

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



AACORN



Expanding Choices. Building Community.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT



Join me in celebrating the achievements of AACORN in 2024! This year, we have continued to grow our mission of providing a supportive, inclusive, and enriching environment for adults with intellectual and developmental differences. Through the generosity of our community—volunteers, donors, and partners—we have expanded opportunities for personal growth, meaningful engagement, and community building. 2024 included successful fundraising events and help with projects from volunteer groups. In October, our vision of providing tuition-free programming to our participants became a reality. We hope you enjoy the stories included here that show our mission in action. You'll also find updates on our progress in planning to build residences on our property.

As we reflect on our progress, we also look ahead with excitement to new collaborations and expanded possibilities. Together, we are planting the seeds for a future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

With Gratitude,
Mary Pickett

RESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE

In 2024, the Residential Task Force made significant progress under the direction of Chair Larry Schimmel. Much work was done to research and formalize the planning process for the task force to follow. Accomplishments in 2024 include:

- Restructuring of the Residential Task Force with a chairperson and 7 regular members
- Drafting a 4-phase building project, with Phase One planning 4 duplex units, including private bed/bath spaces and common living areas with a 24-person capacity
- Regular consultation with Integrated Services of Kalamazoo related to Home and Community Based Services standards
- Establishing a relationship with Southwest Small Business Development Center (hosted at Western Michigan University) to assist with the development of a comprehensive business plan
- Envisioning a blended community, with neurodiverse and neurotypical adults living as neighbors
- The development of a broad strategic plan that includes benchmark goals of a pre-feasibility study, feasibility study, and capital campaign in the next 3 years



Front and back rendering of one duplex unit



THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

Strong partnerships are mutually beneficial. Though a smaller organization compared to most of our partners, AACORN offers opportunities to the associates and students of our partners that are best learned first-hand, affording them a rich immersive experience. Here is how some of our partnerships work.

Young Adult Program

(YAP) operated by Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA) is for students aged 18 to 26. Two groups of students attending YAP come to AACORN during the school year to participate in its skill-building program. This introduces them and their parents to a program they can be a part of during the summer, and attend regularly once they age out of school.

Western Michigan University School Of Social Work

AACORN has been enriched by many Interns from this department who have worked at AACORN prior to receiving their degrees. AACORN offers a valuable placement site for students who will be working with neurodiverse adults. In turn, the interns provide extra staff who enrich each day with their enthusiasm, helping hands, and new project ideas. In 2024, Intern Jessica Bernock secured a grant to purchase a new sign and other marketing materials for our events.



Jessica Bernock

Tillers International

Tillers International farm is just around the corner from AACORN. Our participants have always enjoyed visits to Tillers to commune with their animals, but in the last couple of years, there have been new developments to our partnership. The Tillers OxTrot trail run is now called "OxTrot...Goat Stroll", utilizing both properties for the enjoyment of runners and visitors, with vendors and animals at both properties. Tillers has also advertised soap making classes at AACORN, where attendees learn the process of making goat milk soap.



Western Michigan University Homer Stryker School of Medicine (WMed)

WMed residents from the Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine and Medicine Pediatrics Residency programs participate in focused rotations to expand their learning and gain experience in different areas of medicine, care, and resources for their patients. By visiting community partners like AACORN, residents learn more about how to utilize services to support patients and their families while gaining a better understanding of evidence-based practices.

Dr. Grace Wang says of her visit to AACORN: *"As a physician who cares for children and adults with developmental disabilities, I was delighted to see incredible programs like AACORN that provide the opportunity for adults to socialize, learn valuable life skills, and use those skills to benefit the community."*

Dr. Max Malloy's impressions: *"AACORN is an amazing program. Across the entire farm you will see happy animals and smiling faces. It was a pleasure to spend time touring the facility, playing games and talking to participants, and helping in jarring some of their monthly recipes. Their soap has become a household favorite."*



Grace & Jessie



Max, Ben & Noah

BUILDING REHABS

Two original structures on the AACORN property were given much needed upgrades in 2024. The roof was replaced on the iconic "big red barn," quite a feat for the roofers on this towering structure!

Nearby, the corn crib got new siding, windows in the back, and a new roof. The corn crib was never used by us for drying corn, but it provides an ideal storage shed and a parking bay for our farm tractor. Both structures are near the entrance of the farm and add greatly to the visual appeal of the property.



Prepping for new shingles



Finished new roof



New window, siding & roof

COMMUNITY OUTINGS

Almost every day of the program, an outing is made into the community. These outings are purpose-driven, like making purchases for the farm animals or for a recipe they are going to make in our kitchen. Examples of other outings include performing a community service activity, depositing rolls of coins at the bank, picking seasonal produce like apples, or simply having fun getting ice cream on a hot summer day.



Bingo at the Richland Library

FUN WITH FUNDRAISERS



AACORN has fundraisers throughout the year in order to increase our visibility and to provide multiple opportunities for people to learn about the great things going on



at AACORN. Two that have been very successful are the AACORN Golf Outing, held in June, and our annual fall "Gala" event, held in early October. The Golf Outing is held at the Gull Lake View Golf Resorts in Augusta, attracting golf lovers from all around.

The fall event has been held at different venues, but we love to host it at the farm, where visitors have a first-hand experience. Last year, at our *Harvest Home* fundraiser, Tillers provided



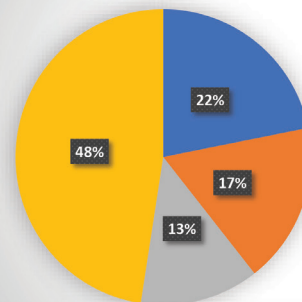
MC Keith Thompson, Tom & Michael

hayrides, kids painted pumpkins, and people enjoyed a picnic-style meal while enjoying live music. The Silent Auction offered many great gift baskets for bidding.



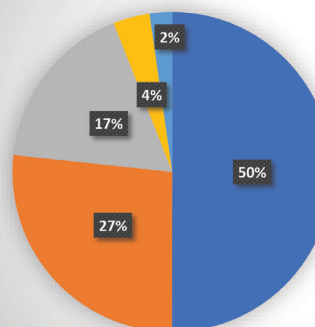
Lining up for a Tillers hayride

Revenues



- Grants
- Program Income
- Fundraising & Other Income
- Contributions/Major Gifts

Expenses



- Staffing
- Operations
- Program Scholarships
- Fundraising Costs
- Other

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS:

Allen & Pat Ade
Brad Allison
Ronald Anderson
Brett Apelgren
Joe Atkinson
Scott Avery
Dwayne & Shelly Bagley
Jerry & Lorraine Bagley
Greg Baker
Monica Barton-Cloutier
Bill & Ashley Beck
Betsy Bennett
Eileen Best
John Best
David Bibbee
Eric Birko
David Blumberg
Barbara Bonney
Roann Bonney
Jim Borowski
Gail Bosch
Steve & Michelle Bosch
Liz Farner & Rick Bosch
Zac Bosma Maria Brennan
Tina Brown
Michelle Burdick
Mary Butler
Pam & John Cameron
Sue & Gary Carpenter
Kathleen Carr
Elizabeth Clark
Jay Clark
Sheldon Cohen
Gregory Connors
Mary Connors
Daniel Crum
Nellie DeLong
Eileen Dolbee
Hilary Dolbee
Crystal & Matt Dunne
Debora Eckstrand
Don Ederly
Sue Eshuis
James Farner
Rohwer Family
Mary Frailing
Mary Beth Giacomo
Dianne Gill
Eric Goodwin
Michael Graham
Cynthia Green
Nancy Guthrie
Lynne Hall
Phyllis Hill
Ken & Leslie Hoff
Mary Hoffnagle
Mary Holtapp
Marty Hooper
Daniel & Mary Houser
Phyllis Johnson
Darrell & Jenne Joque
David Joque
James Joque
Jean Joque
Kelly Joque
Douglas Kaufman
Kim Kelemen
Donna Keller
Bill & Janice Klinesteker
Barbara Knickerbocker
Jane Kramer
Alia Lapina
Martha Lauderdale
Rob & Molly Lehman
Karen Linnell
Joan Lusk
Harry Madison
Kevin and Jamie Maloney
Dan Martin

Jayne Mayer
Linda Mayer
Prudence McCabe
Jennifer McGovern
Pat & Bill McKinney
Greg McLogan
Luke McLogan
Barbara Menlen
John Needham
Kim Nelson
Tracy Newell
Jenny Ott
Don & Ann Parfet
Giavonni Pedrolini
Robyn Pekala
Sandra Pethick
Ann Petzold
Mary Pickett
Cathy & Tom Pinto
Janene Pirbhai
Bob Poel
Mark Prairie
Laura Probyn
Sarah Randall
Laura Reeve
Jill & Mark Reid
Morgan Rhodewalt
Stacey Ring-Sanders
Andy Robins
Maria Rosine
Chris Russell
Larry Schimmel
Ken Sellers
Cindy Semark
Doug Semark
Teri Giannetti & Ron Sergeant
Toni Sergeant
Melinda Shull
Karl Sievertsen
Darlynn Snow
Susan Sobeck
Dennis & Jana Spencer
Lisa Stafford
Sandra Ste. George
Darci Stevens
Phil Stohrer
Dhera & David Strauss
Traci Suess
Terry Tessari
Mark Cardwell & Jeanne Trompeter
Karen Trout
Jody Tsapyak
Henry & Martha Upjohn
David VanHorn
Adelia VanMeter
Bo VanPeenan
Ron Malcolm & Wendy VanPeenan
Richard & Joyce Wank
Tom & Mary Ellen Wanty
Julie Wheat
JC Whitfield
Mary & John Whyte
Sandra Wiederhold
Margaret Williams
Paula and Tom Willson
Pam Yurk
Scott & Holly Zylstra

BUSINESSES, ORGANIZATIONS:

Ace Hardware, Texas Corners
B & B Forest and Tree Services
Bienek Roofing
Bogeys & Stogies
Bold
Bosch Architecture
Century Bank & Trust
Charming Garden Art
Clark Brothers Building & LLC
Climb Kalamazoo
Colors & Cocktails

OUR MISSION

The mission of AACORN is to provide life enrichment opportunities and residential options for adults with intellectual and developmental differences in a supportive inclusive community.

OUR VISION

AACORN envisions adults with intellectual and developmental differences embraced as valued members of a diversely-abled community while experiencing success through innovative approaches to learning and living.

OUR VALUES

Finding purpose	Positive relationships
Mutual respect	Community service
Lifelong learning	Environmentalism
Perseverance	Self-advocacy
Healthy living	

Congregation of St. Joseph
Costco
Detroit Tigers
Design Details
Dough Chicks
Eve Salon & Spa
Fletchers Pub, Oakwood Plaza
Friendship Animal Hospital
Graphix 2 Go
Great Lakes Center for Autism
Treatment & Research
Hardings, Galesburg
Hunan Gardens
Initial Attraction
Kubota Corporation
Liston Bosch Realty
Luminous Nails
Meijer
Michigan Arts & Music Resource
Collaborative
Millenium Restaurants
Parker Hannifin
PEDAL Bicycle
Pizza King, Galesburg
Planet Fitness
PPS&V Financial Advisors
Rentalex
Rockhound Rock Shop
Ron Jackson Agency
Rykse & Company
Sawalls
Sky Zone
SMART
SpartanNash
Sweet Cornhole
The Cheese Lady
Tillers International
Victorian Bakery
VisionPath CFO
Wedel's
Wenke Greenhouse

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Wolf Kubota
Women Who Care of Kalamazoo
County
Z&W Chinese Cuisine
Zen Dens
Zhang Financial
Zoetis

FOUNDATIONS & CHARITABLE FUNDS:

Bui Family Foundation
Burton H. and Elizabeth S. Upjohn
Charitable Trust
Dorothy U. Dalton Foundation
Dr. Joe Foundation
Gary Sisters Foundation
Harold & Grace Upjohn Foundation
Irving S Gilmore Foundation
Marvin & Rosalie Okun Foundation
Nancy Malcolmson Connable Fund
SophieStrong Memorial Fund
Sustainable Community Endowment
Fund
The D & K Bradley Fund
The Glen C & Gail G Smith Fund
The Fletcher Foundation
The Short Family Fund
The W. S. and Lois VanDalson
Foundation
Thomas A Todd Foundation

