



Year in Review FY 2022

Elevating our commitment to provide premier quality services to the growing need of those challenged by developmental disabilities and autism

Our year in review



Fiscal Year 2022 is now complete and in many ways, the year felt like a continuation of the previous year with slight modifications. The challenges of dealing with COVID changed from a pandemic to an endemic, something we all have learned to deal with. The lack of available staff for open jobs that started two years ago has become the norm for many of us today. With this as a representation of today's environment, it helps explain our slogan for the coming year, which is "Moving forward challenges us all...Experience has taught us that we can!"

Despite headwinds coming our way, Little Friends was able to remain strong and continue to provide a robust program of services to children, adults, and families that we serve. We are especially appreciative of the incredible support we have received from individuals and businesses throughout the year. It is this support that has directly provided us the opportunity to reinvest in new technologies and physical space improvements that we were needed.

I hope you enjoy learning about our organization's accomplishments this past year. I'm especially proud of our employees who give of themselves so much and want to recognize the "heavy lifting" they do every day to make the lives better for the children, adults, and families we serve.

Thank you for your continued support!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike".

Mike Briggs, President & CEO





A trusted resource

Little Friends helps children, adults, families with autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities who need support. With a foundation based upon providing dignity and respect for the individual, we strive to improve communication skills, life skills, develop independence and confidence, provide a life of quality and meaning, in a safe, healthy and happy environment.

The outcomes we strive for are cumulative and reflect a building of skills over time. It is our hope and aspiration that our actions translate into Little Friends being considered a *trusted resource*. We do this through our Center for Autism, Educational Services, Community Day Services, Community Living Services, and Respite Family Services.



442 staff

Administration
Center for Autism
Community Day Program
Educational Services
Residential Program
Respite Family Services



57 years

est. 1965



10 counties
51 school districts



900

adults, children, &
family members
served by programs



\$21MM

State = 40%
Districts = 30%
Private = 21%
Philanthropy = 9%

Vision

To be recognized as one of the premier providers of services in the state of Illinois addressing the needs of children, adults, and families challenged by autism and intellectual/developmental disabilities. To provide children and parents through direct services and alliance partners the most robust offering of clinical and research support in the field of autism.

Mission

Empowering people of all ages experiencing autism, intellectual and emotional disabilities and their families, to live, learn, work, and thrive in their communities.



Little Friends suite of services extends from supporting a family through a young child's diagnosis, to an adolescent in school, from a young adult's vocational training to an elderly resident's independent living. This community then becomes a family through one's lifetime.

This continuum of care is what makes our agency unique and a lasting resource to the **children**, **adults** and **families** we serve, whenever they need us.

A continuum of care



Children's services

Little Friends Center for Autism

This year, our Center for Autism, led under the guidance of a new director, successfully expanded our therapeutic services.

ABA – Applied Behavior Analysis – Therapy was offered to additional clients ranging from 3 to 13 years of age. New skills were built, behaviors adapted, and families saw growth and gained independence in their children. Clinic based Speech and Occupational Therapies were reintroduced at the Center, often supporting goals and skills being addressed in the school setting.

Our Center for Autism also entered into a partnership this year with Northwestern University to create a registry connecting families with autism research. By creating this infrastructure, the goal is to help families develop a deeper sense of the cognitive and biological mechanisms underlying autism and related neurodevelopmental conditions and, in the end, better understanding.





"Respite has had such a positive impact on our family. We love that our kids can socialize with other families that share our similarities. It give me comfort knowing he is in good hands"

Respite Family Services

Little Friends Respite Family Services program remained free to participating families for the third year in a row thanks to generous donors. Our program was able to serve more families this year than ever before and we are looking to expand to accommodate additional dates and times.

This essential program provides caregivers of children with disabilities and reprieve from the stress of daily life. Families have the peace of mind knowing their child, along with their siblings, are being cared for in a safe environment while playing and learning alongside others.

Children's services

Educational Programming

Little Friends Krejci Academy has been an Illinois State Board of Education Approved Nonpublic School Entity for over 50 years. We are proud of this accomplishment and look to further the support we provide our students.

We continue to emphasize developing our students' independence, their self-determination, and their ability to advocate for themselves. Ultimately, our goal is to prepare the children we serve to be as independent as possible so that they can maximize their opportunities in their future when school support no longer exists.

In addition to best practice updates in our educational program, we have focused on adding more opportunities to support those students 18-22 who will soon be transitioning to adulthood. Vocational exploration and learning are made possible in our new PAES Lab, through our electronics recycling program, and at our life skills training apartment and outdoor gardens.

Our Krejci Academy staff also celebrated being recognized as a National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET) School of Excellence for the fourth consecutive year.



"Because children with autism will one day be adults with autism. Everyone deserves supports to live the best quality of life possible."

-Kerry Magro, autistic adult and advocate



Adult services

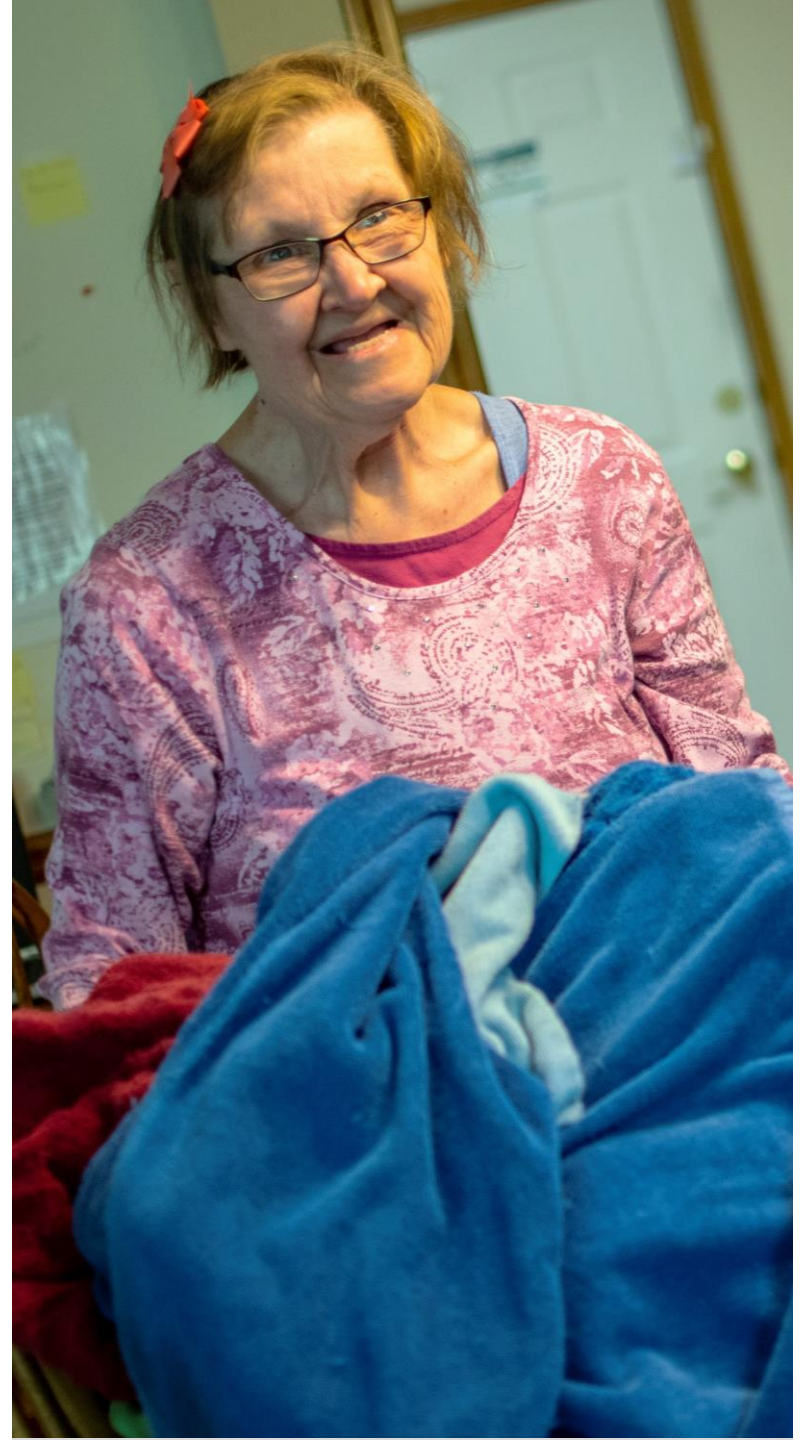


At Little Friends, we take great pride in the comprehensive programs we have provided for adults with autism and other developmental disabilities for 57 years.

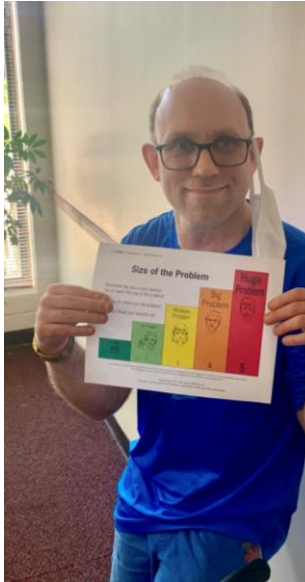
Through our Residential Services program, Little Friends provides independent living skills training, community integration, and money management for adults. We have 41 properties where individuals receive services based on need. The care and safety of our residents is paramount.

Our Community Day Services program offers vocational training, job skills support, as well as community opportunities for participants. On-site paid employment in addition to supported employment in the community help promote functional skills and encouraging social engagement.

This past year, we have continued to explore how we expand the types of care and support we provide adults by offering services that address not only vocational and residential needs, but also behavioral, recreational, and social growth.



Adult services



We have seen great benefit in the focus of therapeutic services throughout our adult programs. A full-time Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) serves Little Friends adult programs, supporting individuals in their daily lives. From behavior groups addressing socializing, mental health and safety to working with individuals to reduce maladaptive behaviors, increase skill acquisition, or developing skills for the workplace, there are many ways behavior analysis has helped the adults we serve.

Occupational therapy services were introduced this past year to improve the quality of life and productive participation of the individuals being served by our adult programs. Structured therapeutic activities uniquely designed to address the specific needs of this population have been added to our programming.

OT activities include: life skills focused on home and community, leisure groups designed to increase physical activity and social participation, and sensory activities to support day-to-day activities. The impact these therapies have made on the those we serves underscores the importance of supporting the needs of the whole individual while strengthening skills to last a lifetime.

When asked what his best day ever at Little Friends Community Day Program was, Ian enthusiastically replied, "Every day!"



Family services



Now more than ever, families of those with autism and other developmental disabilities are seeking support, direction, and guidance. Little Friends has recognized this need by focusing on the families we serve with the reintroduction of our Family Support Network and the establishment of our Family Care Team in addition to the work done by our school's Family Services Division.



Family Support Network

Connecting the common bond between our families and friends of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the different stages thru life's journey. The group offers socialization opportunities for families along with the information, resources and support they need to make informed choices for loved ones.



Family Care Team

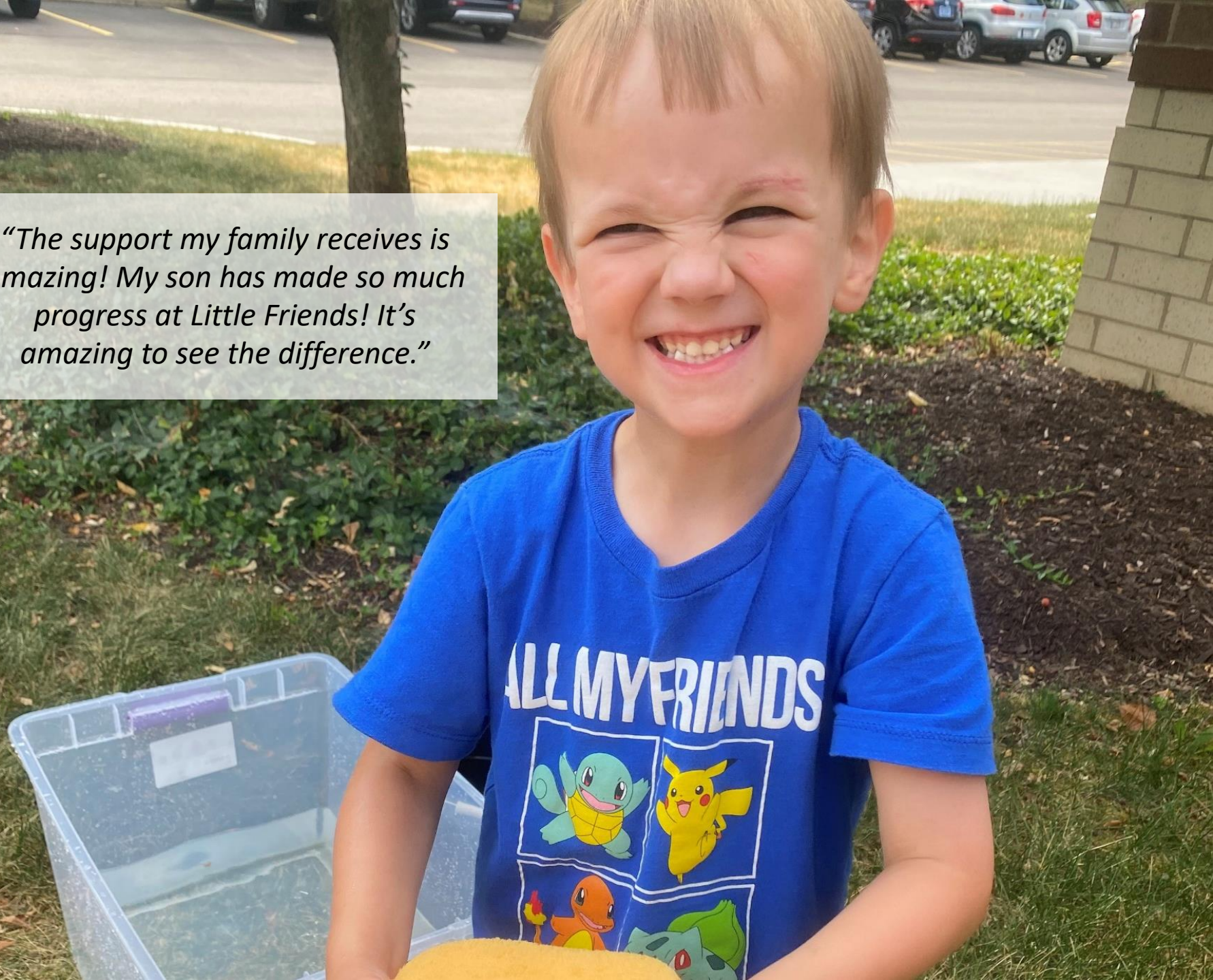
Supporting the initial interactions with families, public entities, and advocates to learn more about our programs, the breadth of our services and the resources available through our trained clinicians, educators and professional staff.



Family Services Division

Counseling services, in-home/family visual and chaining supports, recommendations for connections to community-based family resource, and transition planning for the families of students in our Educational Services Program.

"The support my family receives is amazing! My son has made so much progress at Little Friends! It's amazing to see the difference."



Philanthropic support

While the agency maintains a diverse funding portfolio totaling more than \$20 million, we must raise funds each year to help us cover all our expenses. We rely on your support to help us meet all our mission-related funding objectives to which we are truly grateful. For every \$1 raised, we dedicate 90 cents toward our five different programs.



DONORS

1,184



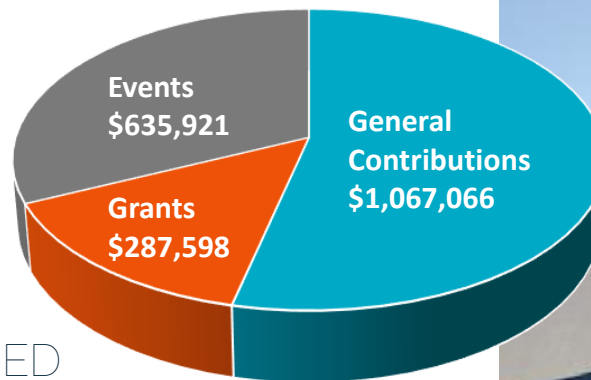
GIFTS

1,822



TOTAL RAISED

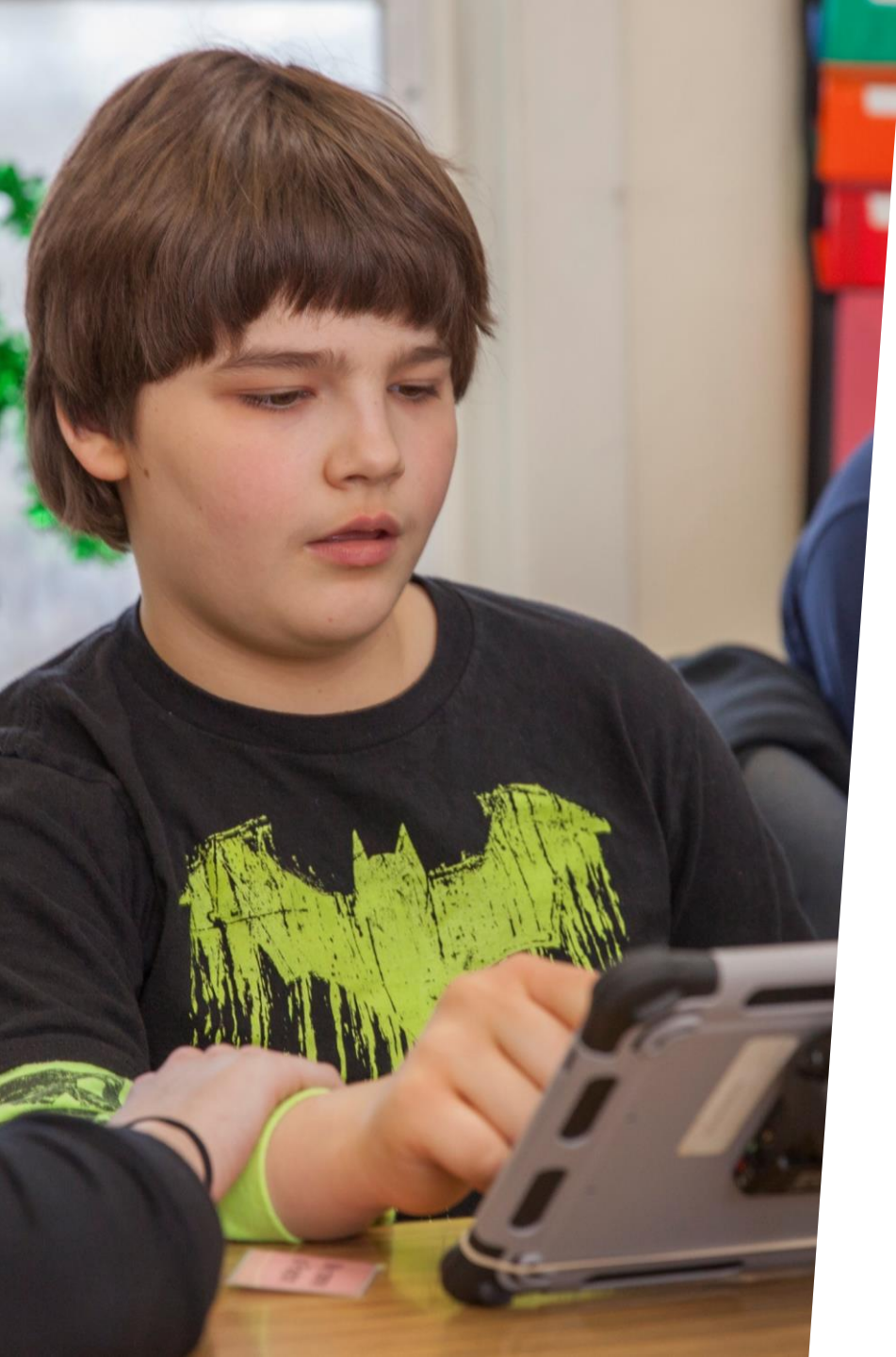
\$1.81MM



There were 252 individuals, businesses and foundations who donated more than \$1,000 each to the agency this year. This number is significant when reviewing the previous two years (70 donors – FY21; 135 donors – FY20), demonstrating a deeper bench regarding those who support Little Friends.

Little Friends Serendipity Resale Shop had great success in the first year at its new location. Our volunteer shop, celebrating its 50th anniversary last year, saw significant increases in donations, customers, and sales!





Capital campaign



In response to the growing need for services for children and adults with autism and other developmental disabilities, Little Friends launched our “Building Futures” campaign.

Announced in April of 2021, this \$10 million comprehensive multi year project will improve our facilities, increase programmatic capacity, and build an endowment that will provide a secure future for the people we serve.

We finished the FY22 year by raising more than \$560K toward our five-year, \$10MM Building Futures campaign. Our current totals are \$6.48MM in cash, pledged commitments and cash savings to the agency.



We invite you to learn more how you can support our Building Futures campaign.



Board of Directors



Pat Adamatis - Retired, Educator, Naperville Community Unit School District 203

Mike Briggs - President & CEO, Little Friends (non-voting member)

Dan Casey - Retired, Owner, Casey's Foods

Thomas Connors, Chairman - Retired, Managing Director, Credit Suisse

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