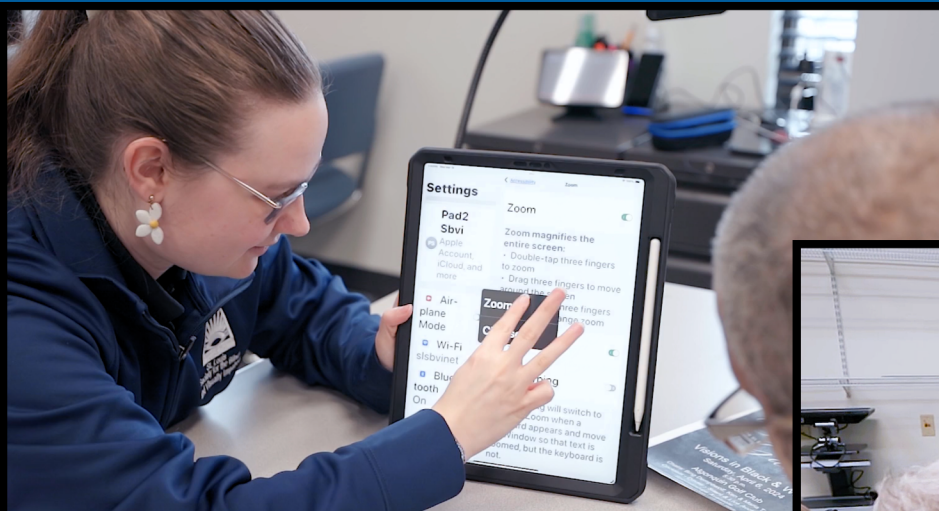




St. Louis Society for the
Blind and Visually Impaired

IMPACT REPORT 2025



Enhancing Independence
Empowering Individuals
Enriching Lives

OUR MISSION

The Society enhances independence, empowers individuals, and enriches the lives of people who are visually impaired or blind.

OUR VISION

A community where vision loss is not a barrier to a full life

OUR VALUES

Dignity and Respect - For each person and their unique goals

Quality and Excellence - In the services we provide

Compassion - With empathy and optimism

Collaboration - With all stakeholders, in a spirit of teamwork

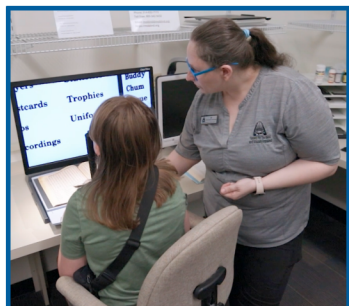
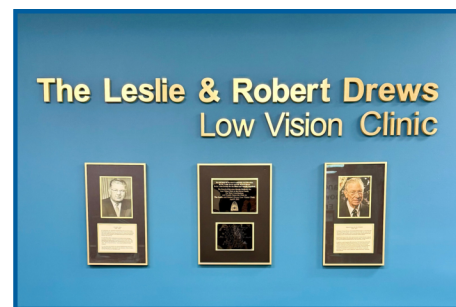
Dedication - To our mission, vision and values

Innovation - In our pursuit of excellence

OUR SERVICES

- **Low Vision Clinic/Functional Vision Assessments**
- **Assistive Technology**
- **Occupational Therapy**
- **Orientation and Mobility Services**
- **Transportation**
- **Support and Peer Groups**
- **Sight Solutions Shop/Low Vision Aids**
- **Community Resources and Referrals**

The Drews Low Vision Clinic is staffed by doctors of optometry and occupational therapists who specialize in low vision conditions and needs. The clinic provides functional vision assessments that determine if there are prescriptive or non-prescriptive vision aids that will help clients best utilize their remaining sight.



Occupational Therapy improves capabilities for daily living tasks and identifies non-prescriptive aids such as magnifiers, lighting, and electronic zoom magnification devices.

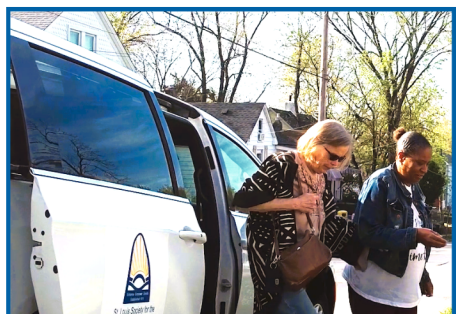
Orientation and Mobility Services offer skills and strategies to help navigate in the home and community.



Assistive Technology helps clients with internet and email, computer training, screen magnification, speech output software, and use of accessibility features on cell phones and tablets.

Transportation Services are provided for Society clients Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. to assist with medical appointments, grocery shopping, and other needs.

The Sight Solutions Shop offers a wide range of low vision items, home and kitchen aids, task lighting, mobility canes, magnification and much more.



HOW IS VISION LOSS IMPACTING YOUR DAY?

This is a question that we ask in welcoming people to the St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Perhaps vision loss has made meal preparation, navigation of their home or neighborhood, reading, or personal care difficult. While the response to this question may vary, our response remains consistent: **The Society is here to provide help, hope and solutions to individuals who are experiencing vision loss.**

Vision loss has an immense impact on an individual's life. The Society's programs and services empower individuals with vision loss to continue participating in the activities that are most important to them and achieve their goals to live confidently and independently.



We help through our Drews Low Vision Clinic that provides functional vision assessments and optical aids so that clients can maximize and best utilize their remaining sight.



We help through rehabilitative therapies that support our clients in developing new skills and adapting their approaches to daily activities.



We provide transportation services for medical appointments and many other daily living needs.



We build knowledge and abilities in the use of new technologies so that our clients can navigate accessibility features on their computers, smart phones, tablets and other devices.



We offer a broad range of magnification, lighting, and other vision aids through our Sight Solutions Shop.



We strengthen our clients' resilience through peer and support groups, recreation, and many other opportunities to stay connected to each other and the community.

The 2025 Impact Report highlights the Society's continued strength in service, commitment to our clients, and exemplary outcomes. We deeply appreciate our clients' confidence and trust in the Society's care, honor the outstanding work of our staff and volunteers, commend the leadership of our Board of Directors, and extend our infinite gratitude for the generous support of our donors and community.

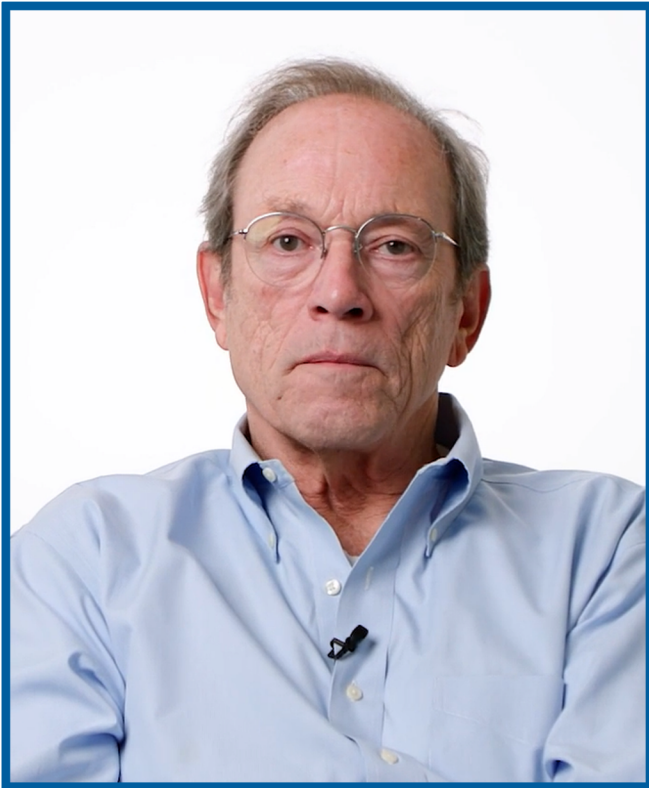


Sharon Mertzlufft
President and C.E.O.



Elizabeth Kauffman
Board Chair

ENHANCING INDEPENDENCE



Bill Preiss

“I’m very fearful of vision loss.” Those were the first words that Bill Preiss said to a social worker at St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Bill has cone-rod dystrophy, a condition that causes progressive vision loss.

In his own words...

“It’s a very scary thing when you lose your sight. You don’t know what direction to turn in. What might be very small to someone else, to someone who is losing their sight, it’s huge.

I experienced a difficult situation where I needed to ask someone for help. I frankly felt a little embarrassed. It’s the stigma of blindness being a disability rather than a lifestyle.

Six years ago, I was fearful of losing my sight. Now all I can say is the Society is amazing. It’s an unbelievable service offered in the St. Louis region.”



Dr. Kate Boland working with Bill in the Society’s low vision clinic

EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS



Polly Willard

Polly Willard has been a client since 2010. She was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa at the age of forty-one. She teaches a poetry class through Washington University's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and she also taught a six-week class at Society for fellow clients.

In her own words...

"I've always had night blindness, and I figured everybody did. I had studied painting in graduate school and was extremely excited to start working at the Saint Louis Art Museum.

One day I was driving into the parking lot on a bright sunny day. When I went into the art museum my eyes just started to flicker in the most amazing, shocking way. It was almost like a strobe light. It really frightened me.

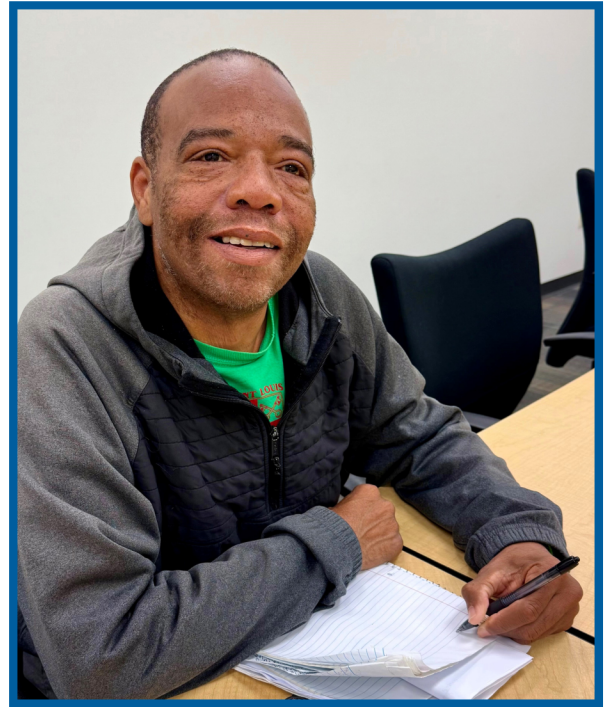
Society means a lot to me, because it's a place where I know I can get help and I know I can count on them. It's one of the key organizations for people who are visually impaired and need to know about all their services and the encouragement that they offer. It's really hard being out here in the sighted world going blind and feeling like you're on your own. I know where I can go to get that lift and that encouragement to keep on going."

ENRICHING QUALITY OF LIFE

Douglas Carter has been a client since 2021. Diagnosed with Diabetic Retinopathy, he is blind in the left eye, with low vision in the right.

In his own words...

“As my vision worsened, my mom started searching online for help. She found St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired and called. I’ve used many of their services including low vision exams, I participated in the Support Group and I really like attending the activities and peer groups here.



Douglas Carter

In 2023, I heard through Society’s activity line that there was going to be a poetry class offered by a fellow client, so I decided to take it, and it’s got me writing again.”

Douglas created a poem about his experience at the Society:

This Place

...is not hard to find with assets to help you survive.

This Place

...supports when you’re trying to get back in stride.

This Place

...has people with common goals.

This Place

...and a relationship with God and church helps uplift my soul.

IMPACT IN OUR CLIENTS' LIVES

The Society's specialized programs achieve positive outcomes. Our clients' successes are measured in the achievement of their personal goals.

Number of Clients Served **1,141**

Low Vision Clinic **99%**

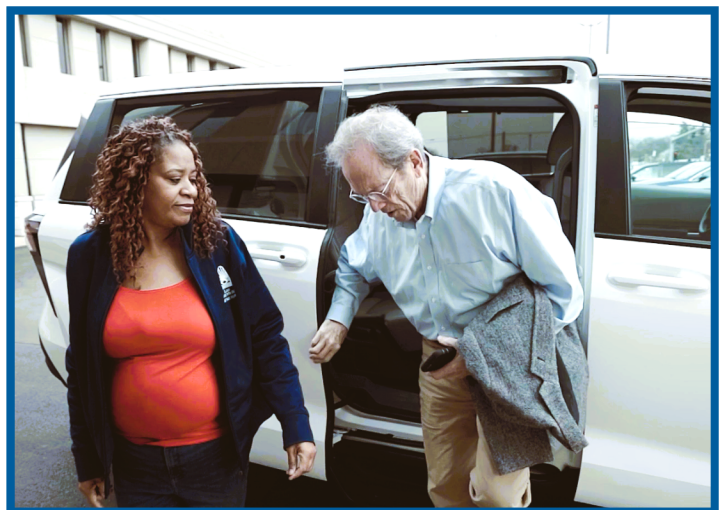
Occupational Therapy **97%**

Orientation and Mobility **97%**

Assistive Technology **94%**

Community Services and Referrals **97%**

Transportation Trips **2,298**



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Raising awareness, making connections, and encouraging participation in the Society's programs and services are core goals of our community outreach initiatives. Society staff, Board members, and volunteers participated in 54 community outreach presentations in 2025 that took place across the Greater St. Louis region and reached more than 1,000 people.



**Presentation at Gambrill Gardens
Senior Living**



**Community Outreach Specialist,
Judy Redlich and her guide dog present at
Oak Bend Library (Aging Ahead)**



**Society leaders speak to the
St. Louis Metropolitan Ministry
Clergy Coalition**

**Presentation at the
Leber Hereditary
Optic Neuropathy
(LHON) 2025
Conference**



**North County residents attend a
presentation at the Lewis & Clark
Library (Aging Ahead)**



CLIENT ENRICHMENT EVENTS

A variety of events and activities hosted by the Society throughout the year respond to our clients' interests and provide opportunities for them to experience the community's cultural, nature, and sports venues.

Sporting events included cheering on the St. Louis Battlehawks and attending the St. Louis Cardinals Disability Pride Night at the Ballpark.

May 18: St. Louis Battlehawks Experience

The experience included tickets to the game and the High-5 Tunnel in which our clients greeted the players as they came out to the field for the game.



July 10: Disability Pride Night at the Ballpark

Society provided free tickets to 25 guests.



Artistic experiences included a mosaic party at YUCANDU and The Tactile Gallery at Saint Louis University

June 26: YUCANDU Mosaic Party



SLSBVI clients gather around a large table as they create their own mosaics.

October 1: Connecting with Art: The Tactile Gallery at SLU



Client Annette Nowakowski enjoys the tactile gallery at SLU.

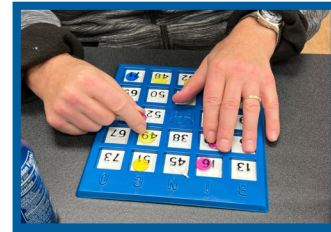
CLIENT ENRICHMENT EVENTS (CONT.)

Musical and cultural experiences included Muny tickets, Kansas and 38 Special, with Jefferson Starship at the Fabulous Fox Theatre, Chuck Berry Birthday Bash at Powell Symphony Hall and RAIN-A Beatles Christmas Tribute at the Fabulous Fox Theatre.



Clients Bob Jaco and Johnnie Cochran with guests enjoy Dear Evan Hansen at the Muny.

Peer Groups led by Society clients offer opportunities for fun and comradery as clients gather monthly to play games or learn about new assistive technology, such as GAB (Games Accessible for Blindness) and I CAN TECH.



Accessible BINGO is a favorite among Society clients

June 6: Client Picnic



Rained out, but still a large crowd



Rhonda Jones takes a chance on Jenga.



Sheaila Washington wins a door prize.

December 5: Client Holiday Party



Another year, another full house!



Terry Nord provided the music for our singalong.



Rebecca Tussey enjoyed the food.

2025 VISIONARY GALA: VISIONS IN BLACK AND WHITE

More than 250 guests gathered on Saturday, April 26, 2025, at the Hilton St. Louis Frontenac for the Society's annual Visionary Gala.



**Scott and Kim Drost,
Gala Co-Chairs**



**Jasmine Huda,
Emcee**

Chaired by Kim and Scott Drost, the Society's premier annual event raised more than \$220,000 and included a cocktail reception, dinner, silent and live auctions, a fund-the-need paddle raise, and entertainment. Local Fox 2 News anchor and journalist, Jasmine Huda, served as emcee for the evening. Gala guests enjoyed an inspiring performance by Holly Connor, a vocalist, actor, musician, and student at Webster University. Holly dazzled the audience with her performance of a trio of songs, and her work to increase awareness and inclusion in the arts.



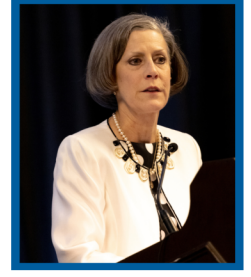
Holly Connor, Vocalist

2025 VISIONARY GALA: VISIONS IN BLACK AND WHITE (CONT.)

The Society's Board Chair, Elizabeth Kauffman, and President and C.E.O., Sharon Mertzlufft, extended their appreciation to the crowd for their participation, generosity and outstanding support of the Society.



Elizabeth Kauffman
Board Chair



Sharon Mertzlufft
President and C.E.O.

The 2025 Visionary Gala also recognized the centennial for the Society's Leslie Dana Gold Medal, which is awarded to honor meritorious service for the conservation of eyesight, research and instruction in ophthalmology, and scientific or medical discoveries of exceptional importance to the conservation of vision. The 2025 Leslie Dana Gold Medal was presented to J. William Harbour, MD, in honor of his research and surgical advancements in ocular oncology. Dr. Harbour is Professor and Chair of the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, TX.



Dr. James Bobrow, Ophthalmologist and Society Board member presents the Leslie Dana Gold Medal to J. William Harbour, MD

Brenda Wendling, MSW, LCSW, received the 2025 Community Light Award in honor of her work that has made immeasurable impact in the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired. Wendling's career in social work spanned more than four decades, including nearly 25 years on the staff of St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired.



Gala Co-chairs, Kim and Scott Drost present the Community Light Award to Brenda Wendling, MSW, LCSW

The Visionary Gala celebrated our clients' successes in achieving their goals and our community's strong support of the Society's programs and services.

2025 VISIONARY GALA: VISIONS IN BLACK AND WHITE (CONT.)



IN GRATITUDE TO OUR DONORS

Gifts received January 1 - December 31, 2025

Helen Keller Society - Champion (\$25,000+)

Margaret Butler Trust
Mrs. Vicki Dillon
Estate of Evelyn Dolce, on behalf of Jo-Ann and Bill Benson
Jefferson Foundation
Deaconess Foundation, St. Louis Seniors Community Revitalization
and Development Fund, Community Health Commission
of Missouri
The Estate of Margaret Catherine Grant
Dr. Kenneth Mares
In Honor of Jeanne and John Sauer
Gillian Roper-Hall Waltman

Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis
The Retina Institute
Mr. and Mrs. Rodger Riney
Katherine Rutter Charitable Foundation
Mr. Charlie Schultz
Dr. and Mrs. Bradley Smith
Torrid Foundation
Mr. Douglas Tracy
Mrs. Elizabeth Wilmsen

Helen Keller Society - Benefactor (\$15,000 - \$24,999)

American Direct Marketing Resources, LLC
Drs. Nanci and James Bobrow
East Missouri Foundation
Ms. Juanita Hinshaw
Estate of Della and Vernon Kramme
William R. Orthwein, Jr. and Laura Rand Orthwein Foundation
Cornelia L. Vogel Trust

Visionary Circle (\$1,000 - \$4,999)

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Dr. and Mrs. Kevin Blinder
The Boeing Company
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Ms. Judith Bradford
Ms. Donna Calamia
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Ms. Michelle Gerhard Glass
Dr. and Mrs. John P. Goltschman
Mrs. Jean Gray
Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Greenlaw

Helen Keller Society - Beacon (\$5,000 - \$14,999)

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Gertrude and William A. Bernoudy Foundation
Bethesda Health Group, Inc.
Dr. and Mrs. Sean Breit
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The David B. Lichtenstein Foundation
Lighthouse for the Blind - St. Louis
Lutheran Foundation of St. Louis
Mariner Foundation
Mr. and Mrs. Michael McKinnis
Mr. David F. Morris and Mr. Joey Neal
Mrs. Joan Musbach
Dr. Susan Pittman

Visionary Circle (continued)

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Mrs. Brenda Jappa
Dr. Sharon L. Jick and Mr. Elia Ellis
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Mr. and Mrs. Corey Kilkelly
Ms. Jo Ann Kindle
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Lions Club of Kirkwood, MO
Lions Eye Foundation of District 26-M2
Mariner Wealth Advisors - St. Louis LLC
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Sharon and Robert Mertzluft
Drs. Judith and David R. Meyer
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Felicia Hatcher, Linda Albanese, Erika Wegman,
David Hans
Great Expectations Fund
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Mr. Thomas J. Maginnis
Robert H. Mayer
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Ms. Susan Meissel
Karen and Bill Meldrum

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Enterprise Bank & Trust
United Workers For The Blind of Missouri
Vollmar Family
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Webster Groves Lions Club
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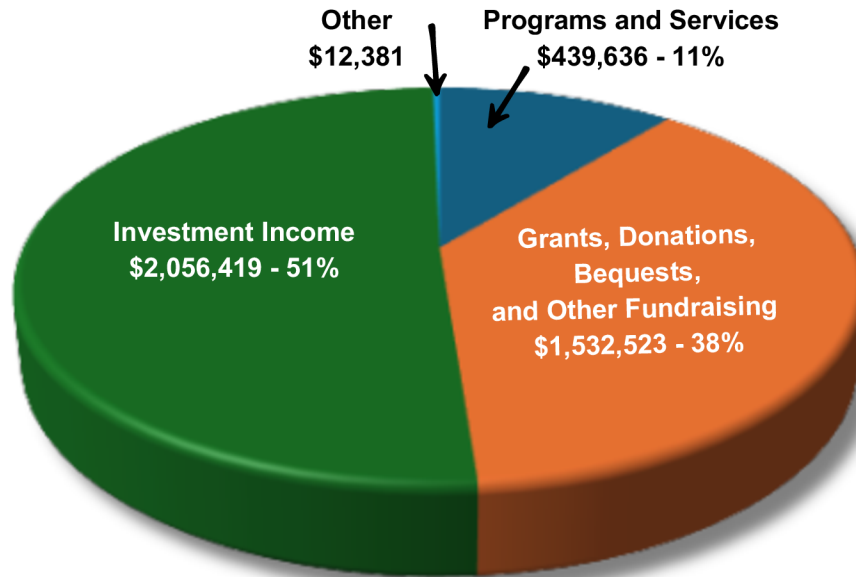
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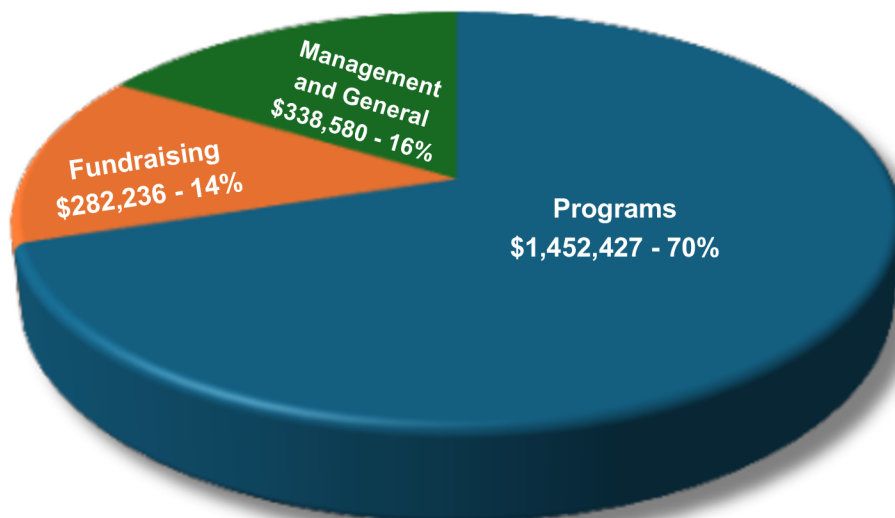
Year Ended December 31, 2025

Revenues and Other Support



Total: \$4,040,959

Operating Expenses



Total: \$2,073,243



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