A single stone can be strong.

But place another beside it,

and it becomes a pathway.

A way to traverse challenges,

form friendships

and celebrate achievements.
Pathways to Independence for People with Disabilities
It is impossible to be intimately involved in the life of Stepping Stones and not be changed by the experience, the people, the ideas and the passion of this incredible organization.

We have a tradition here of taking on the tough jobs, meeting the needs other organizations can’t quite meet, and filling service gaps for families dealing with daunting physical, intellectual and behavioral challenges. That tradition dates to 1963, when a handful of volunteers created Greater Cincinnati’s first summer camp for children with disabilities. Today, Stepping Stones’ year-round, seasonal and overnight programs are tackling growing challenges including severe autism and behavioral needs.

As board president, my goal has been to see our programs expand and strengthen to meet today’s challenges. That has happened, and it happened in the midst of some of the toughest economic times in recent history. I have always been amazed by the creativity and determination of the Stepping Stones team. From staff to managers to board members to volunteers, this team has never lost sight of why we are here—to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

I leave office knowing we will be building an even stronger future for our participants after two years of solid program growth.

• Our Step Up autism education program opened its new education building, expanding the program to serve 12 school districts.
• We have expanded and strengthened our staff and volunteer training programs.
• In 2011 our summer day camp served a record number of close to 400 children and launched a teen camp within the larger summer camp.
• Our Adult Services program has been invigorated with vibrant on-site activity choices and daily community explorations that are drawing new participants.
• In 2011 we won the coveted Impact 100 grant—$112,000 to launch a unique overnight sensory respite program for children with extreme behaviors.
• We completed a new branding effort that is discussed later in this report.

I leave office grateful for the opportunity to be part of Stepping Stones’ future, and confident that the passion that started Stepping Stones is still alive today, building strong pathways to the future.

That community partnership and support has been critical and personal. If you spell “community,” you’ll find “U” in the center. As a supporter of Stepping Stones, you are the center of our community, our neighborhood and our success.

It is with your help that individuals with severe autism are accomplishing educational goals in our expanded educational space. It is with your help that our Adult Services program is building confidence, independence and personal fulfillment while widening individual experience in the community. It is with your help that our Early Childhood Education program is embracing technology as a tool for improving communication and building school readiness.

It is with your help that we will continue to build pathways to the future.
The 7th annual Bloom event was held at the home of Neil and Susie Bortz on September 10, 2011. The outdoor party, with over 400 guests, was a huge success. It raised more than $155,000, with Kit Duval chairing the event. The evening honored longtime friend, supporter and sponsor Fred Fischer.

Presenting:
Fred and Gail Fischer
Sugar Creek Packing Company
Kay and Kroger Pettengill

Patrons:
Susie and Neil Bortz
Cardinal Solutions
First Financial Bank
Landor Associates
Arnold Printing

Supporters:
Bartlett & Co.
Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Birckhead
Buechner Haffer Meyers & Koenig
CORT
Decosimo & Company
Petermann
Thompson Hine
Von Lehman & Company
Wells Fargo Bank, N.A

Friends:
American Financial Group
Blue Chip Venture Company
Castellini Foundation
Convergys
Duke Energy
Fifth Third Bank
Graydon Head
Huntington Bank
Kaplan, Litwin, Kaplan & Associates
The Employees of Meridian Bioscience
Moake Park Group
PNC Financial Services Group
PEDCO E&A Services, Inc.
RSA Associates
Jim and Anne Shanahan
Xerox Corporation

Sweethearts:
Graydon Head
The Kroger Company
Landor Associates
PNC Bank

Cupids:
Convalescent Hospital for Children
Decosimo Certified Public Accountants
Gail and Fred Fischer
Huntington Bank
Jostin Construction Inc.
RG McGraw Insurance Agency
Anne and Jim Shanahan
Squire, Sanders & Dempsey
Stepping Stones Executive Team

Angels:
Blue Chip Venture Company
CORT
Dualite Sales and Service
Ernst & Young LLP

Arrows:
Enquirer Media
Linda and Harry Fath
Vallie and Rodney Geier
Denise and Doug Howe
Thompson Hine
Darla and Jim Wainscott
D’Elegante, Inc.
John A. Ruthven
Sims-Lohman Fine Kitchens and Granite

Team Stepping Stones had 20 runners and walkers take part in the full- or half-marathons during the Cincinnati Flying Pig Marathon on May 1, 2011. Together, they raised $20,000 in support of agency programs. As always, Mike and Linda LeVally were there to welcome participants at the team’s victory tent following the marathon. And, on Saturday of marathon weekend, the agency had 45 participants, staff and volunteers take part in the Hope & Possibilities 5K, a special division of the 5K aimed at celebrating individuals with disabilities and those that love them. Everyone crossed the finish line with smiles and was greeted by hugs and cheers.

The 4th annual Open Your Heart for Stepping Stones event was held on February 7, 2012 at the Eddie Merlot Restaurant. The night was filled with many open hearts raising more than $40,000 for Stepping Stones. The event included dinner, raffle drawings and an evening filled with great support by a sold-out, record crowd of 292 guests.
Statement of Financial Position

2011 Revenue

A Gifts 122,772 4%
B Foundations 291,750 10%
C United Way 262,625 9%
D Fees from Gov’t Agencies 1,807,356 59%
E Service Fees 229,238 7%
F Events 213,541 7%
G Investment Income 44,692 1%
H Rentals/Other 90,563 3%
Total 3,052,536

2011 Expenses

I Personnel 2,293,793 74%
J Professional Fees 205,576 7%
K Supplies 210,950 7%
L Occupancy Costs 188,255 6%
M Equipment 57,196 2%
N Transportation Costs 50,613 1.5%
O Insurance 38,425 1%
Total 3,094,822
Net Result 32,286

Breakdown of 2011 Expenses by Program

Q Functional 790,552 26%
R General/Admin 602,325 19%
S Summer Camp 578,161 19%
T Adult Programs 413,046 13%
U Fundraising 213,173 7%
V Step Up Program 228,155 7%
W Respite and Adventure Trips 147,312 5%
X Early Intervention Services 122,098 4%
Total 3,094,822
Christine Touvelle has been interacting with peers with disabilities since the 4th grade, when she met Janie Miller and found a friend.

Janie has a disability. She and Christine met when they shared a table and a class at Sycamore Schools.

“We connected. We bonded,” said Christine, 18, who is in her fourth year as a Stepping Stones volunteer and her second year as a summer camp staff member.

“I’ve never been the typical teenager always trying to fit in. It’s always been ‘How can I help?’”

She has been in the school’s Partners Club of students with and without special needs since 6th grade. She started volunteering at Stepping Stones’ camp and Saturday Kids Club when she was a freshman.

“One thing she’s positive about is her career path. “There are times at summer camp when I’m watching everyone running around being happy—just being themselves. You know nothing else is important. You have people who love you and you love what you do. That’s what life is all about: doing what you love with people you love. That’s what I hope to do.”

She plans to major in social work at Ohio State. “I’d like to work with families who have a child or relative just diagnosed with a disability. I’d like to bring awareness to the family [for whom] it may seem like the end of the world, but it’s not.”

Her friendship with people with special needs has enriched her life and heightened her understanding of what is important. “I know what my priorities are,” she said. “When I’m with my peers who have special needs, they don’t want me to be something I’m not. They’re not fake.”

Her experience at Stepping Stones, as a volunteer and as a summer staff member, has honed her leadership skills and confirmed her career choice.

“I’ve learned to work with all types of personalities, and I’ve learned anything can happen. Always expect the unexpected. It’s made me more flexible—things are going to happen, you deal with it and move on and stay positive.”

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Invigorated Adult Program Builds Stronger Pathways To Greater Independence

In 2011, Stepping Stones invigorated its Adult Services program, expanding the activity schedule to build a wider experience base, strengthen independence and enhance decision-making skills.

The Adult Services program is divided into three tracks. Each day, individuals choose an area of participation: Continuing Knowledge, Community Exploration or Confident Lifestyle.

Participants in Continuing Knowledge could be learning about health, hygiene, cooking healthy meals, handling money, creative writing, art and music. Community Explorations takes them anywhere from the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, to sports events and makeovers in the mall, with a different destination every day in the Tri-State region. Our Confident Lifestyle track allows individuals to develop hobbies and interests, go to local YMCAs, swim, relax with yoga and Pilates and fine tune healthy bodies.

Our community volunteer program places adults in volunteer activities with staff supervision at sites including Cincinnati Nature Center and community gardens. Participants often combine skills, shopping for ingredients, cooking up brownies or desserts and then delivering them to homeless families through the Drop Inn Center in Cincinnati. Adults who used to be the recipient of volunteer help are now the volunteers, sharing their skills and talents.

Our program creates the framework to help individuals celebrate their abilities and move to a more independent future with confidence. When a 24-year-old man with developmental disabilities lost his father, Stepping Stones became a healing place. The young man has developed friendships and resilience and is thriving both inside and outside the program.

A longtime participant has started teaching American Sign Language to peers as part of an effort to identify abilities that can be shared. A 38-year-old woman has turned her passion for latch hook work into a hobby class where she helps peers create patterns and complete projects. Several participants have completed quilts in the new quilting class led by volunteer Gail Fischer.

Adult Services is supported by grants from the Helen Steiner Rice, Wohlgemuth Herschede, Macy’s and the Sutphin Family foundations, as well as the Clermont County Mental Health and Recovery Board, and United Way of Greater Cincinnati.
Stepping Stones’ day camps are truly stepping stones for children and youth with disabilities, providing support and helping them build the social and physical skills they need to move forward in life.

In 2011, our day camps served record numbers of campers in an expanded program that launched teen camps for older campers transitioning to adulthood, added a “Fun and Learning” activity to help keep school skills intact, and created an additional unit for children with autism and behavior challenges, meeting that growing need.

The day camps at the Given and Allyn sites served close to 400 campers, aged 5 to 22, with about 75 staff and more than 600 volunteers.

“We had the largest camp ever and it was one of the smoothest-running camp seasons,” said Amanda Kay, Coordinator of recreation and leisure programs at the Given site.

An expanded two-week staff training program included additional leadership and emergency procedure training. Campers traditionally are grouped in units of 12 to 14 campers based on age. This year each age group also was divided into units with high energy and more relaxed activity styles based on the camper’s interest and ability levels.

Stepping Stones launched teen camp, creating a special lakeside area for campers aged 19 to 22.

“They are no longer children. They’re over 18. They are beginning their transition to adulthood,” said Kay. “They don’t have to operate on the same schedule as children. The new camp unit has more independence. They have a stage. They do Karaoke. They play tabletop games and get to hang out by the lake. This is the older group, the cool group. They’re the young adults.”

Other camp additions included turning the Wommack Pavilion into a water park by rigging sprinklers in the rafters and adding wading/splashing pools and more sprinklers on the ground.

We also added new pedal boats on our lakes, thanks to a Summertime Kids grant from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation.

Camp scholarships were funded by the YOT Full Circle Foundation, Cincinnati Dreams Come True and an anonymous foundation, as well as generous donors at Bloom for Stepping Stones. One-on-one camp aides were funded by the United Way of Greater Cincinnati.
As we approach our 50th anniversary in 2013, Stepping Stones has a new brand and new image designed by Landor Associates–Cincinnati in a pro bono partnership with Stepping Stones.

“It’s a clean, modern look—professional but friendly,” said Elizabeth Heist, associate client director for Landor.

The new look spells out Stepping Stones’ name in irregularly shaped stones above a tagline, “Pathways to Independence for People with Disabilities.” The design team notes that “no two stones are alike, representing each individual’s unique qualities and journey.”

It replaces the “green path” logo and adds a full branding package that will tie together all Stepping Stones’ information streams, from brochures to campus signs.

The look may be new, but Stepping Stones hasn’t changed its mission to increase independence, improve lives and promote inclusion for children and adults with disabilities.

“We are accomplishing that mission with the same passion and vigor that has energized Stepping Stones from the beginning,” said Stepping Stones Executive Director Chris Adams.

The Stepping Stones staff met with the Landor team for more than six months to be sure that the new image reflected the heart and mission of the agency.

“Stepping Stones’ mission is not just assistive, but empowering and helping people through their journey to independence,” said Heist. “We wanted to focus on the journey towards independence.”

The earth-tone color scheme reflects Stepping Stones’ natural environment, with three tones of green for agency-wide use, and additions of orange for adult services, blue for recreation/leisure and purple for education.

Branding efforts can be a huge expense. Landor took that concern out of the equation for Stepping Stones and produced an award-winning new look. The new Stepping Stones brand won the Gold Walter Award for community/pro bono work in the regional Landor Associates award competition this spring and will be the regional entry in the Landor global awards later this year. The Landor Associates team that produced the new branding was Elizabeth Heist, Kris Linkugel, Tim McDonald, Joe Napier, Eileen Pieczonka, Adam Waugh, Richard Westendorf and Lisa Wurster.
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Stepping Stones is a 501(c)(3)
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