

PALS



2023 Annual Report





**When I go to PALS, it
feels like I found a place
to finally **be me!****

- Chris, PALS Partner

From the

Executive Director

As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible journey we've shared together. It's my pleasure to present the highlights of our accomplishments and growth in the 2023 Annual Report. Our strategic vision for 2025 has served as a guiding compass for our efforts. The diligent work of our staff and Executive Board in actualizing this plan has resulted in deeper partnerships and stronger communities across every region we serve. We take immense pride in having hosted 18 programs in 15 major cities, spanning all 10 of our strategic geographic hubs. Furthermore, our week-long programs across the country are now accredited by the American Camp Association as Inclusive Camps, making them more accessible to families than ever before. This summer, we also expanded our offerings for older participants, providing four modified programs for those aged 25 and over, offering more choice in activities and greater autonomy.

Every volunteer joins PALS ready to challenge their own perspectives with a commitment to inspire a better world. Our gratitude extends to the thousands of volunteers who have served year after year in leadership roles and as Peers in one-to-one pairings. It is through their unwavering support that our mission becomes possible.

Research has shown that PALS leaves a powerful impact on participants, changing attitudes, building leadership, inspiring self-confidence, and instilling a belief that each of us can be change agents in the world. Most importantly, Participants experience a sense of belonging at PALS, where they can be their true, authentic selves—a crucial need for all our young adults.

This summer, I had the privilege of visiting 15 of our 18 program locations, meeting many Participants and Volunteer Leaders in our community. I am humbled by the ways PALS continues to grow, building communities of inclusion across the country and inspiring a world of belonging along the way. Every year serves as a reminder of our mission to inspire a world of belonging, and each person who joins us has an opportunity to carry that mission with them daily.

Our 100th camp celebration at Cabrini University, where it all began in 2004, marked a significant milestone. Jason and I, as young teenagers, found a place that became ours—the first place with shared friends and a shared community. Throughout the summer, I had the pleasure of meeting several siblings who joined as new Peers while their brother or sister attended as a Partner. Each of these siblings brought me back to those first summers with Jason and me. I am excited for this next generation to discover that PALS can be their place too, and I eagerly anticipate how these young leaders will bring positive change to their communities.

Our deepest gratitude goes to our donors and supporters who continued to stand with us in 2023, as well as those who are new to our community. Your commitment allows us to carry out our mission of inclusion and acceptance, making a profound difference in the lives of those we serve.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of 2023, we know that 100 camps are just the beginning. 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of PALS, and we can't wait to share with you all that we have planned. We look forward to seeing you there!



Jenni Newbury Ross
Co-Founder & Executive Director

Jenni Newbury Ross



Mission

Statement

PALS Programs creates inclusive camp experiences for people with and without Down syndrome. Our volunteer-led programs change attitudes, transform lives, and inspire a world of belonging.

Program Overview

PALS Programs began in 2004. The vision was clear—changing perspectives through relationships built on shared experiences. We pair up individuals with Down syndrome one-to-one with their peers to grow in independence, to tackle new experiences, and to build friendships along the way. The programming is simple—we go on trips, we try out new activities in small groups, we compete in the PALS Olympics, and we host the best dance parties you’ve ever seen.

While the programming is simple, the rest of it is magic. Over the years, we’ve built a commitment to this place—to this world where the boundaries of judgment, the fear of exclusion, and the stress of fitting into some pre-designed mold are gone. Our programming centers around our week-long, overnight camps held on college campuses across the country. And we strengthen our community with The Congratulations Project, reaching out to congratulate and welcome new families of babies with Down syndrome through letters written by our Participants. While our programming continues to expand, our model stays the same. We believe in one-to-one pairings that create strong bonds and lifelong friendships. We focus on peer-to-peer relationships, trusting in young Volunteer Leaders to develop age appropriate programming and to be eager to enact social change. We value residential experiences — recognizing that real impact comes from immersive experiences, and real change comes in the moments you least expect it.

We hold specific values of who we are. We are welcoming and supportive. We are a family that is passionate and genuine, and always has fun. PALS has shaped the lives of thousands of individuals since our first program in 2004. Half of us have Down syndrome, but all of us know the value of friendship, the thrill of being on a team, and the best place to experience summer. Together, we challenge each other to be a little better, and to see the world a little differently.



**“Thank you for experiences, memories,
and new friends that I’ll forever cherish.
I’ve grown more than I ever would have
imagined. PALS, you have my heart.”**

- Lanie, Medical Volunteer



Summer

2023

Snapshot

18 Programs
14 week-long
4 modified

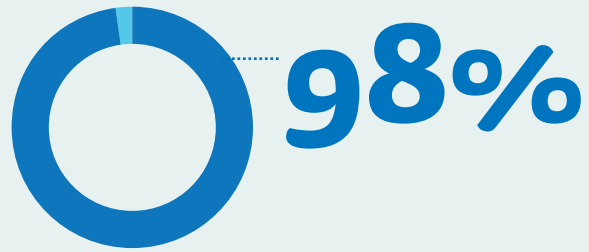
512 Partners

644 Volunteers
(Peers
& Leads)

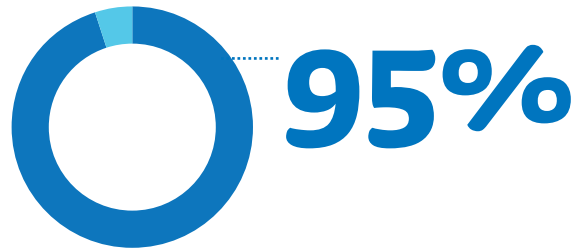
**Exciting
stats**



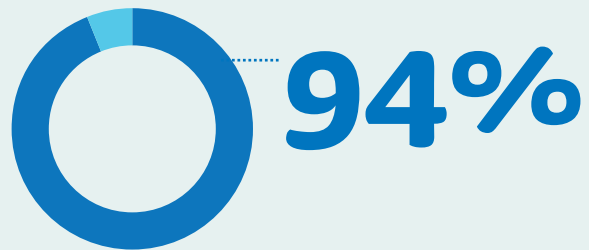
“After PALS, I see the value of supporting inclusion in my community”



“I made new friends at PALS”



“I felt included in the PALS Community”



“I felt my identities were supported and welcomed by teammates”

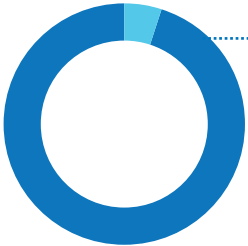
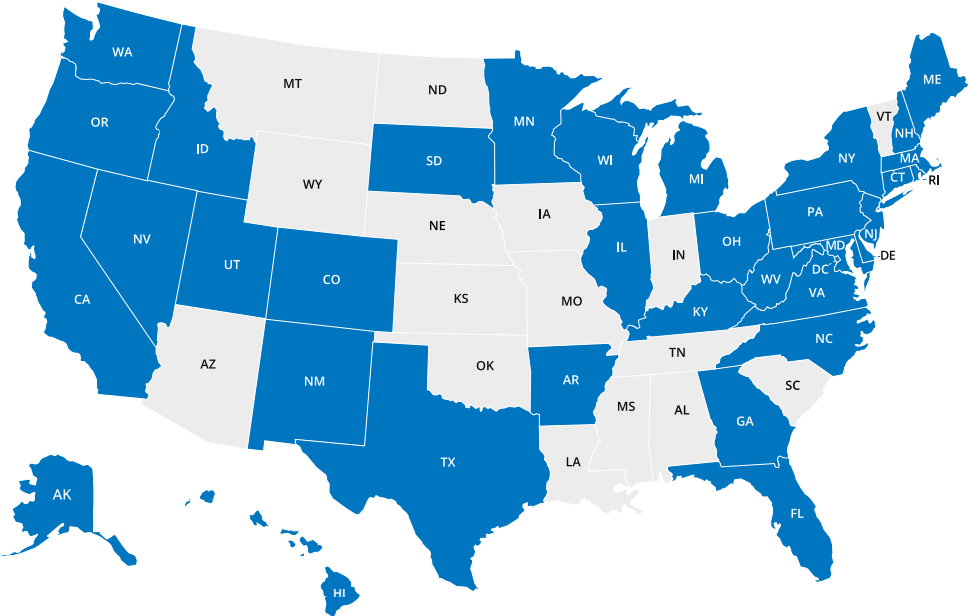


“I tried something new at PALS”

Partner stats



Partners came from:



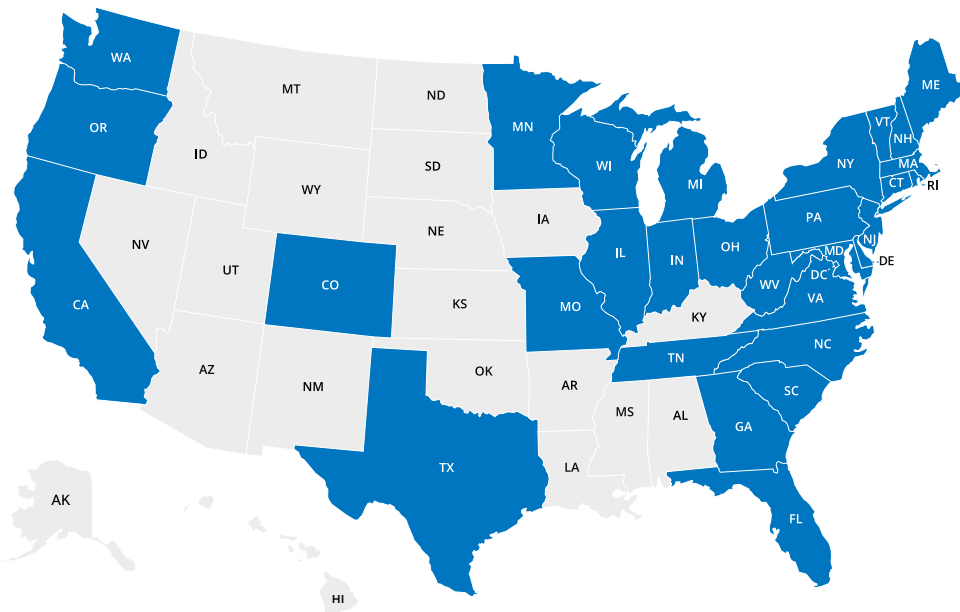
95%
of Partners who attended
camp in 2022 applied in 2023

Peer

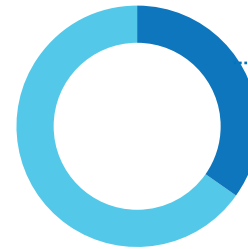
stats



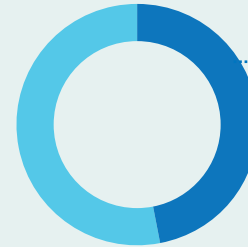
Peers/Staff came from:



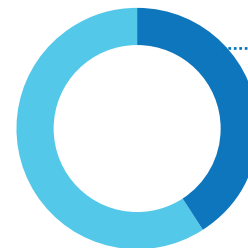
Bonus!



36%
of Peers came back
for another summer
in 2023



47%
were recruited to PALS
by a family or friend



41%
were recruited to PALS
through a college,
school, or club

Summer

highlights

Spirit of PALS Awards

The inaugural Spirit of PALS Awards were given to one Partner and one volunteer to recognize members of the community who embody the mission, spirit, and values of PALS. We received a lot of nominations from the PALS Community, a true testament to how special this summer was. The Spirit of PALS Award for a Partner went to **Melodie Corcoran**. She attended Philadelphia 2 this summer. She was nominated by her Peer, Carolina. The Spirit of PALS Award for a volunteer went to **Bobby Olejarczyk**. Bobby volunteered at PALS Los Angeles as a Team Lead. He was nominated by Harper, a volunteer who met Bobby at camp.



100th Camp

This summer, we celebrated our 100th camp at Cabrini University, where we started it all 19 years ago. Our 100 pairs celebrated this occasion with Jenni Newbury Ross and Jason Toff, co-founders of PALS. Together, they engaged in PALS staples like karaoke, Olympics, and too many dance parties to count. Here's to 100 more!



Leadership highlights

Program Leads

Program Leads work with PALS staff to create and facilitate signature week-long overnight programs. Program Leads work as a team of two people to build a fun and inclusive schedule, work with a provided budget, welcome participants to programs, and put our mission into action!



Team Leads

Team Leads lead a team at Camp. Team Leads provide support, build camaraderie, and ensure the safety and well-being of a team of Participants. They work closely with the Program Leads and the other Team Leads in the weeks leading up to the program to receive training and build trust as part of a leadership team.

Medical Team

Our Medical Team supports and assesses all safety and health concerns at Camp. The team is most often comprised of a Medical Lead (MD, NP, RN, PA) and a Medical Volunteer who has applicable health training and certifications.



Support Leads

Support Leads play an integral role in the inner workings of the week of Camp. They work alongside the Program Leads to assist with executing the program schedule, to support Team Leads, and to play a vital role in carrying out the emergency and safety protocols of the program.



Media Leads

Media Leads capture the magic of PALS through photography and videography! They spend the week helping to showcase our Participants on social media, YouTube, and through closing videos and slideshows.



How many hours of volunteering:

131,880

“Being at Camp has given me a new perspective on my life and has taught me the importance of love, friendship, and happiness. I would not be the person I am today without my experiences at PALS.”

- Avery, Peer



Partnership spotlight

On-Campus Programming

Casino Night: Tom Orrechio and his family provide a standout Casino Night at PALS New Jersey every summer. This summer was no different! From roulette to airplane races, this on-campus programming has become a staple of PALS New Jersey waiting to crown a new winner each summer.



Off-Campus Programming

Gnome Surf: Gnome Surf, an organization that provides adaptive surfing experiences, was a highlight at PALS Rhode Island. Through innovative programming and accessible equipment, Gnome Surf gave us the thrill of riding the waves!



Recruitment

Verbum Dei High School, USC Hybrid High, Peninsula Bridge and Valley Christian High School have established a meaningful partnership with PALS over the last few camp seasons. These high schools actively support and encourage their students to participate in PALS as part of their service learning requirements and even offer internships and credit hours as well. Over 45 of these students joined PALS this summer, fostering connections and embodying the mission of creating a sense of belonging for all.

PALS proudly continues its impactful partnerships with pre-health departments and Best Buddies chapters all around the country. PALS is grateful for the steadfast support from recruitment champions like Hunter College Pre-Health, James Madison University Pre-Health, University of Madison-Wisconsin Best Buddies Club, and Best Buddies Maine & Seattle chapters for encouraging club members to get involved outside of their clubs and universities!



University

JCU: John Carroll University has hosted PALS Cleveland since its inception in 2016 and has continued to demonstrate a deep commitment to our mission of creating inclusive spaces for individuals with and without Down syndrome. The university's dedicated faculty and staff welcome us on their campus, and even joined our improv showcase this summer!



Camp Highlights

PALS Atlantic City



- Steel Pier
- OC Waterpark
- Biergarten AC



PALS Baltimore



- Wonderfly Arena
- Dinner Detective Show
- Baltimore Yacht Club



PALS Boston



- Quincy Market
- Museum of Science
- TreeTop Adventures



PALS Chicago I



- Navy Pier
- Montrose Beach
- Wilder Park



PALS Chicago II



- WhirlyBall
- Seadog Cruises
- Wrigley Field Tour



Camp Highlights

PALS
Cleveland



- Nautica Queen
- Play: CLE
- Improvaneers



PALS
DC



- National Harbor
- Clubhouse DC
- C&O Canal



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

PALS
Los Angeles



- Santa Monica Pier
- Down For Dance
- Los Angeles Zoo & Gardens



PALS
Maine



- SailMaine
- Camp Tallpines
- Shipyard Brewing Company



UNIVERSITY OF
NEW ENGLAND

INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

PALS
New Jersey



- Rock N Air
- Casino Night
- Shady Brook Farm



THE HUN SCHOOL
OF PRINCETON

Camp Highlights

PALS New York



- Bronx Zoo
- Yankee Stadium Tour
- Times Square



PALS Philadelphia I



- Spirit of Philadelphia
- Penns Landing River Rink
- Ocean City Boardwalk



PALS Philadelphia II



- Dorney Park
- Bitty & Beau's
- Franklin Square



PALS Pittsburgh



- Open Up Pittsburgh Yoga
- Kennywood Amusement Park
- Moraine State Park



PALS Rhode Island



- Gnome Surf Therapy
- Brenton State Park
- Sail to Prevail



PORTSMOUTH ABBEY SCHOOL

Camp Highlights

PALS Richmond



- King's Dominion
- Richmond Science Museum
- Cobblestone Pool



PALS San Francisco



- Santa Cruz Boardwalk
- Google
- Dave & Busters



PALS Seattle



- 5th Avenue Theatre Workshop
- Waterland Arcade
- Seattle Aquarium



The

Congratulations

Project
update

1,900+

Letters distributed
since 2012

15

Distribution
Partners

50

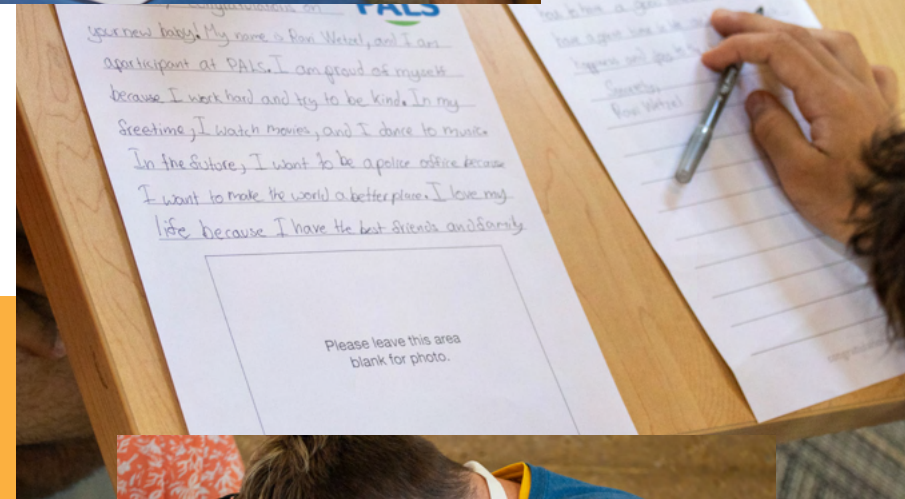
Countries Reached

2,700+

Books distributed
since 2018

50

States Reached



“I have learned so many of the important things in life from being here—how to laugh, love, and enjoy life in its purest form. Your child will have a beautiful life, filled with joy and so much more love than you could ever imagine.”

- Rebecca, Peer

“I love my life because having a disability does not define you.”

- Luke, Partner

“In the future I want to be a role model for people with Down syndrome to share their hopes and dreams. I like to capture every moment I make every day.”

- CJ, Partner



PALS gives us a glimpse of what we wish more of the world could be like, where the lines of able/disabled are blurred, and everyone is invited to have random dance parties and cry when they feel sad and make new friends and be welcomed with a party.

- Parent of Partner



2023

Expenses

2023 Financials

	Program Activities	Fundraising	General and Administrative	Total
Salaries and Benefits	\$408,403	\$149,427	\$57,762	\$615,592
Housing and Lodging	\$452,426	\$1,733	\$5,306	\$459,465
Food	\$248,863	\$3,019	\$4,122	\$256,004
Programming	\$211,940	\$5,002	–	\$216,942
Travel	\$131,996	\$3,329	\$5,968	\$141,293
Professional Services	\$33,203	\$12,237	\$82,012	\$127,452
Supplies	\$63,607	\$8,946	\$3,928	\$76,481
Fees	\$22,209	\$10,552	\$1,322	\$34,083
Information Technology	\$18,724	\$6,792	\$3,459	\$28,975
Training	\$12,159	–	\$5,633	\$17,792
Miscellaneous	\$7,786	\$2,306	\$666	\$10,758
Total	\$1,611,316	\$203,343	\$170,178	\$1,984,837

* As reflected in PALS 2023 Audited Financial Statements.

2023

Revenue

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Tuition and Fees, net	\$980,885	–	\$980,885
Contributions	\$705,897	\$1,329	\$707,226
Noncash Contributions	\$350,347	–	\$350,347
Other Revenue	\$246,017	–	\$246,017
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	\$28,157	-\$28,157	–
Total	\$2,311,303	-\$26,828	\$2,284,475

2023

Change in Net Assets

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	\$1,184,324	\$85,437	\$1,269,761
Net Assets - End of Year	\$1,510,790	\$58,609	\$1,569,399
Change in Net Assets	\$326,466	-\$26,828	\$299,638

* As reflected in PALS 2023 Audited Financial Statements.

Financial Aid

PALS recognizes that our community achieves its mission of inclusion and belonging only when we are able to engage with as many unique participants as possible. With this in mind, we are committed to ensuring that cost is never a barrier to joining the PALS community.

In 2023, PALS awarded

\$158,337.60

**in full and partial scholarships
to 111 families**



“My heart is full of gratitude for the financial assistance that you provided for my son John. Camp PALS is the highlight of his year and especially this year we would have been unable to send him without your financial aid. John has learned and grown so much by being part of the PALS community for the last 19 years.

He has developed lasting relationships and friendships with campers and counselors. I have also benefited by meeting other parents. Thank you so much for the excellent work that you are doing in the Down syndrome community!”

- Parent of John, PALS Partner

Thank you

2023 major donors!

\$10,000+

Crane Fund for Widows and Children • Georgetown University • Hiroshi Lockheimer • James and Patricia White • Joel and Beth Spenadel • Kevin and Susan King • Manuel Gordon Foundation • Michael & Melanie Petras • Noll Foundation, Inc. • Sarah and Dan Wernikoff • Sonya Li • Steven and Jennifer Ross • The Eamon Foundation • The H.Chase Lenfest Foundation, Inc • The J. Ralph and Lois Stone Family Foundation • The Selz Foundation, Inc • The Snider Foundation • The Yver Family • Triad Foundation • Wawa Foundation

\$5,000-9,999

Ausherman Family Foundation • Down Syndrome Association of Pittsburgh (DSAP) • Erik Schouten • Ginny Bryant • Google, Inc. • Jared Culotta • Jessica Trief • John Butler & Lisa Masucci • Louis N Cassett Foundation • Mark & Judi Goldstein • Soeren & Jenafer Palumbo • Special Smiles, LTD • The Allegis Group • The Heller Family • The Tobin Family Foundation • Tim Shriver, Jr.

\$1,000-4,999

Ames/Ooten Walk in Faith Foundation • Barbara Vanderwilden • Becky Delay • Bloomberg • Carola Jain • Courtney and Bret Bowerman • Daiichi Sankyo • Dale L. Reese Foundation • David Vadon • Derek Weber • Don Wiener • DSNMC INC. • Enterprise Holdings Foundation • George Eberstadt • Heather Grenning • Jack & Kath Lavin • Janet Schleicher • Jason Bauer • John Emery • Karen & Bill Matthews • Karen M Knight • Kyle Stolarz • Leonardo Raygoza • Linda Wernikoff • Lubin Family Gift Fund • Maggie Leung • Main Line Tennis Academy • Mark Wight • Matthew Danaher Tully • Maureene Abbe • Meredith and Dan O'Connor • Meredith Vieira • Michael & Suzanne Frame • Michael Hawes • Nancy Litteken • Rajeev Bhaman • Raymond Riley • Richard Price • Richard Rhoads • Samantha Ghoslin • Stephen Brogan • The Skier Foundation • The Sodestrom Family • The Warmke Family • Toburen Fund • Tom and Gina Green • Wendy LaVoy • William A Meltzer

\$500-999

Amazon Smile • Andrew Draa • Anonymous • Benevity • Brinda Doraiswamy • Brock Abramson • C&O Canal Trust • Catherine Kernie • Charles Caravati • Chubb Charitable Foundation • Cyndi Bassel • Dale Carlson • Dinicola Family • Edward Fabula • Edward Slottow • Eleanor and Joseph Cobb • Erica Conway • Facebook Fundraising • Frieri Law Group, LLC • Jason Toff • Jeff Brincat • Jennifer Blougouras • Jill Sachs • Jo Pressimone & Peter Beazer • John & Beth Lord • John & Therese Harding • Judy Martinez-Faye • Julia Schluger • Kate Subramanian • Katie Foster • Laura Mitchell • Lora J Wildenthal • Mark Santacrose • Mary Erickson • Mary Love • Marybeth Garrett • Michael Mackey • Pam Amelung • Patrick E Cermak/Wight & Company • Patrick James Talano • Paul Reischman • Pedro Pujals • Pierce & Katie Keating Family Foundation • Robert Howatt • Robyn & Mark Newbury • Roseanne Pezzolla • Ruth Chalmers • Sandra Conway • Sara Robinson • Shane Nuara • Steven Abbe • Tara Wolf • The Pressimone Family • Thomas C. Moore • Thomas Greenfield • Thornton Lewis • Traci Barr • Van Der Veer/ Mikuni Family Fund

Thank you

2023

Supporters!

These supporters contributed Value-in-Kind donations and program activities.

5th Avenue Theatre

AIM

Argosy Cruises

Atlantic City Cruises

Baker's Crust

Baltimore Yacht Club

Baumstein Family

Bethlehem Historic Association

Bitty & Beau's Coffee Shop

C&O Canal

Camp Tallpines

Chicago Yacht Club

CLE Aquarium

Cleveland Metro Parks Zoo

Clubhouse DC

Cuyahoga Hts Pool

Dave & Buster's

DLE Associates, LLC

Dorney Park

Down For Dance

Furry Friends

Geiger's Limousine & Transportation

Georgetown Visitation
Preparatory School

Give West

Gnome Surf

Google

Holy Nativity Lutheran Church

ICE at Santa Monica

Improvaneers

Jersey Mike's

Kona Ice

Ledgemere Transportation

Lowe's - 1640 W Broad St,
Richmond, VA 23220

Middle Branch Park

Mike's Cart Tours

Museum of Science

Nautica Queen

Navy Pier

Ocean City Water Park

OCNJ Mayor's Office

13th Street Bikes & Bath House

Oxbow Conservation

Papa Gino's

Pittsburgh Zoo

Play: CLE

Point Defiance Zoo

Richmond Science Museum

Ring of Music Band

SailMaine

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk

Science Guys

Seattle Aquarium

Shady Brook Farm

Shipyards Brewery

Siliman Aquatic Center

Spirit of Chicago

Spirit of Philadelphia

Staples - 2040 White Plains Rd,
Bronx, NY 10462

Stars & Stripes Brewery

Steel Pier

SurfSUP Adventures

Tom Orrachio & Family (Casino Night)

Tree Top Adventures

Wonderfly Arena

ZOOZ Fitness

“No words can describe how much fun I’ve had this week. I hope the friendships I have made here will last a lifetime and I can’t wait to be back next summer”

- Jose, Peer



PALS