



Forging the Future

**A FIRST
LOOK**

2018



The Arc.

Rockland
New York

*A family-based organization
for people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities*

Non Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
0P0

OUR MISSION

Empower the people we support to make personal choices and realize dreams by providing them with resources to participate fully in community life.

The Arc Has
heart

OUR VALUES

Honesty & Integrity

Empathy & Compassion

Accountability

Respect for Others

Teamwork



The Arc.

Rockland
New York

OUR VISION

To be the region's leader and employer of choice in supporting people with disabilities.

Letter from the CEO & Board President

Dear Friends,

This was a turbulent year.

The Arc Rockland had planned to open two new homes in 2018. One home would accommodate four adults. A second residence would become home to six men who had been living in two apartments for many years. Once the men would move from the apartments to the house, the vacated apartments would become rolling two-year transitional housing for four adults. Under the guidance of The Arc's professional staff, while living in the transitional apartments, the residents would, after 24 months, gain the skills necessary to move on to more independent living situations.

But, as the adage states, *The best laid plans...* and, the two new homes ultimately opened in early 2019, making possible the inauguration of the two *transitional apartments*. However, the domino effect of the delayed openings had a negative impact on the bottom line—which we expect to rectify in 2019.

In June of 2018, The Arc's Prime Time Upper School closed its doors. While this too created a shortfall for The Arc, the reason for the closure was a positive one. Thankfully, today, most school districts in Rockland offer programs that enable students with autism spectrum disorders to attend hometown schools along with their friends and neighbors.

The Arc Rockland has moved away from center-based services, to a series of community-based hubs in Suffern, Nyack, Congers, Orangeburg and Pearl River. Small groups of people with similar interests begin each day at one of the hubs before heading out to engage in activities throughout Rockland and surrounding areas. For some, this may mean visits to sites of educational or recreational interest, for others it might mean art or music classes, exercising at local gyms, enrolling in higher education courses or working part time in business and industry. Volunteerism is built in to most people's schedules with individuals donating their time and talents at more than 100 not-for-profit organizations in Rockland and nearby counties.

In March, 2019, The Arc Rockland was reaccredited for the designation of *Person-Centered Excellence by CQL | The Council on Quality and Leadership*. Initial accreditation was conferred in 2015.



CARMINE MARCHIONDA



JACKIE CURTISS

Reaccreditation by the internationally recognized CQL is required every four years and was issued following The Arc's year-long compilation of data across all programs and services and an intensive three-day review by representatives from CQL.

The closure of the agency's *Abilities Beyond Autism* pilot initiative was a difficult decision for The Arc. Many of the participants in this program exhibit serious cognitive and behavior challenges. As a result of a nation-wide staffing shortage in this field, The Arc Rockland could not secure the number of highly skilled direct support professionals necessary to ensure a safe and secure environment in which each individual could thrive.

Despite, and sometimes because of challenges and setbacks, The Arc perseveres with determination and commitment to the people who count on us every day. We are proud of the individuals, parents and siblings, staff members and community members who comprise the ever expanding entity known as The Arc Rockland family.

Sincerely,



Carmine G. Marchionda
Chief Executive Officer, The Arc Rockland



Jackie Curtiss
2018 Board President, The Arc Rockland



The House of the Future

The Arc is taking a pioneering role in researching, designing and developing future housing for people with disabilities.

“We want to focus on what housing should look like down the road, as the people we support age and as their needs change,” explains The Arc’s Chief Executive Officer, Carmine Marchionda. “Ideally, a home should provide a safe and welcoming environment that meets current needs and expectations, while being flexible enough so that residents can age in place. The people who live there should be able to access and make use of every room in the home, and continue to be active members of the community around them.”

To best determine what this ideal home would look like, The Arc Rockland gathered together a group of several dozen experts and interested parties including: a renowned architectural firm, a world leader in real estate services, members of The Arc residential staff, The

Arc Board of Directors, senior management, individuals who receive services from the agency and members of their families.

The team toured several of The Arc’s current residences, talked to those who live and work in these homes and spent months discussing their differing visions of the future.

“We were able to really absorb what it means to create a group home with a safe and loving environment where people can have a wonderful experience for perpetuity,” notes Ralph Walker, Senior Project Manager, RSC Architects. “Designing a home for people with disabilities creates unique challenges. It means creating a space where people are comfortable to live and work in a way that is natural to them, but may not be natural for everyone. We have to think carefully about the individual human experience. What happens when I wake up in the morning? Where do I have my meals? Where can I spend

“At the end of the day, we want to walk into that house and see people smiling and living a comfortable, barrier-free life. It will be a model that will continue to be a work in progress as people age and needs evolve.” –FRANK RECINE

time with my friends? We have to look carefully at some of the technical issues: wider corridors, bathrooms that are accessible but don't feel institutional, bedrooms that are designed more carefully and thoughtfully, kitchens where people with and without disabilities can work side by side. How do we create natural experiences like that?”

The challenges are further complicated by the fact that the individuals served by The Arc is varied. “We have people who require clinical supports due to their behavioral challenges or their medical conditions, and we have both young folks and older folks,” explains Jane Zemon, Chief Program Officer at The Arc Rockland. “What we have discovered is that everyone wants his or her own bedroom and that they want to live with people of similar ages, abilities and interests. The ideal house size seems to be a home for six individuals.”

In the past, The Arc has focused on purchasing existing homes and renovating them. But that is becoming increasingly difficult. “It is nearly impossible to find a home in Rockland with six bedrooms, at least three accessible bathrooms, a kitchen that allows for aging in place, open communal areas, and that is located near public transportation, shopping and neighborhood amenities,” says Ms. Zemon.

One option currently being explored is building a house from the ground up, a kind of model home that could set the example. RSC Architects has, in fact, presented blueprints for three such possible designs.

“Our goal is to use private funds through contributions to build this initial home which we could use to demonstrate to the State and other officials just what housing of the future can look like,” Mr. Marchionda explains.

Frank Recine, Executive Managing Director of JLL Real Estate Services, has been instrumental in The Arc's residential evaluation process. “What my firm has been doing with corporations is essentially what we want to do for The Arc: evaluate real estate and how it works in affecting people's daily lives,” he explains. “At the end of the day, we want to walk into that house and see people smiling and living a

comfortable, barrier-free life. It will be a model that will continue to be a work in progress as people age and needs evolve.”



AUDREY MCCUE

For parents of people with disabilities, this vision of future housing is essential. “I am probably the oldest member of this agency at this point in time,” says Audrey McCue, a parent and member of The Arc Rockland Board of Directors. “Our daughter was born in June, 1954, when this was just a fledgling agency. When she was a young adult, you had to put your name on a list to get into a residence. The list might be 100 people long, and the first Arc residence she moved into had tiny little rooms and there were 14 beds,” she recalls. “We have come a long way in terms of the residential services we provide. But we have to realize that, no matter how young your child was when he or she first went into a residence, they are not going to stay that young forever. People are living longer and need to be able to age where they are comfortable, happy and well cared for.”

“The focus on residential services is important to me, as a parent, because my husband and I are aging and I know that it is not realistic to expect our son to continue living with us,” says fellow parent and Board member Karen Feinstein. “We need to know that one day, when we are not here, our son will be in a safe environment, thriving and being productive. I hope that The Arc will be a forerunner in setting the standard for what we can expect for and from these wonderful individuals whom we care for every single day.”



KAREN FEINSTEIN



PHOTO BY: SAMANTHA FINCH

the students fully glazed. “Some of the children present the finished products to their parents as gifts – others choose to keep their creations for themselves. In either case, the young artists take pride in their work,” says Ms. McDonald. “The ability to choose a color, the application of paint – even the concept of color become interactive lessons. Their eyes light up when the idea of the way they want something to look becomes a reality as they set the brush to the object in front of them.”

Education

PRIME TIME

Seeing eye to eye with a goat, touching the coat of a lamb, watching the swish of a calf’s tail – these are aspects of education beyond the classroom walls.

What could be more exciting for preschoolers than a petting zoo on the *Prime Time for Kids* playground? “This is the type of hands-on learning experience that children remember for years to come,” says Melissa McDonald, The Arc Rockland Acting Director of Children’s Services. “Students are naturally curious. They want to know what the animals eat and where they sleep. The shape of an animal’s ears, legs, nose and hoofs provide opportunities for lessons in comparison, and the children use their sense of touch to discriminate between fur and wool. A petting zoo is a wonderful entree for discussions about similarities, differences and the ways in which animals and humans coexist in nature.”

When it comes to teachable moments, the creative arts take a front seat. With pottery, paints and brushes delivered by the staff of The Arc Rockland’s *Glaze Pottery and Art Studio* in Orangeburg, NY, preschoolers practice eye-hand coordination as they apply colors to pottery to be fired subsequently by Glaze and returned to

Pumpkins placed strategically on the grassy lawn at Prime Time, give preschoolers the opportunity to choose a small pumpkin to be decorated in school and taken home. “Youngsters discuss the color orange and the ways in which pumpkins may be used as something other than decoration,” notes Ms. McDonald.

At holiday time, a visit from the *New York Jingle Belles* proves to be a treat for educators and children alike. Familiar songs sung acapella by a group of talented professionals have the preschoolers dancing in the aisles. Every child receives a book entitled *The Biggest Snowman Ever* – a story about the power of cooperation. “The image of the child sitting on the lap of his or her parent or grandparent, a book open before them, epitomizes education at its best,” remarks Ms. McDonald. “It is not only the sound of being read to, but the value of listening and learning. Powers of observation are honed as a child examines the pictures on a page and is introduced to letters, words and phrase in print. Before a child learns to read, he or she learns to appreciate the impact of words.”

TECHNOLOGY

“You can’t run away from technology. It is everywhere you go—from the alarm clock that wakes you up, to playing your favorite radio station or using your computer for work. Technology is anywhere and everywhere,” says Elena Megan Cruz, Technology Instructor.

“I love it when someone says, ‘I don’t need your help. I’ve got this.’”

—ELENA MEGAN CRUZ

Ms. Cruz meets regularly with residents of one of The Arc homes in a pilot program designed to teach people how to use iPads. “It is important for the people we support to become as independent as possible—to not rely on others to help them with things that they can do for themselves. An iPad allows people to set reminders for doctors’ appointments, for example, or for meetings that they need to attend. It is all about people taking control of their lives.”

Whether it concerns education, employment or socialization,

“Technology is an important part of our lives,” says Ms. Cruz. “I believe that everyone should have the opportunity to use technology, and they should be able to acquire the knowledge necessary to use that technology.”

Ms. Cruz is employed full time as the Person Centered Supports Coordinator at The Arc Westchester. Her interest in teaching technology to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities was inspired in part by a training she attended through the New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies (NYSACRA). The event included a segment on the use of technology as a means of implementing a person-centered support system.

Her teaching methods have met with success. “The students in The Arc Rockland class are so excited to be learning how to use the iPad. And, I so love it when someone says, ‘I don’t need your help. I’ve got this.’ One of my students recently told me that she had spoken to her sister and the two intend to Skype with one another. People work during the day or are involved in various programs. Skype enables them to connect with friends and family during evening hours or on weekends.”

Jessica Sirota is on board with the benefits of the iPad. “I can do things like set a reminder to go to my ISP (Individual Support Planning) meeting,” she says. “Or I can go on Amazon to do shopping. Let’s say it’s Chanukah or Christmas. It’s important because that way I can see what I want to buy as gifts for the holidays.”

“The pilot of five homes is just the beginning,” notes Jane Zemon, The Arc Rockland Chief Program Officer. “Our intent is to roll this out to two more homes in 2019.” Funding for the purchase of four iPads was made possible by a grant from Suez Water.

Ms. Cruz has a longstanding connection to The Arc Rockland. “I started as an Assistant Manager at one of the Arc Homes, and I still go there for all of the residents’ birthday celebrations,” she says. “I hope to expand the classes to reach additional students in The Arc homes and in day programs. Thus far, the students love the classes. And, I am always thrilled by that *aha moment* when I help someone gain a little more independence in his or her life.”



PHOTO BY: JOSEPH SCOLLO



Health & Wellness

GARDENING

“The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul.”

In the decades since British poet Alfred Austin (1835-1913) penned those words, scientists have proven him right. Numerous studies have shown that gardening provides stress relief and beneficial exercise. It encourages people to eat more fruits and vegetables. There is strong evidence that interacting with nature helps our bodies heal. Researchers have even found that harmless bacteria normally found in dirt stimulate the human immune system and boost the production of serotonin, a brain chemical that can alleviate depression.

In other words, gardening improves both mental and physical health, goals espoused by The Arc Rockland. In 2018, a community garden was established at The Arc headquarters in Congers.

“Participants in several of the agency’s day habilitation groups tend the garden on a rotating basis,” explains Tara Lewis-Hicks, Director of The Arc’s Day Habilitation Services. “Some of our staff members are

knowledgeable about gardening. They take an active role in choosing the plants and explaining to the aspiring gardeners how best to maintain them. We intentionally select vegetables and herbs that are harvested for use in cooking classes. And we choose plants such as rosemary, lavender and roses so that people can enjoy the aromatic scents.”

In addition to the Congers plantings, many of the agency’s homes have gardens. For example, with the help of the parent of one of the residents, an organic garden has been flourishing at one of the homes for nearly a decade with bounty shared among neighbors and other homes overseen by The Arc.

“The gardens help foster a sense of responsibility,” notes Ms. Lewis-Hicks. “People tend to take ownership when they see the herbs, vegetables and flowers emerge from the things that they’ve helped maintain. The garden at Congers has also become a welcome amenity for everyone in the building, including staff members. They come out to see it, have lunch on the patio and enjoy the warm weather. People from several departments have told us how beautiful and relaxing it is.”



“I’m interested in the garden,” says Leslie Millstein, a member of The Arc Seniors program in Congers. “I help plant tomatoes, peppers, carrots and cucumbers and I help pick them so they can be made into salad in the cooking class. I also water the flowers. I enjoy being out in the garden.”

COOKING

The Arc Rockland’s Day Habilitation kitchen is buzzing with activity as a group of people works intently on preparing lunch. Several are focused on slicing and layering tomato, basil and cheese in a tray, while others stir the homemade vinaigrette in a pot on the stove, careful to make it thicken without burning. Soon, the dressing and olive oil are drizzled over the platter and the dish is served with a crispy baguette.

The participants give the dish a *thumbs up*. “It’s good to eat healthy food,” says Karen Gritmon, a member of the cooking class. “You can lose weight that way and you learn that you don’t need to eat a lot.”

The cooking classes are part of The Arc Rockland’s *Forging the Future* initiative, which includes a commitment to enhancing ‘an environment of

“We’re trying to show the people with whom we work that there are healthier ways of cooking and eating.” –MELODY SCHNALZER

health and wellness.’ Key to this commitment is the teaching of proper nutrition and healthful cooking.

More than 400 people who receive services and supports through The Arc now attend regular cooking and nutrition training sessions. They learn how to choose wholesome ingredients and how to incorporate those ingredients into tasty dishes that they can easily replicate.

“We’re trying to show the people with whom we work that there are healthier ways of cooking and eating,” explains Melody Schnalzer, The Arc’s Culinary Arts Instructor. “Most people think of a diet as a way of losing weight by denying themselves something that they enjoy. But I explain that a diet is really about food that makes you feel good and keeps you healthy.”

Ms. Schnalzer provides cooking classes in The Arc residences and

at the agency’s Day Habilitation and respite sites. “We often begin a session by asking the group what they would like to cook. Then we’ll discuss it, and talk about ways to prepare the dish that would make it a bit healthier,” she continues. “We also want to ensure that whatever we cook can be eaten by anyone in the group. I explain that some people have dietary restrictions. So, for example, if someone is diabetic and we’re using chocolate, we’ll use chocolate that is sugar free. I tell them we’re going to eat the way people with special diets eat so that they aren’t left out. Next, we write a list of ingredients, check to see what we already have in the kitchen and head off to the supermarket and/or the local Farmer’s Market to buy the rest.”

The shopping trip is an important part of the process. When the session is at one of the residences, the choice of what to cook and the shopping take place with the help of the house managers and staff. Participants learn how to choose produce that is ripe, how to weigh it, and how to look for the best prices on each item. Some of the ingredients, including certain herbs and vegetables when in season, can be picked right from The Arc’s communal garden at the agency’s headquarters in Congers.

Ms. Schnalzer often brings in recipes from home and encourages participants to do the same with recipes from favorite cookbooks or clipped from magazines. “Sometimes I ask people in the class about the restaurant they’ve eaten in recently and what they liked. Then we’ll try to make it. If we don’t have the ingredients, I’ll suggest we look at what we have available and what we can create from that. In fact, we’ve done several dishes that the participants themselves put together, and they’re delicious. Someday I’d love to write a cookbook with the recipes from the people who come to our classes.”

As the participants progress in their cooking skills, Ms. Schnalzer expands the scope of her classes. “We’re getting into different types of foods,” she says. “We are going to do some pickling and jarring. We’re also talking about how to organize a kitchen, where to put the spices, and the need to check expiration dates.”

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Clearly, the nutritional message is getting through. “I like to cook things that are healthy,” notes Chrise Dickerson. “You can make chicken or salmon with vegetables—stuff that is light and not heavy.”

“I have fun in this program,” adds participant Jermaine Blount. “Mel’s a good teacher and we cook great stuff. The cooking program forever!”

EXERCISE

Exercise goes hand in hand with good health. Whether it is in the community or at home in one of The Arc residences, physical activity is part of a healthful lifestyle for people of all abilities.

“Not everyone enjoys the same sports or workout regimens,” says Jane Zemon, The Arc Rockland Chief Program Officer. “We make a concerted effort to ensure that people have a choice in this regard. With the help of contributions from generous donors, The Arc maintains memberships in several area gyms and the JCC in West Nyack.”

A group of men and women who are particularly interested in physical fitness begin and end each day at The Arc Rockland hub located at Vision Sports Club in Pearl River. Participants take Zumba, yoga and cardio-fitness classes and enjoy working out on the state-of-the-art equipment available there. The YMCA in Nyack and the St. Lawrence Community Center in Sloatsburg are among other sites frequented regularly by sports-minded athletes.

Dance classes are a popular form of exercise where music and motion combine to keep people in shape at New York DanceSport in New City.

Avid rowers gain skills and confidence through lessons facilitated by the Rockland Rowing Association. Classes take place at Rockland Lake during warm weather months and at the New York Sports Club at the Palisades Center mall during late fall and winter.

Throughout the year, people of all ages get *in the swim* of things at The Arc’s indoor, heated, therapeutic pool on the grounds of The Arc’s Prime Time for Kids Early Learning Center. During the summer months, residents of The Arc homes spend time swimming in several of the area’s many lakes. Spring, summer and fall mean hiking along trails in some of



the Hudson Valley’s parks and recreation areas.

Through the Arc’s recreation department, dozens of teens and adults participate in the agency’s recreational and/or competitive bowling leagues a Hi-Tor Lanes in West Haverstraw.

Touching Bases numbers some 50 individuals representing The Arc Rockland in this softball league for people with disabilities.

More than 80 people compete in a range of Special Olympics games, including: track & field, soccer, hockey and basketball. Practices and competitions take place at The West Haverstraw Community Center, St. Peter’s School in West Haverstraw, West Point Military Academy, Monroe Woodbury High School, North Rockland Soccer Association in Thiells and at The Arc Rockland headquarters in Congers.

“One of the great things about all of our activities is the enthusiasm of our staff and volunteers,” says Ervin T. Williams, Senior Coordinator of Recreation. “Half the fun is in the spirit of community that happens when we cheer one another on.”

Jessica Pizzutello, Managing Director of Community Services concurs. “People are energized by one another when they share a common interest in a particular physical activity,” she says. “There is an aspect of socialization that adds another positive dimension to the workout.”

No matter what the season, keeping fit is a fitting priority for people of *all* abilities.

Fundraising Events

A Taste of Rockland

"The grandest *Taste* to date"—was an apt description of the October 1, 2018, festivities at the Hilton Pearl River. Four hundred guests enjoyed gourmet cuisine, fine wine and spirits and sumptuous desserts provided gratis by area restaurateurs, chefs and beverage purveyors. Lively bidding during the silent and live auctions added to the spirit of the evening.

New City Little League received a special thank you for its donation of \$5,800 raised during the annual New City Little League Tournament for the benefit of The Arc. The Lagana Challenge, begun six years ago by Joseph Lagana, garnered \$40,925, an increase of 33 percent over last year's Challenge.

"The 23rd annual *Taste* was a testament to the meaning of the term community," said The Arc Rockland CEO Carmine Marchionda. "It is true that *A Taste of Rockland* is a spectacular dining experience and a glamorous evening—but more importantly, it is our agency's premier fundraiser. Every dollar contributed enhances the lives of children, women and men with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To all of those who participated in this event, The Arc Rockland is grateful beyond measure for the enthusiasm and generosity that are the hallmark of the *Taste*."



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Golf Classic

Blue skies, groomed greens and sunshine spelled a great day for The Arc Rockland's 33rd Annual Golf Classic, June 20, 2018. Mr. Marchionda thanked the

golfers, guests, Golf Committee members, volunteers and sponsors for a memorable day at Paramount Country Club, New City. "I am always impressed by both the caliber of the golfers and their commitment



to our agency," said Mr. Marchionda. "Where The Arc Rockland is concerned, this was a perfect game."

Dr. Daniel Spitzer, President of The Arc Foundation Board of Directors, introduced a video highlighting the ways in which people who receive supports and services through The Arc are integral members of the broader Rockland community. A continental breakfast, barbecue, a round of golf, competitions and a celebratory meal at the beautiful Paramount Country Club made for a winning day.

Bowling FUN-raiser

Despite a steady downpour, spirits were bright among participants, family members and friends at The Arc Rockland's annual Bowling FUN-raiser. An enthusiastic crowd showed up for the February 25, 2018, event at Hi-Tor Lanes in West Haverstraw. The Arc's league and recreational bowlers took to the lanes amid cheers from all. Individuals, families and owners of local businesses purchased lane sponsorships with proceeds going to The Arc.



Donors & Sponsors

Donations in the form of gifts and sponsorships impact the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities every day. Contributions from Arc families, friends, and representatives of business and industry, ensure that individuals who receive supports and services through The Arc Rockland are integral members of community life.

2018 ANNUAL SPONSORS

Includes Sponsorship of Golf Classic & A Taste of Rockland

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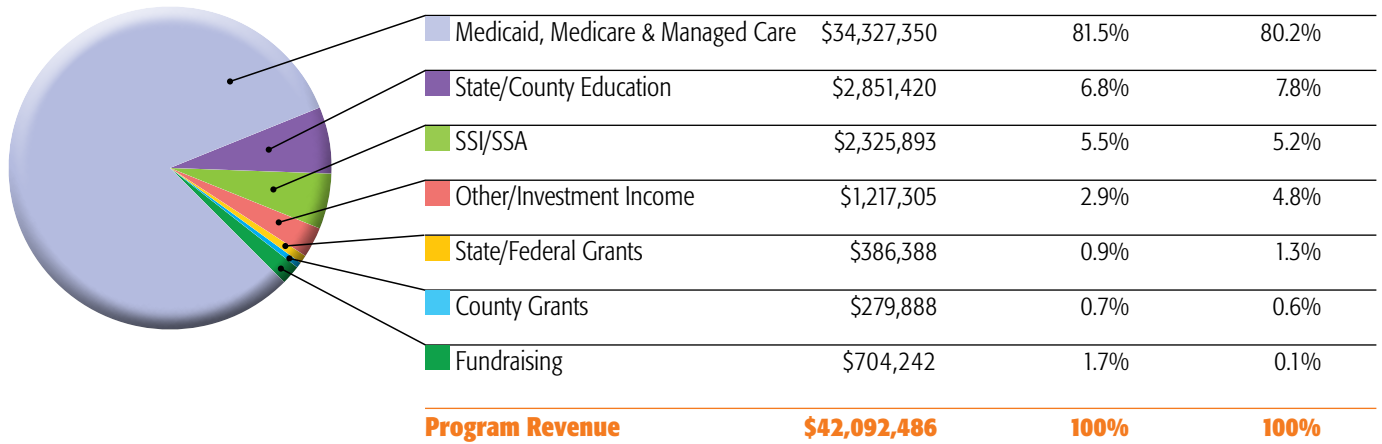
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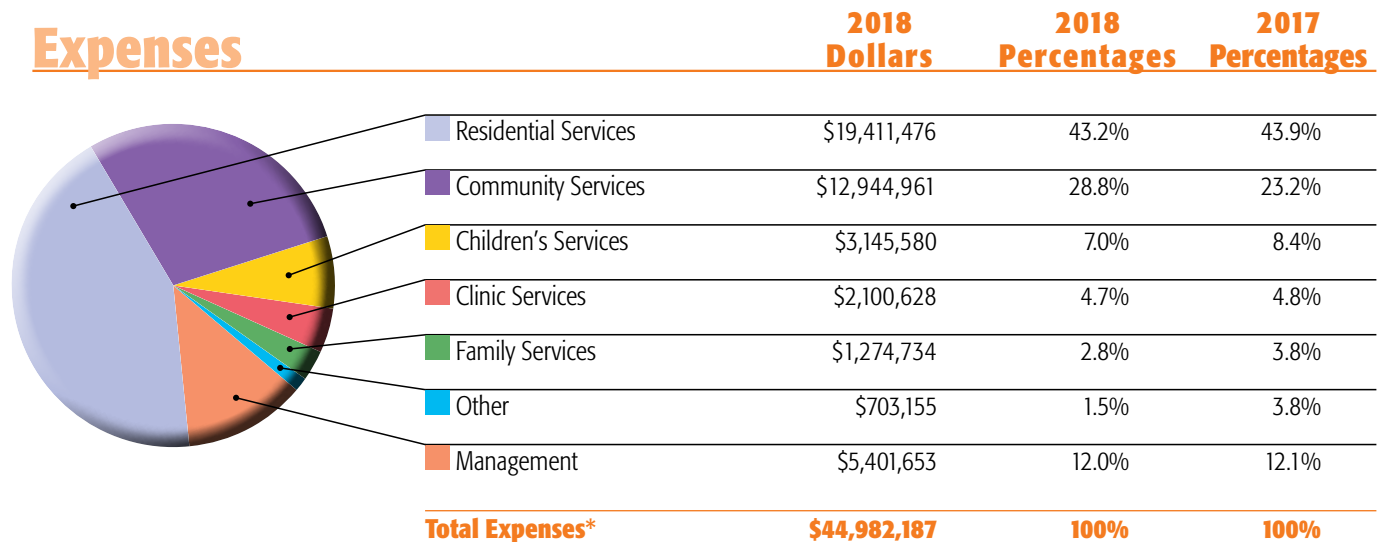
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