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The Guild team have made such a difference in Sergei's life. He has come so far, I can hardly believe it. Every single day I think about his situation and how far he has come along at The Guild."

– Don M., Guild adult parent



Michelle Peters
Chair, Board of Trustees



Amy C. Sousa

Chief Executive Officer

#### Welcome

Dear Guild Community,

The year 2024 marked the conclusion of The Guild's three-year strategic plan, CARF re-accreditation, and the most individuals served in our 72-year history. It was a year of growth, development, and continuous learning for students, residents, and staff. We made improvements to clinical services, offered more community-based opportunities, and shared our learning across multiple regional and national conferences. At the same time, we experienced setbacks and acknowledged our imperfections, all in the service of building a stronger, more connected community committed to educating, encouraging, and empowering people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This report showcases remarkable accomplishments across The Guild and highlights our on-going resolve to create a future that honors the abilities and needs of those we serve. Students and residents actively participated in community life, from attending music festivals and volunteering to support their neighbors, to sailing on the Charles, shopping, and hosting house parties.

Finally, we celebrated the commitment and leadership of employees and community members. The focus of our staff on continuous improvement was evident through the awards they won and the degrees they earned. We were thrilled to recognize staff for their dedication to the adult residential program since it began 10 years ago. As always, The Guild's neighbors, business partners, and donors came together at multiple events to support and celebrate the individuals we serve.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who helps to make our mission possible. Together, we are creating brighter futures and greater opportunities for all.

With gratitude,

Michelle Peters
Chair, Board of Trustees

Amy C. Sousa
Chief Executive Officer





#### The Guild's Inclusive Playground Featured on WBZ-TV

The Guild's inclusive playground received recognition on WBZ-TV. The story captures the unique low benches, saucer swing, sensory activities, and partner slide in action. It shows how much joy the playground brings to The Guild community, and how important inclusivity is in the design of playgrounds everywhere. The playground received national recognition as one of the 10 best inclusive playgrounds in the country, following a study done by Soliant.





#### **Funding For Sensory-Friendly Spaces**

The Guild was awarded over \$90,000 in grants focused on expanding sensory-friendly spaces. Funding from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and The Sudbury Foundation will allow The Guild School to provide welcoming spaces and enhance the overall learning environment.

Sensory rooms offer a supportive space to manage distress and can help soothe individuals and regulate their mood or energy. By providing these new spaces, The Guild expects to increase voluntary breaks, decrease the use of time-out rooms, promote self-care, and encourage students to use more open, friendly, and accessible spaces that support emotional regulation.



The Guild's Suzanne Henderson, Director of Professional Development and Research, and Michael Clontz. Chief Operating Officer, presented with Relias at the ANCOR annual conference in New Mexico. The conference brought together professionals in the human services field from across the nation. Suzanne and Michael's workshop examined learnings from their work in executing a survey to The Guild's direct support staff, which serves as a data benchmark and as a snapshot of trends in the workforce. With a quantitative comparison against the national benchmark, The Guild will conduct data-driven planning for organizational improvements.

#### **Guild Staff Present on Family Engagement at Providers' Council Conference**

The Guild's clinical and family services departments presented at the Providers' Council's annual conference last fall. Their presentation focused on how a familycentered service framework can improve outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in residential programs.

Activities supporting family engagement include education, skill-building, involvement in direct clinical services. planning and decision-making, transition planning, and aftercare support. Presenters highlighted how The Guild employs these methods to engage families within both youth and adult programs. The workshop concluded with a discussion about the importance of using parent and caregiver feedback to inform clinical interventions.





### Without Walls Program Breaks Down Barriers for Students



Thank you for always keeping my child's best interest at the forefront."

- Guild youth parent

On a weekday last winter, The Guild School students strolled the aisles of the Market Basket in Burlington for butter, flour, and sugar. They had previewed store signs, layout, and other environmental features the day before. Students crossed items off their list as they went, taking care not to overlook any ingredients for the chocolate chip cookies they'd make that afternoon.

This trip was part of The Guild School's new Without Walls program, which officially launched in February. Without Walls educators facilitate the application of functional skills in community-based settings. The program focuses on building skills in support of independent living for youth transitioning to adulthood.

The Without Walls team carefully develops lesson plans tailored to students' unique interests and goals. Since the program began, students have developed and practiced skills in budgeting, scheduling, navigation, emergency planning, safety, and more outside of the classroom. Over the summer, they took an active role in picking their excursions based on class surveys, cost, and location details.

"The goal of the program is to get everyone involved, although participation might look different depending on the student," said Without Walls Educator Drew Harmon. "This program is about meeting students' needs when they're out in the community and thinking about what skills they'll need in their adult life to live as independently as possible."

Drew worked with one student who had a habit of spending all his weekly earnings each time he visited the store. Over time, Drew walked him through the budgeting process and helped him understand how saving would allow him to make even larger purchases later. The student now engages in budgeting on his own and puts money aside each week.

"This program fosters inclusion and allows students to build real-world skills beyond The Guild's walls," said Annie Willis, The Guild's Chief Education Officer. "By getting out into the community, students learn how to navigate the world, plan their day, and communicate with others who may not be as familiar with their communication styles."

The Without Walls program continues to empower The Guild School students to gain real-world experience and develop essential life skills. As the program grows, students are better equipped to embrace independence and confidently navigate their transition into adulthood.

#### **Guild Students Lend a Helping Hand at Hale Education**

On Monday mornings, a group of The Guild School students clock in at Hale Education, a scenic, 1100-acre network of trails, meadows, and swimming areas in Westwood and Dover, MA. During their shift, students roll up their sleeves and help with trail beautification, cabin maintenance, and firewood clearing projects. The Guild School's vocational program provides students with weekly pay for their work at Hale.

"When I started in my role at The Guild, I wanted to marry community skills and



There's so much benefit to getting outside and exploring nature, so I thought Hale would be the perfect partnership for us to build."

engagement with potential vocational opportunities. There's so much benefit to getting outside and exploring nature, so I thought Hale would be the perfect partnership for us to build," said Laurel Simpson, Admissions Manager.

Hale Education is widely recognized for its youth programs, family and community activities, and professional development opportunities. Laurel invited Hale's Director of Operations, Tyler Simpson, to lead a workshop on interview skills. Upon completion of the lesson, he offered each student the opportunity to interview with him before beginning their weekly work shifts.

"The partnership with The Guild has been wonderful. Each week, we have a great group of students that come and help us tackle projects that we often don't have time to get to, but make a big difference," said Tyler. "It has been a pleasure hosting and engaging with the students and teachers over the past few years."

Thanks to their hard work and the staffing support of The Guild's education and clinical teams, the students have kept up their Monday commitment for two years. In September 2023, the group's dedication was recognized when they were awarded Volunteer of the Year at Hale's annual Fall Equinox party, which brought together Hale's staff, Board, and community partners.

"We're excited about the potential of hosting more community-building days and events at Hale," said Laurel. "Moving forward, our goal is to be able to accommodate all students who would like to get involved with work at Hale. We've gotten great feedback from students and families alike, so we'd love to open up this opportunity to as many as we can."



# Adult Behavioral Services: Increasing Skills, Improving Lives

The Guild's adult behavioral services team uses Positive Behavior Supports and the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis to assist adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in engaging in socially adaptive, safe behavior.

"I view our role as setting up supports so the individuals we work with can be engaged members of their community at the level of independence that makes sense for them," said Nikki Bryant, Behavior Clinician.

At times, this means focusing on environmental modifications, preventative strategies, and teaching desired and replacement behaviors that individuals can engage in to meet their needs safely. Teaching these behaviors often involves discussing how healthy coping skills, like going for a walk or working on a creative activity, can be used to channel emotions.

"Since everyone we work with is over 22, the behaviors they're engaging in are not typically new. As adult services providers, we have an opportunity to accept that some behaviors are part of who these individuals are, so we ask ourselves how we can support the environment to set them up for success," said Sydney Mountzouris, Behavior Clinician.

The Guild's behavioral clinicians get to know individuals' needs and passions by working with them one-on-one. They put together enriching activities and itineraries All of The Guild's behavioral clinicians get to know individuals' needs and passions by working with them one-on-one and devoting time and attention to each person."

for community-based experiences that residential staff use to structure each day. Adult residents have additional opportunities to learn life skills through workshops on healthy relationships and sexuality, self-advocacy courses with Mass Advocates Standing Strong, and community engagement activities.

Many adult residents attend day programs. However, some are on waitlists due to sector-wide funding and staffing shortages. Recognizing that a lack of access to day services can result in behavioral regression, boredom, and loss of social skills, Nikki spearheaded a weekly music therapy program for Guild residents to engage in meaningful social and educational activities. Because of this unwavering commitment to inclusivity, Nikki was recognized as an Outstanding Provider by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Metro North Office earlier this year.



#### The Search for Acceptance and Belonging

When Sue's son Patrick was diagnosed with autism, her vision for her family changed drastically. "I learned a lot from Pat about child development, how communication is different from 'talking,' and about unconditional love," she says.

Sue struggled with finding public spaces where her autistic son felt accepted. She shares the story of attending her other son's baseball game with Patrick:

Pat was having what we called a "loud day," but I didn't think it would be a big problem because there was always a lot of noise and commotion at these games. Pretty soon, he started standing up frequently, vocalizing, and flapping his hands. He often did that if he was excited, or anxious. or needed to let off steam.

To my surprise, some guy sitting next to Patrick leaned toward me and said. "You know, he doesn't belong here. You should take him somewhere else." This shocked, angered, and embarrassed me. I just wanted to take the two kids and LEAVE, to become invisible.

Episodes like that happened periodically through the years. They weren't frequent, but they weren't rare, either. They created a feeling of isolation, like we didn't belong anywhere."

Eventually, Patrick came to The Guild after graduating from a specialized learning school and living in a group home. His

medical needs decreased with additional nursing, medication supervision, and trained staff. Patrick and his family attend The Guild's annual awards, which can be a loud and busy environment. However, Sue and her family have had a different experience than before:

I've often wondered why I feel so good at these award nights. There's a lot of loud noise, a lot of people coming and going, like that baseball game I described. But, this time there's a feeling of acceptance and belonging. I realized that every family in the room has known the same struggles, the same frustrations as our family. There is no judgement.

It feels great to be there. It's true, The Guild helps students and adults achieve their full potential and builds a great quality of life for each individual. But they also embrace the families as part of their community, and that sets them apart."

Parents like Sue and individuals like Patrick are not always met with open arms. Whether it's helping build new skills, creating structured and meaningful days, or connecting parents with support, The Guild strives to create safe and inclusive spaces where everyone can express themselves.





# Adult Program Celebrates 10th Anniversary

In the spring of 2014, four former students of The Guild School and a fifth adult moved into The Guild's first adult residential home in Burlington, MA. The same five adults are still living together ten years later, along with several of The Guild staff that have supported their daily needs since day one.

The Guild added four more residences within a year of opening that first home. Today, The Guild supports 74 adults across 15 homes. All of the houses managed by The Guild are selected based on the unique needs of the adults who live there. Each has a different dynamic and backstory, underscoring the individuality and diversity of our residents.

Residents are supported not only by 24/7 residential staff, nurse case managers, clinicians, and their own families but also by an "extended family" made up of their housemates and their housemates' families. Over the years, The Guild residents and their families become well acquainted with each other, sharing daily experiences, and rallying around each other during important moments and life changes. The Guild is dedicated to ensuring adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the opportunity to be fully integrated in their community, maximizing their quality of life.



"The staff work really hard to build community within each home and in the surrounding town," says Maureen Costello-Shea, Chief Program Officer. Although most community members welcome The Guild, there can be challenges. Fortunately, The Guild staff are highly committed to fostering these relationships, so that the adults in The Guild's care can be active, contributing members of their local communities. Some adults join the local YMCA, participate in places of worship, attend events, build friendships with neighbors, and volunteer to support those in need.

Many of the adults attend day or employment programs during the week. However, these programs increasingly have long waitlists. The Guild and other organizations face obstacles to keeping up with the high level of need. Looking ahead, The staff work really hard to build community within each home and in the surrounding town."

The Guild plans to renovate some existing homes in the short-term and explore long-term plans for specialized residences that will continue to enhance the quality of life for residents as they age. The adult program has accomplished a great deal in the last 10 years, due to the dedicated staff that have grown with the program and helped shape it along the way.

#### **Guild Programs Receive Prestigious Accreditation**



It is very evident that these staff members are committed to the mission and vision of the organization and go above and beyond to provide quality services."

The Guild received its second consecutive accreditation for youth and adult residential programs from CARF International, an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services. The CARF accreditation, the highest level of its kind, is valid for a three-year period.

After a rigorous peer-review process and surveyors visit, The Guild demonstrated its commitment to offering programs and services that are measurable, accountable, and of the highest quality. In the final accreditation report, CARF surveyors commended The Guild for investing fully in person-centered service delivery, focusing on residents' unique needs and desires. CARF also praised The Guild for taking a multidisciplinary traumainformed approach to care that addresses each resident's holistic needs.

"The organization's direct service staff members appear to have genuine and caring relationships with the residents. It is very evident that these staff members are committed to the mission and vision of the organization and go above and beyond to provide quality services," the report stated.

CARF surveyors noted that The Guild pays close attention to residents' rights and actively engages staff, caregivers, and residents in regular discussions about what constitutes these rights. The Guild was also complimented for its strong benefits program, investment in staff members' professional development,

commitment to increasing diversity in leadership roles, and practice of promoting employees internally to create attainable career ladders for staff.

When initially awarded CARF accreditation in 2020, surveyors were impressed by The Guild's Strategic Plan, Diversity Plan, and reduction in staff turnover. The surveyors at the time attributed The Guild's ongoing efforts to improve base wages, benefits, supervision, and representative diversity as underlying reasons for The Guild's successes in these areas.

Receiving this prestigious accreditation for a second time reflects The Guild's commitment to enhancing individuals' quality of life and ongoing improvement of programming. This achievement is only possible because of the powerful collaboration between staff, families, and individuals served.

Founded in 1966 as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, CARF International is an accrediting body that establishes person-focused standards to help organizations to measure and improve the quality of their programs and services.



# **Keeping Accessibility in Mind Offers New Opportunities for Neurodiverse Shoppers and Staff**

A trip to the store means blinking lights, crowded aisles, kaleidoscopic décor, a cacophony of blaring music, overhead pages, and muttering crowds. Research shows that 47% of shoppers buy all or most of their gifts from the comfort of their electronic devices, while 64% of people with autism avoid going to stores. With consumer spending starting to surge back to or above pre-pandemic levels, now is the time to implement the principles of universal design in retail and invite a broader audience to shop more comfortably.

In 2023, Walmart announced efforts to create calmer shopping experiences during designated hours by "setting in-store TV walls to a static image, turning off the radio, and lowering the store lights."

Walmart anticipated that these sensoryfriendly hours would be "especially beneficial to neurodiverse individuals both customers and employees—with sensory disabilities."

Brands have made the end products themselves more accessible. Pottery Barn recently launched a new line designed for disabilities and aging in place. The items feature grab rails, armrests to aid in sitting and standing, and one-handed hardware.

Going beyond the shopping experience, Starbucks opened its first storefront with sensory-friendly acoustics and lighting, power-operated doors, and inclusive equipment design in early 2024.

"Starbucks has taken the sensory-friendly successes of Target and Walmart and gone the extra mile by including innovations for both customers and employees," said The Guild's CEO Amy Sousa. "Employment rates are significantly lower for people with disabilities (39.6%) compared to those without (76.8%)."

Home Depot partnered with autism advocacy organizations to make hiring more accessible by translating the steps into clearer language and including detailed descriptions of accommodations available for employees.

For many, heightened sensory cues in stores increase the risk of sensory overload, deterring them from shopping altogether. Those with autism or sensory processing difficulties are especially susceptible to becoming overstimulated. Given that over 5 million adults and 1 in 36 children have autism, companies risk missing a huge segment of the population when they fail to create sensory-friendly opportunities.

The implementation of universal design principles and addition of sensory-friendly hours marks an important moment in a consumer landscape that is increasingly client-centric. Accommodating neurodiverse shoppers will likely be good for the bottom line, but more importantly, it's the right thing to do.

Research shows that 47% of shoppers buy all or most of their gifts from the comfort of their electronic devices, while 64% of people with autism avoid going to stores."

#### The Sky's the Limit for Guild School Nurse Sandra Kalambayi

When Sandra Kalambayi started at The Guild in 2019 as an Overnight Residential Assistant with Sassafras House, she wasn't imagining a future in nursing.

"It was curiosity that brought me to this field. I come from a background where talking about mental health isn't common," said Sandra. "I knew I wanted to do something that would allow me to help and serve people. It turns out, I liked working in this field and decided to stay."

The first few months at The Guild were an adjustment. She had adapted to a new country (and harsh New England winters) after moving from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Now, Sandra had to learn how to best work with the individuals in her care. Along with supportive colleagues, patience and a commitment to learning helped her succeed.

"Of course, there are challenging days, but I tell myself I must do better every day. I can learn from yesterday's mistakes and be patient with myself and the students," she said.

In 2021, Sandra served as a Medical Assistant at The Guild School for nine months. Here. she realized her passion for assessing and treating students' medical needs. She was accepted into the nursing school at St. Joseph's in Nashua, New Hampshire, and tuition was completely reimbursed

by The Guild. Sandra continued working overnight shifts at The Guild for two years while balancing classes, homework, and practicum rotations.

"I would work mostly on the weekends and then go to school on Monday. It was hard, but I received a lot of support from my colleagues at Burlington House, The Guild's nursing team, and Human Resources. Everyone was so encouraging and understanding if I needed to change my schedule," she said.

After two years of late nights and early mornings studying, Sandra graduated with her Associate Degree in nursing and accepted the position of School Nurse. For those just getting started in the field, Sandra emphasizes the importance of getting out of your comfort zone.

"I was scared to go to nursing school, but then I jumped in and did it. I knew I could do it because I had succeeded in my roles at The Guild even though I was initially intimidated. I'm pushing myself to face my fears—maybe one day I'll skydive!"



I was scared to go to nursing school, but then I jumped in and did it. I knew I could do it because I had succeeded in my roles at The Guild."

#### **Guild School Graduates**









Allyson

Jacob

Justice

Kaelynn









Marcus

Raekwon

Robert

Timothy

Not pictured: Cody, Erin, and Jonathan

#### Leadership

#### **Senior Leadership**

Amy C. Sousa, PhD Chief Executive Officer

Michael J. Clontz, MSW, LICSW Chief Operating Officer

Maureen Costello-Shea, MEd Chief Program Officer

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The Guild for Human Services Board of Trustees (Not pictured: Michael McDonnell, Will Kinlaw, and Thomas P. Corcoran)



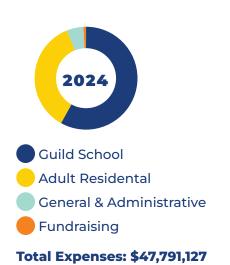


#### **Financials**

#### **Financial Activities**

REVENUE	2023	2024
Tuition	\$30,307,201	\$33,127,167
Service Fees	\$12,853,388	\$15,331,142
Contributions	\$290,497	\$465,527
Interest & Dividends	\$102,390	\$261,291
Net Realized & Unrealized Gains	\$1,118,169	\$2,082,534
Other	\$112,195	\$23,276
Total Revenue	\$44,783,840	\$51,290,937

# Quild School Adult Residental General & Administrative Fundraising Total Expenses: \$42,518,413



#### **Statement of Financial Position**

ASSETS	2023	2024
Cash	\$2,390,680	\$3,457,602
Accounts Receivables	\$4,179,065	\$3,655,337
Investments	\$13,023,685	\$17,049,748
Prepaid Expenses	\$344,863	\$275,803
Property & Equipment	\$25,758,840	\$28,284,326
Other Assets	\$3,602,607	\$3,414,785
Total Assets	\$49,299,740	\$56,137,601

State reimbursement covers almost all direct costs associated with The Guild School and residences but does not cover expenditures for capital renovations, program innovation, vacations and travel, and quality-of-life enhancements. The Guild relies on annual contributions from individuals, businesses, and grant-making institutions to support important program and capital expenses each year.

#### **Thank You to Our Donors**

JULY 1, 2023 - JUNE 30, 2024

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#### In Memory of Daniel Clark

Susan Caruso Maureen Costello-Shea Norma and Stephen Jaynes Lorraine Losanno

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Goulston and Storrs Jan's Janitorial

#### **Affiliations and Memberships**

Access Recreation New England Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts American Art Therapy Association Amplifi Adaptive Music **Artists for Humanity** Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers Belmont/Watertown S.P.O.R.T. **CARF** International Concord Chamber of Commerce Concord Recreation Department Courageous Sailing CVS Internship Program

Department of Conservation and Recreation Universal Access Program Ellie Bloom Special Olympics through Charles River Center Farmer's Helpers, LLC; Chip-in Farm Gaining Ground Goldfish Swim Hale Outdoor Education International Institute of New England LaVida Center for Outdoor Education and Leadership Lifeworks Special Olympics Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong

Massachusetts Association of Approved Special **Education Schools** Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative at Middlesex Community College Merrimack Valley YMCA Miracle League of Massachusetts New Leaf Cafe Newton Athletes Unlimited North American Drama Therapy Association Northeast Passage Open Table Food Pantry, Maynard Pets and People Foundation Platform to Play Profound Autism Alliance

Providers' Council
Revival Café + Kitchen
Riverside Community Care
Special Olympics
Massachusetts
Sudbury Red Sox
Umbrella Arts
Walden Woods Project
Waverley Oaks Athletic Club
Waypoint Adventure
YMCA of Metro North
YMCA of Metrowest

#### At A Glance

#### 10 staff and 12 residents

who have been with The Guild since the adult program began in 2014

74 adults living in The Guild residences

#### 21 Without Walls

community-based learning activities at The Guild School between February and June

The Guild direct support staff feel

50%

more prepared than the national average. based on the provided training and resources

\$470,000+

raised to support The Guild's programming

26 adult residents participated in Waypoint Adventures programs

89% of parents/guardians are satisfied with supports child receives at The Guild School

31% of staff in leadership are People of Color

90 students are enrolled in The Guild School

It's been a real pleasure watching my son transition into adult housing and you really could not have done a better job. So thank you all so much for all that you do!"

- Guild youth parent



The Guild for Human Services 521 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742 GuildHumanServices.org











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