
Annual Report 2021-2022

Arms Around ASD



Asheville, NC

One Giant Hug For Families



Arms Around ASD
Asheville, NC

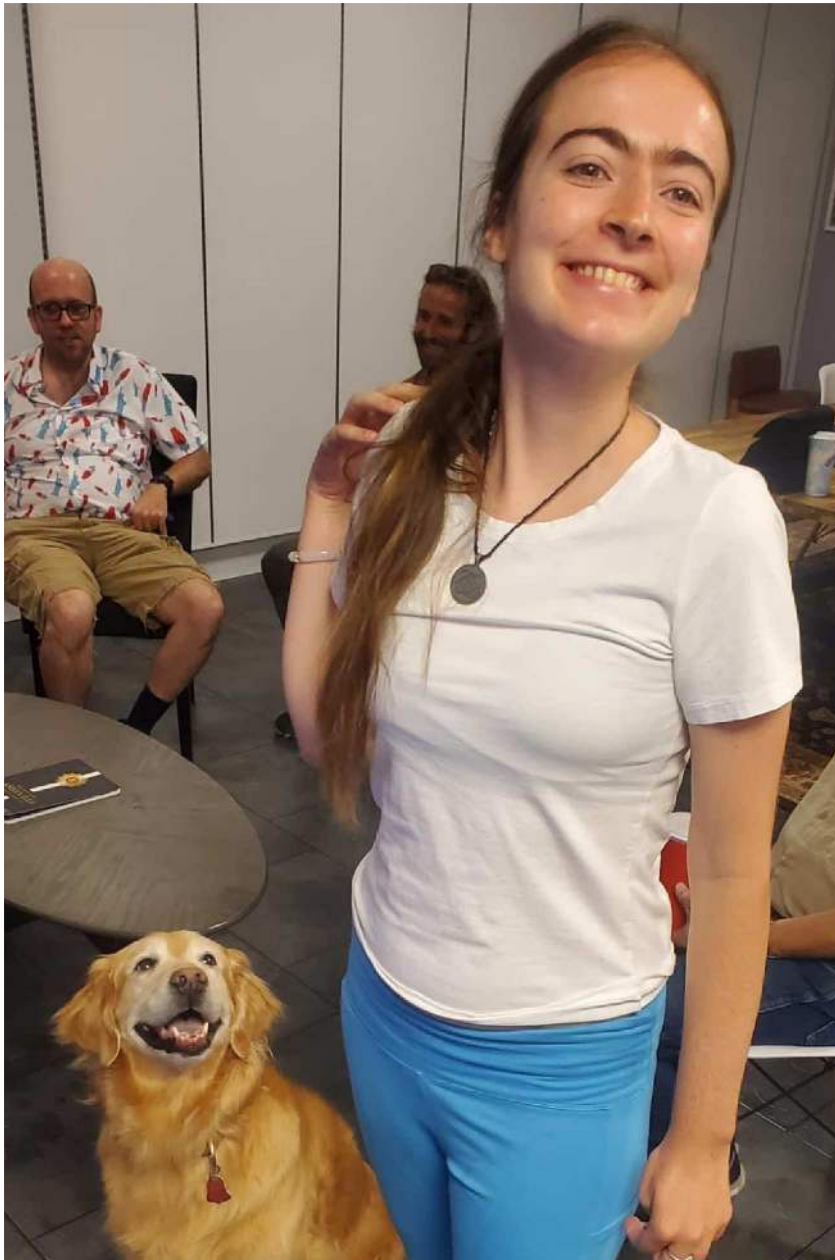


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Mission

The mission of Arms Around ASD is to support the autism community through self-care and development of executive functioning skills promoting the growth of the community as a whole.

Letter from our Executive Director, Michele Louzon

Arms Around ASD is incredibly fortunate to be located in the Asheville Mall. Back in the Fall of 2020 in the middle of the pandemic as I was trying to find another property to rent, Breeya Barbree, the president of the board at the time, suggested I inquire at the mall as they had a lot of empty stores. Initially I thought the mall was an odd choice, but looked into it anyway. Never did I expect to be welcomed with open arms AND find the perfect home for AAASD in the Asheville Mall.

We signed the lease in December of 2020 and got the keys in January of 2021. It took five full months to upfit the space to make it the center I always envisioned. Rereading that statement, I realize that five months is nothing. At the time, it felt like forever. There was so much red tape and hoop jumping and I am by no means patient. But we, and when I say we, I mean so many people pitched in to get everything done in time to open on June 1, 2021.

Our grand opening on June 26, 2021 was a literal zoo. In addition to all of the people who filed in to see the new digs, we had llamas, goats, bunnies, two cats, two dogs, a bearded dragon and a snake. DJ Svoboda read from his new book and everybody got to participate in various demos. It was a ton of fun.

As of opening day (6/1/21), we had 650 people on our mailing list. One year later, we had 1300. The mall has offered an accessibility I could only have dreamed of. Between what seems like unlimited parking, an indoor walking area, easy access with public transportation, a food court and shopping, the Asheville Mall is our Goldilocks.



Letter from our Executive Director, continued

Now that we have found the perfect location, our programming and unique opportunities continue to expand enabling our clients to grow and flourish. In 2021 and 2022 we have added an offsite Nature Walk/Bird Watching Experience, POUND®(a full body workout using lightly weighted drumsticks), a weekly art program – For the Love of Art with Denise, Jyorei (energy work) with Elvia, relationship coaching, monthly chiropractic services, dental evaluations, physical therapy evaluations with optional dry needling, nurse practitioner visits and mindfulness coaching, foot rubs with Trinity, indoor gardening with Babs, pinpoint Reiki, craniosacral with Cherie, Game Day with Jennifer C. (fantasy/role playing DND), Autism & Music Hangouts, parent support group for parents of older children and adults and indoor nature experiences sponsored by Balsam Mountain Preserve in Sylva. We have also added a once a month Saturday option for pet therapy and art.

I mentioned earlier that we've added foot rubs to our roster. They are provided weekly by one of our clients who has truly grown in leaps and bounds since she started participating in services at AAASD back in 2016. Her mother is convinced that Arms Around ASD has been instrumental in this growth. Just last week, Trinity realized she had left her house without her wallet. She was already at work when she noticed and knew she needed to get to the mall for her volunteer job and also needed to grab something to eat before that.

Many folks, autistic and neurotypical alike, would have called to cancel. But not Trinity. Without any help from anyone, she figured out how to get her Uber (who has her card on file) to take her home and wait for her (that's actually two separate rides and requires a bit of finessing with the app) while she ran in to get her wallet. Then she headed to the mall, got a bite to eat and fulfilled her volunteer commitment. This may not seem like a big deal. If that's the case, you probably have developed executive functioning skills. For autistic people, executive functioning is hard won.

Letter from our Executive Director, continued

According to Harvard University, the phrase “executive function” refers to a set of skills that underlie the capacity to plan ahead and meet goals, display self-control, follow multiple-step directions even when interrupted, and stay focused despite distractions, among others.

Much like an air traffic control system at an airport helps planes on different runways land and take off safely, executive function skills help our brains prioritize tasks, filter distractions, and control impulses. Because our focus is self-care and development of executive function proficiency, this story hit home. It's a great example of the skills that our programs help develop, and the Asheville Mall is our perfect place to continue providing the high quality programming that supports our clients and helps them reach their goals.





Programming & Volunteers

ACUPUNCTURE

Jeremy Noble

ASK KAT

Katherine Cosimano (2022)

BELLY DANCING

Haunani Orsillo

BIG HUG BOUTIQUE

Jenny Zimmerman

Kelly Carmody

Teri Siegel (2022)

Alicia Fordham

BIRD WATCHING

Randy Richardson

Susan Richardson

BOUTIQUE/FRONT DESK

Ryan Boblett

Kelly Carmody

Alicia Fordham

Carmen Friel

Rachel Friel

Melissa Gerhardt

Jen Haines

Kat Mallon

Jeanette Hylton

Tracie Singleton & Cadence

Nina Naruke (2021)

Alison Rhodes (2021)

Maria Watkins (2021)

CHIROPRACTIC

Dr. Taylor Maclean (2022)

CRANIOSACRAL

Cherie North (2022)

DENTIST

Dr. Charlie Page (2022)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Michele Louzon

FOOT RUBS

Trinity Johnson (2022)

FOR THE LOVE OF ART

Denise Fosco (2022)

FRIENDS GROUP

Denise Fosco (2022)

Michele Louzon

Kathleen Paduano

GAME DAY

Jennifer Campbell (2022)

GARDENING CLUB

Babs Mountjoy

Scout McCormick

HEALTH SCREENINGS

April Thomas, RNP (2022)

HULA

Haunani Orsillo

INTERNS

Hannah Miller (2022)

Savannah Fries (2022)

Abeni Campos (2022)

JANITORIAL

Ryan Prager (2022)

Mary Koni & Phoenix

Evan Fordham (2022)

JYOREI

Elvia Diaz

LGBTQ+ THERAPY CONSULTS

John Avery

MASSAGE THERAPISTS

Becky Haschke (2022)

Travis Jackson

Haunani Orsillo

Toni Pollack (2022)

MEDITATION

Cynthia Greenfield

MINDFULNESS

Sarah Vallely

Programming & Volunteers (cont.)

MOVE YOUR BODY

Cynthia Greenfield

NATUROPATH

Janet Opila-Lehman

PAMPERING – ESTHETICIANS

Skyler Wagner (2021)

Mindy Wilson

PET THERAPY

Rich Johnston & Sasha

Breeya Barbree & Nico and Kieta (the cat)

Rob Reuss & Digit and Gizmo (2022)
Shallon Jacques & Sugar Gliders (2022)

Amy Dexter & Sumo (2022)

Jarrold & Kristin James and Rusty (2022)

Fur Kidz Sake (2022)

Heel2Heal Pet Therapy (2022)

Michele Louzon & Georgie (the cat) (2022)

PHYSICAL THERAPY/DRY NEEDLING

Zoe Wilson

PSYCHOLOGIST

Martha Perry

REFLEXOLOGY

Cynthia Greenfield (2021)

REIKI

Eva Garza

Jennifer Dale (2022)

RELATIONSHIP COACHING

Amber Lavin

STOP-ACTION ANIMATION CREATION

Jake Louzon-Hadley

SUPPORTIVE COUNSELING

Michele Louzon

TAI CHI – QIGONG

Todd Jensen

TALK THERAPY

Clare Bolton (2022)

THIS & THAT

Jason Hadley

Sarah Kuhl

Jake Louzon-Hadley

Ruby Shearon

Jesse Louzon-Hadley

Julia Christy

JoAnn McElrath (2021)

Eddie Turner

Nate Wilcox-Petit (2021)

Linda Yaverbaum (2021)

Jennifer Marshall

Emily Kuhl-Anderson (2021)

Derrick Cronin (2022)

Aria Cronin (2022)

TRANSITIONS NAVIGATOR

Gretchen Levine

YOGA

Emily Danciu-Grosso

Nani Orsillo (2022)

ZUMBA, ZUMBA SENTAO & POUND

Delia Bailey

Rico Suave

QUEEN OF ALL THINGS

ADMINISTRATIVE

Jennifer Hartzog

PR/SOCIAL MEDIA

Catherine Bergrud

Michele Louzon

Kelsey Maldonado

Client Profile - Gloria Shen

As a parent of an autistic child, 'self-care' has always been more of an idea than something that could be put into practice. Many of us have heard the airplane adage, "You have to first put the oxygen mask on yourself before you can help anyone else."

Yes, but how? Self-care has never fit into my schedule and never seemed justifiable given other household expenses. It was always that dangling oxygen mask that was out-of-reach...until I found Arms Around ASD.

The impact that Arms Around ASD has had on my family has been phenomenal: I have been introduced to the kindest, most compassionate, and knowledgeable group of people who have offered me and my daughter a sense of community and boundless support. By offering an incredible array of respite services, this wonderful organization has also made it possible for me to prioritize self-care. I now have a place to go where I can recharge my mind and body when my physical, mental, and emotional bandwidth have been depleted.

Michele Louzon is quite possibly one of the most amazing individuals I have ever met. I have so much admiration for her. With her vision, she has created this haven and space of complete acceptance for not only the parents of autistic children but all autistic individuals and the people who love them. The team members working with her also deserve tremendous praise including Jenn Hartzog who is the human form of a sunbeam.

I am deeply indebted to Arms Around ASD for all of the invaluable resources this organization has provided me which make me more effective as a parent of an autistic child. Not only have I benefited in profound ways but my daughter has been enriched as well with a support group that is teaching her executive functioning skills in a close-knit and hands-on setting. She has a welcoming place to go where she doesn't feel any expectations from anyone to be a certain way. She can just BE.

Thank you Michele, Jenn, board of directors, and generous volunteers who make such a positive difference in my life and my daughter's. Thank you for being our oxygen masks.

-Gloria Shen



Board Members and Officers

Board President

Jarrold Perkins

Board Secretary

Catherine Bergrud

Board Treasurer

Jason Hadley

Members at Large

Breeya Barbree

Sarah Broberg

Rich Johnston

Kelsey Maldonado

Susan Plemmons

Executive Director

Michele Louzon



Client Profile - Ryan Prager

Ryan Prager on initially getting involved with AAASD -

At first, I was a little skeptical because I didn't know what to expect. But once I got to know everyone, I felt I was very welcomed and loved by everybody and it (AAASD) has made a big impact in my life. It's a wonderful feeling to know there's a place I can go and be with my people and hone in on the energy vibrations. You can't get it anywhere else but here.

What it's like to visit the center -

Just coming inside the door, I can feel the high vibration of love and I can be myself and feel like I don't have to put up walls. I usually have to put up Fort Knox walls because I've been hurt so many times before. I feel love and kindness and a oneness wherever I am in the facility. The staff exudes a type of warmth and love for everybody.

Why is a place like Arms Around ASD important? -

I think this is a very beneficial autistic network of people volunteering their services to the Asheville community. I think we should have more autistic centers around the United States because it certainly has made a world of difference in my life.

Ryan's favorite things at Arms -

I love the reiki with Jennifer Dale and the chiropractor. The meditation is also very good. I'm impressed with the daily programming and how most of it is on Zoom. I love it for all the people who can't make it to Arms Around ASD in person. Also, the staff are wonderful. All of them are. They are part of my family, that's how much I love them all. It's amazing how much they love and care for all of the people on the autism spectrum.



Client Profile - Kim Rank

Arms Around ASD is both professional and compassionate. As a caregiver my main priority is involving my clients in activities that excel their potential. I have utilized Arms Around ASD in their schedules because my clients instantly feel comfortable there. The classes, services, special events, staff and volunteers have provided the utmost essential care needed for my clients.

I have a client who has artwork in the thrift store, a client who loves foot rubs and Chair Yoga, a client who participated with me in the fashion show and loves Autism & Music and a client who attends Zumba Sentao, Meditation, Music Listening, Pet Therapy and sometimes Art. All of my clients have grown in their time spent at Arms Around ASD and I have, also.

As a caregiver I have participated in classes, services and events and would recommend anyone utilizing any or all of what they have to offer. I am complimented often by parents who actually see the progress made in their child's lives.

I am a strong advocate in introducing others to Arms Around ASD. Everyone meets other special needs clients, caregivers and family and everyone is accepted as they are. No judgement, no prejudice, no color barriers, gender preference barriers, come as you are and be accepted as you are.



Sponsors and Donors

12 Bones Smokehouse
4imprint
828 Pizza
Addie Cheseldine
Amy & Barry Fields
Angela Hall
Angela Roberts
Anne Wray
Appalachian Vintner
Asheville Drag Brunch
Asheville Pizza & Brewing
Ashley MacMeeken
Aunt Anne's
BB Barnes
BLAINESWORLD
Bob & Esther Manewith
Brigitte Ruckle
Bug N' Tater
Buncombe County TPG Program
Carl Schreck
Carlos Palma (Textura)
Carol Anderson

Carol E. Banks
Caroline Wilhelm
Chik-fil-A
Christine Cooper
Christy Thompson
Colleen Burnett
Cook Out
Courtney Cahill
CRUMBL
Cyd Dawson
Cynthia Decker
Dana Dollar
Dave & Joyce Anderson
Dawn Johnson
Deanne Horton
Debbi Mathis
The Delaney Agency
Devil's Foot
Dick & Pat Johnston
Donna Chambers (SensaCalm)
Edrianna Stillwell & Unity Church
Elizabeth & Andy Glatstein

Elizabeth McAteer
Elizabeth Porras
Emily Danciu-Grosso
First Bank
Great American Cookie Co.
Hannah & John McDonald
Harold Southern
Heather Brown (The Matt & Molly Team)
Heim Family
Helen Pace
Highland Brewing
Jacob Ballard (Asheville Print Shop)
Jarrod & Kristen James
Jason & Kim Clark
Jeffrey Jones (Asheville Color & Imaging)
Jeremy Kimmel (Kimmel & Associates)
Jesson Gil (Early Girl)
Jim Brinkley (Carolina Mountain Sales)
Jim Gregory (Movement For Life)
Jim March
Johnston Family Foundation
Josh & Laura Henri

Sponsors and Donors

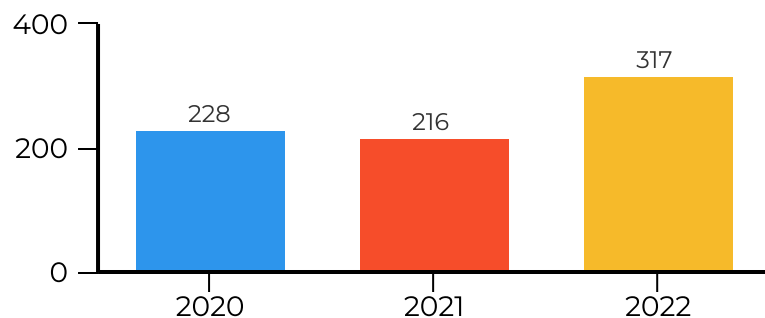
Karen Groce
Kat & Joe Mallon
Kathleen Burke
Kathryn Coyle
Kathy Trimbach
Kelly Sparks
Key Autism Services
Kim West
Krystal Dredge
L.O.T.U.S.
Land of the Sky UCC
Lenore Bonessi
Linda Meyer-Peyroux
Linda Yaverbaum
Lisa & Ryan Boblett
Lisa Jackson
Lisa Zanzig & Jason Wick
Lowe's
Magnetic Theatre
Marcy & Hunter Lanier
Marta Flynn
Mary Diffendal
Mary Koni & Phoenix

Mellow Mushroom
Michelle Jenkins
Moya Cavanagh
Nancy Beck
Nancy Fraser
Neill Yelverton
Neomi Negrón (Buggy Pops)
Pamela Glass
Paragon Financial
Party City
Pauline Lilley
Peggy Shafer
PepsiCo
Pete & Betsy Brewer (Howdy Homemade)
Phil Jacques
Renaldo Hylton
Rhonda Karg
Rich & Gail Jackson
Richard M Schulze Family Foundation
Ricky McGrath
Ryan Boblett
Sam's Club
Samara Price (Brew Naturals)

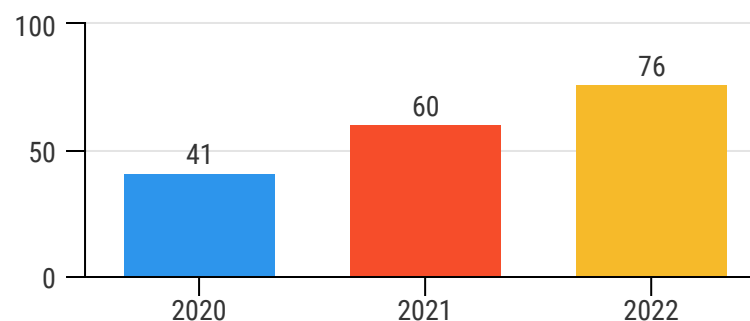
Sarah Broberg
Sarah Malson
Simply Home
South Slope Cheese
Stagridge
Starks Financial
Steven Vaughan Nichols
Susan & Michael Maxwell
Susan & Randy Richardson
Suzanne Arthur & Evan Landaw
Tabitha Morgan
Teri & Greg Siegel
Textura
Tracy & Deanna Bradshaw (Bug N Tater)
Trimbach Family
Trish Levan
Wicked Weed
Willow's Dream
Wilma & Michael Leary
Winnie Ramsey
Winslow Umberger
Wolfgang Luckmann

AAASD by the Numbers

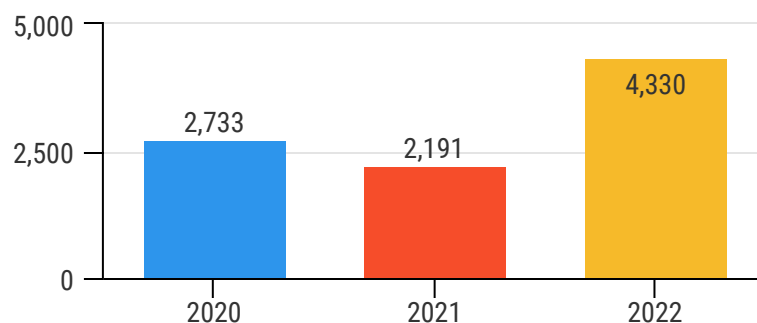
Clients Served per Year



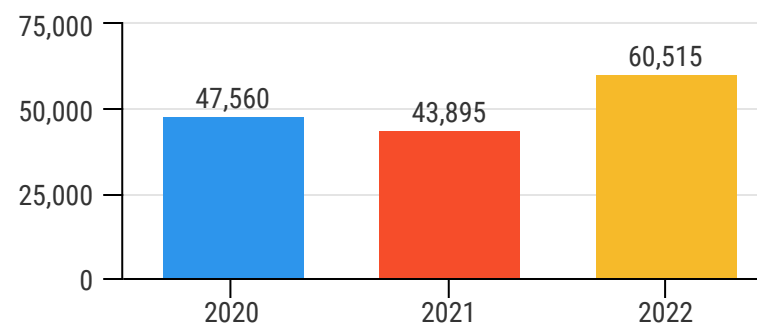
Number of Volunteers



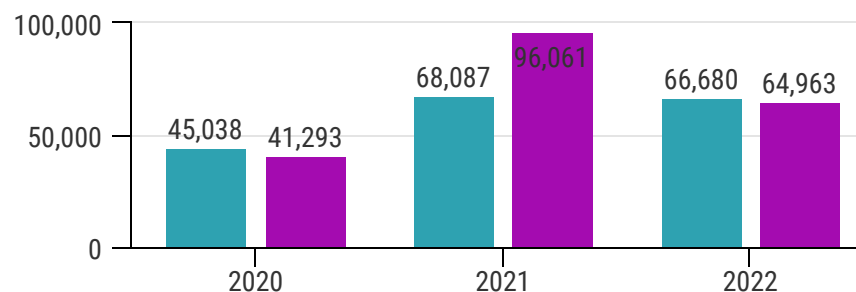
Total Number of Services Provided



Market Value of Services



Donations & Expenses



Donations Expenses

AAASD in Pictures

Pet Therapy



AAASD in Pictures

Music, Art & Games



AAASD in Pictures

Buncombe County Tipping Point Grants

Buncombe County continued its support of Arms Around ASD by providing Tipping Point Grants in 2021 and 2022. These grants helped outfit our kitchen, garden room, sensory room, and overall space.



AAASD in Pictures

Fundraisers, Boutique & Awareness



AAASD in Pictures

Hop to the Movies 2022

