



IMPACT REPORT FY 22/23

PA Connecting Communities

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FROM THE CEO

Strategic Highlights

In FY 22/23 PA Connecting Communities (PACC) saw the return to full time events, programs, activities, and direct service engagement to include Connecting Me Home, Home and Community, Occupational Therapy, OVR, and Transition Services. PACC's staff and members of the Board of Directors participated in a full day strategic planning session to reflect, analyze the current condition, and reframe program priorities moving forward.

Financial Highlights

PACC received its first grant from DSF Foundation as well as continued support from The Edith Trees Charitable Foundation to complete the fiscal year with surplus revenue.

Operating Highlights

At the beginning of the year some people were cautious to return to in-person events and activities, but PACC returned to robust attendance by the year's end.

Empowering individuals with disabilities and providing opportunities to improve their quality of life for 20 years.

Looking Ahead

Many parents have reached out to PACC with concern that, when they pass, their son or daughter may become homeless. This concern is due to the state's waiting list for residential services. In response, PACC will be adding residential services in 2024. Tremendous community support will be needed to help make this happen. Stay tuned!

Kelly O'Malley
CEO

CHANGING AND SAVING LIVES

The mission of PA Connecting Communities is to empower individuals with disabilities and provide opportunities to improve their quality of life. Our Guiding Principles include person-centered planning, individual choice, and access to full engagement in community life.

The Need

Since inception PA Connecting Communities (PACC) has been one of the most innovative care agencies for individuals living with disabilities in Western Pennsylvania. We build our programming based on the voices of those we serve, meaning we listen to the needs of our individuals and their loved ones and implement programs that meet these needs.

For the better part of the past thirty years, programming for individuals and families living with disabilities has shifted from institutional settings to community-based living and programming.



For many years before this, people with disabilities, especially those with intellectual disabilities, were denied personal freedoms to live and work where they choose.

In the United States, it is estimated that 7.38 million people are living with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (Larson, Butterworth, Tanis, Smith, & Lulinski, 2021), and of those 7.38 individuals, only 17% are receiving services within their communities or from state agencies. Evidence of a negative trend in service delivery, in 2019 twenty-two percent were known to their state developmental disabilities agency.

Regrettably, 5% more people were being served in 2019 than in 2021. (Residential Information Systems Project, University of Minnesota Minneapolis, Research and Training Center on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration).

Utilizing data from the Office of Developmental Programs service report for fiscal year 21/22, the percentage of people being served by ODP ranges from 10.93% to 16.75%, well below the 17% national average reported for 2021. What's more, ODP has 13,000 people on a waiting list for service.

PACC connects individuals with disabilities to their communities and fosters independence through skill building and integration. The two main concerns of the parents/caregivers of our clients have been the lack of opportunities for work and appropriate social activities to build friendships. Needs are met through delivery of program services. **The overarching goal of all programs offered at PA Connecting Communities is to help individuals become as independent as possible and to live fulfilling purposeful lives.**

Connecting Me Home

Connecting Me Home (CMH) is a program set up to facilitate the best opportunities for participants to learn to be as independent as possible in their daily lives. The stocked and furnished home is equipped with educational materials and learning manuals for staff to work on independent living skills with PACC participants. In addition to CMH being readily set-up for addressing independent living skills every day, each week additional learning is organized and set up to enhance these skills, usually with a themed recipe and activity. Special events and additions to the program are often considered and added to the program for increased learning and the best opportunities. The lessons at CMH address numerous independent living skills and are multi-skill level, adaptable, and leave room for creative and critical thinking. **CMH served 44 unique individuals in fiscal year 22/23.**



Events, Programs and Activities

People living with an intellectual disability, developmental disability or autism oftentimes require a variety of supports to simply live the everyday lives so many of us take for granted. Most of us venture out on our own to shop for groceries and household items but enjoy the company of friends when we go to a movie, bowling, or dancing. PA Connecting Communities (PACC) recognizes the benefit of peer engagement to build confidence and self-esteem and to cultivate friendships. PACC goes beyond providing supports for a person with an intellectual disability to provide opportunities for personal development and growth.

PACC's Events, Programs and Activities team organized and presented 1,124 events, programs, and activities in fiscal year 22/23. Presented at 186 unique locations, each event is designed especially for the disability community, to include a safe integration into the broader community. Some activities may be limited to PACC clients, but most events are

open to people with an intellectual disability, developmental disability, or autism, regardless of service provider. In doing so, PACC provides a valuable service to the entire disability community, including other service providers. **Last year 174 PACC clients attended events while 15 partner service providers engaged 210 individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability at PACC's 1,124 events, programs, and activities.**

Home and Community

For many family members and guardians of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, finding supports for their loved one is proven to be a challenging task. PACC works diligently to break down these barriers and bridge the gap between family support and direct care services. We accomplish this by reaching out to families and individuals living with disabilities and working with them within their communities. We help them find work and other fulfilling opportunities where they live, surrounded by their peers and neighbors.

As an organization committed to self-determination, PACC engages clients in conversation and thoughtful reflection concerning their personal goals, as well as seeking feedback regarding program effectiveness. **Last year PACC's Home and Community program provided support for 258 unique individuals, allowing them to live everyday lives.**

Occupational Therapy

Everyday activities are used as therapeutic tools to increase independence, allowing people to live life to its fullest by achieving goals, gaining skills, staying as healthy as possible, maintaining, or building independence, and participating in everyday activities. Occupational therapy goals are based on physical needs and emotional well-being and are centered around activities meaningful to the person being served.



In fiscal year 22/23 the OT program served 9 individuals allowing them to be at their healthiest and to live their best lives each and every day. Guiding principles include integrity, inclusion, and self-determination.

Transition Services

The Transition program provides supportive services for students aged 14 to 21 years of age who are currently enrolled in high school. Transition services are focused on providing students with increased competitive and integrated employment after completing high school.

We evaluate our participants' abilities to seek employment and provide community assessment opportunities, job coaching, and employment preparedness. We provide services with an emphasis on building life and work skills. Our goal is to ensure that our participants receive appropriate transition services aligned with their interests and abilities while promoting community. **Last fiscal year 15 students from 8 school districts were served.**

Vocational Rehabilitation

PACC's OVR/Transition employment focus is to increase competitive integrated employment for Pennsylvanians with disabilities. PACC has a vocational center to evaluate and place individuals of all ages with various forms of disabilities. PACC's OVR team evaluates each participants' abilities to seek employment, provides community assessment opportunities, job coaching, and employment preparedness.

"For the past 2 years, I have worked with Bryan in an administrative setting at The Pittsburgh Conference (Pittcon). Bryan was triggered by loud noises and was unable to perform his duties when they occurred nor was he willing to do responsibilities that were loud. When Pittcon moved, Bryan was responsible for helping to pack up boxes. During this time, Bryan broke glass and needed to clean it up. Bryan not only was able to pick up the pieces, but Bryan ran the vacuum to clean up his mess. This was a major feat for him. His mother, Penny was so proud. Since then, Bryan has been able to vacuum when asked at work." The OVR team provided meaningful service and supports to 103 unique individuals last fiscal year.



IN SUMMARY

In fiscal year 22-23 PACC delivered cutting-edge programs and services to 813 people in need of support.

With a dedicated team and community support, great things happen to amazing people!



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