



IMPACT



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NOTES FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



Dear Friends and Supporters,

For the last 5 years, it has been an honor and a privilege to serve as President of the STAR board. As I prepare to transition out of my role as Board President, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible journey we've shared over the past year. I am thrilled to share our Annual Impact Report, showcasing the meaningful progress we've made together.

It has been a true honor to serve alongside such dedicated board members, staff and volunteers who are passionately committed to our mission. This year has been one of growth, resilience, and innovation. Together, we have expanded our programs, strengthened our community partnerships, and made significant strides in serving individuals with unique abilities. Each accomplishment is a testament to the hard work and unwavering dedication of our entire team. ***Highlights from this year include:***

Hippotherapy Program: STAR Rubino Pediatric Therapy Center introduced this innovative therapeutic approach which uses horseback riding to enhance physical, emotional, and cognitive skills in children with IDD.

STAR Cafe: The Cafe reopened and has become a vibrant hub for our community. This initiative not only provides employment opportunities for individuals, but also serves as a gathering place where friendships blossom and connections deepen.

This year, we have been honored to welcome **MaryGrace Giuliano**, STAR's new Executive Director, to lead our community. MaryGrace's vision and leadership will undoubtedly take STAR to new heights! I am proud of what we have achieved and confident that the foundation we have built will support the next chapter for STAR.

Lastly, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our next board President, **Doree Levy**. Doree leads with intelligence, kindness, and a sense of humor and she is passionate about STAR's mission and the individuals we serve. We are fortunate to have Doree leading our board into the future.

As we move forward, STAR remains committed to breaking new ground in person-centered support of individuals with IDD, and we are excited about the possibilities the future holds. Thank you for your continued support and belief in our mission.

Sincerely,

Meghan Cioffi

President of the Board, STAR, Inc., Lighting the Way...





NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on the past year at STAR, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible journey we have taken together. This Annual Impact Report not only highlights our achievements but also serves as a testament to the unwavering commitment of our Board of Directors, dedicated staff, generous donors, and the individuals we serve.

Throughout the year, we have faced both challenges and opportunities, each allowing us to grow and adapt as an organization. Our programs have continued to evolve, providing critical support to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

To the board, your leadership, guidance and strategic vision have been invaluable. I am deeply thankful for your commitment to our mission and the trust you've placed in me to lead our organization. To the staff, your passion and hard work are what make this organization thrive.

I also want to express my sincere appreciation to our generous donors. Your contributions have made it possible for us to enhance our programs and services, allowing us to reach more individuals and families in need. Together we are creating a lasting impact.

Most importantly, I want to thank the individuals and the families we serve. Your resilience and determination inspire us every day. It is an honor to support you on your journey toward achieving your goals and aspirations.

As we look ahead, I am excited about the possibilities that await us. With your continued support, we will strive to innovate and expand our impact, ensuring that every individual has opportunity to thrive in our community.

Thank you for being an essential part of our mission. Together, we can create a brighter future for all.

With Gratitude,

MaryGrace Giuliano

Executive Director, STAR, Inc., Lighting the Way...





OUR MISSION

STAR, Inc., Lighting the Way is dedicated to championing rights and enhancing the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Through collaborative partnerships, innovative programs, and unwavering advocacy, we empower individuals to reach for the STARS, fostering a community where every person is valued, included and celebrated for their unique abilities.



OUR VISION

To create a community where individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities are empowered to lead fulfilling, inclusive, and independent lives, achieving their full potential through person centered support and advocacy.





IMPACT: Highlights

STAR CAFE

In May of this year, we launched the successful reopening of the STAR Cafe which provides meaningful employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities while serving delicious food and beverages. This initiative reflects our commitment to fostering independence and a path to community employment. We invite you to visit and experience our amazing food.



HIPPOTHERAPY

This trailblazing addition to STAR's Pediatric Therapies brings encouraging new opportunities for children to strengthen their muscles, minds, and movement as they attain developmental milestones through connections with their new equine friends.



DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

STAR joins the annual celebration of our dedicated Direct Support Professionals whose compassion, caring, and professionalism are the cornerstone of our person-centered focus of support.



ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The Suzanne McGraw Foundation Assistive Technology Center officially opens and receives distinction from Department of Developmental Services as Fairfield County's official evaluation center.





IMPACT: Pediatric Therapies

INNOVATION AND EDUCATION

The STAR Pediatric Therapies program at the Rubino Center blends cutting edge therapies to enhance the development of children ages birth to eight years. By offering a holistic approach through **Physical Therapy (PT)**, **Occupational Therapy (OT)**, and **Speech Therapy (ST)**, STAR empowers children to achieve greater independence and developmental milestones.

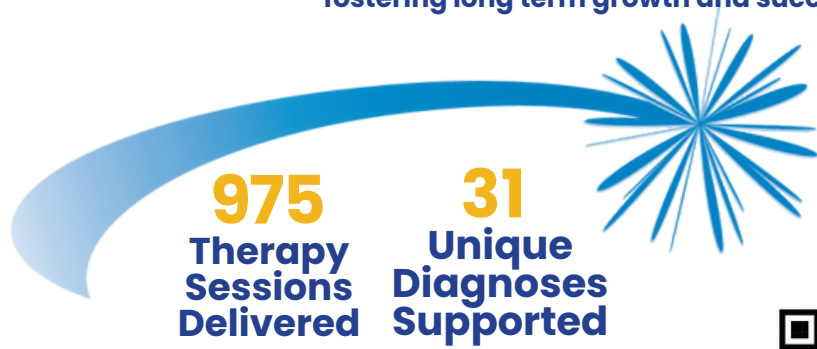
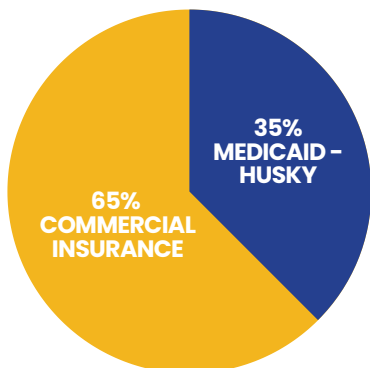
Physical therapy (PT) focuses on improving motor skills, strength, and coordination helping children increase mobility and engage in everyday activities with more confidence.

Occupational therapy (OT) supports children in developing fine motor skills, sensory integration, and daily living skills, enabling them to perform tasks essential for school and home life.

Speech therapy (ST) addresses communication by enhancing speech, language and social interaction as well as feeding therapy.

Hippotherapy is a therapeutic intervention that uses the movement of horses to improve physical, emotional and cognitive functioning.

By aligning therapy goals with educational program, STAR helps children achieve developmental milestones, build independence, and succeed both at home and in the classroom, fostering long term growth and success.





IMPACT: Family Supports

STAR Family Support Services provide holistic guidance and support to local families in addressing questions, needs, and opportunities for children, teens, and adults whose lives are impacted by intellectual and developmental disabilities. A dynamic and growing collection of activities engage individuals, family members, care givers, and friends by offering networking, educational, community, and social experiences in a comfortable, inclusive setting.

Likewise, support services extend to recommendations and referrals regarding housing, day programs, summer camps, respite care, high school transition, job training, financial planning, insurance, and other concerns specific to helping an individual with IDD thrive and succeed in life.

Notable activities in the past year included: First Family Forum to be held three times a year (May, Sept., Feb), presentation of Spellers program at NC Library, panel on Special Needs Trusts and Financial Planning for Special Needs Families, forum on residential housing initiatives and opportunities, presentation in coordination with Women Helping Women addressing transition services from high school to life.

HIGHLIGHTED PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

JumpSTARS—hosts monthly coffees for parents and caregivers for casual conversation and support- held at favorite coffee spots throughout the 6 towns we support.

Additional fun weekend activities, ranging from a comedy night, murder mystery night, graffiti art session, health and wellness retreat, wreath decorating, parent's night out at a brewpub, promote networking and new friendships for over 30 participating adults whose lives are impacted by family members with IDD.

Sports Buddies—A weekly inclusive sports program held in New Canaan attracting over sixty participants weekly for area youth with IDD who buddy-up with 'typical' youth and adult volunteers in seasonal low-impact sports activities and build friendship, skills, and sportsmanship.





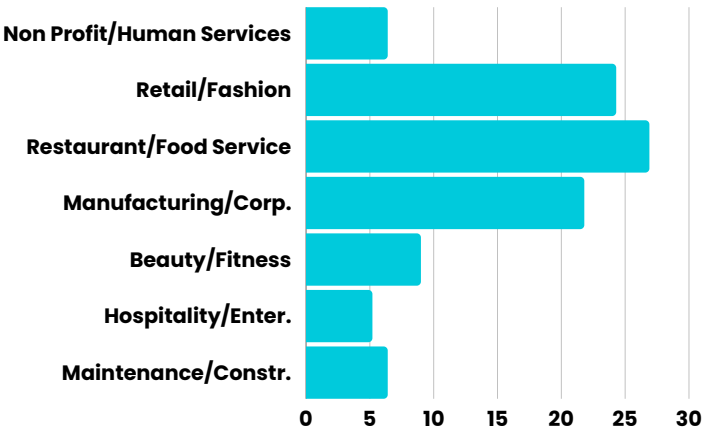
IMPACT: Employment Supports

STAR has six staff members certified in **Customized Employment** by Department of Developmental services who provide evaluations, training and support that lead to meaningful jobs. Last year, **47 individuals** were supported in jobs in the community with an average tenure of **9.37 years**.

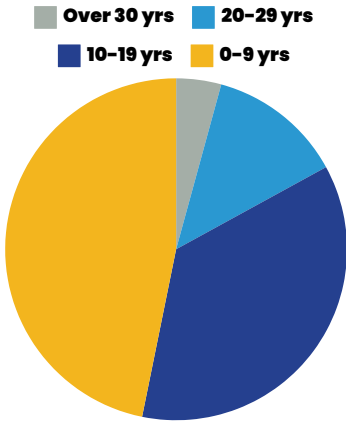
STAR is thankful to scores of local businesses who have provided inclusive work sites for STAR participants over the years. We welcome more employers who need reliable, able, and eager employees to contact STAR for your next hire. Please contact Martha Spiegel, mspiegel@starct.org.

LAST YEAR, STAR SUPPORTED 55 JOBS FOR 47 ADULTS WITH IDD (SEVERAL WORKING MULTIPLE JOBS). THE GROUP WORKED AN AVERAGE OF 584 HOURS PER WEEK IN OUR LOCAL TOWNS—ABOUT 12 HOURS A WEEK PER PERSON.

JOB LOCATIONS BY PERCENTAGE



YEARS ON THE JOB



**AVERAGE
TENURE
ON THE JOB
IS 9.37 YEARS!**





IMPACT: Day Options

The Day Support Program: Offers a variety of engaging activities designed to enhance the quality of life for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Focused of fostering independence and social inclusion, the program includes:

Community Activities: Individuals are encouraged to explore and engage with the local community through outings, classes, volunteering, and recreation events, promoting social interaction and a sense of belonging.

Arts Program: Creative expression is facilitated through arts and crafts, music and drama activities. These programs help individuals build self-esteem, develop new skills, and foster emotional well-being.

Social Skills Development: Tailored workshops and group activities focus on enhancing communication, interpersonal skills and relationship building, ensuring individuals can effectively interact with peers and community members.

Seniors Program: Offers structured activities and support services, promoting social engagement, wellness and independence.

4 Locations

Norwalk (2), Darien, New Canaan

179

**Individuals
Supported**





IMPACT: Residential Options

The **Residential Services** program is dedicated to promoting independence and community inclusion for **79 Individuals**. Through person-centered support, we focus on empowering individuals to lead their best lives.

Key features of the program include:

- **Individualized Support Plans:** Tailored to reflect personal goals, interests, and needs ensuring autonomy and self-determination.
- **Life Skills Development:** Activities designed to equip individuals with the skills necessary for independent living, fostering self-sufficiency and confidence.
- **Community Integration:** Encouraging participation in local activities to build social connections and sense of belonging.
- **Supportive Staff:** Trained staff provide continuous support and guidance, ensuring safety while respecting individuals' choices and promoting their overall well-being.

Prioritizing independence and community engagement, the Residential Supports program empowers individuals to thrive and live fulfilling lives.

STAR Community Living Arrangements (CLA)



- **CLAs are small community-based housing options for people with intellectual disabilities.**
- **CLAs provide residents with a safe environment, support and activities including work, social and recreational opportunities.**



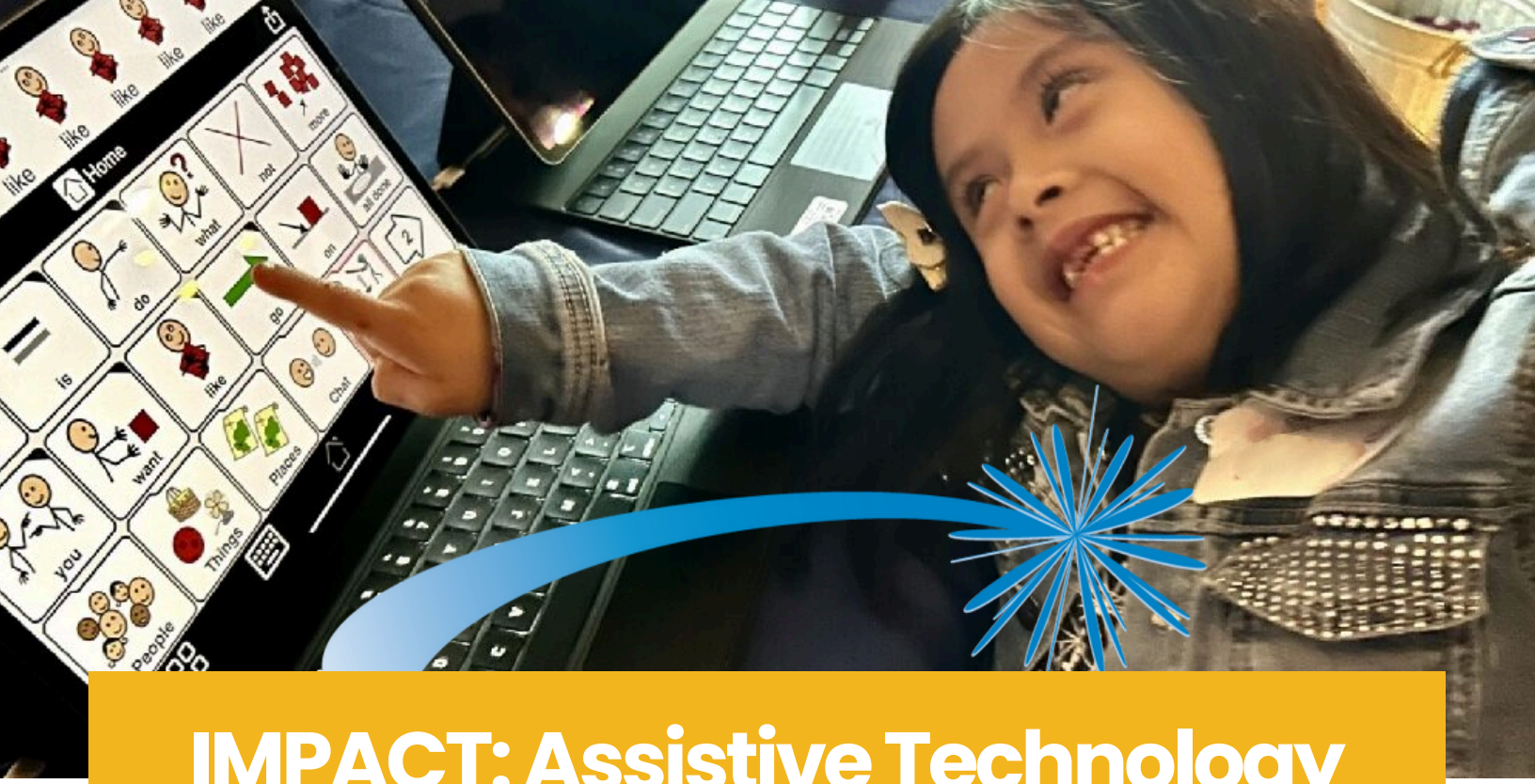


IMPACT: Recreation

Rec program at STAR-Adult activities range from mini-golf and dinner, movie and dinner, bowling, rock concerts, baseball and basketball games, Bingo nights, WWE nights, and monthly themed dances and parties, as well as several all-day outings. About **85 individuals** partake in these activities that foster inclusion and friendship.

Theater of STARS-A seasonal, feel good, theatrical performance by over **60 STAR individuals** culminating in a performance at Norwalk Symphony Hall attended by over **500 friends** each December.





IMPACT: Assistive Technology

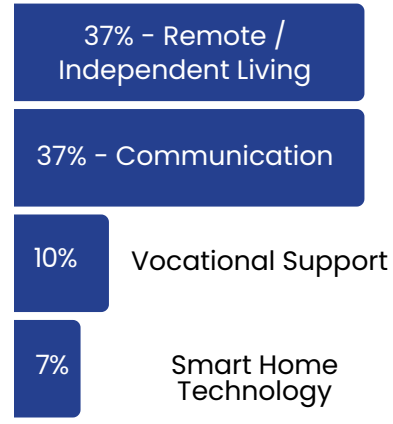
The **Suzanne McGraw Foundation Assistive Technology Center** empowers individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to enhance their daily lives and achieve greater independence.

Key offerings include:

- **Personalized Assessments:** Trained specialists conduct thorough evaluations to determine the most suitable assistive technologies for individuals, ensuring customized support.
- **Technology Training:** The center offers training and support for individuals and their families to effectively use assistive devices, fostering confidence and independence.
- **Community Engagement:** The center actively collaborates with local organizations and service providers to promote awareness and accessibility of assistive technologies in the community.
- **Ongoing Support:** Continued assistance and follow-up ensure that individuals can adapt and make the most of their assistive technologies over time.

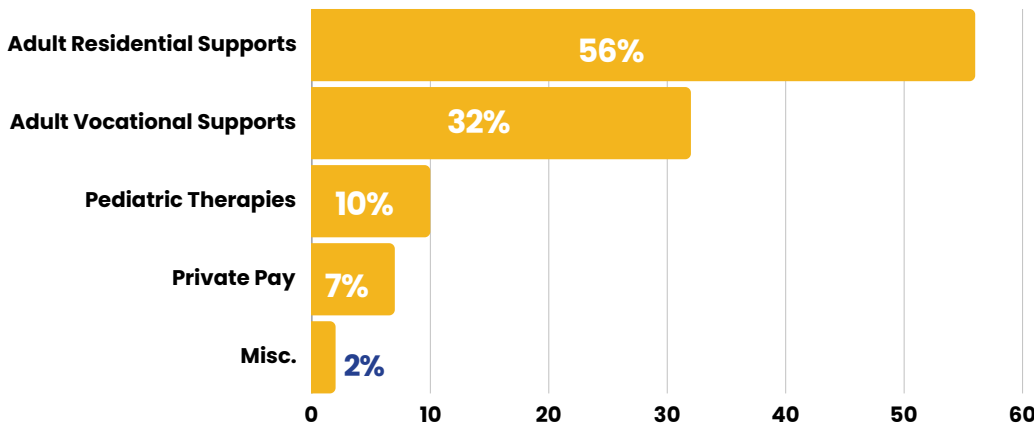
43
Individuals
Evaluated

**TYPES OF
EVALUATION BY
PERCENTAGE**

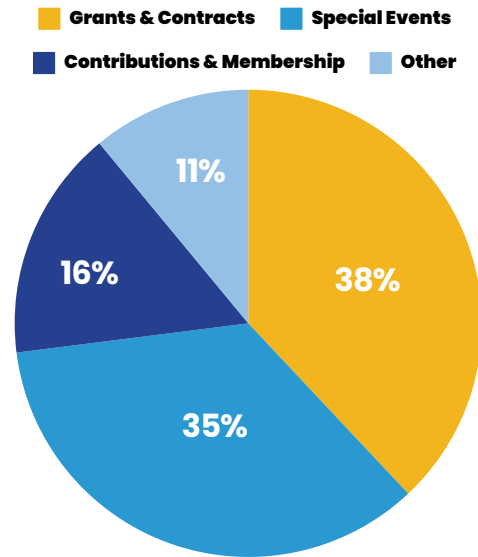


Financials

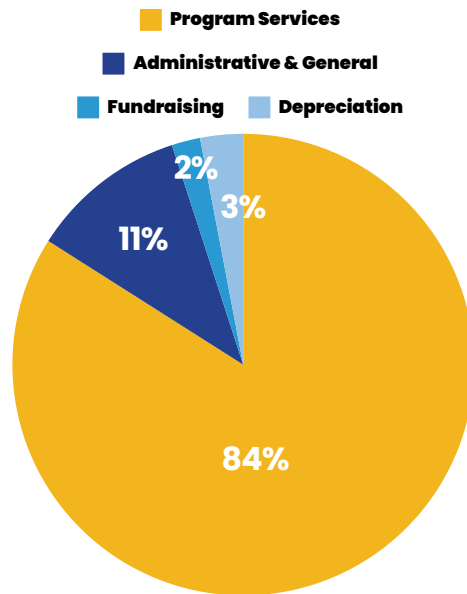
PROGRAM REVENUE
\$16,129,581



GENERAL REVENUE SUPPORT
\$971,954



EXPENSES
\$17,525,653





IMPACT: Looking Forward

As we look forward to the next year at STAR, we are excited about the opportunities to further our mission of supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). We are committed to expanding our programs, enhancing our services, and fostering a more inclusive community where every individual can shine.

A key focus will be our advocacy for fair wages for our dedicated staff, who are the backbone of our organization. We will also prioritize efforts to promote affordable supportive housing, ensuring that individuals with IDD have access to safe and inclusive living environments that foster independence.

With the continued dedication of our staff, the support of our generous donors, and the collaboration of our community partners, we believe we can make a meaningful impact in the lives of those we serve.

Join us in our mission to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities! Your contributions can make a significant difference in providing essential programs, advocating for fair wages, and promoting affordable supportive housing. Together, we can empower our community and create lasting change. Donate today or get involved to help us make a positive impact!



Volunteer with us!

**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT
JENNIFER THOMPSON @ JTHOMPSON@STARCT.ORG**



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Cathleen Piscitell
Lauryl Schembri
Charlie Sherman

Gratitude



TO OUR VOLUNTEERS, DONORS AND SPONSORS

185 VOLUNTEERS PROVIDED **3,003 HOURS OF SERVICE**
THIS YEAR TO IMPROVE LIVES AND PROPERTIES AT STAR!

Dear Valued Donors, Volunteers, Board of Directors and Families,

We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your generous support. Your contributions have made a profound difference in the lives of the families we serve.

Thanks to your commitment, we have been able to serve over 600 people who make a positive impact on our community. We are proud to partner with you in this mission and look forward to continuing our work together.

Some highlights this year included CT Community Bank Ice Cream Social, Deloitte Volunteer Day of Impact and Yvonne O'Kane's STAR art classes, among many others.

Thank you for believing in our vision and for making a tangible difference in the lives of those we support.

For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Kate Guthrie at kguthrie@starct.org.



THE SUZANNE MCGRAW FOUNDATION

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