



Years of Making Lives Better

FY 2023 Impact Report

THE
SUMMIT
CENTER

1973 *Making lives better for 50 years* 2023

TESTIMONIALS

"I remember going to visit Summit for the very first time. The shock of having a child with autism was still fresh, and we really didn't know where to turn or what the next steps were. We had Ben in early intervention, but it seemed like we were spinning our tires at times. All of the staff at Summit were warm, welcoming, and really helped to calm all of our fears. The progress we've seen since Ben has been at Summit has been nothing short of amazing. Our Ben is on his way to blossoming and is showing everyone more of his abilities, and we owe it to the work everyone at Summit has done. It's not lost on us, and we thank you all from the bottom of our hearts."

– Jeffery and Melissa, former Summit parents

"The Summit Center is an amazing organization. It is because of the wonderful and dedicated staff at The Summit Center that my son is able to get the support he needs to thrive. The professionals that work at Summit are a guiding light of positivity and hope for families. We love Summit!"

– Jessica, Summit parent

"We love how Summit focuses on our son Logan's needs and how the program is structured. Since he's started with Summit, Logan has excelled so much. He has learned some American Sign Language and is starting to use verbal communications to tell us his wants and needs. We've had such a great experience with the Early Autism Program."

– Whitney and Tom, Summit parents

A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends,

After 28 wonderful years, my time as Chief Executive Officer of The Summit Center comes to an end on December 31, 2023. I'll be handing over the reins to Lisa Foti, our Chief Financial Officer, and Amy Jablonski, our Vice President of Early Intervention and Education. It's been my honor to lead an agency so full of heart and determination.

I often think about the landscape of autism care when I first moved to Buffalo in 1995. Quite frankly, I can't believe how dismal it was. Children with obvious signs weren't being diagnosed, and treatment options were practically nonexistent. Thankfully, I was able to convince a handful of school administrators about the power of early intensive intervention. The Early Autism Program was launched in 1997, meeting a critical need in the community.



Fast forward to our 2023 fiscal year. In November, Summit Academy Enhanced opened its doors to students with pervasive challenging behaviors. This severe behavior program is the first of its kind in Western New York, an extension of our special education school that provides intensive clinical treatment. It took 10 years to find a state agency that would fund it, develop the treatment protocols, and construct the facility. Today, Summit Academy Enhanced is treating adolescents who previously had nowhere to turn. It's truly one of the highlights of my career.

The S.T.E.P.S. (Success Through Engagement and Positive Supports) day habilitation program offers meaningful leisure opportunities and increased staffing levels for adults with developmental disabilities. With the growing need for high quality programs, S.T.E.P.S. has an ongoing waitlist. Finding new community partners can be a challenge, but St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Eggertsville welcomed us with open arms last fall. St. Paul's provides a comfortable home base when participants are not visiting cultural attractions, volunteering, or engaging in recreational activities.

In January 2023, we kicked off a year-long celebration of The Summit Center's 50th anniversary. When Nancy Harris established the Language Development Program in 1973, she knew a brighter future was possible for her son who was born with significant hearing loss. The Language Development Program evolved into The Summit Center and the focus shifted to children and adults with autism. And yet, the sentiment on which it was founded remains the same.

Nancy Harris imbued a spirit of optimism that still drives us forward. The belief that every individual has untapped possibilities is found in the Behavioral Pediatrics Clinic, Supported Employment Program, Summit Academy, and everywhere in between. Throughout this annual report, you'll read about the milestones people have reached on their personal journeys.

As I prepare to say the most difficult goodbye, I know Summit will remain a beacon in Western New York. Our donors have always ensured that we are greater than what state funding would allow. Summit's life-changing work will continue on!

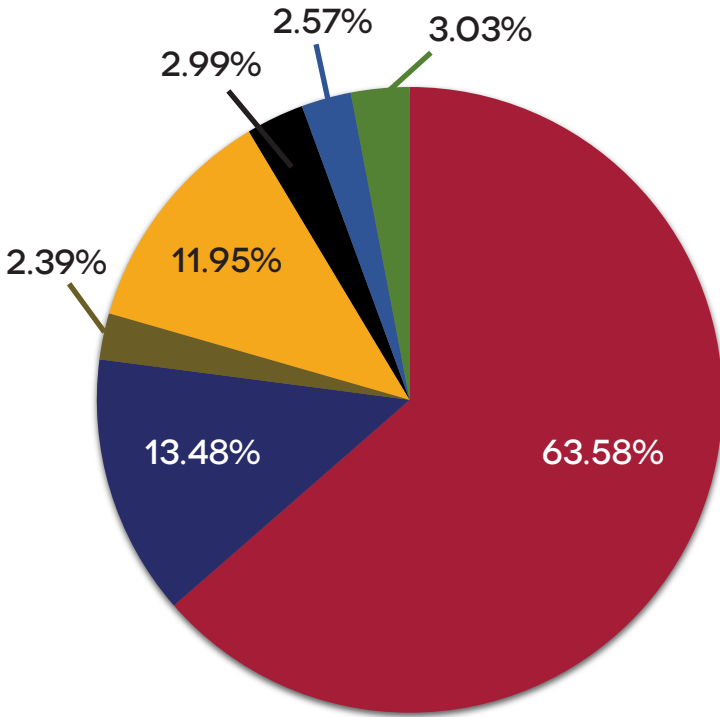
With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen R. Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen R. Anderson, PhD., BCBA-D, LBA
Chief Executive Officer

FINANCIALS

The following information covers our 2023 fiscal year, which ran from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.



REVENUE

- SCHOOL AGE** - \$20,565,311
- PRESCHOOL** - \$4,359,992
- INFANT & PRESCHOOL OTHER** - \$773,874
- OPWDD** - \$3,864,946
- BEHAVIORAL HEALTH** - \$968,418
- FUNDRAISING & SUPPORT** - 832,175
- OTHER** - \$978,380

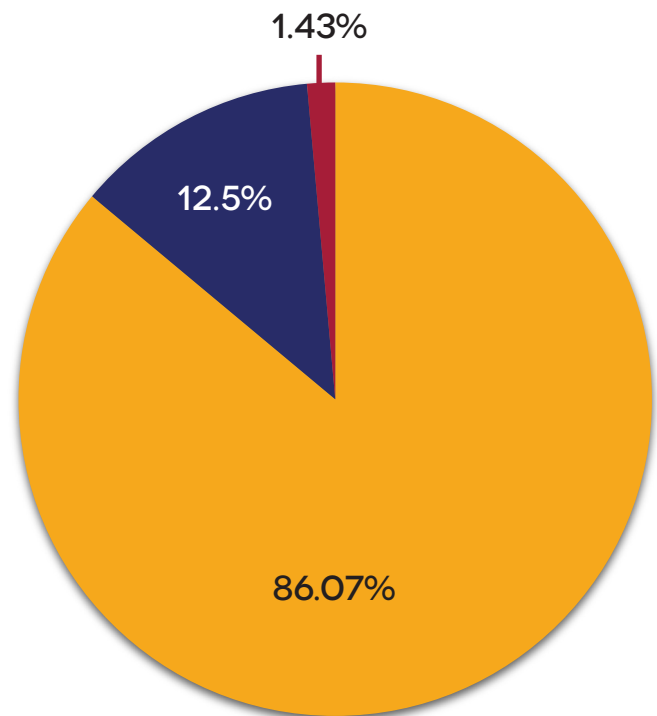
TOTAL: \$32,343,096

EXPENSES

- PROGRAM SERVICES** - \$27,629,811
- *GENERAL & ADMINISTRATIVE** - \$4,014,344
- FUNDRAISING COSTS** - \$458,099

TOTAL: \$32,102,254

*Below state-mandated percentage of 15%



EARLY INTERVENTION & EDUCATION DIVISION

Summit Academy Enhanced opens

Summit Academy Enhanced began operations in November of 2022 with the opening of two classrooms serving 12 students at 165 Creekside Drive in Amherst.

The program is the first day program of its kind in New York State to provide a highly specialized behavioral assessment and treatment program for students ages 12 and up who display severe challenging behavior.

Throughout the 2023 fiscal year, Summit Academy Enhanced increased its numbers to 15 and opened another classroom. The program is serving 18 students in the 2023-2024 school year. When fully staffed, Summit Academy Enhanced will serve 30 students across five classrooms.

The first year of operation has been a success for many students. One student came to school each day with his service dog that he had since 2016 due to his tendency to try to run out of the classroom or building. By working with staff to increase independence skills, the student faded out the use of his service dog completely when transitioning from one room to another within the school.

While many students served are from Summit Academy, the program has started accepting students from public school districts. The goal is to serve students from a variety of settings in order to best meet the needs of the community.

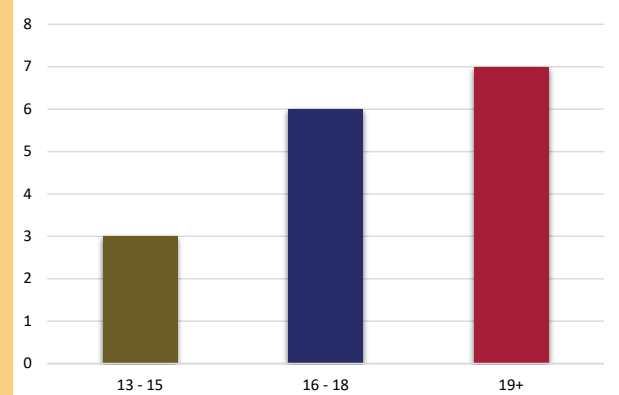


By The Numbers

In the 2022-2023 school year, Summit Academy Enhanced provided service to 15 male students and 1 female student.



Number of Students Served by Age Range



EARLY INTERVENTION & EDUCATION DIVISION

Former student finds new opportunities

Benjamin loves playing outside, whether he's riding his bike or relaxing on a swing. He enjoys swimming lessons in the summer and ice skating lessons in the winter, with an interest in playing hockey one day.

"He is a very intelligent, laid-back, and soft-spoken boy, who also has a silly side to him," describes Melissa, Benjamin's mother. "He's shy, but he is never too nervous to greet everyone with a big smile."

When Benjamin was 3 years old, his parents noticed that he did not participate in any activities at his school program. He was disinterested in socializing with his classmates and paced the perimeter of the classroom. He struggled with speech, fine motor skills, and sensory processing.

Benjamin was evaluated for a suspected autism diagnosis. During this process, a friend told Benjamin's family about The Summit Center. Melissa reached out to Summit, and Benjamin began receiving services in January 2022.

During Benjamin's time at Summit, he went from refusing to enter the classroom for the entire school day, to willingly participating in class each day, including group activities. He also began having play dates with friends outside of school.

"Benny's speech and comprehension has improved dramatically," Melissa said. "He went from saying one to two words to speaking three to four sentences at a time while engaging in full conversations with his peers."

This year, Benjamin enrolled in a new school and is already making new friends. His family credits Benjamin's staff at Summit in helping him learn the skills he needed to succeed.



Celebrating the Class of 2023



Our goal at Summit Academy is to provide an exemplary alternative education program to meet the needs of children with autism and other developmental disabilities. Summit Academy serves about 340 students ages 3 to 21 years old in preschool, elementary, and secondary classroom settings.

When graduation day arrives, it is a special event to witness. In 2023, we celebrated 11 Summit Academy graduates. Principal Mary Bennett led the ceremony with a welcome message followed by a keynote address by Summit CEO Dr. Stephen Anderson. They both reflected on the the students' journeys at Summit and their accomplishments.

We are proud to celebrate our students' successes and see their hard work come to fruition.

ADULT DIVISION

S.T.E.P.S. expands to new location

During the past year, Summit's S.T.E.P.S. (Success Through Engagement and Positive Supports) program has continued to grow, sparking the need for a new location.

A fourth location opened at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Eggertsville in the fall of 2022. Since then, the cohort has developed a wonderful relationship with the church and its pastor, Steve Biegner.

"We've been thrilled to work and partner with S.T.E.P.S. The staff and participants have been incredible and we're glad to have them as a part of St. Paul's mission work," Pastor Steve said. "They've jumped in to help care for the building and help with our pantry and mobile food shares through Daily Bread Food Truck as well. We're happy to have them on the team."

While S.T.E.P.S. participants spend most of their time in the community, the new location offers a communal place where individuals can start and end their day while continuing to work on important life skills to achieve greater independence. The location offers a very active setting that provides opportunity for regular interaction with community members.

"We also assist the church with their outreach efforts. It's called the Tiger's Den, which includes a clothes closet and food pantry. We help with any kind of outreach and distribution to people in need," said Wendy Loverme, Director of Community Services.

Currently all four of Summit's S.T.E.P.S. programs are full with 12 individuals per location.

"We have seen a lot of growth in these individuals over the past year," Wendy said. "These programs are important because they allow individuals to be out in the community with the supports that they need while learning critical skills for future success."



48
adults served
through S.T.E.P.S.
across four
locations

Respite Center provides permanent home to several programs

In fall of 2022, The Summit Center opened its Respite Center at 55 Pineview Drive in Amherst to provide a permanent home for its afterschool respite, adult respite, and S.T.A.R. (Support, Training, and Respite) programs.

The space features activity stations for fitness, arts and crafts, board games, and puzzles. Individuals can enjoy playing video games, relaxing in the cozy corner, or spending time alone in a “calm space.” There is also an outdoor area where children and adults can play basketball or cornhole or relax at a picnic table during warmer weather.



Prior to the Respite Center opening, afterschool respite was held in a space shared with Summit Academy.

“We were very lucky to do that for so long and it worked, but there’s just something different about having your own space, your own supplies, having everything you need, and being able to adapt that space to families’ respite needs,” said Ashlee Bronson, Assistant Director of Community Services.

One benefit of having a dedicated center for respite is that students can transition to a different environment once the school day is over. This has positively impacted students like Melanie. Melanie would sometimes resist transitioning from her classroom at Summit Academy’s Creekside location to after school respite that was being held down the hall. Now she successfully transitions to the van to be transported to the Respite Center.

Ashlee said, “The Center is such a beautiful space and it can be so adaptive. Now we get to foster that true respite environment.”



Up to **22**
children served at
the Respite Center
each day



Behavioral Pediatrics Clinic offers help to children and young adults

Summit's Behavioral Pediatrics Clinic (BPC) offers short-term therapeutic interventions to children and young adults who are struggling with common childhood problems like depression, anxiety, and ADHD, as well as individuals with autism. David Meichenbaum, Ph.D., Director of the Behavioral Pediatrics Clinic, spoke about trends he's seeing in students and how parents and teachers can provide support.



Q: What trends are you seeing in treating individuals?

A: For me, almost every child or adolescent that is seen in the BPC has a goal related to emotional regulation to learn strategies to deal with negative thinking and feelings. I teach coping and thinking strategies to help kids navigate those moments when they're experiencing heightened emotions that cause difficulty for them.

Additionally, many of my clients are receiving help with addressing executive functioning difficulties. Executive functioning includes skills like sustaining attention, planning and prioritizing tasks, organizing, getting started, thinking ahead, time management, and flexible thinking.

Another trend I'm seeing is an uptick in school resistance/refusal. If each school day is filled for a student with reprimands, corrections, academic underperformance, failed social peer interactions, etc., what is that going to feel like for them later in the week or even later in the school year? We have to understand what these kids are facing on a day-to-day basis and try to tilt the balance toward actions and plans that are going to lead to success, build their self-esteem, and motivate them to want to go to school.

Q: What is another key element that you focus on when working with clients?

A: Recently I have been working with children to increase their social thinking. This involves increasing an individual's understanding of how their behavior impacts others, by considering how other people feel, and how those people will react and treat you based on one's behavior. Essentially it's teaching individuals how to think before they act.

Q: What can parents and teachers do to support their children's or students' demonstration of positive behaviors?

A: There are four important things that parents and teachers can do to increase the generalization of skills learned in counseling:

1. First, support the generalization of skills and show children the where and when that they need to use these skills. That comes with having some understanding of what goes on in the counseling sessions, whether it's at the Behavioral Pediatrics Clinic or in school.
2. Second, parents and teachers need to learn how to become "front loaders." This means prior to a potentially difficult situation, such as going to recess or to a grocery store, clarifying the expectations, reviewing expected responses, and highlighting exactly how their child's world is going to respond should they adhere to expectations.
3. Third, seize the moment to show your child an example of the skills they are learning. This could be with another child, student, or adult. For example, a teacher might say, "Michael, see what Megan is doing over there. It's our skill of the week. What's that skill? Waiting patiently." This helps to show the child exemplars of what that behavior looks like, and it also highlights the circumstances in which that behavior should occur.
4. Lastly, recognize that it's tough for kids to do these adaptive alternative skills in the moment when they're needed, particularly if they have another more inappropriate way of responding that has become habit. If they don't understand why they should do a certain behavior, then we have to give them relevance through reinforcement. Reinforcement is a key piece for building generalization.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Summit Center partners with Buffalo State University

In response to the shortage of applied behavior analysis providers in New York State, Buffalo State University launched a graduate program in applied behavior analysis (ABA) in the fall of 2022. The master's level program prepares students for a career as a behavioral health treatment provider for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities.



BUFFALO STATE
The State University of New York

The Summit Center partnered with Buffalo State University to serve as an internship site. Graduate students can complete the required minimum of 2,000 field hours through rotations at Summit Academy, Summit Academy Enhanced, and the Early Autism Program. Upon graduation, they can sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) exam.

Summit employee Carol Shaw, BCBA, M.S. Ed., heads up Buffalo State's ABA program as the program coordinator and program liaison between Summit and Buffalo State. In addition to advising students and teaching classes, she provides supervision to candidates pursuing their BCBA certification.

The program started with five students enrolled and has grown to 20 students as of the fall of 2023. With only 32 licensed behavior analysts in Erie County, the need for programs like this in Western New York is great.

Carol said, "As the number of individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder increases, these professionals will fill the growing need for ABA specialists in Western New York and provide much-needed services to our community."

Regional Center for Autism educates the community

The WNY Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders (WNYRCASD) addresses the needs of children and young adults with autism spectrum disorder. It's a collaborative program of The Summit Center, University at Albany, and The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities. The WNYRCASD offers educational opportunities to support parents, teachers, school administrators, human service providers, and other related professionals. In 2023, more than 1,000 parents and professionals participated in trainings on fostering social skills, vocational training, strategies to address challenging behaviors, and more.



47

**in-person or
online trainings
offered**



1,120

**total people attended
in-person and online
trainings**



42.5

**hours of trainings
provided**

CELEBRATING TOGETHER

Making lives better for 50 years

When Nancy Harris founded the Language Development Program in 1973, she simply had a vision of a better life for her son with severe hearing loss. She never imagined the profound impact it would have on so many individuals with developmental disabilities.

Over the years, the Language Development Program grew into The Summit Center and thousands of children and adults reached new levels of independence.

In 2023, we celebrated 50 years of making lives better through storytelling. We shared stories from families, self-advocates, students, staff, and board members who have been impacted by The Summit Center's work. We look forward to another 50 years of serving the Western New York community and helping children and adults with autism reach their fullest potential.



30+ services
to support individuals
with autism and other
developmental disabilities

20,000+
children and adults
served across Western
New York since 1973

WNY Beer Trail promotes autism acceptance

The Summit Center depends on donations from the community to make the greatest impact. So when an organization asks to host a fundraiser on behalf of the agency, it's an enormous gift.

In April 2023, the WNY Beer Trail organized its 3rd annual Autism Walk fundraiser. The event, held at Resurgence Brewing Company, raised more than \$2,300. Guests enjoyed a variety of raffles, live music, and a special Believe in Summit pilsner.

Founder Tom Whitmarsh and his wife Michelle have a son with autism. Tom shared, "As the parents of a teenager with autism, we have experienced first-hand the support and services Summit provides and are so thankful. Summit is an essential resource for individuals and families, and we are proud to use our platform at WNY Beer Trail to bring more awareness and fundraising support for Summit."



For more information about the WNY Beer Trail, and to purchase a trail pass, visit wnybeertrail.com.

EVENTS

Party for Summit returns after three-year hiatus

On November 4, 2022, more than 300 guests gathered at the Atrium @ Rich's for the Party for Summit – A Night in Las Vegas. Chair Tammy Nicholson coordinated a spectacular evening that featured authentic casino games, silent and live auctions, and entertainment by Terry Buchwald. The Party for Summit also included the return of the Hope Awards, an honor bestowed on supporters who demonstrate outstanding service and dedication. CEO Steve Anderson, Ph.D. presented the 2022 Hope Awards to Gerry and Missy Cornish and Kathy Doody, Ph.D.



Gerry Cornish, Managing Director of Merrill Lynch, joined the Summit Foundation Board in 2007. He served as Co-Vice Chair of the Building Hope capital campaign which secured \$3.6 million for new programs and facilities. Gerry is also a longstanding member of the investment committee. Missy Cornish, co-owner of Event Artistry, has used her professional expertise to amplify Summit's special events. She is a committed supporter who has introduced new donors and raised critical funds.

Kathy Doody, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the Exceptional Education Department at Buffalo State University. Over the past 25 years, she has consulted with many nonprofits, schools, and hospitals on the needs of the autism community. Kathy is also a member of the Operating Board.

The Party for Summit raised \$180,000, with \$155,000 invested in the Summit Foundation and \$25,000 reserved for the construction of an outdoor learning space at our Creekside Drive campus. The evening was presented by Reeds Jewelers.

Community raises \$312,000 at 2023 Autism Walk

The Autism Walk is a community-wide event that celebrates individuals and families impacted by autism spectrum disorder. Held on May 13 on our Stahl Road campus, the 2023 Autism Walk generated \$312,000 for The Summit Center's education, community integration, and behavioral health programs. More than 2,700 registrants and donors made the day an overwhelming success.



With state funding alone, The Summit Center could not provide the personalized care people depend on. The money raised by the Autism Walk translates to a high level of staffing, with many children and adults receiving one-on-one support. It gives us the tools to thoroughly understand their unique challenges. As a result, the individuals we serve have the best chance of building important skills and reaching new milestones.

More than \$25,000 was raised by top fundraiser Claudia Rosenecker. Since the Autism Walk's inception in 1998, the Rosenecker family's fundraising has amounted to a staggering \$325,000! Tony DeSimone, Candace Richardson, Steve Anderson, and Ellen Madsen rounded out the top five. West Herr served as the presenting sponsor for the fourth year in a row, and Tops provided extensive product and promotional support.

OUR BOARDS

The board members listed below served during our 2023 fiscal year, which ran from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.

OPERATING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mark E. Brand, Esq., President
Actuarial Consulting Services, Inc.

John R. Cinquino, Co-VP
Evans Bank

Frederick G. Floss, Ph.D., Co-VP
SUNY, Buffalo State College

Eric Saenger, Secretary/Treasurer
Mission Critical Energy, Inc.

Lisa Burrows-MacLean, Ph.D.
Psychologist – Private Practice

Rahsaan DeLain
Community Health Center of Buffalo

Tony DeSimone
New Era Cap

Gregory Fabiano, Ph.D.
Florida International University

John Gavigan
Endeavor

Daniel P. O'Neill
Beechwood Continuing Care

Kathy Ralabate Doody, Ph.D.
SUNY, Buffalo State College

Cindy Romanowski, MD
General Physician, PC

Elizabeth M. Schachtner
Marketing/Planning Consultant

Kenneth Sniatecki
Citi Bank

Emeritus Member:
Anthony M. D'Auria
Waterbourne Real Estate Advisors, LLC

Emeritus Member:
Colleen M. Seminara, Esq.

Emeritus Member:
Robert E. Spangenthal, Esq.
Lake Ledge Systems, Inc.

Emeritus Member:
Sujata Yalamanchili, Esq.
Hodgson Russ, LLP

FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thomas Rosenecker, President
American Eagle Fireplace & Playsets

Joseph S. Brown, Esq., Vice President
Golberg Segalla

Lisa A. Foti, CPA, Treasurer
The Summit Center

Neil Arnold, Secretary
Retired Corporate Executive

David S. Aston
Stahlka Agency, Inc.

Gerald Cornish
Merrill Lynch

Tinika Dandridge
Independent Health

Cindy DeMarti
Founder, C.D. Financial

Kent Keating
Buffalo Precision Glass

Janice G. Larson
Rich Products

Yolanda Morris
Daemen University

Stephen Nicholson
Merrill Lynch

Bethann Roehling-Flynn
Alpine Sweets Bakery

Andrew Ryan
Motivair Corporation

Charles Stodolka
GEICO

Dave Zolnowski
M&T Bank

GRANTS

Grants allow us to dream big. In our 2023 fiscal year, generous support from local and national foundations augmented existing programs and provided meaningful opportunities for the individuals we serve.

Arts For Learning WNY

\$2,570

Arts For Learning WNY provided artistic and cultural experiences for students at Summit Academy, including performances by Bernard Woma Dagara Music Center, a visit from the Buffalo Science Museum, and more.

Chur Family Foundation

\$35,000

The Chur Family Foundation funded a new minivan for Summit's day habilitation program S.T.E.P.S. (Success Through Engagement and Positive Supports) to provide adults with opportunities to volunteer in the community.

Cullen Foundation

\$4,300

The Cullen Foundation funded instruments for Summit Academy, art supplies for S.T.E.P.S., and workshops conducted by the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and Locust Street Art for respite programs.

Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism

\$10,000

The Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism provided startup funding for Summit Academy Enhanced, a specialized program to assess and treat students with severe challenging behaviors.

E & W G Foundation

\$20,000

The E & W G Foundation will help fund the replacement of the gazebo decking at Summit Academy's Stahl Road location.

Foundation 214

\$40,000

Foundation 214 provided startup funding for Summit Academy Enhanced, which began operations in fall of 2022.

Golisano Foundation

\$40,000

The Golisano Foundation funded the partnership between The Summit Center and Buffalo State University to create a graduate program focused on applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy.

James H. Cummings Foundation

\$30,000

The James H. Cummings Foundation will support the creation of an adaptive courtyard at Summit Academy's Creekside location in Amherst.

GRANTS

Julia M. Cullen Foundation

\$2,500

The Julia M. Cullen Foundation will help support Summit's Early Intervention and Education division.

Rite Aid Healthy Futures KidCents

\$10,250

Rite Aid Healthy Futures KidCents supports Summit's general operations.

Terra Science and Education

\$3,328.82

The Terra Science and Education provided funding for STEM books and activities for Summit Academy's media center.

Timothy and Margaret Busch Family Foundation, Inc.

\$3,600

The Timothy and Margaret Busch Family Foundation, Inc. helped purchase 12 iPads for Summit's Early Autism Program.

Variety Club of Buffalo

\$1,800

The Variety Club of Buffalo funded private sailings on the Spirit of Buffalo for Summit Academy students.



Pictured above from left to right: A Summit Academy student enjoys her time behind the wheel on the Spirit of Buffalo during an excursion made possible by funding from the Variety Club of Buffalo. Performers from the Bernard Woma Dagara Music Center visited Summit Academy as part of the Arts for Learning WNY grant.



Summit Academy & Administrative Offices

A: 150 Stahl Road | Getzville, NY 14068

P: 716.629.3400

Summit Academy Paddock Vocational Training Center

Summit Academy Enhanced

A: 165 Creekside Drive | Amherst, NY 14228

P: 716.810.7700

Adult & Community Services Division

Behavioral Pediatrics Clinic

Development Offices

A: 75 Pineview Drive, Suite 200 | Amherst, NY 14228

P: 716.629.3400

Respite Center

A: 55 Pineview Drive | Amherst, NY 14228

P: 716.629.3400

716.629.3400

Learn more at www.TheSummitCenter.org

FOLLOW US



OUR DONORS

Our donors' generous support helps children and adults with developmental disabilities realize their strengths and achieve new levels of independence. To view the list of donors who gave between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023, please visit www.TheSummitCenter.org/ourdonors.