



**2019**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**



**Unity House**  
Empowering Lives. Securing Futures.

## Mission

To empower and enrich the lives of people in recovery, coping with a mental illness, and/or diagnosed with a developmental disability.

This is accomplished by offering services and supports in an inclusive, person-centered environment.

## Vision

All individuals are respected and lead lives of personal fulfillment and acceptance within our community.

## Core Values

Honesty, Integrity, Respect

## 2019 Board of Directors

Cindy Wilcox – *President*

Andrew Cuddy – *Vice President*

Kenneth Knight – *Secretary*

Bradley Chapman – *Treasurer*

Donna Clark

Elane Daly

Patricia Festa

Jessica Janssen

Joseph Manning

Christopher Ryan

Richard Slagle

Christopher Sloan

James Vivenzio

## Administration

Elizabeth Smith

*Executive Director*

Darlene Podolak

*Chief Operating Officer*

Diane Jurczak-Prue

*Director of Finance*

Sara Bilinski

*Director of Human Resources*

Kelly D. Buck

*Director of Marketing  
& Development*

Amber Amidon

*Director of Quality Assurance*

Gary Fellows

*Director of Facilities*

# Defying the Odds

When Nick Reiter was a little boy, he was told by his physical therapist that he would never ride a bike. As most young children respond to being told “no,” Nick became bound and determined to do it; he absolutely would learn to ride a bike. He practiced and practiced. One day, his mother, Donna Power Stowe, went out with him on a bike ride, and they literally ran into Nick’s PT specialist. She was flabbergasted, and said: “You can’t do that! I’m seeing the impossible!” That is the essence of Nick.

“Having Nick as my son has been a challenge, and has been critically important in making me a better human being,” said Donna. “We have a very close relationship and he trusts me, but it hasn’t always been easy.”

Donna married young and never intended to have children. When Nick came along, the delivery was extremely difficult, with an oxygen deficiency that likely led to Nick’s disability. In the 1970s, there were no real programs for children with special needs like Nick. The family sought help from the Alfred I. DuPont Institute in Wilmington, where any child from Delaware could get osteopathic care at no cost. They recommended occupational and physical therapy, and advised that the family should provide stimulation and imagine that Nick could learn and do until he couldn’t.



With just that to go on, Donna shifted her outlook and became “as positive, creative and persistent as possible to help Nick learn, achieve and grow until he reached his limit. We have not yet found that limit. I think he’d say now that I was tough on him. Nick is incredibly smart and has a fabulous memory that the family relies on. I didn’t believe in letting him off the hook and really pushed him.”

Nick has struggled with his disability and sometimes resented its limitations. But even with all the setbacks and challenges, Nick is now in his 40s and is still learning and growing. He has defied the 1970s experts and is doing the “impossible.” Nick has lived in his own apartment in Ithaca with support from Unity House for over 20 years. He holds a job in the dish room at Ithaca College and has a fiancée. He was invited to speak at the fall appreciation breakfast, and has traveled to Albany with Unity House staff to advocate for higher wages.

“I’ve worked with Nick for about five years now, and he’s very much his own person,” said Ithaca Independent Housing Program Manager Amanda Voorheis. “Living in his own apartment has built his confidence. He knows what he’s capable of and we hold him to the standards we know he can meet.”

Nick pursues a number of interests and hobbies – he can tell you anything you want to know about airplanes – and loves to travel; he and Donna visited Paris for his 40th birthday.

“Without the love and support I get, I wouldn’t be where I am today,” he says. “Staff visit me at my home two or three times a week, and help me plan my day and advocate for me.”

“Nick feels very much part of a community at Unity House and in Ithaca,” continued Donna. “I appreciate that Amanda has his number; she sets expectations for him. The staff have helped Nick mature in ways I never imagined possible. Places like Unity House are not easy to find, and I am so impressed and grateful.”

# It's All About the People

Another year has passed and Unity House is as strong and vibrant as ever, and supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

In New York, the way we deliver services to people with disabilities is changing. The impact of social barriers on health has emerged as a principal focus on how the state delivers and pays for care. Research shows that people experiencing unstable housing and a lack of support services are more likely to have poor health outcomes.

While this new emphasis on stable housing is good for Unity House, it demands that we clearly articulate the value of our services and how they impact the health and wellness of our community. It demands collaboration, partnerships, and transparency. It demands a renewed commitment to quality, excellence, and service.

In response, the board of directors approved a new three-year 2019-2021 strategic plan which will advance the three priorities that will help us maximize the opportunities that lie ahead: create a culture of quality improvement and data driven decision making; expand outreach and increase community awareness of our services; and successfully position the agency for service delivery changes.

We would be unable to accomplish these goals without a strong, stable workforce. Recognizing the significant challenges that lie in recruiting and retaining qualified staff, we are laser-focused on lobbying efforts that enable us to pay a living wage and create a safe, supportive work environment that encourages positivity and recognizes the efforts of all employees.

Unity House made other advancements in 2019 as well. To support recruitment and retention efforts, we have implemented an intranet system which has improved communication across the agency. The administrative team has been meeting quarterly with employees, encouraging them to share feedback and ask questions. We have also reworked our consumer advisory panel to provide a forum for people we support to share with us what is working and not working within their services.

In the end, it's all about the people: the people we serve, the people we employ, the people who lead our efforts, and the people who support us. Unity House could never achieve its mission without the people who make us what we are. Thank you for another successful year.



**Elizabeth Smith**  
*Executive Director*



**Cindy Wilcox**  
*Board President*

# 2019 Financial Report

For the year ending 2019, the agency's revenue remained steady at \$22.7 million. Expenses were \$21.5 million, resulting in a surplus.

For the first time in years, Unity House did not open any new properties or expand services. Instead, we stepped back and reviewed our current programs to ensure that we are providing quality care to the individuals we serve. We conducted an internal evaluation of our systems, staffing and processes to verify that we have the necessary resources in place to navigate the ever-changing Medicaid landscape.

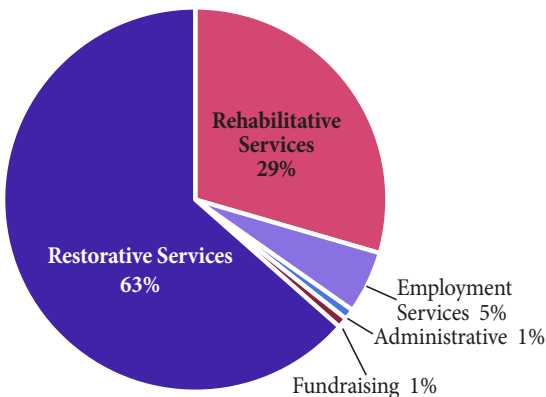
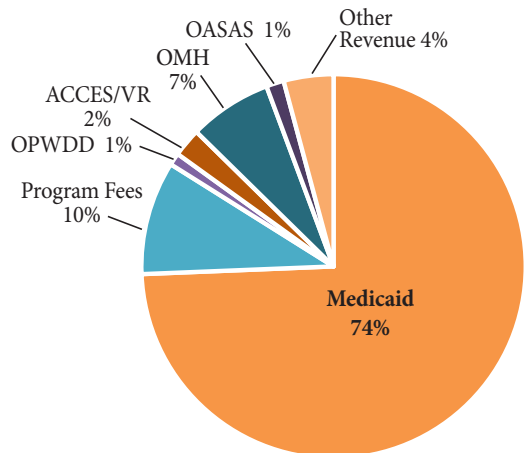
We look forward to another successful year in 2020.

**Diane Jurczak-Prue**  
Director of Finance

## OUR 2019 FUNDING (unaudited)

### REVENUE

Medicaid	\$16,878,176
Program Fees	\$2,169,555
OPWDD	\$233,804
ACCESS/VR	\$545,564
OMH	\$1,583,578
OASAS	\$337,045
Other	\$950,445
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b><u>\$22,698,167</u></b>



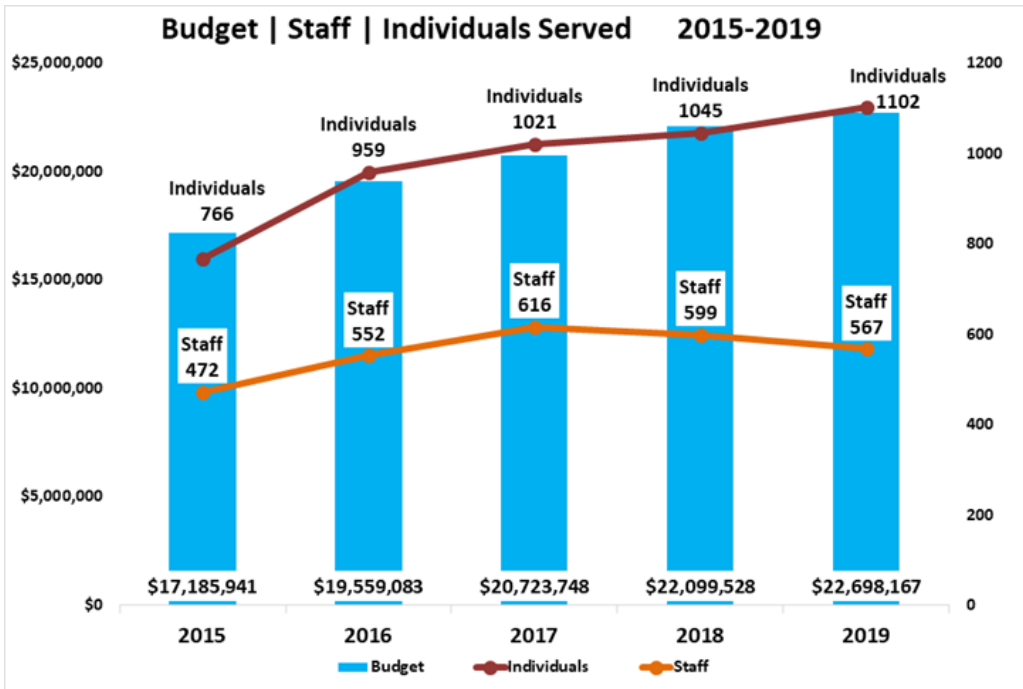
### EXPENSES

Restorative	\$13,693,463
Rehabilitative	\$6,362,860
Employment	\$1,134,878
Fundraising	\$193,657
Administrative	\$185,994

**\$21,570,852**

# 2019 Programs in Review

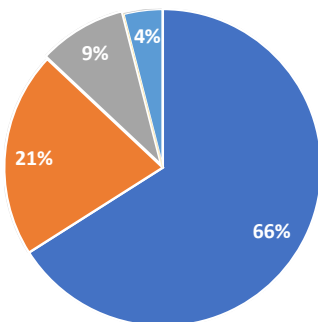
Unity House’s annual report has a new look. Our strategic plan calls for the agency to incorporate data-driven decision making. To that end, the agency has been collecting and dashboarding statistics to better inform our choices and monitor our progress. As we move towards managed care, Unity House will be required to prove its ability to operate quality programs. We are sharing some of this data here, which we think more accurately captures and reflects the most important numbers for our audience.



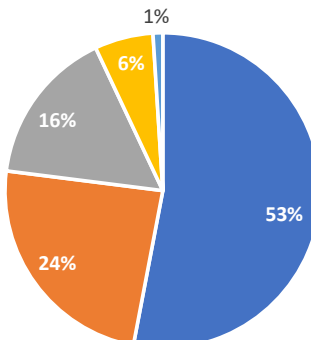
## 2019 Satisfaction Surveys

Unity House conducts annual satisfaction surveys to receive feedback and insights from service recipients in order to determine if there are areas of concern that need to be addressed and improved. The surveys also indicate where the agency is doing well in each of the three disability groups.

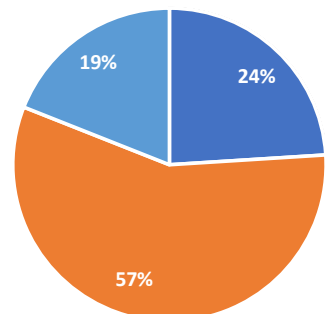
People With Developmental Disabilities (PWDD) Services



Mental Health (OMH) Services



Alcohol & Substance Abuse (OASAS) Services



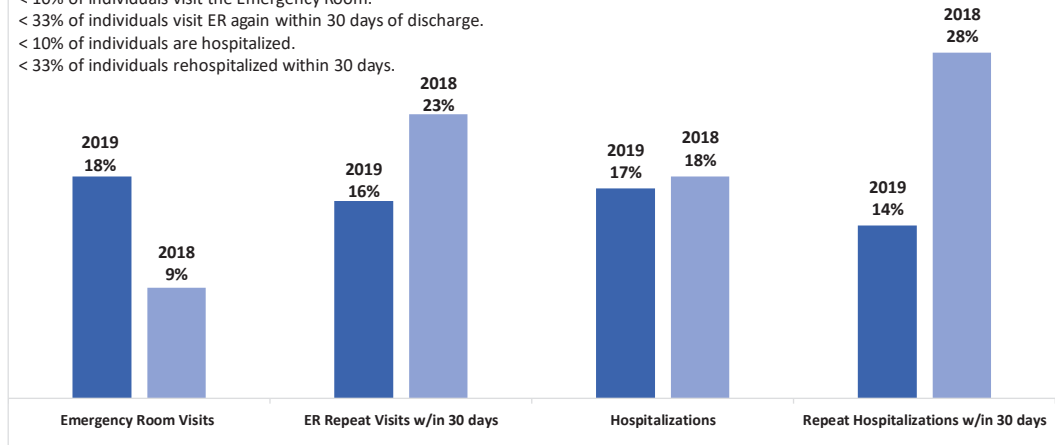
■ Great      ■ Good      ■ Average      ■ Somewhat Dissatisfied      ■ Poor

# 2019 Programs in Review

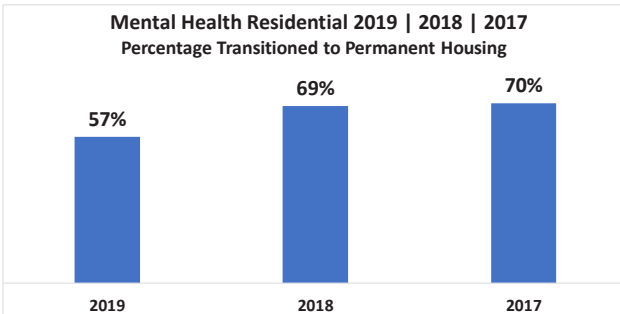
## Mental Health Residential 2019 | 2018

### GOALS:

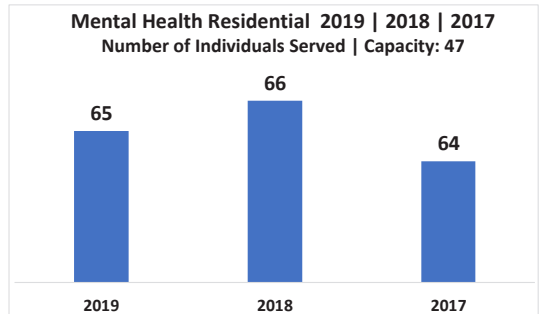
- < 10% of individuals visit the Emergency Room.
- < 33% of individuals visit ER again within 30 days of discharge.
- < 10% of individuals are hospitalized.
- < 33% of individuals rehospitalized within 30 days.



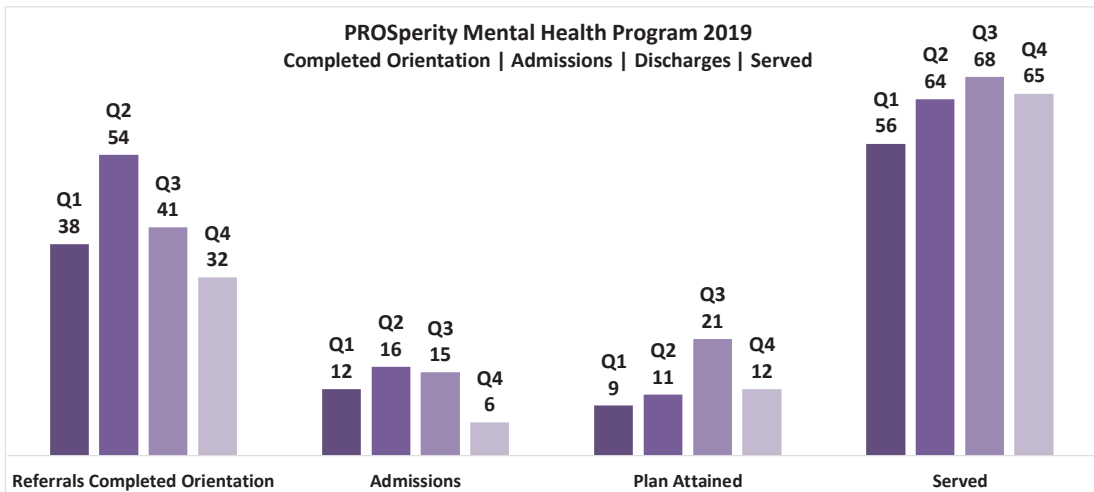
## Mental Health Residential 2019 | 2018 | 2017 Percentage Transitioned to Permanent Housing



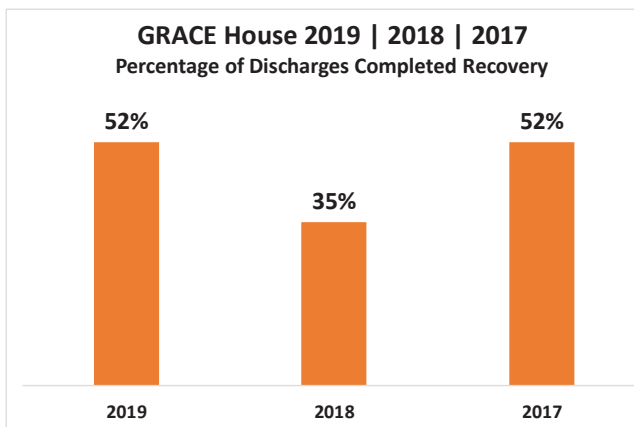
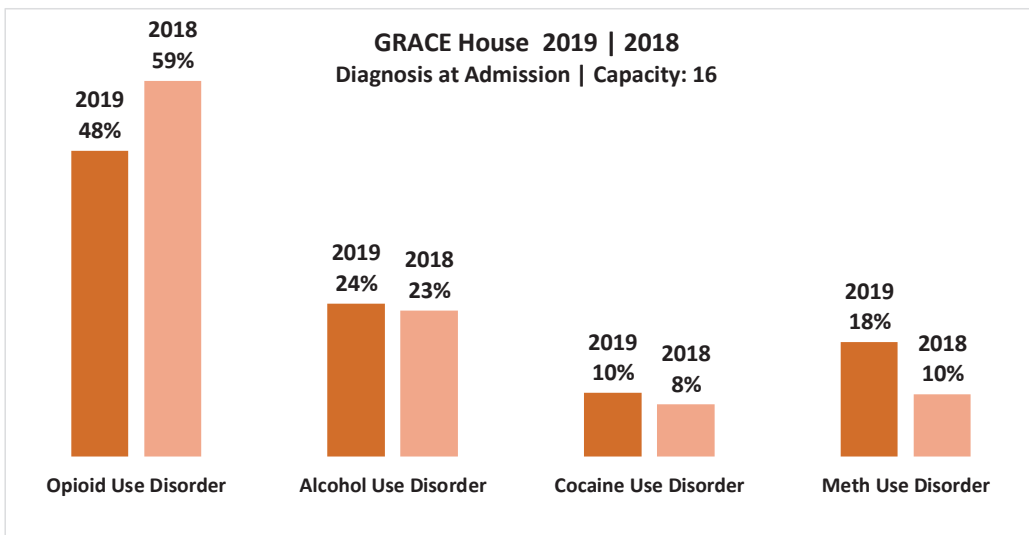
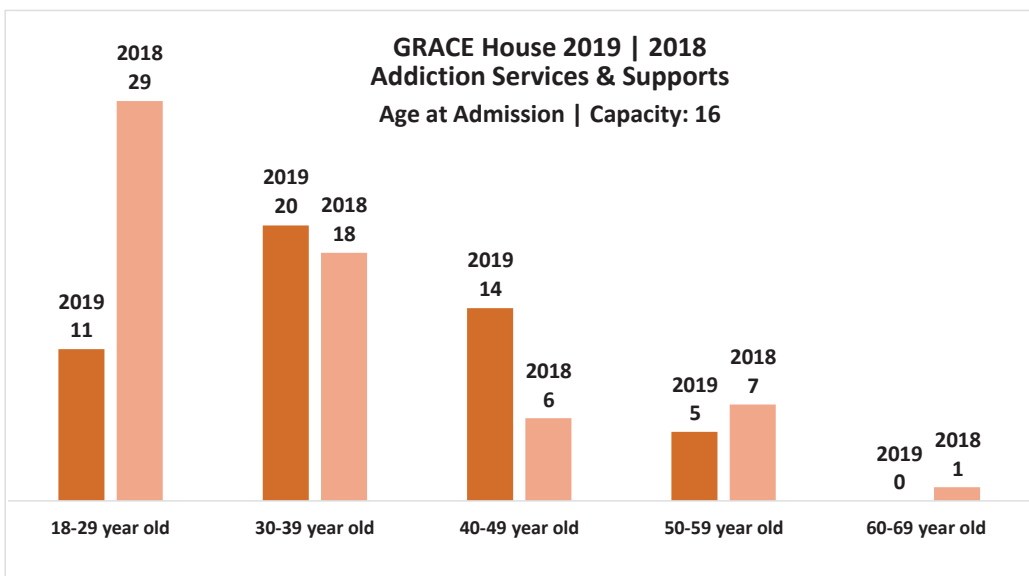
## Mental Health Residential 2019 | 2018 | 2017 Number of Individuals Served | Capacity: 47



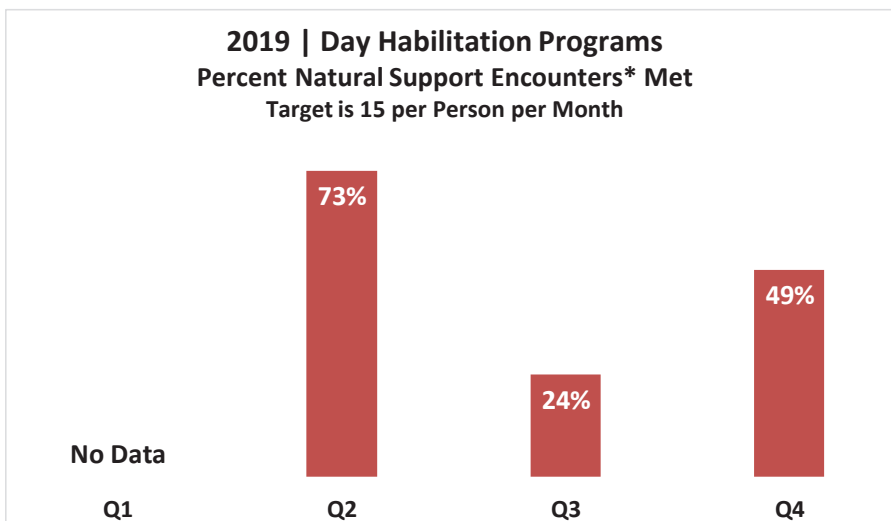
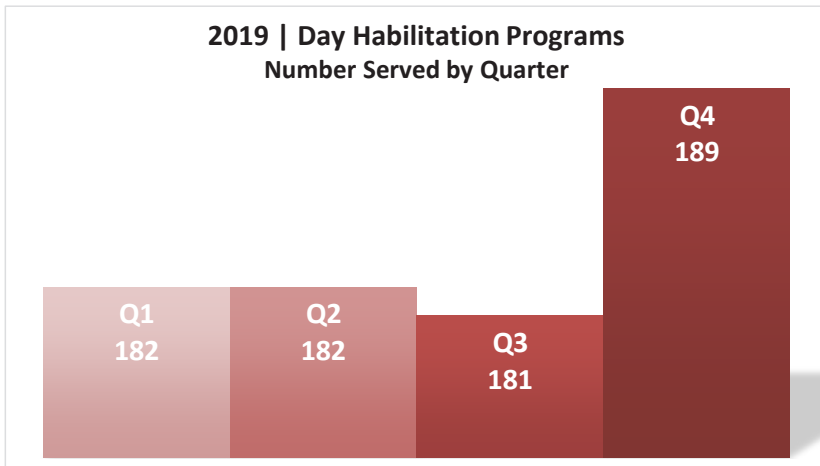
## PROSPerity Mental Health Program 2019 Completed Orientation | Admissions | Discharges | Served



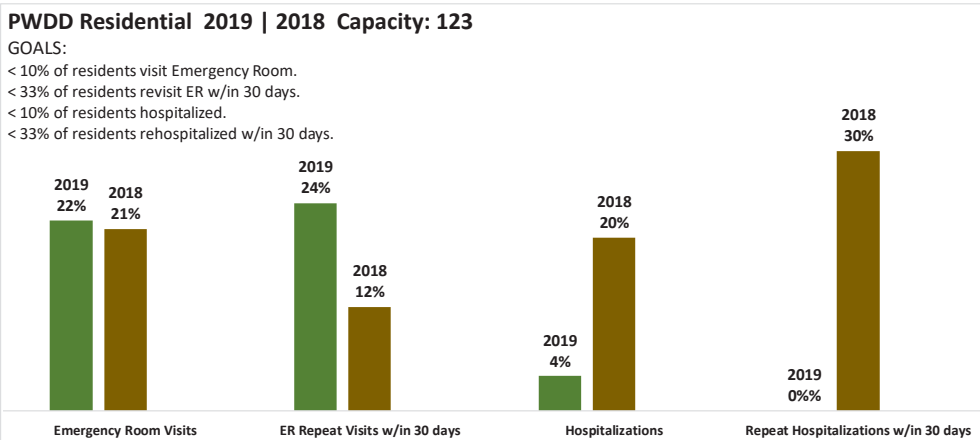
# 2019 Programs in Review



# 2019 Programs in Review

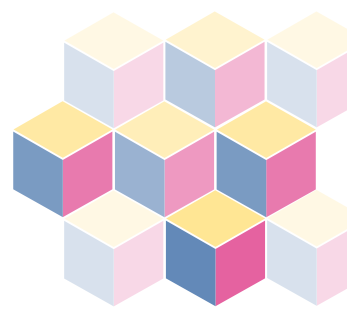


\* Natural Support Encounters are community relationships that are nurtured through time and contribute to an individual's sense of belonging and self-worth





# Agency Highlights of 2019



## JANUARY

The agency launched its new three-year strategic plan. The 2019-2021 plan retains the previous three top priorities – prepare the agency for service delivery changes, expand outreach and increase community awareness, and create a culture of quality improvement and data driven decision making – while restructuring the objectives and expected outcomes to help us reach those goals.

## FEBRUARY



Richard Slagle (left) joined the Unity House board of directors. Rich is a nurse practitioner at Auburn Correctional Facility. He holds a master's degree in nursing from Upstate Medical University. In August, David Wilder, president of the St. Thérèse of Lisieux Foundation, also joined the Unity House board. David is a graduate of Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship with degrees in political science and business administration.

## APRIL

Unity House had much to celebrate at its annual board and award dinner at the Auburn Holiday Inn. We heard keynote remarks from Kayla McKeon, the nation's first lobbyist with Down Syndrome, and presented the Atkins Community Service Award to Don Poole of Auburn and the Open Arms Award to Naomi Bernheim of Truxton, NY.



## OCTOBER

Ryan Morrell joined the agency as director of the PROSPerity mental health program in Auburn. He is responsible for all operations of the Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS) program. Ryan holds a B.A. in psychology and biology from SUNY Cortland, and an M.S. in mental health counseling from SUNY Oswego. Previously, he was the director of Criminal & Family Court Programs at Cayuga Counseling Services.

## NOVEMBER

The agency expressed its gratitude to lead donors and board members at an appreciation breakfast at the Springside Inn. Nearly 50 friends attended to enjoy brunch, network, and hear updates from Executive Director Liz Smith and Board President Cindy Wilcox. Two Ithaca clients, Nick Reiter and Don Lewis, pulled on heart strings as they shared their Unity House stories. Don even told his story in American Sign Language!



# 2019 Honor Roll of Donors

Unity House was on an uphill trajectory in 2019. Our faithful donors stepped up and increased their giving by 26%. Corporate donations were also up, and annual events – the award dinner and Art Flaire – also saw increases. For the first time, Unity House participated in Giving Is Gorges Day in Tompkins County, and our most generous anonymous donor increased her support of our phonathon and Giving Tuesday efforts, matching all contributions made on those special fundraising days. Giving Tuesday resulted in \$8,008 and the phonathon (104 calls!) brought in \$7,569. We've noted that more friends are making donations in honor or in memory of loved ones, and our own employees and board members exceeded giving goals in 2019. Thank you all for your on-going support of Unity House.

Kelly D. Buck, Director of Marketing & Development

## GOVERNMENT AGENCIES & REPRESENTATIVES

ACCES/VR  
Cayuga County Department of Mental Health  
CNY Health Home  
NYS Department of Corrections & Community Supervision  
NYS Department of Education  
NYS Department of Health  
NYS Departments of Social Service  
NYS Justice Center  
NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

NYS Office of Addiction Services & Supports  
NYS Office of Mental Health  
NYS Problem Solving Courts  
Ontario County Department of Mental Health  
Seneca County Department of Mental Health  
Tioga County Mental Health  
Tompkins County Department of Mental Health  
Wayne County Department of Mental Health

## FOUNDATIONS & GRANTMAKING ORGANIZATIONS – \$9,450

Auburn Kiwanis Club + McDonald Foundation Savage Club of Ithaca Triad Foundation +

## FRED ATKINS COMMUNITY SERVICE FUND – \$1,155 in 2019; \$30,506 fund total at year end

Bowman, David & Beth + Coon, Gary & Janet Poole, Don & Jean Scollan, John  
Clark, Clara Hoskins, Wayne & Bonnie + Schwarting, Fred & Deb Slagle, Richard \*

## BOARD DISCRETIONARY FUND - \$830 in 2019; \$159,154 fund total at year end

Unity House's Board Discretionary Fund (BDF) is the agency's quasi-endowment fund. Donors are welcome to make gifts in perpetuity to the BDF at any time. These funds will be invested to ensure the longevity of the agency. Donations made in memoriam at the time of death are automatically designated to the BDF unless otherwise directed by the donor.

Ashman, Curt & Ann Crandall, Charles & Debbie McGee, Sharon Pierce, Robert & Peggy  
Cole, Julia Cuddy, Andrew \*+ Payne, John & Pam Schwarting, Willard & Jean

## IN KIND GIFTS & SERVICES

Atkinson, Bill Cross, Leslie Lowe's of Ithaca Symphoria  
Auburn Doubledays Finger Lakes Mennonite Church Lynch, Susan Syracuse Crunch  
Auburn Party Rental Galbato Law Firm Owasco Paddles Upstate Party Rental  
Burgess, Pam Hamel, Serena Printery, The Ward, David  
Cass, Tami Hollis, Mary Sapoznikov, Lona  
Cayuga Museum Jacobs Press Skowron, Jane ^  
Colbert, Tammy Lang, Thomas St. Alphonsus food pantry

## THE FUND FOR UNITY HOUSE – \$60,097

Anonymous (16) Beesley, Adrian Coe, Gary & Sue Enterprise Fleet Management  
Akins, Thomas Bement, Louise Cool, Marion Evaneck, Nancy ^  
Alberici, Gino & Maxine Beno, John & Maryann Cuddy Law Firm \*+ Fandrich, Mark & Jill +  
Amazon Smile Foundation Bilinski, Judi + Cuddy, Andrew \*+ Farrell-LaPage, Christine  
Amidon, Amber ^+ Bilinski, Sara ^ Cuddy, Dan Fellows, Gary ^  
Ammerman, Rose Bouley Associates, Inc. Currier Plastics + Festa, Patricia \*  
Anderson, Carl & MaryAnn Buck, Kelly ^+ Currier, Jim Fishlock, Mary ^+  
Arnold, Chris Carbonaro, Paul & Kathy Daly, Elane \*+ Frampton-Pearsall, Denise  
Atkins, Neil & Maggie + Carr, Timothy Damboise, Jamie ^ Freedman, Robert  
Atkinson, Bill Delaney, Robert & Michelle Dunbar, Jonathan Fricano, Midge  
Auburn Elks #474 Chapman, Bradley \*+ EarthShare Ged, Constance +  
Auburn High School Student Chemung Canal Trust Co. Eason, Terry Gilbert, Donna +  
Govt Assoc. Chili's Restaurant Auburn Chili's Restaurant Ithaca Goldman, Marty & Wendy  
Auburn Kiwanis Club + Choiniere, Renee ^ Eidel, Carey Gould, David  
Auburn Rotary Club + Clark, Donna \* Empower Federal Gould, Gary & Sandy  
Becker, M. Catherine & Kenneth Scofield + CNY Services Inc. Credit Union + Green, Lisa +  
Gross, Eleanor +

# In Memoriam / In Honor

Amidon, Amber ^+  
*in memory of Nora Feldman*

Ashman, Curt & Ann  
*in memory of Michael Payne*

Badalamenti, Ben  
*in memory of  
Onorato Badalamenti*

Baird, E. Jeannette +  
*in honor of Joyce Hunter*

Bement, Louise  
*in honor of Sam Martin*

Bayor, David & Deb  
*in honor of Katy Bayor*

Bowman, David & Beth +  
*in memory of Fred Atkins*

Buck, Emory & Anne  
*in honor of Kelly Buck*

Buck, Kelly ^+  
*in memory of Phyllis Buck*

Campbell, Dale & Sharon +  
*in honor of Gale &  
Tony Amerman*

Cannucciari, Dan & Phyllis  
*in memory of John Cannucciari*

Clark, Clara +  
*in memory of Marian Prockup*

Cole, Julia  
*in memory of Michael Payne*

Crandall, Charles & Debbie  
*in memory of Michael Payne*

Crenner, James & Elena +  
*in honor of Tim Laird*

DeJoy, Jean  
*in honor of Jamie Vivenzio*

Dygart, Gerald  
*in memory of Chris Dygart*

Fishlock, Mary ^+  
*in honor of Don Lewis*

Fishlock, Mary ^+  
*in honor of Nick Reiter*

Gioia, Phillip  
*in honor of Cath Willsey*

Gross, Eleanor +  
*in honor of Richard Gross*

Hollis, Mary  
*in memory of Bill Conklin*

Hoskins, Wayne & Bonnie  
*in memory of Glenn Schwarting*

Larson, Ken & Diane Koester +  
*in honor of Benjamin Larson-Koester*

Mancini, Michael  
*in memory of Catherine Mancini*

McGee, Sharon  
*in memory of Michael Payne*

Miskell, Allan & Helen +  
*in memory of Allan Peter Miskell*

Moore, Ursula +  
*in memory of Onorato Badalamenti*

Neigh, Robert  
*in memory of Earl & Carol Neigh*

Noren, Scott  
*in memory of Miriam Leah Noren*

O'Connor, John +  
*in memory of Mark O'Connor*

O'Hora, Siobhan  
*in honor of Kelly Buck*

Palumbo, Joe ^  
*in memory of Frank & Willie at  
Danby IRA*

Payne, John & Pam  
*in memory of Michael Payne*

Pierce, Robert & Peggy  
*in memory of Michael Payne*

Poole, Don  
*in memory of Fred Atkins*

Power, Barbara +  
*in honor of Nick Reiter*

Redmond, Richard & Margaret  
*in honor of Auburn Day Hab Staff*

Schwarting, Willard & Jean  
*in memory of Thomas Jetty*

Slagle, Charlotte & Porter +  
*in memory of Shirley Isabelle Beach*

Smith, Leonard & Nancy +  
*in honor of Miles Smith*

Stowe, Derick  
*in honor of Nick Reiter & Donna  
Stowe*

Stowe, Donna Power +  
*in honor of Nick Reiter*

Vanetti, Michael & Carol +  
*in honor of Timothy Vanetti*

Vasile, Louis +  
*in memory of Joseph Vasile Jr.*

Vivenzio, James \*+  
*in honor of Jamie Vivenzio*

Wilder, David \*  
*in memory of  
Patricia Ann Wilder Fitzmaurice*

## THE FUND FOR UNITY HOUSE – \$60,097 *continued*

Gucciardi, Tony & Patty  
Gunderson, Tom & Maralee +  
Hanno, Carrie ^  
Haun Welding Supply  
Hautala, Richard +  
Havens, Patricia +  
Haynes, Elisha ^  
Hiza, George & Carolyn +  
Hoff, Annie  
Insalaco, Val & Sherry +  
ITT Goulds Pumps  
Janssen, Jessica \*+  
Johnston Paper +  
Jonathan's Furniture  
Jordan, Dawn  
Julian, Mark & Jeannine  
Kahl, Robert  
Kerr, Tricia Ottley  
Key Bank +  
Knight, Kenneth \*+  
Lake Country Real Estate  
Larkin, Susan  
Lehtonen, Johan  
Leone, Thomas  
Liberatore, Paul & Margaret

Lynch Furniture +  
MacDougall, Sharon  
Mack, Beverly & William +  
Maguire Auto Dealerships  
Manning, Joseph \*  
Markley, Paul & Diane  
Markley, Stephen  
Martin, Deb ^  
McClain, Kevin & Chan  
MEDENT/Community  
Computer +  
Meng, Hung-Yuan  
MG Architects  
Militello, Alyssa ^  
Miller, David & Jill  
Network For Good  
Oplinger, Nancy  
Palumbo, Joe ^  
Parker, Emily  
Penniman, Dawn  
Perrine, Cindy  
Pestridge, Michiyo ^  
Pierce, Robert & Peggy  
Podolak, Darlene ^+  
Poole, Don

Printery, The +  
Reagan, James P Agency +  
Redmond, Richard & Margaret  
Reiley, Thomas  
Relph Benefit Advisors  
Rusinko, Dick & Joan  
Ryan, Christopher \*+  
Santobianco, Amy ^  
Sargent, Patrick & Wendy  
Schenck, Sheriff Brian  
Selective Insurance Group +  
Shamon, George  
Sheffield-Tanner, Nancy +  
Short, Ashley ^  
Sierzenga, Margaret  
Slagle, Richard \*  
Sloan, Christopher \*  
Smith, Elizabeth ^+  
G & J Smith Charitable Trust +  
Smith, Patricia  
Speck, William & Karen  
Spencer, Tara  
Stoecker, Martiel  
Stowe, Donna Power  
Stoyell, Alice ^

Tanzini, Chester  
Taylor, Jerry  
Tersegno, Michael & Linda +  
Tompkins Trust Co. Auburn  
Tompkins Trust Co. Ithaca  
Triad Foundation  
United Way of Central  
New York  
United Way of Greater  
Capital Region  
Vanek, David +  
Wilcox, Cindy \*+  
Wilder, David \*  
Wilson III, Freddie ^  
Wride, Marilyn  
Xylem, Inc.

\* = Unity House  
board member

^ = Unity House  
employee

+ = 5 year donor



217 Genesee Street, Suite 14 • Auburn, NY 13021  
[www.unityhouse.com](http://www.unityhouse.com)

Honesty

Respect

Integrity

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Auburn, NY 13021  
PERMIT NO. 128

2019 ANNUAL REPORT