



LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN NEW YORK

2016 Annual Report



Our Mission is to provide high-quality individualized, comprehensive, and innovative services, which support, educate, and empower all individuals with learning and/or developmental disabilities.

Our Vision is to create and provide an environment in which all individuals we serve will experience independence, respect, dignity, and full participation in the community so that they can reach their potential

CORE PROGRAM VALUES

Community Minded

The Learning Disabilities Association of WNY works to establish mutually respectful relationships between LDA and diverse communities by recognizing responding to community needs through enhanced collaborative efforts, visibility, and participation.

Person-Centered

The Learning Disabilities Association of WNY recognizes that the individuals we serve have a right to choose and pursue their life choices with encouragement, assistance, and support.

Dedicated

The Learning Disabilities Association of WNY is committed to supporting individuals we serve in their life choices, persevering that support, without judgment or expectation.

Creative/Resourceful

The Learning Disabilities Association of WNY values creativity in matching resources to needs and choices by effectively imaginatively seeking using solutions not needs and choices by effectively imaginatively seeking using solutions not readily apparent.

Diversity/Multicultural

The Learning Disabilities Association of WNY recognizes and respects the unique differences and contributions of all people, and provides equal access opportunities to the individuals we serve, and to our employees.

Executive Summary

It takes a great team to build a great organization. As we reviewed the details of this report, it's clear that the accomplishments recounted within it are the result of extraordinary collaboration by The Learning Disabilities Association of Western New York's most important assets – its employees, volunteers, and the individuals we support. At every level of our organization, each individual plays a valued part in moving the organization forward.

LDA of WNY is an organization of engaged professionals who create, pursue, perform and achieve in support of our mission and vision. In this report, you will see a snapshot of that activity and the remarkable opportunities that LDA of WNY provides to the individuals that we assist.



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Chief Operating Officer

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Programming Highlights

Through an array of vocational, residential, educational, case management, family support, and advocacy-based services, the LDA of WNY provides more than 1,200 children and adults with learning and developmental disabilities with opportunities to succeed in school, at work, in relationships, and in the community.

At the LDA of WNY, we're guided by a person-centered approach to care. This means that the services and supports provided to each individual and family we work with are specific to that person or family, designed to give them the highest quality of life, and most independence possible.

Vocational Programming

The current focus is to get people out of the workshop setting and/or "typical" jobs that people with disabilities generally get.

The Vocational Program assists individuals who need help identifying their strengths, skills, and interest through vocational counseling, career exploration, and volunteer placements.

In 2016, the LDA of WNY's job coaches helped 31 individuals obtain employment, and 98 others maintain their employment.

The **Employment Training Program** is a paid internship intended to assist individuals in obtaining employment in the community earning at least minimum wage. This program allows a business or organization to train the employee while the New York State pays the wages.

Pathway to Employment is a focused, time limited program that engages individuals in identifying career interests, provides instruction training in pre-employment skills and develops a path for achieving competitive employment through volunteer experiences and extensive job exploration.

16 individuals obtained and maintained employment for the first time.

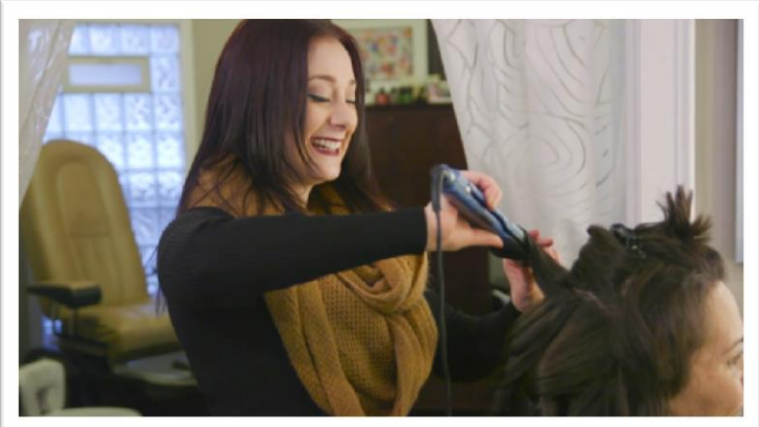
The agency's vocational programming will continue to expand with its **Community Prevocational Services**, which will assist individuals who need help identifying their strengths, skills and interests through vocational counseling, career exploration, and volunteer placements.

70% of all of the individuals in the program are employed in the community, in an integrated setting, at minimum wage or higher.



Rich McCanty was the first person to be enrolled in the LDA of WNY's Employment Training Program. In 2016, Rich was hired as a machine operator by Bison Bag. He enjoys his job, because it's close to home, and has allowed him to use his skills to excel. Through the program, Bison Bag is now paying 100% of his wages.

LDA of WNY continues to be the only provider in WNY to offer tutoring supports for individuals who have completed post-secondary education, and wish to gain NYS licensure to pursue a career in areas like cosmetology, welding, nursing, social work, and CDL driving.



It was a wonderful experience. Without it, I would never have finished Cosmetology School and gone on to get my Cosmetology license.

-Corinne Saletme, Bangs Salon

For many, obtaining a NYS licensing certificate is the first step on a path to a successful career. In 2016, the LDA provided tutoring services to 19 people for civil service exams, cosmetology, and esthetician certifications, helping them take that first step.

90% of those tutored passed their exams and earned licensure, and 60% are currently working in the field of their licensure.

The Learning Center served individuals in a combined Adult Basic Education, Pre-TASC, and TASC Prep Program, with college prep and support classes.

90% of TLC participants had at least one gain in 2016, with a total of 25 educational gains program-wide.

Community Based Services

The agency's focus on transitional services have allowed it to assist individuals in high school looking for employment, as well as with college coaching, including navigating the campus and linking to services available from the college, or even moving out of their parents' home for the first time, or from a certified setting, into a home of their own.

Using person-centered, community-based programming via a skill-based training and social support network the LDA helps provide the knowledge, skills, and resources people need to live as independently as possible, and fully participate in their community.

"In the home or for the home", these services are geared toward helping individuals maintain independence in their own home,

in a community of their choosing. Our work has increased people's independent living skills, productivity, and self-esteem.



Direct Care staff constitute the backbone of LDA's supports and services. LDA's staff play a crucial role in strengthening our communities, by supporting our most vulnerable neighbors, friends, and family members.



Staff take on critical responsibilities such as budgeting, parenting, and medical needs.

Two more people moved into the community in 2016, one from a Supported Apartment, and another from an IRA. The agency works with more than 100 people either living on their own, or learning skills to do so in the future.

With 280 activities from gardening club, potlucks, shopping trips, excursions to Canalside and Letchworth State Park, sporting events, and craft nights, the agency's adult recreation programs in Buffalo and Fredonia, I Lead, Educate, Advocate, Respect, and

Navigate, **I-LEARN**, continued to provide an opportunity to improve socialization skills, community integration, and make new friends.

Using Starlight Studio and Art Gallery as a backdrop, the **Creative Student** program assists youth in becoming active, independent members of their community, equipped with the tools they need to find inclusive opportunities, enhance their quality of life, and prepare them for their future.

From trips to Canalside and Delaware Park, to Shea's Performing Arts Center and Albright Knox Art Gallery, participants have made new friends, explored the community, and drawn inspiration for their own projects.

Residents of the agency's Intensive Residential Alternatives, IRAs, have many interests that keep them a part of their community. Several people enjoy traveling, and went to Erie, Rochester, Batavia, and Cleveland for sporting events. They also have enjoyed events throughout Buffalo, including at Shea's Performing Arts Center, Key Bank Center, and New Era Field.



We welcomed many new faces to LDA's programs, enrolling more than 60 new individuals into Community Habilitation in the last quarter of 2016, alone.

Starlight Studio and Art Gallery

Starlight Studio, the first studio of its kind in WNY, continues to pave the way as an inclusive arts space, offering a place for artists to develop and enhance their artistic, vocational, and social skills.

In 2016, Starlight continued to expand its presence in the WNY arts community with more offsite exhibits and projects. Artists had the opportunity to participate in Amanda Browder's public art project, *Spectral Locus*, commissioned by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, as well as CEPA Gallery's West Side Lots Project. With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, a full-size Woolly Mammoth sculpture, inspired by work by Chace Lobley, was fabricated, and is on display at 34 Helen Street in Buffalo.

Starlight artists and staff also filmed the documentary, *Of One Mind*, with Squeaky Wheel Media Arts Center. With grant funding from the New York State Council of the Arts, the four short docs paired Starlight artists with artists from the community to talk about their views on life and art.

Starlight Artists literally turned their art into music, when they graphically scored music with the talented experimental classical music ensemble, Wooden Cities. Wooden Cities then performed the music for a live audience.

Educational workshops *Widening the Focus: Finding Dignity and Acceptance in Difference*, allowed Starlight Artists to teach Buffalo Public School #95 students to celebrate their differences and use life experiences to create great art.

2016 also marked Starlight's first year of planning gallery art exhibitions with artist and curator, Kyle Butler. Starlight Artists were paired with artists from the community to exhibit side by side, creating elegant shows that brought new visitors to the gallery. Starlight hosted 16 exhibitions in the Main Gallery for community artists.

Artwork was purchased by, or on display at, locations throughout WNY, including the Buffalo and Erie County Downtown library, Daily Planet Coffee, Albright Knox Art Gallery, University at Buffalo, Merge Restaurant, Café 59, and Kaydara Noodle Bar. In addition, Starlight work was entered into the collections of the Oishei Foundation and the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, with works installed in the Oishei offices and Roswell Park's Scott Bieler Clinical Sciences Center.

In 2016, Starlight Studio raised \$12,313.63 through donations, artwork sales, and events. Artists earned \$3,893.30 from sales of their work.



Community Impact

LDA of WNY's outreach in the community continued to grow this year as we held and attended community fairs and events throughout Erie, Niagara, and Chautauqua counties.

LDA's staff connected with our neighbors, providing guidance on programs and services for themselves and/or their families.

The agency continued its educational advocacy throughout cities and suburbs in WNY. We've continued to focus on the urban school districts in Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Lackawanna, Tonawanda, and Lockport, via our Educational Advocate, enrolling 86 students from urban areas.

In April, the LDA hosted a Special Education Family Workshop with Parent Network, The Packard Court Community Center, Council Member Ezra P. Scott, Jr., and the Niagara Falls Youth Board, to provide parents and guardians with information on how to navigate the special education system, obtain accommodations for their children, learn their rights and responsibilities, and become better advocates for their children.



The LDA assisted more than 200 families through family support and educational advocacy services during 2016.

The agency has also continued its collaborative relationships with community groups and organizations including Partnership for Public Good, Parent Network of WNY, Center for Self Advocacy, Disability Education Alliance Network (DEAN), and Self Advocacy Associations of Western New York and New York State (SANYS).

Self-Advocacy

LDA's self-advocacy group, I-VOICE, continued to give a voice to those who had been previously denied one. Members participated in several events, including regional and State conferences, community initiatives, and other outreach activities. The group, current, and past members, were recognized in 2016 for their efforts.

*I-VOICE received Self-advocates of the Year honors at the 2016 SANYS Annual Conference.
Member Sheila Bush was named Advocate of the Year.*

Self-advocate Marie Malinowski was also awarded several awards for her work in the community: the Chris Burke Award for Excellence, the Ntosake Award, and the One Buffalo Community Award. The Chris Burke Award was presented by the Museum of DisABILITY to individuals who, through advocacy efforts, exemplify the value of contributing significant work in the disability community and make inclusion a priority.



Marie received the Ntosake Award, which literally translates to, “She who walks with lions; she who carries her own things” from VOICE Buffalo, for her work as Chairwoman of the Disability Rights Task Force. The One Buffalo Community Award, the first from Kim Pegula and Pegula Sports and Entertainment, highlights the work of exceptional members of the WNY community, those who embody the meaning of One Buffalo by making a positive difference in their everyday lives.

I do all of this because I'm a person with different abilities who was told that I couldn't, or wasn't smart enough to do the things I do. I also like to fight for the people who can't

-Marie Malinowski, Self-Advocate

Workforce Development

As an agency, the LDA of WNY demonstrated a renewed focus in developing and maintaining the professional standards needed to work in the human service field.

Coupling the Code of Ethics for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), with the NYS Core Competencies: Putting People First, Building and Maintaining Positive Relationships, Demonstrating Professionalism, Supporting Good Health, Supporting Safety, Promoting Choice of Home, and Promoting Community Integration, these values-based competencies and skills are the foundation of person-centered supports for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities. Agency staff developed several trainings to help DSPs learn these different competencies, and understand how they guide different aspects of their work.

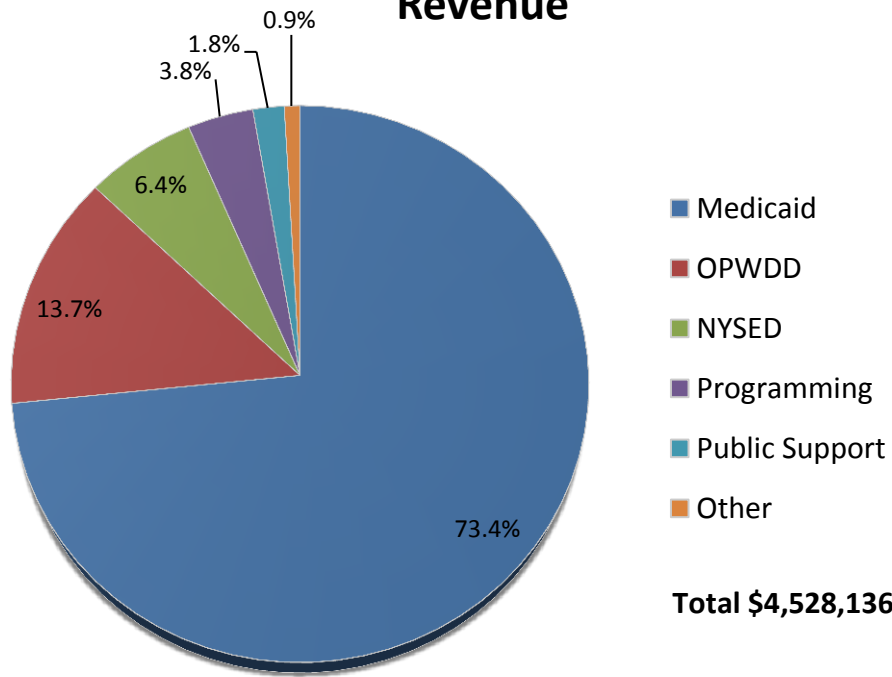
LDA provided staff with more than 10 different training topics over 186 hours, including Direct Support Professionals Core Competencies, Supervisors' Roundtable, Positive Supports and Interactions, Dual Diagnosis, Active Shooter/ Workplace Safety, Overview of Learning Disabilities, and Bugs (and what to do about them).

These trainings ensure that LDA's team of professionals continue to create, pursue, perform, and achieve, in support of our mission and vision.

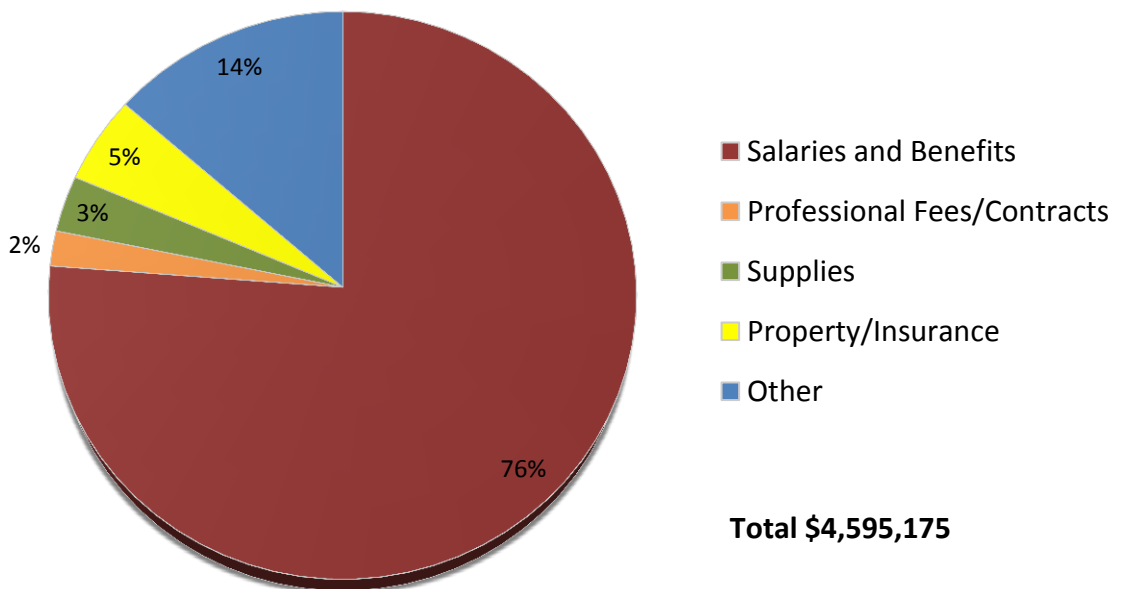


Financial

Revenue



Expenses



About Us

LDA of WNY's legacy is a grandmother's love. When Mrs. Howard's grandson experienced significant learning difficulties at school in April 1965, Rachel Howard sought help from Dr. Robert Warner from The Children's Rehabilitation Center who suggested a potential learning disability. Research was beginning to show that as many as one of every seven students might have a learning disability.

Mrs. Howard agreed to help establish a support group for parents of children with suspected learning disabilities. Within five years, this parent support group grew from its original 9 members to a WNY chapter of nearly 500.

Today, LDA of WNY serves more than 1,200 individuals and families in eight counties of Western New York annually, and remains unique in its service to the learning disabled population. The agency provides a comprehensive array of vocational, residential, educational, case management, family support, and advocacy-based services to help children and adults with learning and developmental disabilities develop the skills they need to work, live, and participate in their communities.

LDA of WNY is an affiliate of the LDA of NYS and the LDA of America, and participates in lobbying efforts for the learning disabled. The majority of the Board of Directors continues to be parents and/or individuals with learning disabilities, and remains dedicated to serving this population. The LDA of WNY has approximately 100 staff members, with offices in Kenmore and Fredonia.

For more information on specific programs and services, visit our website at www.ldaofwny.org.

Want to support the LDA of WNY?

- Sponsor dress-down days through your employer.
- Get some friends and do a Paint Nite at Starlight Studio and Art Gallery.
- Buy artwork from Starlight Studio and Art Gallery.
- Own a business or know someone who does? Have a cash donation box on the counter or by the cash register!
- Implement employee-employer donor matching programs with your HR Department.
- Promote and attend LDA of WNY's fundraisers and events.
- Shop with Amazon Smile! You shop, Amazon donates 0.5% to us!
- Designate some, or all, of your gift through the United Way.
- Have a bake sale, walk, run, golf tournament, concert, or other event, and donate the proceeds to the LDA of WNY.
- Follow us on Twitter and Facebook, share stories and posts, and interact with us!

Administrative Offices

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