

2024

*Annual Impact  
Report*



Aspire  
of WNY

*“Believe you can...  
and you’re halfway there.”*

*- Theodore Roosevelt*



Members of  
Aspire of WNY's  
iXpress Art  
Program created  
the artwork  
featured in this  
impact report.

# One agency, with health and safety for *all*.

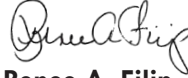
Reflecting on the past year at Aspire of WNY, I'm constantly impressed by the resilience and spirit of our incredible community. Together, across all staff members and individuals served, we've built a support system that finds every opportunity to promote the health and safety of the people we serve.

Our agency's unwavering commitment is to cultivate a secure and nurturing environment where everyone can thrive. This commitment is manifested in our focus on well-being, our encouragement of healthy habits, our meticulous crafting of personalized and compliance-oriented safety protocols, and our creation of spaces that foster security and inclusion.

Together, we are empowering our loved ones to feel confident and ready to conquer the world, in whatever way they dream possible.

Remember, even small steps can lead to big changes. Let's embrace healthy choices, prioritize proactivity, and celebrate each other's victories. Together, we can build a future brimming with health, happiness, and boundless possibility. I hope you enjoy this annual collection of stories and successes and take with you the shared responsibility we all have: to ensure the safe and fulfilling future of everyone in our wonderful community at Aspire of WNY.

Thank you, and be well,



**Renee A. Filip**  
President & CEO  
Aspire of WNY



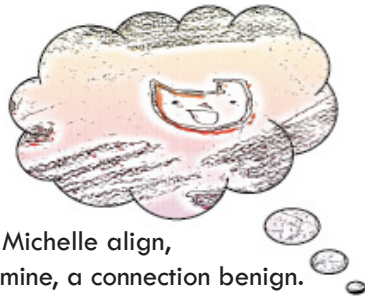
Renee A. Filip, President & CEO of Aspire of WNY, attends the Art & Wine Celebration with her son, Marshall.



Melanie Wing, a member of Aspire of WNY's iXpress Art program, has found a unique way to express herself through writing. Despite not speaking, Melanie has a strong love for words and uses them to communicate her thoughts and feelings. She started writing poetry in 2023 with the assistance of her art facilitator and has already gained a following for her heartfelt and easily relatable poems.

## My Mother's Name and a Cat's Meow

By *Melanie Wing*



In the world of names, Richelle and Michelle align,  
My mother's name, and a friend of mine, a connection benign.  
Shiva, a cat who finds comfort in my hold,  
While Stanley, affectionate, his story unfolds.  
His meow, a thunder, demanding and loud,  
When hunger strikes, his voice, a vibrant crowd.  
Shiva's purr, whispers a gentle, subtle plea,  
A lullaby so soft, but only Stanley purrs for me.  
Stanley, more reserved, his purr a precious gem,  
For in those quiet moments, we're two as one again.





## Flying Over Chautauqua: How an Autism Diagnosis Can't Keep You From *Conquering* the Sky

Where there's a will, there's a way.  
And, Kaylee has enough will to make her **fly**.

Kaylee's passion for flying began when she was very young, on rides with her grandparents to visit the Chautauqua County Airport in Dunkirk, NY. By age 4, she was eager to go there daily before heading to kindergarten. Her grandparents took her to her first "Fly-in Breakfast" at age 10, where she participated in her first of many discovery flights. Over the years, she attended several

Fly-in Breakfasts and had numerous flights, continuing to foster her love of aviation.

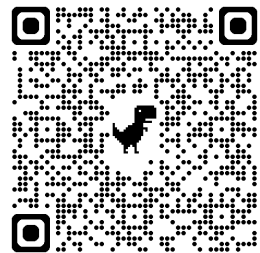
In 2017, Kaylee had the opportunity to fly in a powered parachute in Silver Creek, NY, after talking with pilots who offered her the chance. She attended the Air Show in Dunkirk, where she was captivated by the Wing Walker and aspired to become one herself.

Kaylee has developed a fondness for several airplanes, giving them unique names like "Beachy," "Flaggy," "Black Cherry," "Dandelion," "Apache," and "Cappy." Even more, than bestowing special names, Kaylee has also flown each one of these planes and has practiced steering take-offs and landings in "Beachy," "Flaggy," and "Black Cherry."

*Continued Online...*

Read the Rest of  
Kaylee's Story!

SCAN THE QR CODE  
TO SEE THE STORY





# Creating Safe Spaces & *Welcoming All*

**IMPLICIT BIAS WORKSHOPS 2023 - 2024**





One of many steps taken to help create a more inclusive and accepting work environment at Aspire of WNY throughout 2023 & 2024 is the new implicit bias workshops that are being offered to employees throughout the agency. These workshops aim to help employees be able to identify and recognize implicit biases and microaggressions. Implicit biases are most often defined as negative feelings or stereotypes that appear automatically and unintentionally. Oftentimes, we are not consciously aware of these, making discussion around this topic crucial to being able to recognize implicit biases as they appear.

The implicit bias workshops are not your typical lecture-style sessions. They are highly interactive, engaging, and centered around group discussions. These workshops provide a safe space for team members to openly discuss diversity and inclusion, fostering a culture of understanding and respect.

“The implicit bias workshops are extremely interactive and create great discussions between employees here at our agency,” explains Melissa Roth, Chief Human Resources Officer at Aspire of WNY. “The activities and discussions that take place at the workshops encourage everyone to take a closer look at any biases they may have and really question them.”

“The goal of these workshops is to help everyone look deeper beneath the surface,” says Renee A. Filip, President & CEO at Aspire of WNY. “Everyone comes from different backgrounds and experiences, so recognizing and talking about implicit bias is essential.”

Creating safe spaces for these discussions is vital to our agency's growth. Learning how to recognize implicit biases helps teams collaborate to the best of their ability, and building stronger teams is essential to providing the best care possible to the individuals that our agency supports.



This is just one of the first steps, of many, that Aspire of WNY is taking towards diversity and inclusion.

# Paris Adams *Shines* at Tim Tebow's Event!



Crowned as guest of honor, Paris attends an event he'll remember for the rest of his life!

From limousine rides to red carpets, Paris Adams, an individual who receives services from Aspire of WNY, experienced a night fit for royalty. Paris attended the Tim Tebow Night to Shine event in Cleveland, Ohio, on February 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2024, where he was crowned as a guest of honor.

The Tim Tebow Night to Shine is an around-the-world prom night experience for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities hosted by the Tim Tebow Foundation. Over 622 churches worldwide open their doors to event attendees annually. Paris received an invitation to the foundation's Cleveland, OH event with the help of two of his summer camp counselors and friends from Pioneer Camp, who advocated for Paris to attend.



Paris was picked up in a limousine for the event at 6 PM, which would run until 9 PM. When he arrived, he got to walk in on a red carpet and have pictures taken. He spent the rest of the night dining, dancing, and enjoying guest performers.

*Continued Online...*





# Show us your *smile!*

## 2023 – 2024 PHOTO GALLERY



# Show us your *smile!*

## 2023 – 2024 PHOTO GALLERY



# You have the **ABILITY** to make a difference for WNY children & adults with disabilities!

Aspire of WNY has been supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities for 77 years. Now, we're asking our community to give back and support the incredible individuals who receive our support. Your generous donation will go towards participant transportation, program development and supplies, residential opportunities, day habilitation, art programs, music programs, and garden therapy programs, and will give all those supported by Aspire of WNY the ability to live as independently as possible.



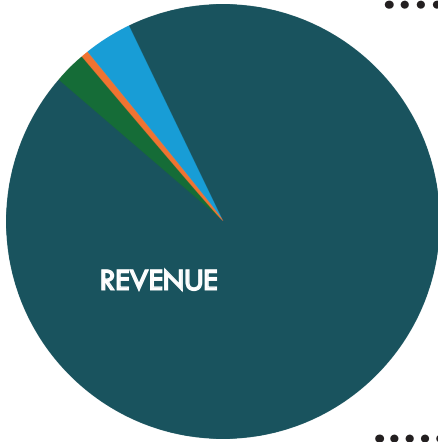
**Scan to Donate  
& Make Smiles  
Happen**

Donations made through this QR Code will be designated towards Aspire of WNY's Annual Appeal. 100% of your dollars remain in WNY and benefit the individuals we support!

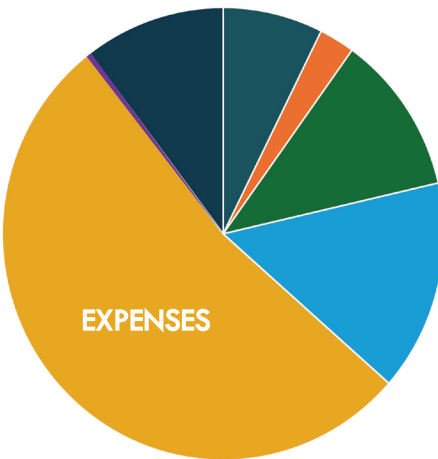
## Thank you!

# 2023 FINANCIALS

2 Aspire of WNY leadership developed the information presented on  
 2 this page based on information in the audited financial statements  
 3 of the year 2023. 99% of the Program Service revenue comes from  
 Federal & New York State Funding.



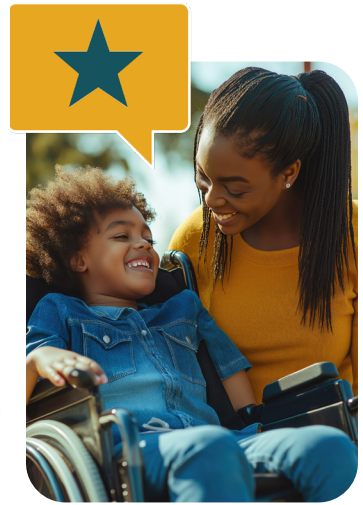
- Program Service**  
\$83,594,107
- Fundraising**  
\$224,705
- Government Grants**  
\$1,062,934
- Other**  
\$1,449,514
- TOTAL:** \$86,331,260



- Administration**  
\$7,311,257
- Clinic**  
\$2,451,563
- Day Habilitation**  
\$9,841,096
- Educational**  
\$13,415,180
- Residential**  
\$40,965,504
- Grants, Intake & Outreach, and Other**  
\$49,514
- Community & Independent Living Supports**  
\$9,448,518
- TOTAL:** \$83,482,632

# Customer Satisfaction

At Aspire of WNY, the quality of our services are defined and determined through ongoing communications with those who trust us to provide support. Our promise to those people is to measure satisfaction and quality, based on factual evidence, success within the community, and personalized outcomes.



We rely on the input from the people we support and from their committed staff, family members, and advocates in making our determination relative to quality and satisfaction. The future of Aspire of WNY is in our commitment to listen with a positive attitude, relentlessly pursue opportunities, work together as one, and be accessible to all.



**By completing the Satisfaction Survey you help us stay true to our Mission and Vision. If you can't scan the QR code, please email [intake@aspirewny.org](mailto:intake@aspirewny.org) to request a paper copy. Thank you!**

# memoriam

Remembering the individuals we've lost.

Those remembered below passed away in 2023. Each year, we prepare a memoriam from the year prior for those who have recently left us.



Karen Andry

Charles Gennuso

Sheila Bradbury

Brenda Hebdon

Matthew Bradley

Elise Knowlden

Amber Brancato

Catherine Komodzinski

Bambi Cosco

Jennifer Marchal

Carrie DAmore

Michael Whitfield

David Echevarria

Robert Gavacs

**“There are no goodbyes for us. Wherever you are, you will *always* be in my heart.”**



2024

We're all able to aspire.  
So, let's *Shoot* for the stars!

Learn more & make an impact today  
by visiting: [www.aspirewny.org](http://www.aspirewny.org)



Aspire  
of WNY