.

Rob's world is a big one and growing every day.

NELSHAUN & APRIL:

WHY WE CHOOSE SHARED LIVING

Shared living is a residential service option where a paid home provider shares their home with a person with a disability. Nelshaun and April have shared a home for the past two years. Home provider Nelshaun says, "Shared living allows you to develop an attachment to someone and really bring them into your family."

For some people who live in staffed residences, frequent staff changes can be difficult. Nelshaun has observed that people worry, "Is the next person going to be nice to me? Shared living gives a person the chance for individual attention" from someone who is going to be there every day.

April is a veteran of shared living. Before Nelshaun, April lived with a previous provider, Jackie, for 17 years. April struggled with her emotions when she first lived with Jackie. When upset, she could be aggressive, and she sought support by calling 911 and going to the hospital. With Jackie's help, April learned how to soothe herself when she got overwhelmed.

When that relationship came to an end after the pandemic, April's supporters worried that the transition would be really difficult after such a long time together. "I love Miss Jackie. I miss her." Jackie and April still talk on the phone.

While it was a challenge, April was ready for a new home. Nelshaun communicated with Jackie about April's likes and dislikes, and she kept many routines that Jackie had started. "It wasn't a rushed thing. There were lots of meetings before she came to live with us," says Nelshaun.





This gives me a greater ability to make decisions about my life.

On their first day together, Nelshaun and April had a conversation about their expectations of each other and their home. It's a busy household, including April, Nelshaun, Nelshaun's sister, daughter and nephew—there's always someone to talk to and something to do. "It's good to be around people and get close to them. They're lovable and kind," says April of her housemates.

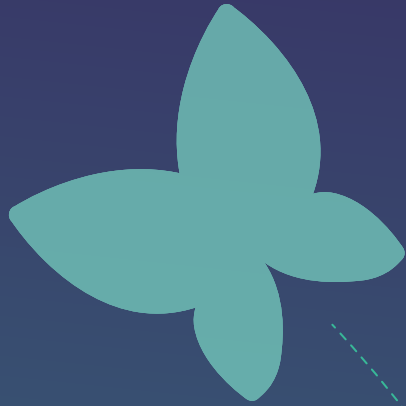
For Nelshaun, being a shared living provider has given her newfound freedom to be at home and to spend time with April and the rest of the family. "This gives me a greater ability to make decisions about my life," says Nelshaun.

Nelshaun and her family have been great role models for April as she continues learning how to handle life's ups and downs. In the past, April got angry easily and wasn't sure how to ask for what she needed. Now April knows how to communicate. She can figure things out with Nelshaun and the kids without getting upset. "I worked on my attitude," says April.

They are making strides as a household, too. Together, they have been on a health journey. Nelshaun has lost 15 pounds, and April has lost 30 pounds in the past two years. They love to cook and bake, so they are working together on making healthy meals for the benefit of everyone in the household. They get plenty of exercise, and everyone loves swimming at the pool. April and Nelshaun are hatching plans to go camping, crabbing, and fishing, too.

When Nelshaun considers what makes shared living successful, she says "When you come together and both of you benefit, it really works." But also: "Make sure that you match well. I come from a large family. April wasn't shocked that 30 people come for a cookout. Someone else might be shocked, but April was like 'let's go to the party.'"

As for April, she likes being the only person with a disability in the home. "I like 1:1. I like living with Miss Nellie." Shared living isn't necessarily her forever plan. April's long-term goals are to live independently and to have a romantic relationship. Nelshaun's advice is "Don't go until you're ready!"



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