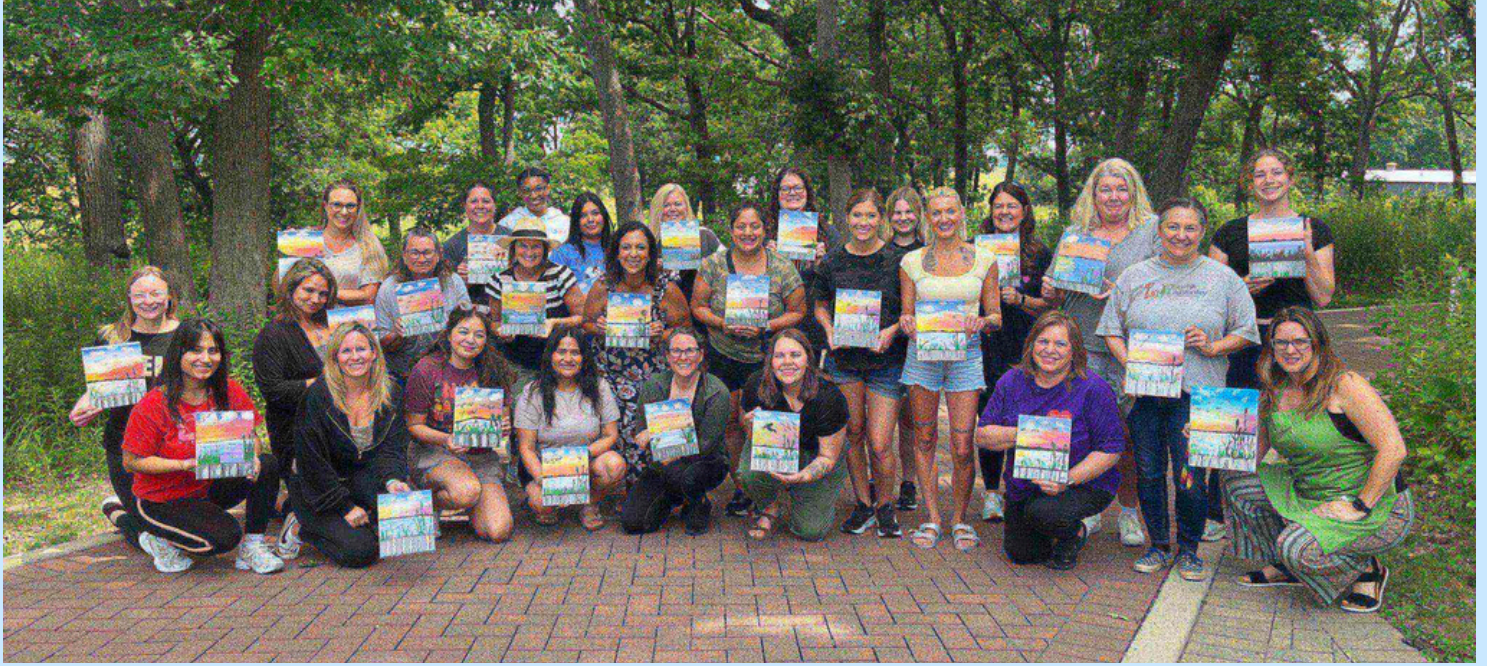




ANNUAL REPORT FY2025

Options & Advocacy for McHenry County

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Mission

Empowering individuals and their families through advocacy and education while creating a more inclusive community.

Guiding Values

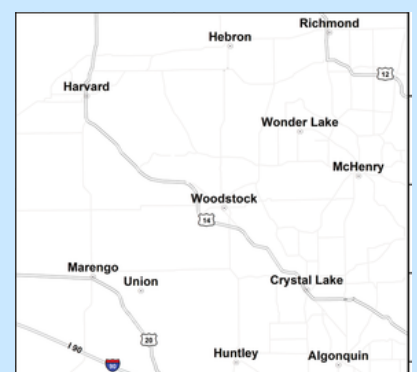
- Community-Centered
- Collaboration
- Resilience
- Empowerment

Vision

Creating an empowered and inclusive community.

Who we Serve

- McHenry County families
- Individuals with autism
- Families with children pre-natal to three years old
- Children with developmental delays up to age three
- Neurodivergent individuals navigating mental health



Board of Directors President, Dr. Michael Thomas



I thank you for your interest in Options & Advocacy. For over 30 years O&A has been providing services to individuals and families in McHenry County. I was first introduced to O&A 19 years ago when my daughter, Katie, was born with Down syndrome. My family needed help right away, and O&A was there for us. The Child and Family Connections Program worked with my family for three years and then helped us transition into the public schools. The therapy for Katie and the hours of conversations we had with the team members gave us the tools and confidence we needed. My family was empowered by O&A to meet Katie's needs when we needed them the most.

Besides helping kids who have developmental delays in the Early Intervention Program, we offer support to those on the autism spectrum of any age through our Autism Resource Center. We have our HUG (Helping Us Grow) program that is a prevention initiative for at-risk families with young children. We also have a Neuro Inclusive Counseling center where we offer therapy to those who identify as neurodiverse and who are navigating mental health concerns.

A lot of our time is spent towards finding kids and families who could use our help. If you know anyone who might benefit from our services, please spread the word. Anyone can reach out for information or to refer someone in need. You can call our office or go to our website to refer.

We are so proud that we can provide support to over 2,000 unique individuals and their families. Although we do receive funding from the state, almost one third of our budget comes from our County Government, local grants and fundraising. Our local funding is variable year to year, so we are completely dependent on fundraising to bridge our budget gaps. Please consider attending any of our fundraising events throughout the year, our website has the most up-to-date information about these events.

The dedication of our talented staff inspires me and my fellow board members to continue to work towards getting the resources needed to keep Options & Advocacy strong. We will continue to be there for the families that need us in McHenry County.

Thank you,

Dr. Mike Thomas

Our Board of Directors



Dr. Michael Thomas
Board of Directors President
(Since 2013)

Dr. Jonathan Kaufman
Board of Directors Vice
President
(2007-2010, 2021-present)



Jennifer Wollpert
Board of Directors Secretary
(Since 2017)



Jeff Seda
Board of Directors Treasurer
(Since 2017)



Tom Carroll
Director
(Since 2012)



Melissa Bruett
Director
(Since 2019)



Shabbir Kapadia

Director

(Since 2024)



Susan Wright

Director

(Since 2025)



Carissa Beaman

Director

(Since 2025)

Truly
Grateful
for you.

Board of
Directors

Sponsored
Staff
Appreciation
Lunch

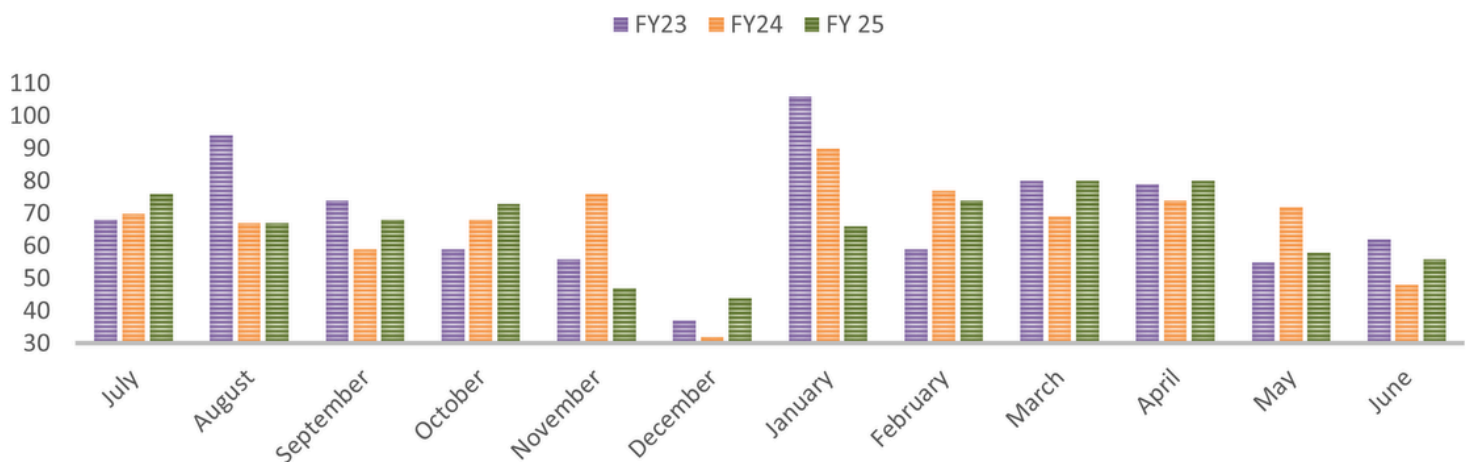


Child and Family Connections

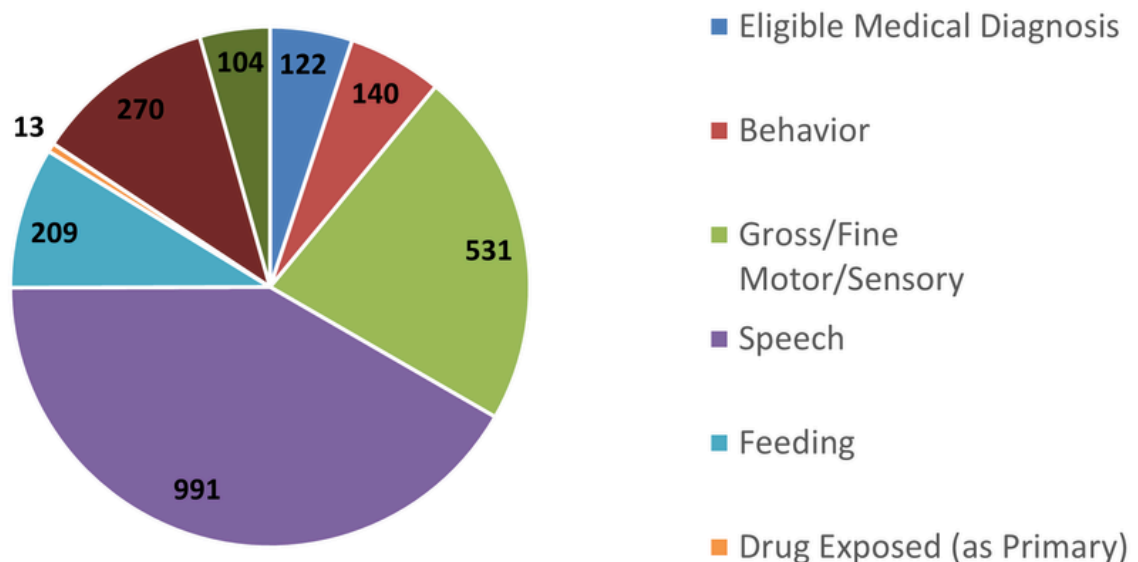
PROGRESS FOR JULY 1, 2024- JUNE 30, 2025

From July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, we received 789 new referrals, which is similar to last year's numbers. Our referrals have been steady over the past few months. Referrals continue to be primarily for speech concerns, though we are seeing an increase in referrals for prematurity, motor and medical diagnosis. We are also seeing more children being referred due to social/emotional and feeding/swallowing concerns. We served 1,244 total children (unduplicated) in FY25.

REFERRALS BY MONTH FY23-FY25



Reason for Referral July 2024 - June 2025



Autism Resource Center

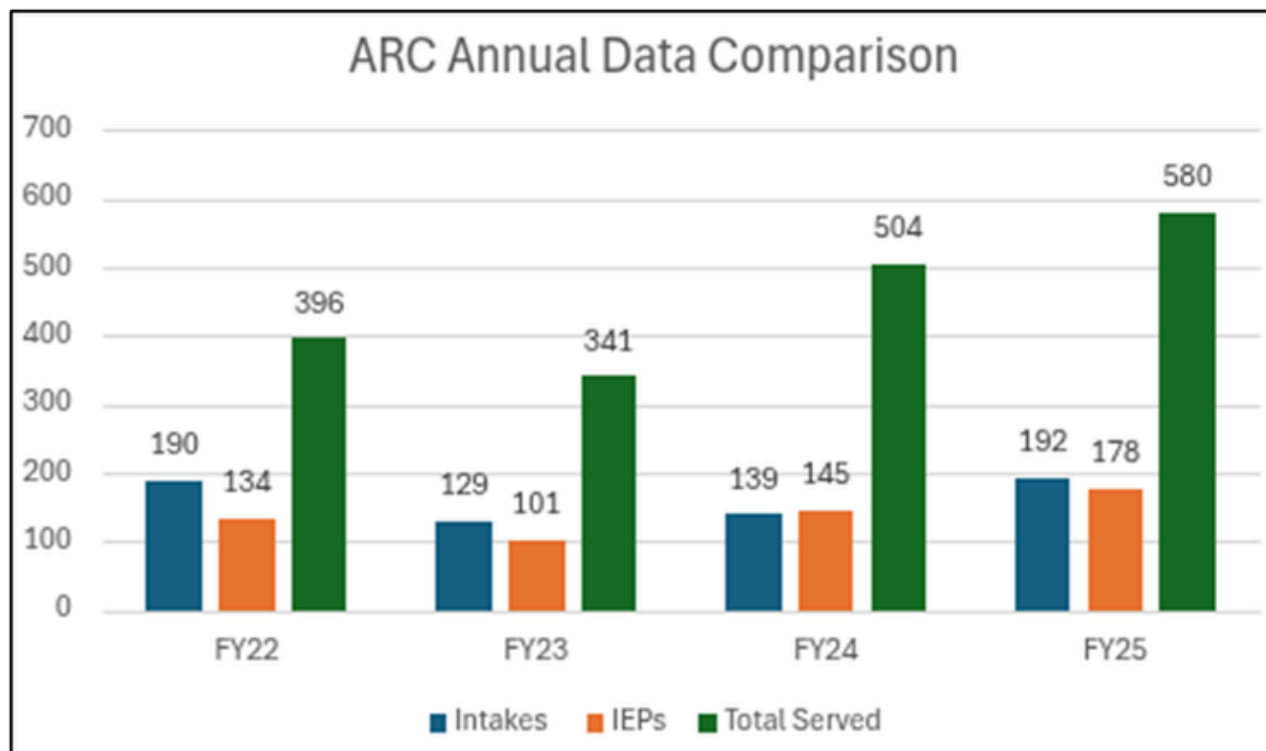
PROGRESS FOR JULY 1, 2024-
JUNE 30, 2025

Over the past year, the Autism Resource Center (ARC) had the privilege of serving 580 individuals through one-on-one sessions, group programs, trainings, and special events. We were excited to welcome a new Family Educator to the team who added fresh ideas and additional expertise to our work with families.

Throughout FY25, ARC offered a variety of groups tailored to the needs of our community—including Social Empowerment groups, Hangout groups, Parents and Littles playgroups, Caregiver groups, and our Adult Connections group. Each of these provided meaningful opportunities for connection, growth, and shared support.

We also enjoyed bringing families together through special events at Millie's Playland, MCC, and our annual Hayride in Stern's Woods.

In addition, we partnered with several organizations to offer trainings and build awareness, including District 200, District 50, Brown Bear Day Care, DCFS, and the Algonquin Public Library. These collaborations help extend our impact and reinforce our commitment to community-wide inclusion.



***Total Served includes number of unduplicated individuals engaged in 1:1 family education/case management, educational advocacy, social/support groups, family connection events, and trainings.**

Autism Resource Center Highlights



One of our families enjoy a picnic at our Hang out Jr. Family event



Hang Out Sr. having a little tetherball fun



A close obstacle course race between staff and client



Enjoying a roller blading movement break during a family education session



Parents connect during Spanish Caregiver Support Group

Helping Us Grow

PROGRESS FOR JULY 1, 2024-
JUNE 30, 2025

In FY24, Family Support Specialists conducted 861 personal visits, marking an increase of 64 visits from the previous fiscal year. The Helping Us Grow program assisted 98 families and 116 children. This reflects a growth of 12 families and 9 children compared to the previous year. Among the families served, 93% reported facing one or more high-risk family stressors, 13% reported two stressors, 10% reported three stressors, and 53% reported four or more high-risk family stressors. Notably, there has been a significant rise in the number of families with four or more stressors, increasing from 22% in FY23 to 53% in the current fiscal year. We can see increases in many areas on the chart. The number of caregivers experiencing a mental health condition, substance use disorder, families experiencing intimate partner violence, and housing instability all increased significantly since last fiscal year.



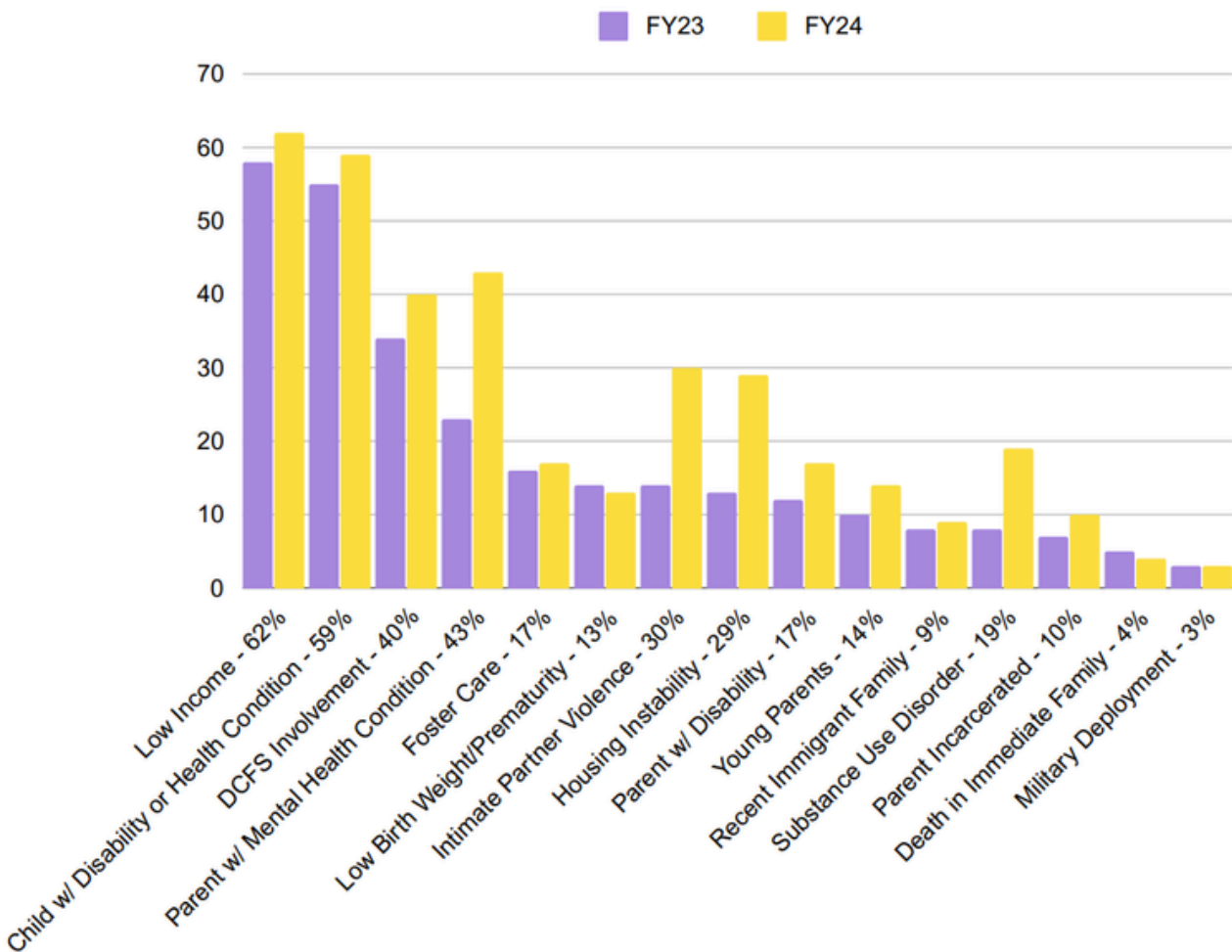
98 Families Served



116 Children Served



861 Personal Visits

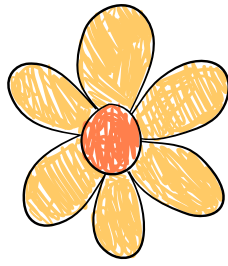


Helping Us Grow Highlights



Maves Family

"Helping Us Grow has helped me in many ways but the most by helping me understand childhood development, and milestones. Every week, we were trying a new activity and would be on my child's level. Eventually, all my kids looked forward to their weekly visit from Charlee. HUG gave me activity ideas, bonding time, educational tools, hope, understanding and even helped me with receiving diapers! Monthly they would host a group activity that were always fun and educational. I would 100% recommend the program to any new moms out there in McHenry County who want to learn more about childhood development and to help guide their babies. Thank you HUG for everything!"



"Me gusta mucho, mis hijos les encanta cuando llega la educador de padres, gracias por todo el apoyo que me han dado"

I like it a lot, my children love it when the parent educator arrives, thank you for all the support you have given me

"I appreciate the flexibility and understanding with my parent educator."



Mecher Family

"We are beyond blessed that this program was available. We all know there is no handbook for parenting and raising children and having an unbiased adult, who has experience and the knowledge, to help work through parenting challenges, has been priceless. We will forever be grateful for this program and for Elyse. She is part of our family now and we hope to continue the relationship we developed."

Group Connections

August - Beach Day

September - KickART Your Day

October - Virtual Pizza Party

November - Rock n Kids Music and Movement Class

December - Holiday Party

January - Millies Playhouse

February - Fire Department Safety Presentation

March - Mind, Body, and Bonding: Yoga and Mindfulness

April - Prairieview Education Center Earth Day Celebration

May - Consumer Credit Counseling Budgeting Presentation

June - HUG Graduation

June - Summer Bash

September - April - O&A Playgroups



Neuro Inclusive Counseling Center



PROGRESS FOR JULY 1, 2024-JUNE 30, 2025

NIC moved to a larger space in December which allowed for us to be able to increase our capacity serving more clients and create spaces that therapeutically align with our agencies value of accessibility.

Highlights:

- July 1 2024-June 30 2025 NIC served 87 clients often these clients are weekly or biweekly most are currently still clients.
- Currently we are in network with commercial insurance companies such as Blue Cross Blue Shield, Aetna, Cigna and United Healthcare (on a limited basis).
- We are working through the process to be in network with Medicaid and anticipate being able to bill in Fall or early Winter!

We are fully staffed as much as possible!

- One full-time program manager/therapist
- Three full-time staff one intake coordinator and two therapists
- 3 part-time staff including two bilingual and bicultural therapists
- 1 clinical level intern
- 1 program support specialist

Team highlights:

- We had the opportunity to attend the NASW conference in June
- The team is obtaining outside training from an Occupational Therapist in our community to understand the interwoven sensory aspects as it relates to the client's therapeutic experience.

Neuro Inclusive Counseling Center Highlights



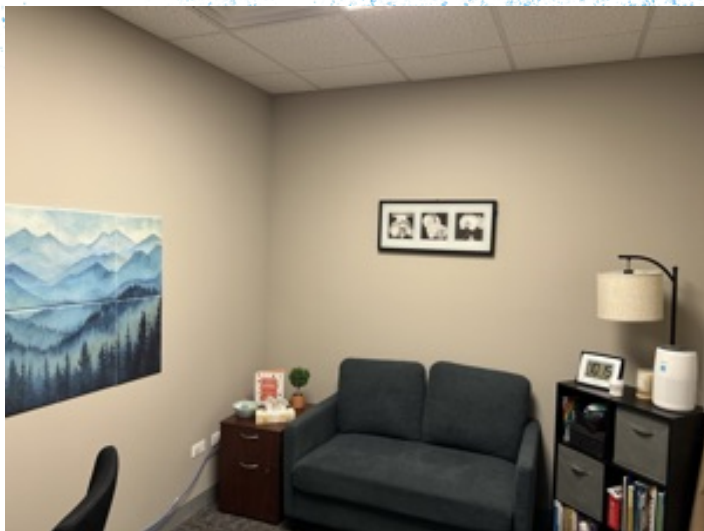
NIC Team at the National Association for Social Workers Conference



NIC Therapy Offices



Sensory Room





Stefanie Sullivan

Joyful Arts



We have had a very successful year once again! In the past fiscal year, we held 16 classes with an average student attendance of 11 students per class. We had our 3rd Annual Art Show which brought in 75 attendees including a bus load of people from a local assisted living facility. It was a small busload, but to see a bus pull into the parking lot was so exciting! They were all ladies who very obviously enjoyed their time with the artists. For the first time some of our artists sold their works to people who attended. We talked about it prior to the show. I told them these are your paintings and it is your prerogative to sell or not and to negotiate prices. It was fun to see them make some money and the pride they took in doing so was evident. The Art Show is the program's pinnacle event of the year and the artists show up in their best clothes, with new haircuts, and with their families who are so proud (and impressed!) with what they have achieved. It's a beautiful thing!

The accomplishments of the program are much greater than the artists' ability to create a good painting. We have seen remarkable personal growth in all of our students. Their confidence levels have improved. Their ability to communicate either verbally or by signing has improved. One of our students lost his sister a year and half ago. He has not missed a Joyful Arts class since he began although he rarely spoke. In the past few months, he has been speaking and making eye contact. He jokes around with me and calls me by my name. I nearly cried the first time it happened. He is the first one in class every week and wakes his dad up at 6:00 am to make sure that they're on time.

At the end of each class, the students are invited to the front of the class to talk about their paintings. At this point in the program, they can hardly wait to do so. One week we did a sunflower picture using q-tips instead of brushes. One of our young ladies stated that she did not like using a q-tip and she only liked to paint with brushes. Her communication was quite clear and I love how she spoke her mind.

The friendships between the artists have grown. They are concerned if one of our core group is missing. Joyful Arts is frequently the topic of conversation in a local McHenry County High School where many of our students attend. In school, when asked about what makes him happy, one of our students wrote, "I smile when I go to the joyful arts."

We have continued to have a painting and a short biography in the Pediatric Associates of Barrington office in Crystal Lake. This is a much coveted honor for our students. Dr. Kaufman's staff is so warm and positive and shares with me the responses they get from their patients and families. This year we included a painting from our Joyful Art interpreter Andi Bedell. Each time I leave that office, I feel so blessed to be part of something that is putting out good into this world.

For the first time, I made award certificates in artistic achievement for each of our students. Their response to being acknowledged in this way was unexpected. They were thrilled! It was very moving and our first ever group shot picture says it all.



Joyful Arts Highlights



Two of our students had a “show” at the Pepper Park Coffee Shop in Barrington. They each sold paintings there.

We were contacted by the McHenry County Sheriffs Department to do some paintings for their space at the County Building. We had a great morning painting with them. Three of our students' paintings now hang in their witness quiet room.

Pat Kerin, our wonderful teacher, is also an amazing Santa Claus. Last December, he was invited to visit a local McHenry County High School where he saw many of our students. He also did a reading of the Night Before Christmas at the Green Read on Williams Street in Crystal Lake.

We were honored to be a focus of the O&A fundraiser last December. Two of our students had their Picasso pictures displayed.

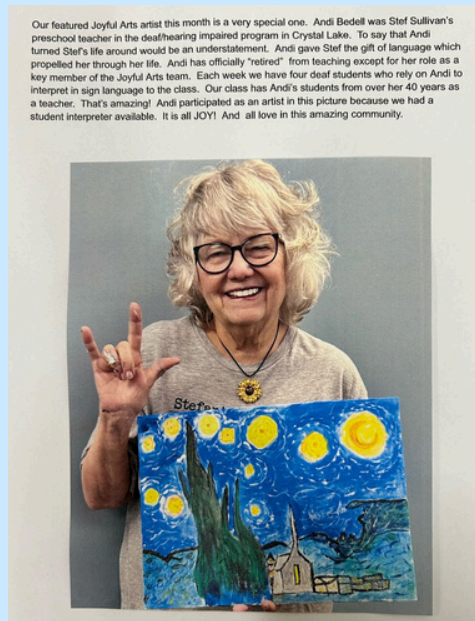
We were part of the Caregiver's Conference on March 8. I gave the morning keynote talk and we had a class doing self portraits in the afternoon.

Our remarkably generous donors, Ray and Hilary Gaebler, have given \$4,760 to the program in the past year. They knew my daughter Stefanie for most of her life. We wanted to demonstrate our deep gratitude to them so Patrick painted a beautiful landscape with a field of yellow flowers. Stef's favorite color was yellow. I had it framed and we sent it out to Des Moines where the Gaebler's live. They hung it in their living room and sent me the sweetest note.

On a related note, I want to share with you something that I recently heard. Years ago, my daughter was in the hearing impaired program. Stef was not typically deaf. She had many other needs. The program was in Crystal Lake and we lived in McHenry. Stef was a very social person yet she had no friends. She knew no one in the town she lived in. I requested that she move to a classroom in our district where she would go if she had no exceptional needs. Even writing that feels wrong! She was denied that opportunity. I filed for due process and had an advocate from the Illinois State Board of Education who came and supported me at the meetings. The district agreed to include her. Stef attended Parkland Junior High where she made friends and had a peer group. There was this wonderful group of giggly girls who became Stef's posse. They were at my house frequently. Stef had her first slumber party. They did each other's nails and hair. The girls all learned sign language. It was a beautiful thing! One of the girls would tell me that she wanted to be a teacher of hearing impaired/deaf students. We talked many times. She had a challenging home life and I frequently picked her up so that she could hang out with Stef. She was one of Stef's closest friends through junior high and high school. Stef's last teacher in the district, whose name is Stephanie, is retiring this year. She was asked by the district to interview candidates for her position. The district felt that she could speak better about the position. In that interview process, she asked one of the candidates how she became interested in deaf education. The response was that she met a girl in junior high who was deaf and in a wheelchair and that she changed her life. Stephanie asked what the girl's name was. It was Stef Sullivan. That launched a long, and I suspect, emotional conversation about Stef. Of course, she got the position. They met nearly 30 years ago. How often are we blessed with the opportunity to learn about our child's impact so many years later? I have a hard time not crying about it still. Our actions individually and collectively on behalf of children and adults with challenges, make a difference.

I want to thank the Board of Directors for allowing the Joyful Arts to be a part of O&A. I also want to thank you for making a real difference in our county.

-Cindy Sullivan



Who We Help

MCHENRY COUNTY, ILLINOIS



INDIVIDUALS WITH
AUTISM



CHILDREN WITH A
DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY
OF 30% OR MORE



FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN
UNDER 3 YEARS OLD
FACING A SIGNIFICANT
STRESSOR



FAMILIES ACCESSING
PUBLIC ASSISTANCE



CHILDREN WITH A
MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS



NEURODIVERGENT
INDIVIDUALS NAVIGATING
MENTAL HEALTH

Options and Advocacy is proud to support families of all backgrounds, abilities, and structures who live in McHenry County.

We serve families in need of Early Intervention service coordination, in-home support to pregnant women and young children, and individuals on the autism spectrum and their families.

O&A has been a part of the McHenry County community since 1994 and has provided support to thousands of families since then.

Working Together

Early Childhood Network

The Local Interagency Council (LIC) & Early Childhood Network (ECN) of McHenry County is a community-based collaboration led by Options & Advocacy for McHenry County committed to enhancing a high-quality, well-coordinated, easily-accessible system of services and supports that promote the positive growth and development of expecting parents and families with children from birth to age five.

We work with local families and local community leaders to address local needs in our community. ECN works collaboratively to make the most of existing resources in our communities to promote the mental and physical well-being of families and young children.



Anyone who works, lives with, or is raising children 0-5 is welcome to join! Contact Angela Krambeer to join or learn more!



LIC/ECN Coordinator
Angela Krambeer
angela.krambeer@opad.org
815-477-4720 ext. 258

Early Childhood Network

ECN Members

School Districts:

2, 3, 12, 15, 18, 19, 26, 36, 46, 47, 50,
118, 158, 165, 200, 220, 300

Prevention Initiatives:

- Brown Bear Daycare
- Helping Us Grow
- District 19
- District 50
- District 200

Childcare Providers:

- Brown Bear Daycare
- Community Action Agency for McHenry County Head Start
- 4-C Community Coordinated Child Care
- Crystal Lake Montessori
- Friendship House
- Hearthstone Early Learning Center
- Young Scholars

Medical-Health Providers:

- Dr. Jonathan Kaufman, Pediatrician
- Greater Family Health
- McHenry County Dept of Health
- The Goldman Center
- UIC-Division of Specialized Care for Children
- Univ. Of IL Extension/McHenry Co.

Social Services/Therapeutic Providers:

- Beyond Play
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of McHenry Co.
- Birth to Five II
- CASA of McHenry County
- Child Advocacy Center
- C.I.T.Y of Support
- DCFS Early Childhood Project
- DSCC
- Early Intervention Clearinghouse
- Easterseals DuPage & Fox Valley
- Encore Rehab
- Gigi's Playhouse
- Home of the Sparrow
- Keeping Families Covered
- Kids In Need of McHenry County
- Main Stay Therapeutic Farm
- NAMI-McHenry County
- Northern Illinois Special Rec Association
- Pioneer Center/PADS
- Positive Caring
- Safe Families

Police Social Worker:

- Sue Blechschmidt, LITH Police Department

Spotlight Partners

9/24/24 Head Start, Univ of IL Extension

11/12/24 Gigi's Playhouse

2/11/25 Safe Families, NAMI

4/8/25 DCFS, Keeping Families Covered

6/10/25 Northern Illinois Parents

Working Together

July 2024 Community Resource Picnic



Working Together



Working Together



Working Together



Working Together



Working Together



Working Together



Working Together



Working Together



Working Together

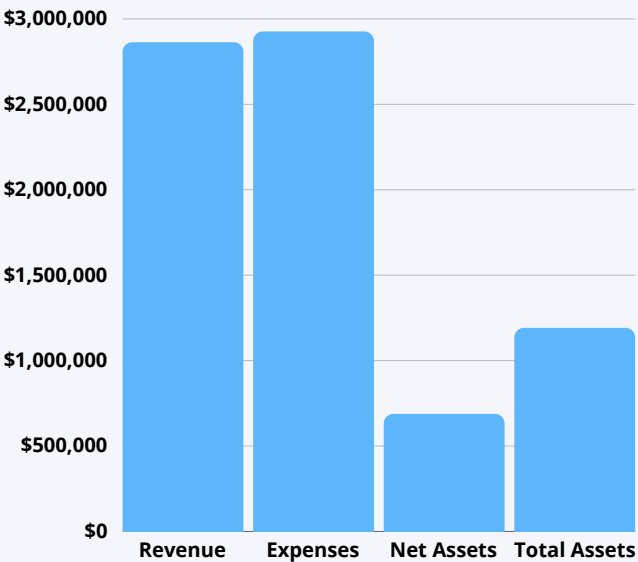
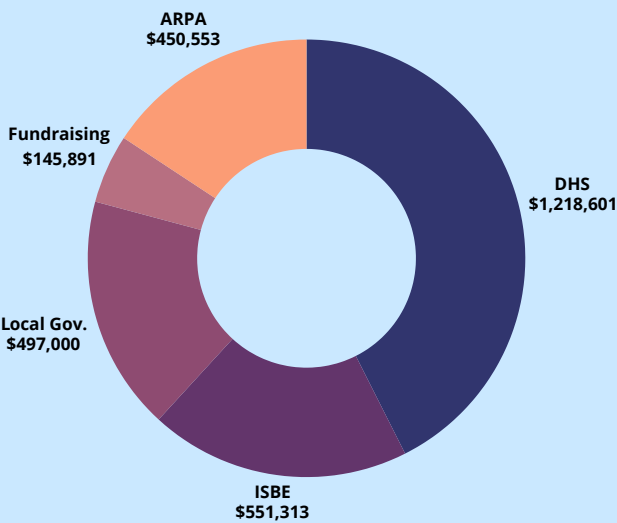
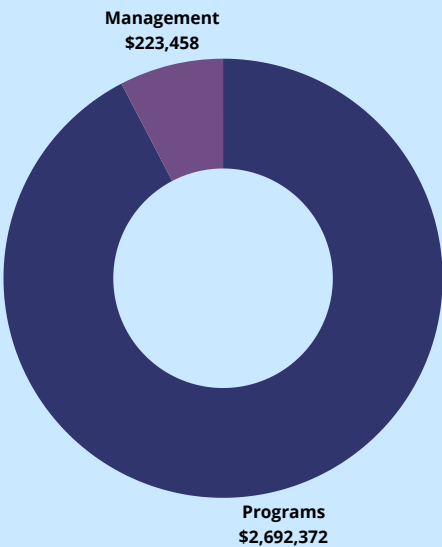


Financial Overview

During Fiscal Year 2025, Options and Advocacy received funding from a number of different sources.

The State of Illinois - Department of Human Resources (DHS), and Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) along with McHenry County Federal ARPA dollars - funded 77.5% of Options and Advocacy's total revenue. The other 22.5% originated from the local government (708 Tax Dollars), fundraisers, and other grants/miscellaneous funders.

Our four programs, ARC, CFC, HUG, and NIC received 92.3% of our total revenue leaving the other 7.7% for management and other general expenses.



Options and Advocacy's total revenue from July 1, 2024-June 30,2025 was \$2,863,347. From that, our expenses totaled \$2,926,487.

Our net assets came to \$688,124, leaving our total asset amount at \$1,191,700.

Ways You Gave

WEBSITE

optionsandadvocacy.org

Donations through the "How Can I Help" tab on the O&A website.

MAJOR GIFTS & GRANTS

Philanthropic Giving

Thank you to our local friends and family foundations for your generous contributions.

O&A MERCH STORE

Freundly Designs Merch Store

We partnered with Freundly Designs to create a merch store. 10% of all sales on O&A merch is donated to us! Merch is available on Freundly Design's website!

PARTICIPATION

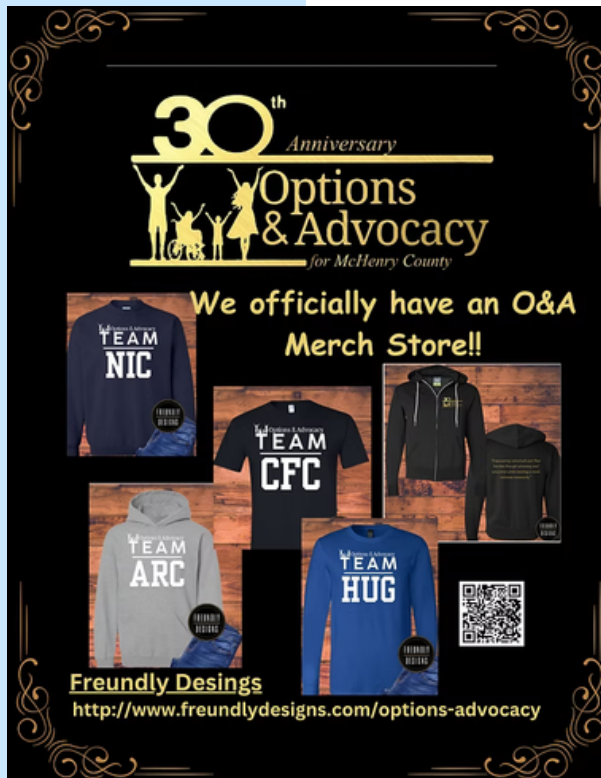
Fundraising Events

Attendance at the Referral Partners 365 Golf Outing, MHRL Fall Diddley, and 2024 Masquerade Ball Gala.

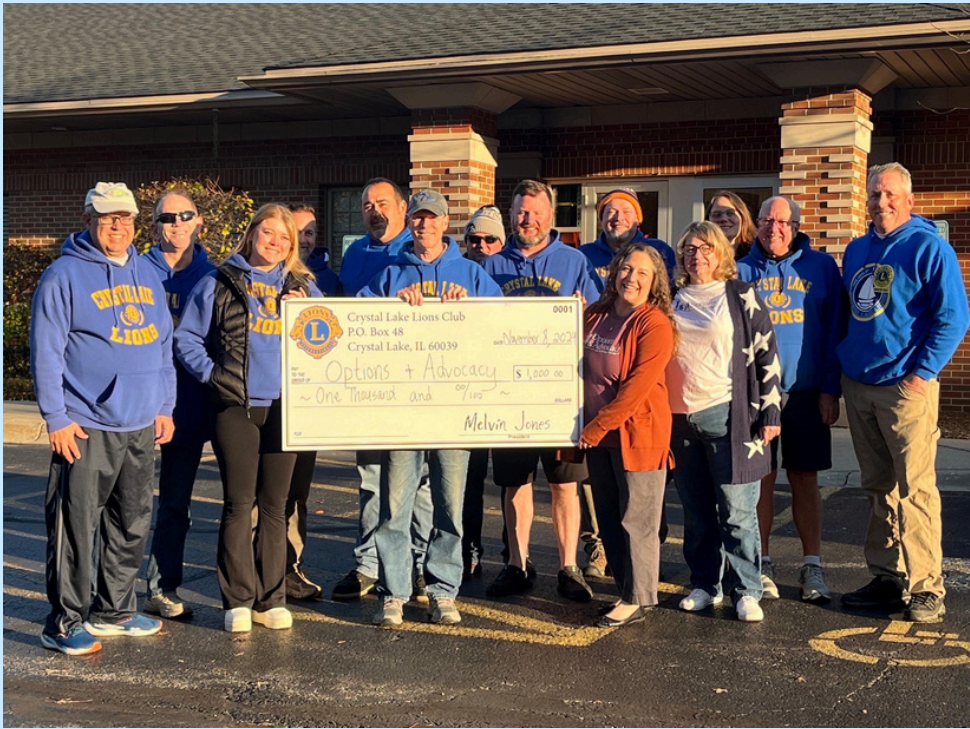
DONATIONS & VOLUNTEERS

On-Site

Friendly volunteers and donations of clothes, toys, diapers, and more help us assist families across the county.



DONATE

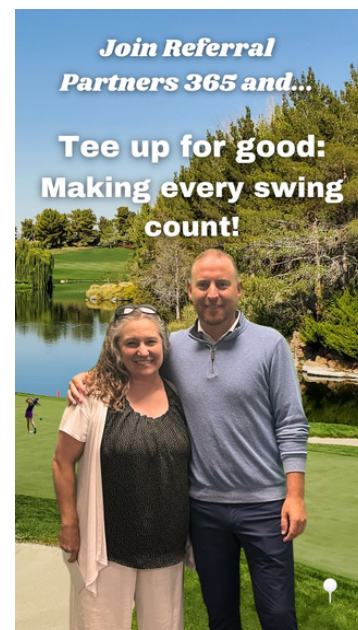


Crstal Lake Lions Club



Toys for Tots

THANK YOU DONORS



RFP365 Golf Outing August 12, 2024



MHRL Fall Diddley
October 12 & 13, 2024

Tootsie Rolls
September 20 & 21, 2024

Fundraising



OPTIONS & ADVOCACY'S
THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Masquerade Ball

November 16, 2024
6-11pm
BOULDER RIDGE COUNTRY CLUB
LAKE IN THE HILLS, ILLINOIS

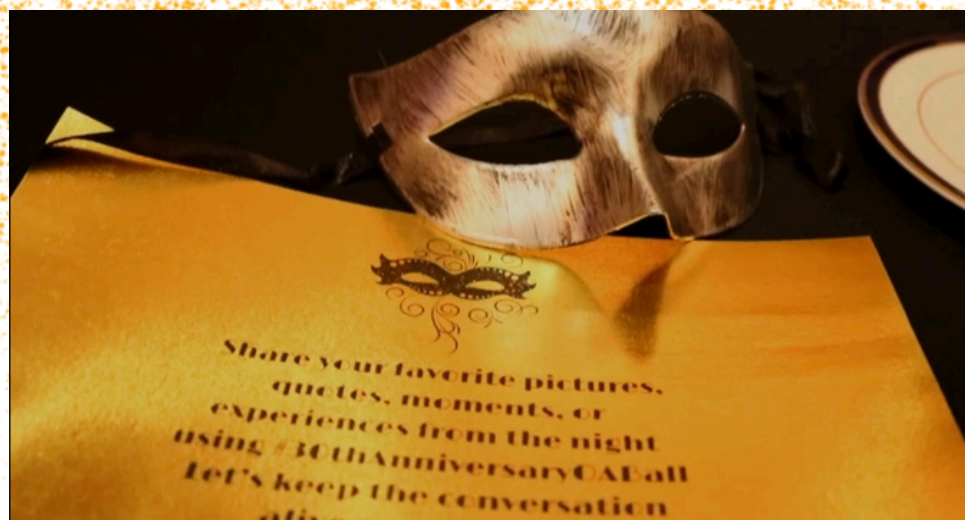
30th Anniversary



Options
& Advocacy
for McHenry County



Fundraising



Options & Advocacy extends its sincere appreciation to every donor who contributed between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025. Your generosity strengthens our mission and ensures individuals and families in McHenry County continue to receive the support they deserve. Thank you for investing in a more inclusive and connected community..

Zahida Bahrainwala
Taufique Bahrainwala
J. Baldo
Sarah Barham
Courtney Behrens
William Blechschmidt
Melissa-Ann Bruett
Sonali Candappa
Isabella Cangiolosi
Darbi Carbone
Mary Chilcutt
Nicole Corrales
Evan Cunningham
James Davis
Yaslin Davis
Kimberly Doerr
Kristin Dwire
Bob Edwards
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Michael Esposito
Aidan Fedyniak
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Patrick Flight
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Lynn Hettermann
Gilbert High
Joshua Hildebrand
Marcel Hill
Kimberly Hinks
Kimi Hinks
Marie Humphrey
Julie Jennett
Savana Josephsen
Shabbir Kapadia
Douglas Kananen
Christina Keach
Patrick Kerin
Lori Kleczynski
John Kleczynski
Krambeer Family
Dr. Jonathan Kaufman
Sandra Knop
Cheryl Kurkiewicz
John Lewis

Cicely Lopez
Brittney Madison
Berenice Mahoney
Matthew Mannino
Matthew Mannino
Tracy Mega
Noah Mendoza
Mary Miller
Kristin Miller
Pat & Donna Minogue
Erica Nelson
Christine Neilsen
Kean Neilsen
Winter Noe
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Jeremy & Emily Peace
Allison Pohl
J. Reibel
Jeffrey Richardson
Scott Ripke
Brad & Michele Rogers
Stacy Rogner
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Keith Seda
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Cathy Schultz
Sandra Southwell
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Laurie Steenberg
Mark Steenberg
Margaret Stefani
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Cindy Sullivan
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Renee Wagner
Kade Walter
John David Willis
Fay Wilson
Gail Zalokar
Jane Zamudo
Michael & Melissa Zmuda

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Crystal Lake Lions Club
Cyber Grants
Felix & Fingers Dueling Pianos
O&P Innovations
Knights of Columbus
Kunes Automotive
Kune Family Foundation
Mental Health Resource League
PayPal
Referral Partners 365
Streamwood
Swiss Automation
Uline

Foglia Family
FOUNDATION

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Options & Advocacy

for McHenry County



Connect with us!



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815-477-4720



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