PATHWAYS TO CHOICE

FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

STEPPING STONES

2016

ANNUAL REPORT

CHOOSING TO EXCEL
BUILDING STRONGER FUTURES

Choices—from the executive offices to the people we serve–have defined 2016 and directed this year of growth and evaluation.

One of the most visible choices was our decision to expand to the west side of Cincinnati as we successfully integrated the small BeauVita adult day program into the Stepping Stones family of services. That met a long-planned objective to provide programming on the west side of town. The new Stepping Stones BeauVita site is serving more people with a wider range of activities and a strong, well-trained staff.

BeauVita followed the earlier merger of United Cerebral Palsy into Stepping Stones in 2014. All of that growth, including integrating staffs and program styles, prompted a series of internal choices as we re-examined policies, training, staffing and facilities. Our goal was to ensure safe, client-centered programs that have a meaningful impact on the people we serve. Our choices in 2016 have expanded staff training, revamped policies, increased staffing levels in some programs and enhanced safety and efficiency throughout the agency.

We have always strived to make every choice an ethical choice. In 2016, we were honored to receive the Better Business Bureau's coveted Torch Award for exceptional ethics in interactions with the community, staff and clients.

We also chose to listen more closely than ever before to the choices of the people we serve. In the disabilities field, that is called "Supported Decision-Making." People with disabilities should have the right to make their own decisions and have the information, experiences and support to make those decisions with assurance and confidence.

Programming changes have ranged from involving participants in the planning stages of activities to a heightened focus on individual rights, supported decision-making and employment initiatives. The agency provides clients with opportunities to find their voices, pursue personal interests and explore employment options. We are seeing higher participation levels and a stronger sense of empowerment and independence.

As an agency, our choices set our direction and define our values.

Our supporters do the same with their choices to attend special events, provide foundation support, contribute to the various appeals and volunteer to spend time with participants or wield a paintbrush or a rake at one of our program sites. These choices all lead to success for the people Stepping Stones serves.

Thank you for choosing to be part of Stepping Stones. Together we will continue to create pathways to independence for others.

"The strongest principle of growth lies in the human choice...." –George Eliot

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LIGHTING THE PATH
THE TORCH AWARD

In the fall of 2016, Stepping Stones was honored as one of four winners in the 16th Annual Better Business Bureau Torch Awards for Marketplace Ethics. The award ceremony was held in downtown Cincinnati. The Torch Award recognizes ethical practices in dealing with clients, staff and the community and is awarded to for-profit businesses and nonprofit charitable organizations that make it through a rigorous judging process.

Winning the award validated the efforts of so many who strive to ensure that Stepping Stones adheres to ambitious ethical practices in program delivery and stewardship of our resources.

LIVING LARGER
OUR BEAUVITA ADDITION

The agency celebrated the start of a new year on January 1, 2016, with the addition of BeauVita West to the growing Stepping Stones family. The merger of this adult day program in Monfort Heights has allowed Stepping Stones to expand its services to a new geographical area, fulfilling a strategic long-term objective of providing services to individuals throughout Cincinnati.

The ability to offer services via a West Side presence offers the agency an opportunity to continue its mission of providing important connections for adults with disabilities to engage with their communities while pursuing effective pathways to achieve fulfilled lives.

The BeauVita location provides a strong community focus with programs that include community excursions, recreational activities and contributions to their neighborhoods through volunteering at other nonprofit organizations. These program objectives align well with the overall mission of Stepping Stones Adult Services.

"The future model for delivering programming for individuals with disabilities will be neighborhood based. Funders want individuals to remain in their communities for services and employment opportunities." —*Stepping Stones Program Team*

"Volunteering and then working at Stepping Stones and Camp Allyn was probably the most rewarding experience of my teenage years. I met so many wonderful lifelong friends, and my career path was set from these early years. I can't imagine who I would be if I didn't have all of those "Stones" experiences. My life was impacted immeasurably." —*Jamie Steele (1978–1984), Executive Director of Ohio Valley Residential Services*

OUR VOLUNTEERS

LIFTING US UP

Sometimes in mentoring others, the lessons we learn about ourselves become the real process of discovery. What began as a routine course requirement last fall has transformed a relationship and forged an unbreakable bond between two remarkable people. Little did Shaunna, a University of Cincinnati student, know that she would fall in love with those she helped at the Stepping Stones adult program in Norwood. Since completing her required service hours, Shaunna has continued to devote 2–3 days per week to work with Robert B., a participant who has cerebral palsy, making verbal communication very challenging. Shaunna has given her personal time and energy to assist Robert in pursuing his goals of learning to send emails, take photos, write stories and prepare interviews for the movie he's creating. This spring, Robert plans to deliver a voice-activated speech using the gift of adaptive technology to a college class of future educators at U.C., where he will share challenges and opportunities in the world of disabilities. This gift of technology was provided by the Dinerman Fund.

Shaunna says, "What I admire most in Robert is his determination to achieve his goals and he has a clear idea of what he wants to accomplish. His great sense of humor, his intelligence and his friendly attitude make it so easy to support him in his objectives!"

GIVING AND RECEIVING

The Barnes clan's connection to Stepping Stones has become a family affair these days. Triplets Rachel, Hannah and Sarah are currently freshmen at Miami Valley Christian Academy and have volunteered at Camp Allyn day camp for the past two summers. They can't wait for the 2017 season to start! The sisters' desire to give back to others is deeply tied to their family's experience with Camp Allyn, where one brother serves on the summer staff and is a weekend respite counselor and another brother participates in programs. The girls say they enjoy being a part of something that brings joy to the campers and state that "the most important thing we've learned is to understand different abilities and how to adjust. We enjoy seeing campers try new things and be successful at them." Added Sarah, "My time as a volunteer at Camp Allyn has made me even more confident that I would like to teach special education."

"I began volunteering in the summer of 2014, and what a journey it has been. I started working at camp in 2015 and have been ever since. Every day I am working, I wake up and get excited to go to the place I love and do the thing that I love. Working with people is my passion and Stepping Stones has been such an amazing experience for me. Not only was I able to provide these kids and teens with an awesome summer, but they were able to provide me with a new perspective of the world; one that involves love and friendship." —*Cole Stautberg, Stepping Stones summer camp staff and Saturday Clubs staff*

GROWTH FOR ALL AGES
ADULT PROGRAMS

"This is a wonderful collaborative. We could never fund a program like this for our participants. CTRH Executive Director Rob Seideman and the Luther Foundation made it possible. I firmly believe in horseback riding as therapy, and the confidence that comes from it is incredible."
—Sam Allen, Director of Programs and Operations

A casual conversation in the fall of 2015 between two agency directors regarding shared visions has evolved into an amazing partnership at Cincinnati Therapeutic Riding & Horsemanship.

Thanks to the Luther Charitable Trust, a Fifth Third Bank Trustee, adult participants at Stepping Stones are embracing important life skills through the benefits of equine therapy.

Words alone cannot capture the joy and sense of accomplishment these individuals feel in being able to touch, groom and ride a therapeutic pony at CTRH. The smiles and pride in their achievements say it all.

ERICK'S STORY

Paving the way to success for Erick this school year has involved building on positive learning experiences. Initially, Erick's lack of functional communication was extremely frustrating to him and often became the main cause of his disruptive behaviors. The Step-Up Autism Alternative Education staff recognize that each student communicates in his or her own way, and the ability to create different methods to identify the best communication mode makes this program unique.

Erick's one-on-one aide, Sarah, worked hard with him to build the trust that has allowed him to move from gestures and physical acts to being able to vocalize his thoughts and needs. Today, Erick is not afraid to speak up or share his opinions with Sarah as well as other students and staff in the classroom. This new confidence has enabled Erick to seek out social opportunities within our Saturday Clubs as well as move away from his solitary activities, such as games on his iPad. Together, Erick and Step-Up are moving toward a new and exciting future!

"Students with autism possess unique skills and can reach their goals and contribute to their communities when they receive the right support. The Step-Up program helps students who struggle in a more traditional school achieve their potential through alternative learning strategies."
—Maureen Harmon, Step-Up Program Manager

MEET DEZ & SPENCER
KIDS CLUB

"When I began as a summer camp volunteer five years ago, I had no idea what to expect from the organization, or that my life would be changed as a result of my experience. I have had the opportunity to work with and get to know so many amazing participants, and it is a privilege to see how everyone grows older and grows in their independence. My fellow staff members are practically family, and I could not ask for a better place to work." —*Maia Forman, Summer Camp Staff and Saturday Kids Club counselor*

For best friends Dez and Spencer, being together means having a place to belong, and Saturday Kids Club has provided a wonderful community where they can connect and share. In his first months at Kids Club, Dez would participate in activities but rarely spoke to his peers or program staff. Instead, his big brown eyes and solemn gaze would take in everything around him as though he was searching for something that was invisible to others.

All that changed with the arrival of Spencer, whose bubbly personality and constant chatter made for instant friendship.

Today, their shared energy is contagious. While they may be inseparable, they can often be found in a group, spreading their happy vibes to everyone around them.

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is really the work of childhood." —*Fred Rogers, Early Childhood Educator, aka Mr. Rogers*

MEET ADAM
CAMP ALLYN

Summer 2016 was Adam's first season at Stepping Stones Camp Allyn. This was a huge step for Adam and his father, who was anxious about Adam's ability to successfully adapt and interact with others.

Adam was paired with Summer Camp staff member Josh, and they quickly formed a strong bond. Adam is very intelligent and loved to spend his days doing math problems and writing lists. Paper and pen were treasured possessions, and Adam's finished products were immaculately organized. However, Adam's need for order could also cause him to become extremely upset if he made a mistake or anyone touched the clipboard and papers he carried with him.

A skill that Josh and Adam worked on daily was how to effectively socialize and share with others. Josh introduced a token system where Adam could earn paper, pen and writing time if he attended group activities or shared with others.

The plan was a huge success! Adam responded well to the reward system, learning to participate in group events and sharing his wonderful ideas for a future with others.

"I volunteered at Stepping Stones as a teenager in the '70s and grew up to have a son with Down syndrome. I cannot imagine our lives without Stepping Stones... well, I can, but when I do I get unbelievably sad. From Summer Day Camp since he turned 6, to Saturday Kids Club and now Young Adults Club, to Camp Allyn Respite Weekends and the Adult Day Program in Norwood, Stepping Stones has improved his life immeasurably." —*Ellaine Herschede*

2016 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

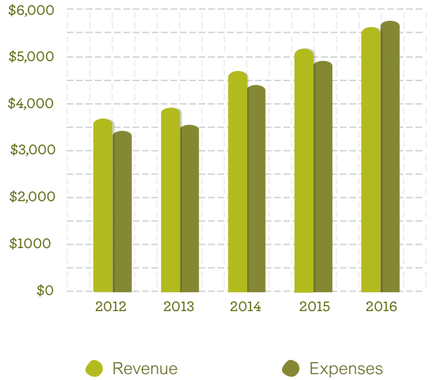
For this five-year period the agency has produced an aggregate surplus of approximately one million dollars. In addition, the agency absorbed two new entities into its corporate structure and operating platform. Operational investment has been required to support this growth, and positions the agency to expand service options.

BALANCE SHEET

Net Assets | $9,098

FIVE-YEAR TREND OF REVENUE & EXPENSES

2012–2016



(Unaudited) figures are in thousands.

TOTAL REVENUE $5,547

PUBLIC SUPPORT

23.9% | $1,329

Individuals, institutional and corporate donations, grants and sponsorships

$436 | 2016
$560 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Grants and gifts from foundations

$447 | 2016
$417 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Funds raised from special events

$269 | 2016
$256 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Contributions from individuals

$177 | 2016
$177 | Rolling 3-year avg.
United Way

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

76.1% | $4,218

Revenues generated from delivery of services and other sources

$3,689 | 2016
$3,111 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Contract fees from schools and government agencies

$297 | 2016
$287 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Non-contract fees from individuals

$92 | 2016
$164 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Other income

$71 | 2016
$68 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Investment income

$69 | 2016
$80 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Rental for corporate, school and community events

TOTAL EXPENSES $5,735

Most of our expenditures by category (78%) are for human resources.

$4,529 | 2016
$3,931 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Human resources

$515 | 2016
$492 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Overhead (includes maintenance, building expenses, etc.)

$412 | 2016
$348 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Program supplies

$279 | 2016
$257 | Rolling 3-year avg.
Depreciation

ASCRIBABLE ATTRIBUTES

Unpredictable revenue sources were soft to budget impacting aggregate forecasts and results:

The cyclical nature of foundation awards impacted 2016 grants and gifts received by the agency.

Over supply of Gas & Oil in the marketplace resulted in a reduction of the US production for these commodities, causing a decrease in royalties from deposits owned by the agency.

Expansion of expense categories to address rapid growth in program offerings impacted absolute dollars while maintaining parity with percentage allocations.

Additional human resource expenditures were required to absorb the growth in the program census from the expansion of services and locations.

Other operational expenditures grew in proportion to clients served, investment in facilities and operating drivers of expense.

SPECIAL EVENTS
2016 HIGHLIGHTS

OPEN YOUR HEART

The 8th Annual Open Your Heart dinner was held on February 2, 2016, at Eddie Merlot's restaurant, netting more than $70,000 for Stepping Stones. Mary McGraw chaired the event with committee members Tricia Knowles-Brown, Deb Caley, Beth Carroll, Kathy Handorf, Angela Smethwick and Patti Zesch.

THIRD-PARTY EVENTS

In 2016, Stepping Stones launched a third-party fundraising initiative to bring new donors to the agency. These events are created when a business, organization, community group, school or individual hosts an activity where Stepping Stones is designated as the beneficiary. Thanks to generous donors such as Pizza Hut and Operation Sunshine, last year's third-party events helped raise $25,000 for the agency.

GOLF CLASSIC

Last summer, 170 golfers participated in the 15th Annual Stepping Stones Golf Classic, presented by Niagra. The event was held at O'Bannon Creek Golf Club on Monday, June 13, 2016. Once again, Stepping Stones partnered with Hyundai to provide two winners with all-expense paid trips to the Hyundai Invitational in Las Vegas. The event netted more than $80,000, thanks to generous donors and golfers and an outstanding volunteer committee.

2017 date: June 12, 2017, at O'Bannon Creek Golf Club, Loveland

BLOOM

The 12th Annual Bloom for Stepping Stones presented by Huntington Bank was held at the Greenacres Art Center on October 1, 2016. The event included more than 80 sponsors and more than 400 guests, raising more than $275,000 to benefit agency programming. Bloom featured food from 24 restaurants and caterers. Special thanks to event co-chairs Kevin and Michelle Jones, as well as honorary chairs Beth and Doug Brendamour.

2017 date: September 9, 2017, at Greenacres Art Center, Indian Hill

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS AND SPECIAL EVENTS SPONSORS

2016 GIFTS AND SPONSORSHIPS OF $1,000 OR MORE

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45/46 Fine Men's Apparel
84.51

A

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Patti & Rob Zesch

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