



AACORN

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



**EXPANDING CHOICES.
BUILDING COMMUNITY.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT



Eric Birko was hired in November, 2020

AACORN has been no stranger to change and in 2022 we had a major one to be certain. Dr. Liz Farner, one of our founders and visionaries that brought us to where we are this very day – retired from her position as Program Director. We are so grateful that she remains involved, participating now as the Vice President of our Board of Directors, Liz and her contributions were memorialized in 2022 through the naming of our activities building. The Dr. Liz Farner Activities Building is a great place where we, as a program, gather daily and serves as our central hub. AACORN continues to grow in our community and welcomed new community partners out for volunteer days in 2022. Pfizer and Stryker both sent volunteer groups that helped us work on some big projects (such as updating our goat pasture fencing) as well as getting a personal introduction to the farm and its impact on those we serve.

As we continue moving forward, we invite you to partner with us in support of our mission. Donations of time, talent, and treasure will all help us to continue to move forward AACORN's mission of creating meaningful opportunities and choice to those participants we serve. Additionally, we can encourage the greater community to become part of this inclusive and welcoming environment. Everyone can benefit from this AACORN!

Eric Birko
Executive Director

CHECK OUT THE SKILL-BUILDING PROGRAM

AACORN is a program for adults with intellectual and developmental differences whose participants are all over 18 years old. Although Michigan provides special educational programming to age 26, once students age out of school there are very few program options and they are frequently left with nothing of meaning or purpose to fill their days. AACORN exists to provide that meaning and purpose as well as valuable social connections. If you are interested, follow these steps:

- 1) Contact us by phone at 269-348-0985 or through our web site at aacorncommunity.org
- 2) Set up a tour and interview at the farm to see if the program is going to be a fit
- 3) Following the farm visit, if there is still interest, the new potential participant (or family) completes the application and scholarship forms
- 4) Applications are reviewed and the Program Director contacts parents/guardians to complete the scholarship process and add the new participant to the schedule

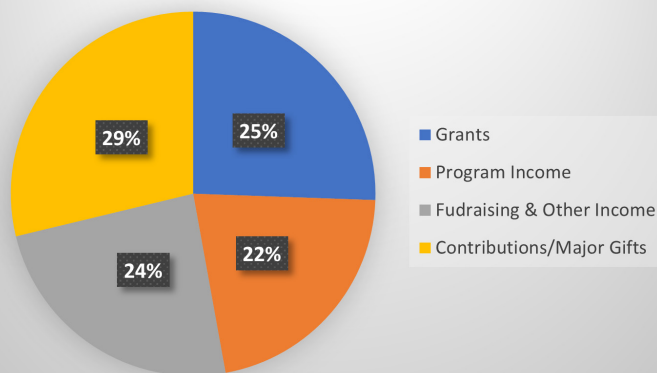
FEES: We charge a fee for each session, but most participants do not pay full fees. Lack of ability to pay should not be the reason to stay away; we work with families to arrive at fees that fit their budget.

PROGRAM SESSIONS: 9-11:30 and 12:30-3. Some participants stay all day and bring a sack lunch.

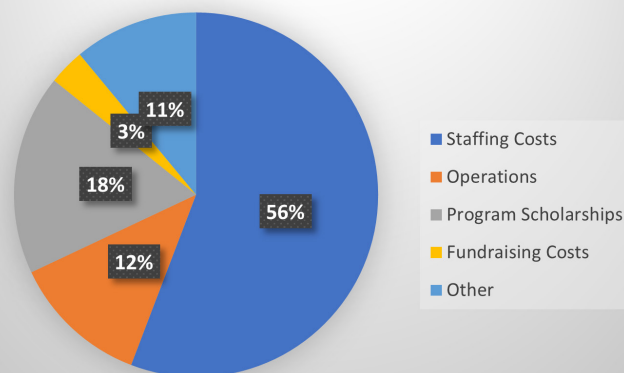
TRANSPORTATION: As AACORN is in Kalamazoo County, many of our participants use the Metro County Connect to attend. We have a scholarship in place to pay for transportation and might soon provide a pick up and drop off service ourselves. We currently have a short waiting list, but are always interested in new participants, including those from surrounding counties.

NOTE: At this point it is difficult to accommodate participants with significant physical disabilities, but we are moving towards greater accessibility.

Revenue: \$410,829



Expenses: \$384,361



AACORN Board of Directors

Cindy Semark, President
Liz Farner, Vice President
John Best, Secretary
Hilary Dolbee, Treasurer
Michelle Bosch
Francis Cervencic
Mark Varney

AACORN Staff

Eric Birko, Executive Director
Melissa Alexander, Program Director
Crystal Van Pelt, Farm Manager
Leana Best, Program Staff
Sarah Randall, Program Staff
Emily Hickman, Program Staff

ACCORN LOVES OUR INTERNS

Every day, AACORN changes lives through the work we do. In this moment, we'd like to shine a light on one group of individuals that have been and continue to be a valued part of AACORN. For quite some time now, AACORN has hosted summer interns from Kalamazoo College. These talented folks come to AACORN and support our participants and staff while also working towards achieving their own education goals with our support. Each has brought their own unique talents and experiences to help create meaningful interactions and opportunities for those we serve – and this benefits our interns as well. Some of our interns have even transitioned to AACORN staff! Our internship opportunities have continued to expand, from our interns that come through Kalamazoo College in a unique paid experience as part of their Community Building incentive program to interns from WMU's Social Work program in both the fall and spring semesters. This wonderful infusion of fresh eyes and new ideas that each student brings to AACORN helps us to continue to expand our program offerings and new relationship opportunities creatively and thoughtfully. Thank you to all our interns that have blessed us with your presence. If you are interested in pursuing an internship with AACORN, give us a call and we would be happy to discuss the opportunities that might exist or can be created.



FEATURED PARTICIPANTS: EMMET AND SARAH



Emmet Paul – Participant since 2022

This hard-working young man brings an eclectic set of skills and infectious energy every time he sets foot on AACORN grounds. Emmet works at a local Kalamazoo market and then comes to AACORN to commune with his peers. Emmet has many passions including an incredible talent in art (he recently

contributed drawings to AACORN for a fundraising project). Emmet enjoys talking about his favorite films and inspirations behind his art and other creative endeavors. To say that our friend Emmet has a creative imagination would be selling it short! When asked about his favorite thing about coming to AACORN, Emmet shared that he loves coming to the farm to see his friends. He also stated that he enjoys getting out into the community and tell people all about AACORN. We so appreciate all the energy and positivity he brings to the farm!

Sarah Kueppers – Participant since 2022

Sarah demonstrates a true caregiver's spirit. When Sarah is present at AACORN, you can often find her approaching the staff asking how she can be of help or giving one of her peers a hand and words of encouragement. She has a true love for all things arts and crafts and has proposed new project ideas often inspired by her peer interactions as well as her own interests. During down time, Sarah can be found reading as she is a voracious reader! Sarah loves to engage with her peers in conversation – engaging in a variety of topics and expressing her thoughts and opinions with respect and an interest in hearing other people's perspectives. When asked about her favorite most memorable AACORN experience, Sarah said she has great memories of baking a delicious lemon cake to celebrate her birthday and loves being able to attend and contribute to AACORN special events such as the Gala fundraiser and



the holiday party. She wants anyone who is curious about AACORN to know that it's a special place where participants can come and learn all about animals and their care and can contribute to real work activities. Even in saying that, she also emphasized that it's a fun place to come to and also enjoys getting to engage in the community on outings.

OUR 2022 DONORS

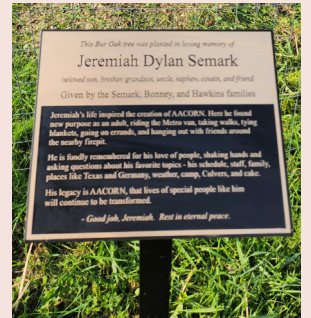
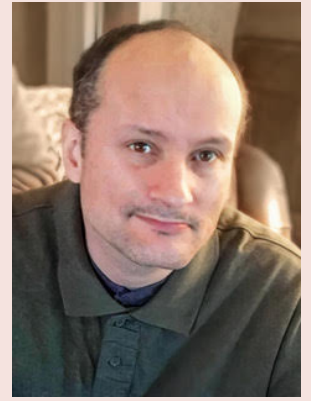
INDIVIDUALS:

Alex Connors
Amanda Bengtsen
Amy Monroe
Ann Vivian
Autumn Bell
Beth and Andy Short
Barbara Parfet
Betty Bonney
Beverly Fisher
Beverly Lemmen
Bill & Linda Steusloff
Bill and Pat McKinney
Bob and Mary Butler
Brett Apelgren
Bryan Zocher
Candace Cane
Cardwell-Trompeter
Carol and Nick Pratt
Cathy and Matt Pinto
Cathy Velten
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Charlotte Pirog
Chris Russell
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Cindy Green
Cindy Semark
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David Jeng
David Joque
David Joque and Lisa Kasmer
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David VanHorn
David Wochaski
Davis & Mary Hoffnagle
Debby Mesch Burton
DeeAnn Galbreath
Dhera and Davia Strauss
Diana Falahee
Diane and Robert Phillips
Diane Berger
Don and Ann Parfet
Donna and Jay Emerson
Doug and Sue Hoopingarner
Douglas & Mary Wood
Drs. Jorge and Suzanne Gonazlez
Elizabeth and Andy Short
Elizabeth Frey
Elizabeth Zentner & James Joque
Ellen Bradley
Eric Nelson
Francis Cirvencic
Gail Bosch
Gary and Diane Baumbach
Gary and Sue Carpenter
Grace Tiffany
Greg and Allison Connors
Greg McLogan
Gregory Ketchum
Hillary Dolbee
James and Jo Borowski
Jana Spencer
Jane E Ziemer
Jane Ziemer
Jay Clark
Jennifer Lewis
Jerial and Carol Jean Beard
Joan Lusk
Joanne Dodick
Jodi Kurtze
John and Mary Whyte
John and Pamela Cameron
Joy and David Best
Judy Timan
Julie Heath
Karen and Stu Eddy
Karen Brown
Karen Trout

Karla McCormick
Kathleen Carr
Kelli Andrews
Kelly Davis
Kelly Joque
Kim Peters
Kristi Blythe
Kyle Klumpp
Larry and Mary Collette
Larry McCullin
Laura Probyn
Leigh Ann Sayen
Lenore Pott
Liz Farner and Rick Bosch
Lori Anderson
Louise Wright and Curt Leibbrand
Marjorie "Mike" Brinkman
Mark and DeeAnn McCormick
Mark and Jill Reid
Mark and Margaret Williams
Martha Hooper
Martha Phelps
Martin Johnson/Jean Joque
Mary Ann Birch
Mary Ann Carroll
Mary Auber
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Michael and Heidi Horn
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Nancy Demink and family
Nancy Douglas
Louise Wright and Curt Leibbrand
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Richard Bosch
Roann Bonney
Robert and Mel Van Peenan
Robert Butler
Dr. Robert and Mary Jo Poel
Robin Wormser
Robyn and Richard Pekala
Ron Sergeant and Teri Giannetti
Ross and Jodi Tsapyak
Sandra Ste. George
Sandra VanHoe
Sara Wick
Sarah Brown
Sarah and Ian Brown
Scott and Gail Bosch
Sharon Yantis
Sheldon Cohen
Sherry Stephens
Sheryl Swodzinski
Starla Scott
Steve Bosch
Steve Walsh
Susan Wohl
Ted and Sonya Scarff
Thomas Rupp
Thomas and Mary Ellen Wanty
Tracy Newell

SHAKE MY HAND? SHAKE MY HAND.

In the spring of 2022, the AACORN family lost our friend Jeremiah. An inspiration prompting the creation of our beloved program, Jeremiah was a fixture from the very beginning. Jeremiah never remained a stranger for long, greeting everyone he met with a grin and a spirit of curiosity not easily extinguished. He would often greet you with the words used to in the above title – both hopeful and confident – one couldn't help but shake his hand. Jeremiah was a source of guidance in many ways, helping shape the program and what the chosen focuses should be. Jeremiah was so many things to so many people. A loving son and sibling, a curious seeker of information (and snacks), and a lover of the farm – to name just a few. For all of us whom have been around AACORN for a while, we miss him every day but always feel his presence.



Tresa Kruis
Wendy Van Peenan and Rod Malcom
William & Lorraine Root
William Magee

VanderSalm's Flower Shop and Garden Center
V & V Quality Meats
Victorian Bakery
Wayne Tech
X-Golf
Zhang Financial
Zoetis

ORGANIZATIONS:

Ashley Beach Photography
Bartholomew Heating and Cooling
Bosch Architecture
Burdo Family Dentistry
Century Bank and Trust
Class of 1960 (sent by Virginia Kunesch)
Congregation of St. Joseph
CNB Hardwood Floors
Great Lakes Center for Autism Treatment and Research
Gull Lake View Golf Resort
Eaton Corp.
Holtapp Farms - Vickie and Jay Holtapp
Law offices of Richard Bosch
Liston Bosch Realty
Local Gutters
Inland Cat Class Sailing Assoc.
James Kruis Plumbing
JVC Enterprises
Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra
Meijer
Milham Golf Course
Perrigo
Pfzier
Primo Farms
Rentalex
River Street Flowerland
SalesPage
SMWIA Local 7
Tempo Vino Winery
Target

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Sarah Yetter/Dr. Joe Foundation
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Thomas A Todd Foundation
Tidball Family Foundation
United Way Greater St. Louis
United Way of BC and Kalamazoo Rg 709
W.S. & Lois VanDalson Foundation
Westminster Presbyterian Church