

“If you build it, they will come”
– W.P. Kinsella

Dear Partners in the Community,

It has been such an exciting year at Willows Way and one of unparalleled growth for the agency. It is with great pleasure (and a big sigh of relief) that I share with you that the extensive building expansion we started in 2016 is complete. This project was the culmination of a vision we've had for years to expand our programs to even better meet the needs of the community. Expanding within our building allowed us to double the size of our day program, RISE, and briefly eliminate the waiting list. Within just a couple of months of opening the new RISE space, the program reached maximum enrollment and, once again, we have a growing waiting list. We know that there is an ongoing need for meaningful, innovative day services in the region. Willows Way is well-positioned to meet that need through continued expansion moving forward.

In addition to the rapid growth of RISE, we also saw a dramatic increase in our Realities (Partial Support) program. Already the largest provider of this service in St. Charles County, we continued to expand through the addition of Independent Skills Development, a service funded by the Department of Mental Health. This new service allows us to reach folks who have not yet moved out on their own and teach them new skills to better prepare them for living independently. This new service also had an impact on Project Heart, a program that enhances independence and skill development through participation in educational classes. Over the course of 2017, we had 28 attendees who had never before been to one of our classes.

Not least, our Independent Supported Living (Residential) program experienced slight and, most importantly, sustainable growth over the course of 2017. As we did last year, we focused more on our hiring, training and retention efforts to ensure quality staffing rather than continued growth in the number of clients we serve in the program. We realize that it's critical to have a solid workforce and we have made great strides this year to ensure that we are the employer of choice by increasing wages, providing bonuses and enhancing our advancement opportunities. The success of Willows Way rests with our employees and we are committed to having a fully engaged and trusted workforce to support our clients and our mission.

On behalf of all the people who are impacted by what we do, I want to thank you for being our partner. With you at our side, we are changing lives and changing our community. When we knew it was time to expand to better serve our clients and the community, you helped us grow. And when it's time to grow again, we hope you will join us on that journey.

With gratitude,

Joy V. Steele
Executive Director

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Mission

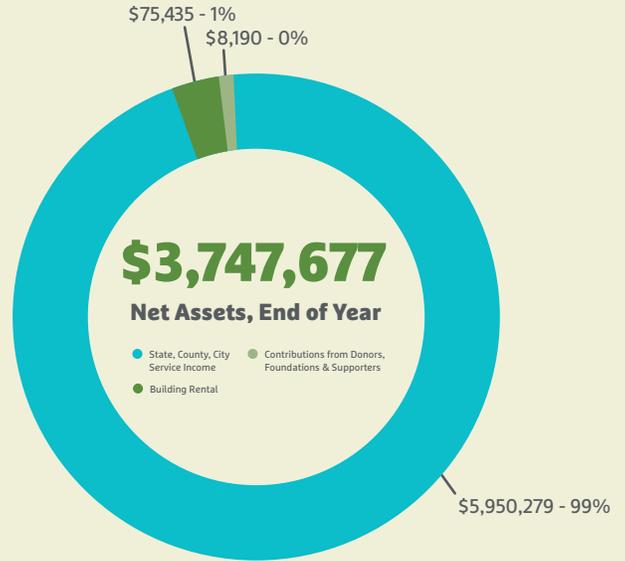
Willows Way empowers individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live a life beyond limits through personalized support and community engagement.

Vision

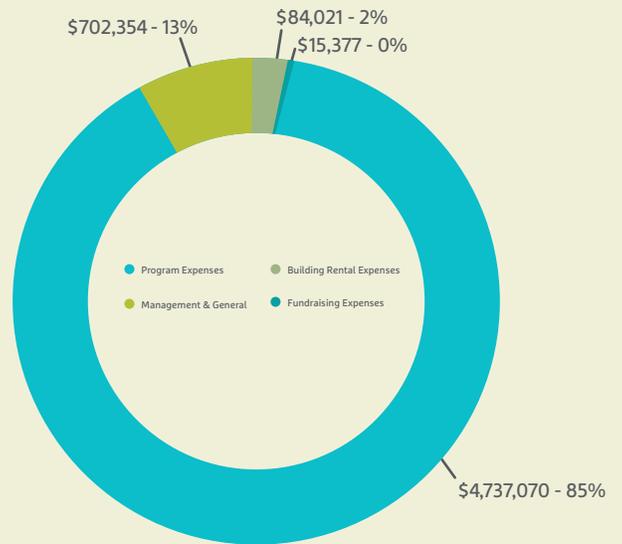
People of all abilities having the opportunity to experience a sense of home, a feeling of security and an avenue for personal growth.

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Total Support & Revenue

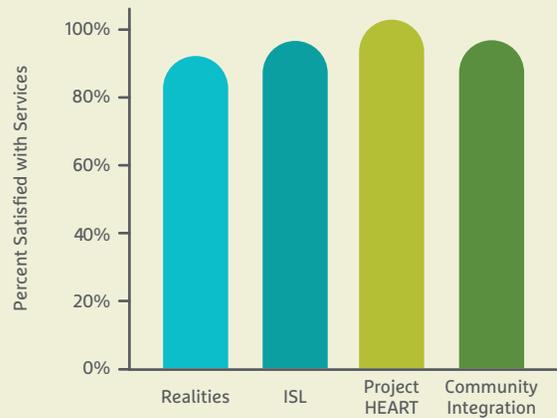


Total Expenses



Overall Ratings of Willows Way Programs Clients, Family & Friends

(2016) Realities: 40%*, ISL: 38%*, Community Integration: 41%*, Project HEART: N=13**



Rating of WW Services

*Return Rate of Surveys **# of Surveys

Our PROGRAMS

Realities

Realities provides **Independent Living Assistance** to enhance skills that enable clients to live independently and maintain a household. Realities staff teach living skills such as healthy meal planning, comparison shopping, and cooking skills. The service provides social learning opportunities through activities coordinated by clients and opportunities to build upon activities of daily living that encourage personal growth and independence in the home environment. In 2017, Realities served 64 individuals and had many successes. Joshua met Marie through the Realities program. They formed a friendship and decided to date. After nearly a year and half, they decided they would live together. With the support of Realities staff, family and friends, Joshua and Marie have found a home of their own and today report that they have built a stronger relationship and are happier in their lives.

Realities also provides **Community Integration and Individualized Skills Development** services to support individuals in building independent living skills while developing friendships and community connections. During 2017, Realities served over 30 people in this program with many successes along the way. Lauren lives with her father and spends the majority of her time with him. Since joining Willows Way and receiving Realities service Lauren has begun attending parties with her peers and attended other community activities. Lauren is making friends and getting out of the house!

Project HEART

Project HEART provides stimulating, person-centered health education classes, skills training and resource information to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and those supporting them. The Project HEART philosophy is that each of us learns best by doing and having fun at the same time. Project HEART develops and modifies classes and activities to meet the needs, learning styles and interests of each individual learner. In 2017, Project HEART served 91 clients, supporting participants to foster independence and meet personal goals. Along the way many clients grew more comfortable engaging in conversation with others and saw their lives become fuller as new friendships were formed and confidences gained. Karinne G. had a wonderful 2017. Early in the year she told staff that she wanted to lose weight for health reasons. With the information learned in health and fitness related classes Karinne was able to transform her life - losing 30 pounds this year!

RISE

Reaching Independence through Social Engagement is an innovative day program designed for clients to be involved in community and volunteer activities for the majority of their day. Expansion of day program services was finalized in 2017 with the opening of a second program. This year 45 people received RISE services as 17 individuals began service in the new program. As service opportunities are made available to more people seeking a meaningful day, RISE continues to support clients to build on their social and independent living skills. Clients participate in organized activities that promote community involvement, attend community events, and visit local tourist destinations. Volunteer opportunities included nine community partnerships this year with the majority of individuals participating in six to eight volunteer activities or more each month. This was a very special year for Emily S. Prior to joining RISE, Emily was very anxious in groups and new social situations. With staff support Emily has become more comfortable in new situations and environments - her world continues to expand while her confidence in herself and her abilities increases with the support of RISE staff members.

Individualized Supported Living (ISL)

Individualized Supported Living (ISL) service coordinates the supports needed for an individual to live in their own home in the community. Person centered supports are designed to facilitate choice, assisting the individual with deciding how they wish to live, work, learn and actively participate in their community. Supports are provided by trained, caring staff at the individual's home with support available 24/7 as needed. Daily living skills building, social and recreational activities, transportation support and personal care supports are some of the core supports offered within the service. In 2017, 42 people received Individualized Supported Living service. This was the year of travel for clients in Individualized Supported Living with numerous people taking destination vacations with staff support. Clients also increased participation in self-advocacy efforts as four people attended the state-wide People First Conference in 2017. In addition, Steven left the confines of a nursing home, and found a home with Willows Way in St. Louis while Carol joined the Willows Way family, moving into a home in St. Peters. We are thrilled to welcome them both to Willows Way.

