

UNIFIED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

2023

Annual Report



WHAT
MAKES UNIFIED
SO SPECIAL
ARE
ITS PEOPLE.



MISSION

Our mission is to support individuals with disabilities in achieving independence, productivity and the quality of life they seek.

VISION

Our vision is to be recognized for excellence and leadership in providing innovative, person-centered supports, making us the agency of choice for individuals with disabilities and their families and the employer of choice for human service professionals.

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2023

Annual Report

Message from Our President and CEO & Board Chair

This has been a very successful year for Unified. Revenues are up, and our programming increased as we returned to our pre-COVID-19 activities. What makes Unified so special are its people: the wonderful individuals we support who know that their disabilities do not define them; the families who place their faith and confidence in us; and our quality staff — the backbone of our organization.

Unified supports more than 800 individuals. There are 170 individuals enrolled in our Meaningful Day Services, with day habilitation programs offered in our Frederick and Cumberland centers. The Developmental Disabilities Administration continues to encourage providers of Meaningful Day Services to prioritize community participation. Currently, 49 individuals participate in Unified's Community Development Services (CDS) program, partaking in activities in their communities tailored to their interests. We are proud of the participants in our Hagerstown CDS program who were recognized by The Salvation Army for their volunteer service in its food pantry.

Our Residential Services continue to grow. We now operate 43 wheelchair accessible and renovated community living group homes. We are especially excited about our nine one- and two-bedroom apartments attached to our community living group homes. These apartments are unique to Unified and allow individuals who do not need 24-hour support to live more independently, on their own or with a roommate.

Families frequently tell us how much they cherish our staff. We recognize the level of trust these relationships instill and encourage open lines of communication between our staff and the families we serve.

Caring for our staff is central to who we are. Unified offers many incentives to attract and retain quality staff such as competitive pay, ongoing training, bonuses, regular salary increases, opportunities for professional development and advancement as well as gift cards and recognition events.

Unified strongly supports Maryland Technology First, a statewide initiative to increase access to assistive technology resources, enabling greater independence and community integration for people with disabilities. Few agencies have Unified's capacity to provide assistive technology services. In the past year, 310 people received assistive technology services from Unified, a significant increase from last year, and we are well positioned to increase that number even more to meet community needs.

It has been a busy year at our headquarters as we have been preparing for the implementation of a new Human Resource Information System (HRIS) that will streamline scheduling, payroll, timekeeping and communications while reducing paperwork and making us more efficient. Additionally, we are implementing a new statewide billing system that will allow us to better capture services provided and improve revenue flow.

Our fundraisers were very successful this year, and we thank all our generous sponsors and attendees for their support. Hoodstock XX, under the leadership of Russ Causey and his committee, raised \$106,000, bringing total monies raised to well over \$1 million during Hoodstock's 20-year history. More than 350 people attended Hoodstock XX, held at the Winslow in Baltimore. During the event, the 2023 Samuel A. Tucker Memorial Can Do Award was presented to Ann Ernst for overcoming major health challenges. Ann is one of the first individuals to live independently in a Unified apartment. She participates in Unified's Community Development Services program in Cumberland.

A highlight of the evening was a special tribute to Russ for chairing Hoodstock since its inception. Russ also received the 2023 Creative Campaign of the Year award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals Maryland Chapter for creating Hoodstock.

Our 17th Annual Golf Classic at the Elkridge Club in Baltimore was enjoyed by 100 golfers and raised \$66,000. A special thank you goes to chair Matt Lenihan and his committee and to our presenting sponsor Sandy Spring Bank.

We are pleased to announce that Rob Freedman, managing director of JLL, has been named chair of Unified's board of directors effective January 2024. He succeeds Ellen Milles who retired on Dec. 31, 2023. We extend a heartfelt thank you to Ellen for 13 years of dedicated service. She joined the board in 2011 and became board chair in 2018.

During her tenure, she served and chaired the Audit and Finance Committee. During the year, we also welcomed new board members Sandy Snyder, Lisa Badie, Emily Sutorius and Bill Foxburrow. Our sincere appreciation goes to all our board members who lend their time and talent to Unified. Your visionary leadership makes us a premier organization in the disability community.

In closing, to all our staff, generous donors, families, friends and individuals who receive our services, thank you for your ongoing confidence in us and your support.

Sincerely,

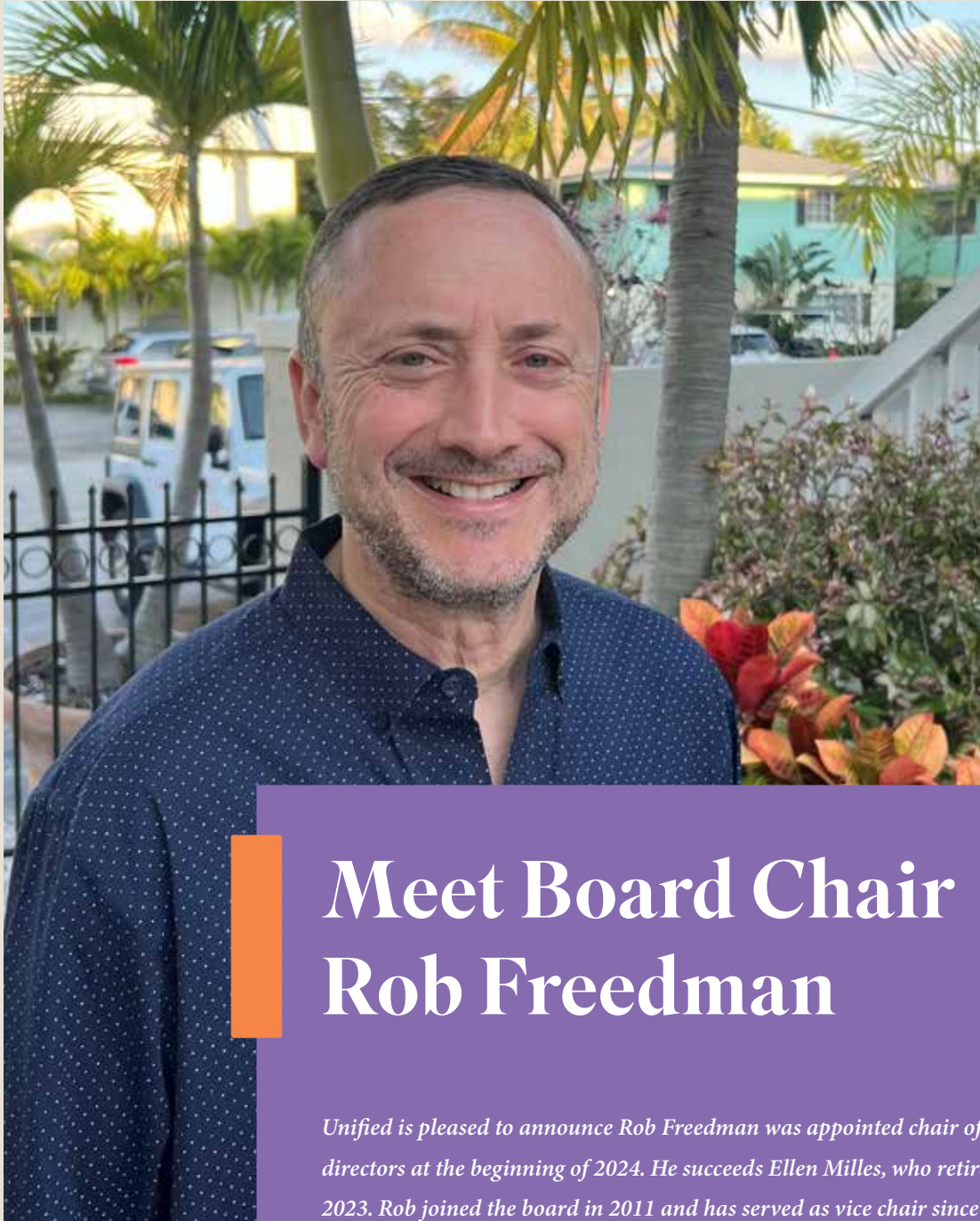


AMY KREITZ
President and CEO



ELLEN MILLES
Board Chair

**“WHAT
MAKES UNIFIED
SO SPECIAL
ARE
ITS PEOPLE.”**



Meet Board Chair Rob Freedman

Unified is pleased to announce Rob Freedman was appointed chair of our board of directors at the beginning of 2024. He succeeds Ellen Milles, who retired at the end of 2023. Rob joined the board in 2011 and has served as vice chair since 2021. During his tenure, he has chaired the board's development and recruitment committees. Matt Lenihan, another longtime board member, has been appointed the new vice chair. Unified is deeply grateful for the volunteer leadership of these board members. Their contributions have helped ensure Unified will be able to support people with disabilities for the long term.

**“... IT’S IMPORTANT TO HELP
IN ANY WAY I CAN.”**

Rob Freedman is a highly regarded community leader, so it may come as a surprise that there was a time when he felt he did not have much volunteer experience.

He says, “Giving back is important to me, so I began asking people how and where I could help.” Soon he was serving on a variety of boards including Leadership Howard County, the Howard County Board of Publics Works, Temple Isaiah, HC Drug Free and Howard Community College Education Foundation. Rob explains, “These boards were the result of relationships developed throughout my career and within my community.”

Rob is a managing director at JLL, a commercial real estate firm, where he specializes in selling and leasing commercial space. Before joining JLL, he was a principal of two other commercial real estate companies: Colliers International Baltimore and Corridor/Reznick Commercial Real Estate. Altogether, Rob has more than 30 years of experience in the commercial real estate industry, a career he describes as relationship driven.

In 2007, Unified enlisted Rob’s services in relocating its headquarters to Hunt Valley. He was impressed with Unified’s Team: “Everyone was so nice and committed to the mission.” Unified then sought Rob’s

expertise on a parcel of land it owned. Rob met with the board to help them decide if Unified should build a campus headquarters or sell the land. The Board determined that the timing wasn’t right, so Rob helped Unified sell the land and recoup its money, fortuitously, right before the market crashed in the early 2000s.

Soon after these transactions, Rob was invited to join the board. He says, “Evaluating Unified’s real estate needs gave me an in-depth understanding of the organization, and I was excited to find new opportunities to grow and strengthen Unified’s mission.”

Rob continues to assist Unified with its commercial real estate needs, and he has been part of the board during several major initiatives. He was part of the board team that made the decision to end Unified’s affiliation with United Cerebral Palsy, and he participated in all the subsequent rebranding down to selecting the name “Unified Community Connections” and the new logo colors. He says, “I know the leadership at Unified and believe in what they are doing and see how hard they are working, so it’s important to help in any way I can.”

Rob enjoyed working with Diane Coughlin for many years, and when she made the decision to retire from her position as



Board Chair Rob Freedman (l) and Board Vice Chair Matt Lenihan (r) at Unified's Annual Golf Classic.



Rob Freedman (l) and Director of Development Lauren Bussard (r) celebrate Hoodstock.

Unified's president and CEO, he was pleased to be part of the group that helped identify her successor. "We looked outside the organization, but no one matched Amy Kreitz's amazing knowledge of our organization and more than 20 years of hands-on experience," he says. "One of Unified's distinguishing factors is the number of tenured staff. Having experienced so many different business cycles, the staff can anticipate and redirect resources, funds and people to manage challenges."

Unified is incredibly fortunate to have many amazing donors and sponsors. "We are grateful for their generosity," says Rob. At the same time, he emphasizes the need for more boots on the ground: "We are always looking for volunteers. If anyone would ever like to join a committee, volunteer at an event or join a friendly, organized board, we would welcome the opportunity to speak with them. We are grateful to those people that serve and are lucky to have so many hard-working people on our team clearly making an impact."

As Rob looks to the future, he says, "We have a really great team of leadership, staff and board members at Unified. The people who came before me and the people that are on the board now have done such a great job getting Unified to this point. My goal is to be a steady steward and help to keep Unified moving forward. It has been rewarding to see Unified evolve while making sure it can provide the best possible services."

**"WE HAVE A
REALLY GREAT TEAM
OF LEADERSHIP, STAFF
AND BOARD MEMBERS
AT UNIFIED."**



Director of Operations in Cumberland Jessica Fonferek (r) with Chrystal (l) at the Cumberland Day Center.

Jessica Fonferek: A Unified Leader

At 19 years old, *Jessica Fonferek* started her first “serious job” as a direct support professional with Unified. Being a direct support professional was physically and emotionally challenging, but Jessica found it rewarding and “fell in love with the individuals” she was supporting. “I was comfortable around people with disabilities because I grew up around my aunt, who has disabilities and is on the autism spectrum,” Jessica says. “My aunt lived with my family, and I helped with her care as I got older.”

Within three months, Jessica was promoted to house manager for a community living group home in Hagerstown. Over the next 17 years, Jessica rose through the ranks, serving as assistant residential director in Hagerstown and residential director in Frederick. In 2022, she was promoted to her current position as director of operations in Cumberland. She manages 90 employees and oversees all the departments in Cumberland to include the center and day program, nursing and personal support services, seven community living group homes and three residential apartments.



*Jessica Fonferek
(l) welcomes the
Easter bunny to the
Cumberland
Day Center.*

“Working at Unified from such a young age has shaped the person I am today,” says Jessica. “I have learned to appreciate what I have instead of focusing on what I don’t have. There is so much joy and laughter to be found in everyday life.” Jessica’s favorite part of her job is interacting with the individuals who receive

supports from Unified. “If I am having a bad day, I step out of my office and visit with the participants in the meaningful day program. They remind me why I am here.”

Jessica continues, “It’s so exciting to be able to introduce someone to new things.” She shares a story about a camping trip: “The camp site

let us use its golf carts to get around, and the individual I was supporting got such a kick out of driving one. The camp site also has a pool with waterslides, and while you’re only supposed to go

down the slide one at a time, he needs support, so I was allowed to go with him. We spent all day on those slides.”

Every year, Unified helps the individuals it supports set goals. Jessica recalls how one of the individuals wanted to learn how to swim. “She is paralyzed,” states Jessica. “In my head, I was thinking, ‘How will this work?’ At Unified saying ‘no’ is not an option. Staff must think

outside the box and figure out how to support an individual in moving toward their goal.” The staff brought the individual to a pool where she began learning basic water skills such as how to float. Eventually, she was enrolled in a swim class and became a great swimmer. “Never doubt someone just because they have a disability,” says Jessica. “People with disabilities are just like anyone else. They have the same interests and desires. They just do things differently.”

Jessica credits Unified’s leadership for helping to guide and mentor her professionally and for taking care of her “like family” along the way. She calls President and CEO Amy Kreitz and Chief Operating Officer Angela Hanft her role models. “No matter the situation, they listen,” says Jessica. When I need help, they are there for me, and there isn’t anything they expect me to do that they wouldn’t do or haven’t done.”

Jessica looks forward to her future.

“Cumberland is the smallest of Unified’s regions,” she says. “Over the next five years, my plan is to grow Cumberland by increasing participation in meaningful day services and opening more community living group homes and apartments.” She aspires to continue rising within Unified’s leadership and is working hard to reach that goal.

“It is a privilege and an honor to work for Unified,” Jessica says. “I have gained so much – a fulfilling career that has encouraged me to grow as an employee and as a person and the opportunity to make a positive impact in peoples’ lives.



Honoring Shelbe

Wendy and Keith Hundertmark moved their daughter *Shelbe* into a Unified community living group home in Hagerstown when she was 26 years old. “It was a hard transition for all of us,” says Wendy. Up to that point, Shelbe had always lived with her parents, but Wendy and Keith knew it was important to plan a life for Shelbe outside of their home. “We all know life can flip on a dime. Somebody’s health changes, and then your family is in crisis and your child is subjected to a crisis placement,” says Wendy.

Tragically, it was Shelbe’s health that took an unexpected turn. She passed away suddenly last year at age 30 due to health complications. Wendy and Keith had always assumed Shelbe would outlive them. “She was medically fragile and endured health issues her entire life,” says Keith. “But she was also a fighter and had survived several serious hospitalizations in the past. We really thought she was going to pull through, and then she didn’t.”



(Top Photo) Shelbe Hundertmark (c) with her family (l to r): Audrey, Nick, Wendy, Keith and Louis.

(Bottom Photo) Shelbe (l) at almost three years old with brother Nick (r) when he was one-and-a-half years old.



*(Far Left Photo)
Shelbe with her
brother Louis.*

*(Left Photo) Shelbe
with her sister Audrey.*

Unified received several donations in Shelbe's name and reached out to the Hundertmark's to ask if there was something special that could be done to honor her memory. Wendy liked to sit outside with Shelbe when she visited and thought a glider would be enjoyed by residents, staff and future visitors in the years to come. Unified purchased a glider for the community living group home where Shelbe lived and attached a memorial plaque to commemorate her.

Sharing their family's story is another way Wendy and Keith hope to honor Shelbe's memory and raise awareness of the importance of having access to the services and supports she received from Unified.

"We chose Unified because Shelbe needed a lot of care," says Wendy. They were impressed with Unified's wraparound services. Shelbe had severe cerebral palsy and multiple physical challenges that contributed to ongoing health issues. She was nonverbal, relied on a wheelchair for mobility and needed daily personal supports.

"I really liked the setup at Unified," states Wendy. "We were relieved of the day-to-day responsibilities but could still be involved with Shelbe's care and visit her whenever and as much as we wanted. We tried to see her at least once a

week and brought her home for weekends, holidays and family events. We could go to her doctor's appointments when we felt it was important to have input, and Unified handled the routine visits and was very responsive when it came to urgent care." The Hundertmark's appreciated the attention Shelbe received and the open communication with Unified's staff.

Wendy and Keith both worked full-time, and Shelbe could not be left alone, so there had always been a steady stream of caregivers in their home. Shelbe was the oldest of four children. "Our other children did not have normal lives," says Wendy. "They rarely had both parents attend their games, recitals or special events because one of us would usually stay home with Shelbe."

After Shelbe moved into her Unified home, Wendy and Keith were able to visit their children in college and attend special events together. When their youngest daughter got into a serious accident out of state, they were grateful to be able to pick up and go and not have to worry if Shelbe would be okay while they were gone.

With three younger siblings, homelife could get loud, and Shelbe would get overwhelmed by too much activity and noise. "She loved her family, but she didn't always love

“SHELBE APPRECIATED
THE SIMPLE THINGS —
GOOD FOOD AND FAMILY.
SHE REMINDED US HOW
MUCH JOY COULD BE HAD
FROM THE SMALL THINGS
IN LIFE.”

*Direct Support Professional
Kathy Maners enjoys the glider
given to honor Shelbe’s memory.*

being in the same room with us,” recalls Wendy. Shelbe did not interact with just anyone, so people often assumed she could not hear. “Shelbe was very selective about who she gave her attention to,” Wendy explains. “She really did like to make eye contact, but she had to know you first.”

Wendy laments the number of times people barely acknowledged Shelbe, even caregivers and doctors who should have known better. There were also times when Shelbe received excellent care. Shelbe had a breast cancer scare not long before she passed away, and Wendy shares how the doctor spoke directly to Shelbe throughout the consultation explaining every step along the way. “I wish more people had that kind of compassion for people with disabilities,” she says.

Shelbe had difficulty drinking and chewing and all her food had to be pureed, but she loved to eat and especially enjoyed her family’s cooking. “She would make sounds of pure enjoyment to let us how much she liked something,” says Keith. “Shelbe appreciated the simple things — good food and family. She reminded us how much joy could be had from the small things in life.”

Wendy and Keith say Shelbe taught their family many valuable life lessons. They are especially proud of the kind



people Shelbe’s siblings have become, and they believe growing up with Shelbe gave them a keen sensitivity toward people with disabilities.

Shelbe’s older brother, Nick, wrote a tribute to her that he shared at her funeral. Here are a few excerpts describing the impact Shelbe had on her family:

“[Shelbe] you taught us how to have patience and empathy, as well as strength and grit. You persevered through the most difficult physical limitations to continue experiencing the one life you had. You faced the same set of challenges every single day and never gave up...without you, we would not have known the selfless and caring people who helped care for you. You attracted the best people in this world and brought them into our lives.”

2023

Board of Directors

Lisa Badie, MBA*

Kennedy Krieger Institute

James E. Betts

American Airlines, Retired Captain

Steven Choi
Financial Industry
Regulatory Authority
Blake Curry

Maury Donnelly & Parr, Inc.

Marc A. DeSimone, Jr., Esq.

Maryland Office of the Public Defender

George N. Ensenat

Orrstown Bank

Christopher B. Forhan

Fearless

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Unified Community Connections,
Chair (Previously Vice Chair)
JLL
Bill Foxburrow*

Firsttrust Bank

Jody Gatuso, MBA, C.M.

AVPeridontics

Amy Kreitz, M.S.
Unified Community Connections,
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JoAnn Kubica

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Offit | Kurman, Attorneys at Law

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Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of
Public Health
Maryland State Senate
Matt Lenihan
Unified Community Connections,
Vice Chair
St. John Properties
Sarah Lieb

Apex Physics Partners

Ellen Milles, CPA*
Unified Community Connections,
Chair (Retired on Dec. 31, 2023)
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Retired Vice President
Joanne S. Odom
MedStar Georgetown
University Hospital
Kim Reno, CPA

Aludyne, Inc.

Jane Schlegel, MBA*
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ExecuPharm

Sandy Snyder*

eXp Realty

Emily Sutorius*

State Farm

Dr. Edward T. Zimmerman
Woodholme Gastroenterology
Associates, Retired Partner

*Retired in 2023

*Elected in 2023

2023

Senior Management Team



Amy Kreitz, M.S.
President and CEO

Angela Hanft
Chief Operating Officer

Gary V. Lane, CPA
Chief Financial Officer

Lauren M. Bussard
Director of Development

Vickie McGilton
Director of Quality Assurance

Angela Strauch Lane, M.S., CCC-SLP
Director of Assistive Technology Center

FISCAL YEAR 2023

Statistics



800

INDIVIDUALS WE SUPPORT



49

INDIVIDUALS IN OUR CDS PROGRAM



170

INDIVIDUALS ENROLLED IN OUR MEANINGFUL DAY SERVICES



43

COMMUNITY LIVING GROUP HOMES



150

INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN OUR COMMUNITY LIVING GROUP HOMES



9

COMMUNITY LIVING APARTMENTS

“I DO NOT KNOW WHAT I WOULD DO IF I WERE NOT WORKING AT UNIFIED. I LOVE MY JOB, AND I LOVE THE PEOPLE THAT I TAKE CARE OF. I WISH I COULD DO MORE.”

— Tammy Quesenberry, *Direct Support Professional*



310

INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES – (AN INCREASE OF 85 FROM LAST YEAR)



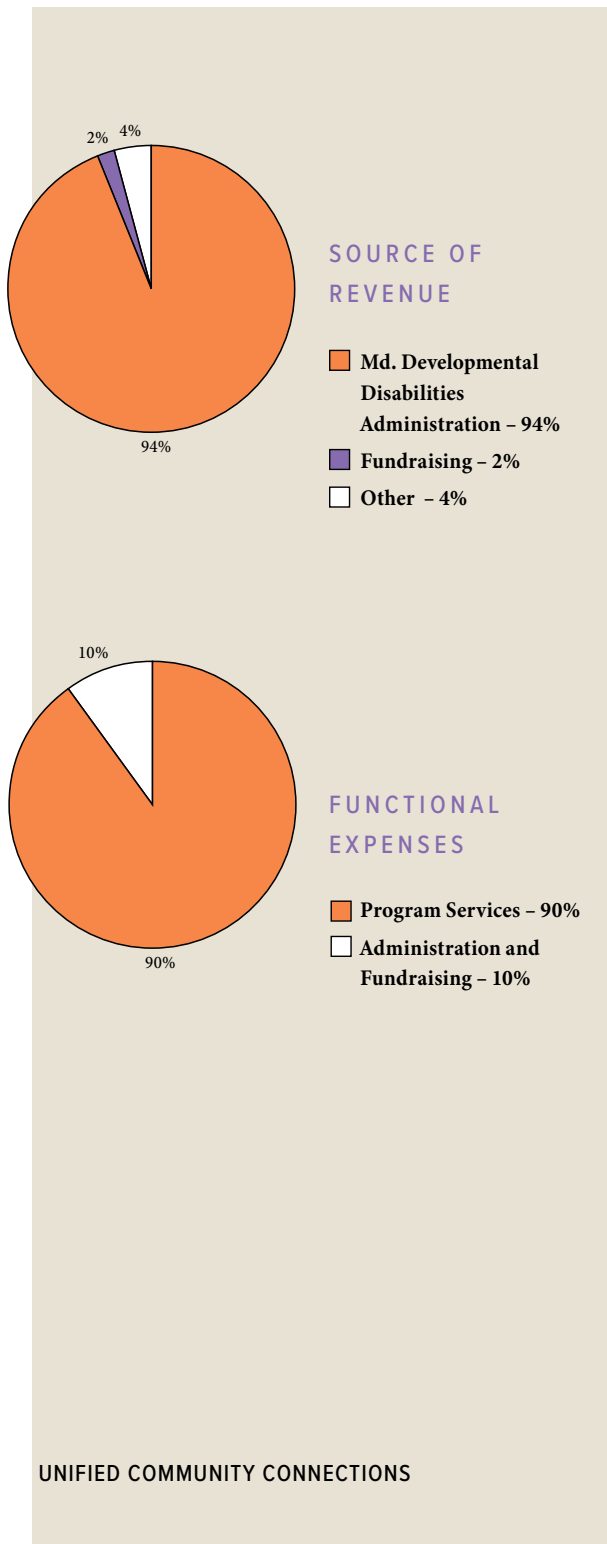
314

DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS



2023

Revenues & Expenses



REVENUES

Contracts	\$	29,370,055
Fundraising	\$	489,078
Other	\$	1,278,821
TOTAL REVENUES	\$	31,137,954

EXPENSES

Program Services

Direct Services	\$	24,783,417
Public Education	\$	64,281

TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES	\$	24,847,698
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ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Management & General	\$	2,662,607
Fundraising	\$	116,900

TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	\$	2,779,507
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TOTAL EXPENSES	\$	27,627,205
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EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	\$	3,510,749
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2023

Statement of Financial Positions

ASSETS

Current Assets	\$	19,370,218
Property & Equipment, Net of Accumulated Depreciation	\$	10,863,458
Other Assets	\$	1,921,648
TOTAL ASSETS	\$	32,155,324

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities	\$	5,392,893
Long-term Liabilities	\$	6,618,154
Other Liabilities	\$	0
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$	12,011,047

COMMITMENTS & CONTINGENCIES

Net Assets

Unrestricted	\$	19,969,761
With Donor Restrictions	\$	174,516
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$	20,144,277

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$	32,155,324
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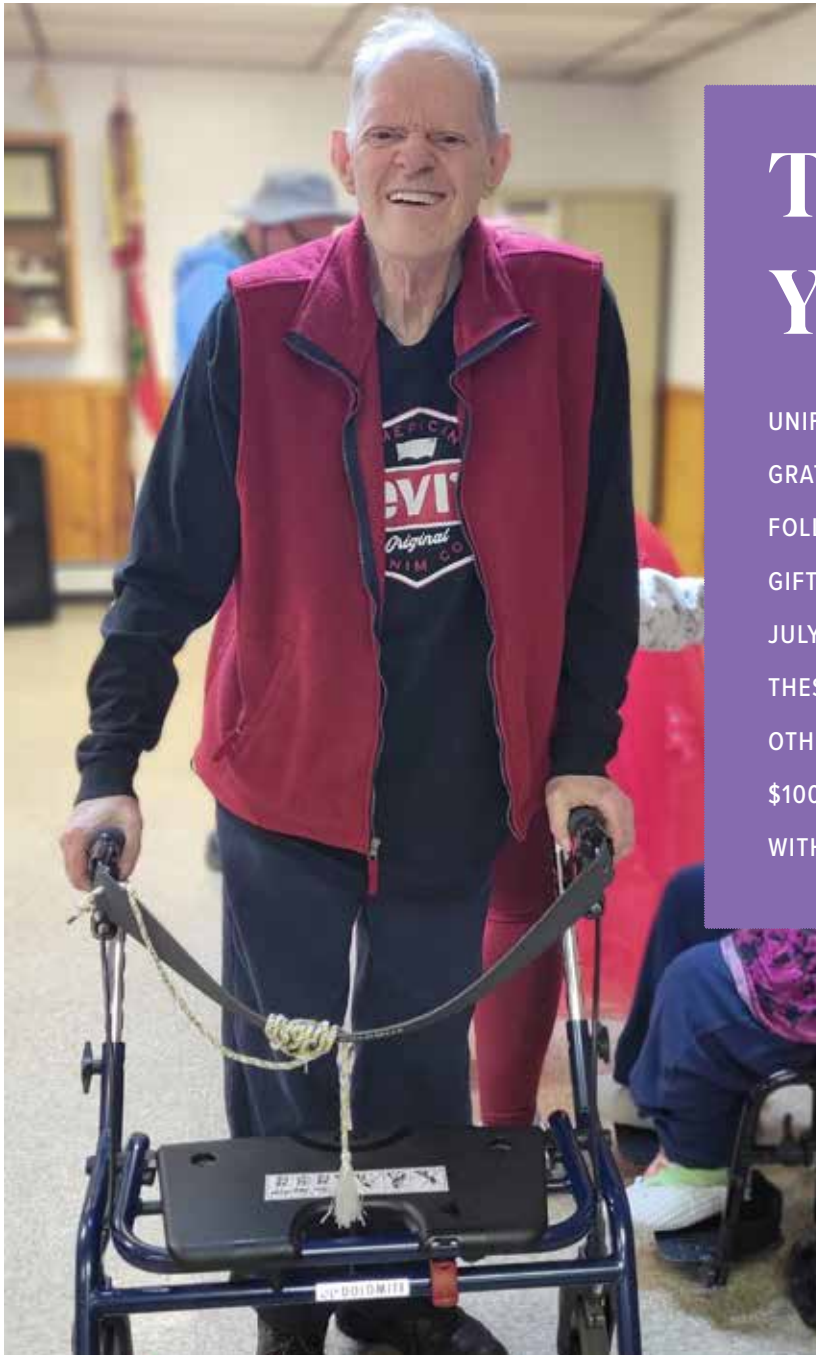


FOR YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2023

Unified Community Connections is designated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. A copy of our audited financial statement is available upon request by calling 410-484-4540 or writing to Unified Community Connections at 952 Ridgebrook Road, Suite 1000, Sparks, MD 21152. Additional information is on file with the Maryland Office of the Secretary of State.

2023

Donors



Thank You

UNIFIED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE
FOLLOWING GENEROUS DONORS FOR THEIR
GIFTS OF \$100 OR MORE RECEIVED BETWEEN
JULY 1, 2022 AND DECEMBER 31, 2023.
THESE DONATIONS, ALONG WITH MANY
OTHER MUCH APPRECIATED GIFTS BELOW
\$100, ENABLE US TO BETTER SERVE PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES IN MARYLAND.

INDEPENDENCE VISIONARIES (\$25,000+)

Mr. & Mrs. Russ C. Causey

Mrs. Kay K. Hartleb

Montgomery County Department
of Transportation

One Donor Who Wishes to

Remain Anonymous

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(\$15,000 - \$24,999)**

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Mr. Daniel Standish
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2023

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 Ms. Diane Willoughby
 Ms. Vesta Zembower

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 Unit 121 Auxiliary
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 Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Carper
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*Two Donors Who Wish to
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 Ms. Judith E. Cox
 Ms. Olayemi Fatungase
 Dr. & Mrs. James Frank
 Mr. Fred Grosskurth
 Dr. Dorothy Adamson Holley
 Mr. Timothy O'Donnell
 Mr. Kyle Pollock
 Mr. Paul Segraves
 Mr. Randy Smith
 Ms. Mimi Wang
*One Donor Who Wishes to
 Remain Anonymous*

FRIENDS CIRCLE (\$100 - \$249)

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 Amazon Smile Program
 American Legion Auxiliary #39
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 Ms. Lisa Badie
 Ms. Monique Berton
 Ms. Bodian

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 Ms. Annette Davis
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 Ms. Lisa Eckard
 Ms. Kim Fennell
 Mr. & Mrs. Arnold Fruman
 Ms. Elizabeth Gartland
 Gladhill Plumbing & Heating, Inc.
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 Ms. Agnes M. Keller
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 Ms. Amanda M. Kell
 Estate of Joyce Leviton
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 Ms. Renee McCullough
 Mr. Paul McGee
 Ms. Vickie McGilton
 Ellen & Glenn Milles
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert J. Muir
 Ms. Audrey R. Neely
 Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Pariser
 Ms. Darlene Peterson
 Ron & Cathy Polkowski
 Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Regan
 Ms. Carol Schaffner
 Ms. Bobbi Snyder



Mrs. Laura Strauch
 Mr. Robert E. Suggs
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 Ms. Lois Witte
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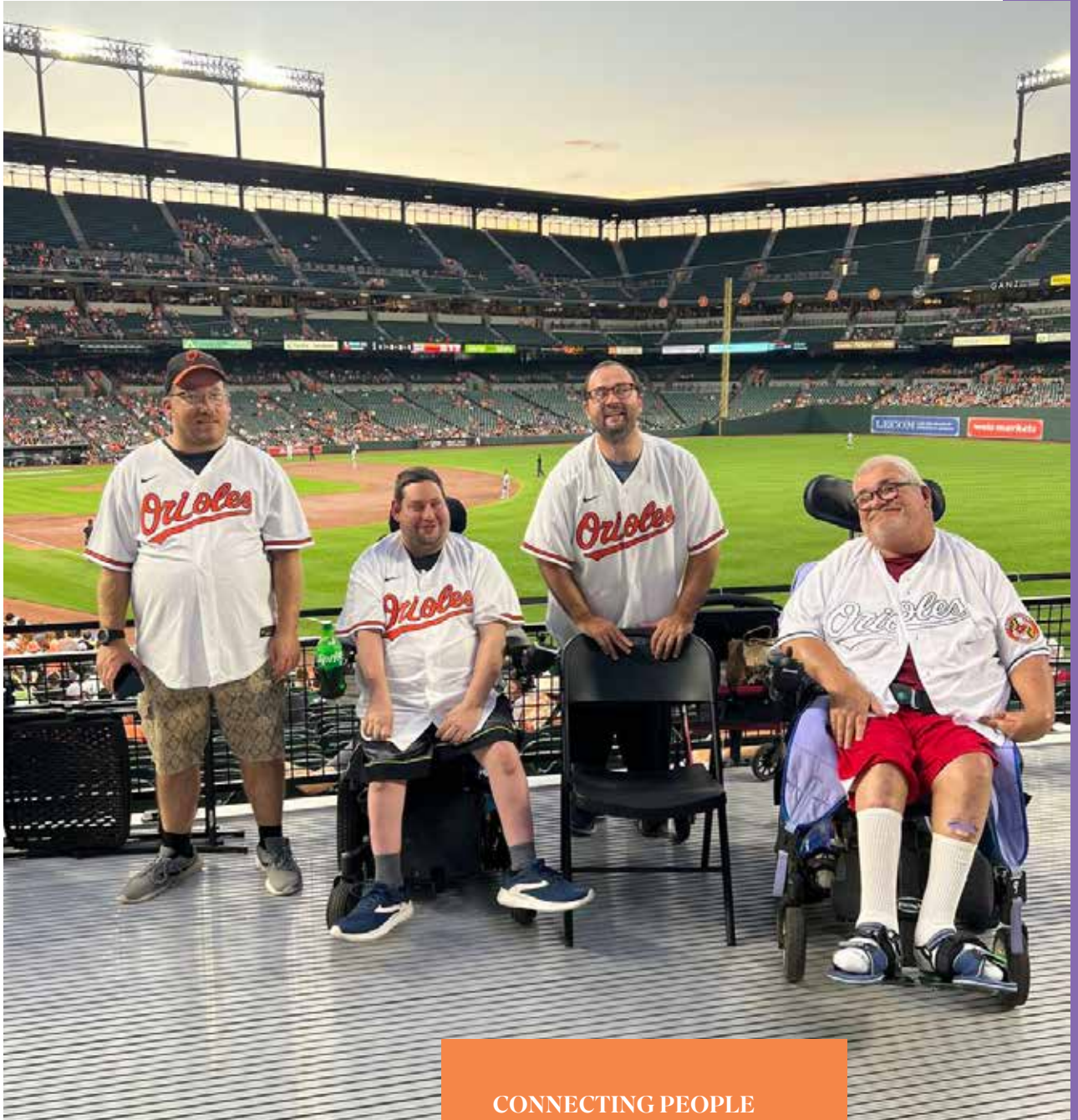
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CONNECTING PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES
TO LIFE'S POSSIBILITIES.

2023

Annual Report



“I WILL BE CELEBRATING 29 YEARS WITH UNIFIED THIS SPRING. I REALLY ENJOY WORKING WITH THE INDIVIDUALS IN THE PROGRAM AS WELL AS THE STAFF.”

— Janice Hadel, Day Program Director, Frederick

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